February 28, 2022

Graduate Faculty Executive Committee
C/O William J. Karpus
Dean of the Graduate School
Graduate School
University of Wisconsin - Madison

Dear Dean Karpus and Graduate Faculty Executive Committee,

Thank you for the positive review of the external review process and reports from our ten-year program review of PhD, MS (Research) in Curriculum and Instruction and Doctoral Minors in Curriculum and Instruction, International Education, Qualitative Research Methodology in Education, and Science Education. The recommendations from GFEC align with those identified in our program self-study and in the response to the external review report as part of the ten-year program review process.

Here we provide responses to the four areas identified in your request for more details from GFEC’s discussion of our review.

1: Maintain a graduate enrollment that is consistent with the availability of resources to support the students.

Three years ago, the department shifted to offer four-year guaranteed funding to all incoming PhD program students. As a result, our slightly smaller cohorts of students than in previous years, with 14 students being admitted in each of the 2020 and 2021 admissions classes. We have projected our number of admitted students based on projected TA and PA needs and the numbers of fellowships and other funding sources that would be available. This meant a shift in process for admissions as well as a decrease overall in the
total numbers of PhD programs admitted. Overall, this use of guaranteed funding offer, among with the quality of our program and faculty, has led to a high yield of admitted students attending – over 70% for the first two years of the funding guarantee. When we do not yield candidates, it is generally because we are competing with institutions that offer substantially better packages of five years of funding or with additional resources.

In addition to these fully funded students, we also have a small number of admitted students who rejected offers of departmental funding as they are current UW-Madison employees who did not intend to leave their current positions (including Teaching Faculty academic staff in our department). Finally, many students interested in continued funding beyond the fourth year are able to acquire TA positions (and we have a process where they can apply to be in the pool considered for these TA positions), PA positions with faculty on externally funded projects, or one of several departmental or school fellowships for dissertators.

For this current year we have shifted our admissions plan to one that provides faculty more autonomy over graduate admissions decisions, allows for regular and equitable opportunities to faculty to admit PhD students, and uses our project funding estimates and yield projections to estimate a sustainably-sized cohort for admission. This process will continue to be adjusted as needed going forward.

2: Continue to implement the assessment plans.

As noted in our self-study for the ten-year review, C&I has consistently submitted yearly program assessment data for our research PhD and MS degree programs. We are currently conducting a review of our assessment plan and will make updates in the upcoming year to make sure our plan aligns with current department goals for our graduate programs. We have also begun working on aligning and integrating our MS Teaching programs assessment data with our MS Research program for our assessment review and reporting going forward.

3: Focus on PhD degree completion and decrease time to degree.
Overall, our department completion rate within four years (67.4%) is similar to the university average (Graduate School Explorer). Additionally, the percentage of students still working toward completion of the degree (13.3%) reflect a number of students who come to us without an MS degree who need to take an additional 30 credits and those whose research often takes additional time. We admit students without master’s degrees directly into the PhD plan, so they show up in our PhD graduate school data. This adds a minimum of 2 years to degree completion. Many of our students also conduct empirical research in k-12 classrooms, which has an onerous approval process in the best of circumstances. In the Madison Metropolitan School District, for example, the process for approval alone can take up to a year in addition to the time needed for identifying research sites and doing data collection. These additional research approvals can add another year onto the completion timeline. Over the past two years, this issue has been further exacerbated by the pandemic and extended closure of public schools.

In order to improve our completion rates and assure students are getting the opportunities and supports necessary, especially given the conditions of the past two years, we are taking several steps. We are currently identifying students who are nearing or have reached their timeline for not showing academic progress (not passed their prelim exams within three years or not defended their dissertation five years beyond becoming a dissertator) to attempt to mediate any issues or provide support and clear expectations for maintaining satisfactory academic progress. Over the past six months we have communicated with the faculty advisors and students who were identified and have put plans in place for completing their dissertations in a timely manner with set deadlines and, in some cases, clear consequences of exiting the program if deadlines are not met. We also believe that the shift to a four-year guaranteed funding model, and consequently the smaller PhD admission cohorts, will also help with the level of advising and support provided to students to stay on time with their academic programs.

4: Consider reorganizing the areas of focus consistent with the current faculty strengths and size.

[Please see the longer and more detailed response in the attached departmental response letter to the external review report.]
In sum, it seems that the external review committee made assumptions about the roles of areas in our instructional offerings and departmental functions. In reality these areas were defined using the current structure by a former dean and are currently utilized more to help outsiders identify the areas of intellectual work within the department and as a loose organization of faculty and students in areas of collaboration. Our departmental organization already allows for faculty to maintain collaborations and work in multiple areas and does not limit students to work within any particular area.

