



Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

East Carolina University

Spilman Building • Greenville, NC 27858-4353

www.aa.ecu.edu

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MEMORANDUM

Office of the
Vice Chancellor
106 Spilman
252-328-6241
252-328-6040 fax

Administrative Staff
215 Spilman
252-328-6242
252-328-4010 fax

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Robert J. Thompson *RJT*
Interim Vice Chancellor

DATE: April 22, 2002

RE: Comments on the Teacher Education Move Proposal

In the interest of time and clarity, I thought I would make my comments to you in writing.

First of all, let me thank people from the various differing perspectives for taking this question so seriously and for devoting considerable time to it. The issues involved are important and, despite the rhetoric that has surrounded the issue at times, they are not easy ones to decide. Today, we will be talking about a number of issues – not just about the matter of where three academic programs, the faculty associated with them, and the enrolled students will be housed. We are also focusing on the future strength of these programs and where they will most likely prosper best in the future.

As a state and as a country, we have a serious and growing shortage of teachers. We must find ways to turn out more and better teachers. We do not need to develop or maintain curricula that hinder the achievement of those goals. We need curricula that provide the students, both traditional students and lateral entry students, with a solid mix of both content and pedagogy. Knowing a great deal of history, math, or English alone will not make a person a good teacher; neither will solely knowing a great deal of pedagogical theory. The question is one of the appropriate balance.

The preparation of good teachers is a responsibility that belongs to all of us in the university. I do not think we have done as well at this as we could have. I think we have to make better assessments as to what we have done well in the past and build on it in the future. That does not necessarily mean staying the same. I agreed to pose the question of the movement of these programs because the deans posited a reasonable issue about where these programs would be best served in the future and the connection of their administrative location to the missions of the College and the School of Education. The process we have followed has allowed for significant input from a diverse mix of people and constituents on those topics. If we did not disagree, we would not be academics.

By the way, in response to a point raised in the EPPC report, I chose not to delay consideration of this discussion until a new provost was appointed because the topic has been around for some time and needs to be settled. Postponing consideration for a new provost would have likely meant that the faculty and students in these programs would have to wait for another year or two for a resolution. In my view, that would not be fair to them. It would simply be a delaying tactic that would leave them uncertain as to their future home.

We are also discussing the nature of the relationship between the College of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools. Underlying much of the discussion of this whole topic are assumptions about the intellectual rigor and validity of one another's programs. The perceived prestige of one unit versus another has also entered into these discussions. In my view, that is neither appropriate to this discussion nor warranted. Different disciplines approach matters from differing perspectives. It has been clear to me from my experiences that they each bring something valuable and intellectually challenging to the proverbial table.

There are several points made in the EPPC report with which I disagree and, at least one, that needs comment. The opponents to the proposals have claimed that Deans and I have maintained that NCATE requires all teacher education programs be in the School of Education. As the proposal states

- Having the Dean of Education exercise line authority over Education faculty in the core areas of Math, English, and Social Studies would more clearly meet the guidelines as put forth by National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. While the most recent review team did not directly address this matter during the most recent site visit, it remains an issue for them and will likely arise in the future. This past time ECU was able to steer the reviewers away from the matter. **The key point is the need for closer collaboration between the teacher education programs and the School of Education.**

This whole debate has made one thing clear to me. Regardless of the location of these programs, these programs cannot continue as they have. We do not have the degree of collaboration needed to build these programs or to educate more and better students.

- There must be greater interaction between the faculty responsible for these content areas and the School of Education. These programs have operated with virtual autonomy within their respective units – almost as sub-departments. In at least one case, this has contributed to a significant distortion in allocation of resources. Also, the School of Education is charged with being the university's primary point of contact with the public schools and the public school infrastructure. All of our teacher education regardless of location must participate in this process. This means there must be clear continuing communication between the School of Education and these programs. This has not occurred in the past and must change.

- There must be a clear definition of the tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation criteria so that the faculty working in these areas are appropriately recognized for their work. I do not believe this clarity exists either in writing or in practice. Simply because a majority of the faculty vote a certain way does not mean that the standards are clear, consistent, understandable or communicable to candidates. I believe this is a serious problem for the Social Studies (History) program and will likely be one for English as that department moves to the doctoral level. It is currently less of a problem in Math, but that does not mean it is non-existent.
- If these programs remain in the College of Arts and Sciences, then the reappointment, tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation processes of these units must be changed to include more meaningful input for the Dean of the School of Education.
- High scholarly standards for faculty and students need to be maintained regardless of the location of these programs. Much of the discussion has centered on how well the programs are doing. This is a clear example of where our lack of solid assessment data hinders our ability to make a judgment. I believe the Dean of the School of Education when she cites complaints from the students in these various programs about what was lacking in their educational preparation. I also believe the opponents when they cite others who think the programs have worked for them. Given the volume of what needs to be learned, the wealth of experiences required, and the brevity of time in which to master all of these points – it is reasonable to expect that students and teachers in the field would have complaints that they wished for both more content and more pedagogical education.
- Finally, the autonomy of these teacher education programs housed in separate units must be broached even if they stay there. These are not just Math, History, or English programs. These are university programs, housed in a department and serviced by its faculty, but they are accountable to the university – not the other way around.

I still believe the proposals to move these programs to be in the long-term interest of the goal of producing more and better teachers, protecting the interests of the faculty in these programs, and the future academic development of the programs. I thank you for your consideration of this important question.