The one area where the area system had initially caused some concerns was in the shift to the centralized admission process with guaranteed funding as we at first had admissions decisions emerging from the areas to the departmental admissions committee. We have since shifted our process to allow for more faculty autonomy in the admissions process in part because of the recognition of the differing sizes of areas and the fact that many faculty identify with more than one area.

Therefore, we do not see the area structures currently to impede the work of the faculty and department but more so as an organizing structure for hiring and communicating the areas of work in our department to the external world. The area structure also already allows for shifts over time, such as the Digital Media area recently shifting to use the area label of DICE (Design, Informal, and Creative Education) to reflect the shift of work among faculty in that area over time. We are also planning a faculty retreat in Summer 2022 to reconsider area designations and the functions that areas serve in our departmental work.

We hope that these responses provide the details requested by GFEC. Please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Erica Halverson, Professor and Department Chair

Jeremy Stoddard, Professor and Director of Graduate Education

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19 October 2021

Erica Halverson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair of Curriculum and Instruction
School of Education
Sent Electronically

Dear Professor Halverson,

When the School of Education assembled a review committee to conduct a ten-year program review of PhD, MS (Research) in Curriculum and Instruction and Doctoral Minors in Curriculum and Instruction, International Education, Qualitative Research Methodology in Education, and Science Education, Professor Earlise Ward was asked to serve as the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) representative. Professor Ward led a discussion of the review at the GFEC meeting on October 8, 2021. In this letter, I summarize the committee’s discussion.

The GFEC learned of the many strengths of the program including a highly ranked program, strong diversity among students and faculty, strong mentoring relationships, and effective program leadership. The GFEC has the following recommendations:

• Maintain a graduate enrollment that is consistent with the availability of resources to support the students.
• Continue to implement the assessment plans.
• Focus on PhD degree completion and decrease time to degree.
• Consider reorganizing the areas of focus consistent with the current faculty strengths and size.

GFEC requests that the programs engage in efforts to address the recommendations of the review committee. Please provide a written response by March 1, 2022 on how the department is addressing these recommendations, which will be discussed at a subsequent GFEC meeting. Thank you for your commitment to graduate education.

Sincerely,

William J. Karpus
Dean of the Graduate School
Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Cc: Diana Hess, Dean, School of Education
Adam Nelson, Senior Associate Dean, School of Education
Bernadette Baker, Graduate Programs Director, Curriculum and Instruction
Jocelyn Milner, Office of the Provost
Karen Mittelstadt, Academic Planner, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
Parmesh Ramanathan, Graduate School
Jenna Alsteen, Graduate School
RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT 2021

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The department of Curriculum and Instruction is grateful for the studious insights provided by the external review committee Chair, Professor Lynda Stone, and the committee members Professors Keffrelyn Brown, Noah Sobe, Lynne Paine and Earlise Ward. The report summarizes strengths and challenges of the past decade and recommendations for future action. Our response is organized around these three sections of the report.

Strengths

We appreciate the committee’s recognition of how our multiple strengths have contributed to our number one ranking in graduate education (US News & World Report) for 19 of the last 20 years. We agree with the committee’s assessment that lauds our unique intellectual reputation in the competitive national and global landscape of education. Our department’s signature of outstanding interdisciplinary research, extremely strong mentoring of graduate students who succeed on the world stage, and innovative and creative teaching underscores what becomes possible when excellence and equity are seen as mutually constitutive. The review has highlighted that for the Master’s and Ph.D. degrees our department’s emphasis on social justice, along with high quality research, teaching and service, have produced a vibrant, exciting and forward-thinking intellectual and social milieu in which epistemological and demographic diversity are foregrounded in ways that benefit the student body, the faculty, the UW and the state of Wisconsin.

Challenges

Three main domains within which the committee observed challenges were related to how areas function in different departmental tasks, the workload for faculty, and the ways in which different assistantship opportunities can be offered to graduate students.

Areas and department functions. We recognize the challenges that the new admissions policy for full funding of all admitted students presents to a department that has built its distinctiveness and reputation on more decentralized academic excellence and admissions. The centralization of the process represents integrating difficult intellectual, ethical and organizational tasks. It requires a new departmental organization with new responsibilities and obligations of faculty in decision-making. Among the latter are comparing department-wide candidates for admission who have extremely different epistemological commitments, backgrounds and fields, disciplines that are not reducible to each other, and a wide range of intended research projects. While faculty are clearly able to discern strong candidates in their respective areas, the intellectual and programmatic diversity make it not possible to set criteria in advance that would genuinely embrace or honor such differences equally across the department or that could account a priori for all variables applicants present. Even with this complexity, however, in the two years of new admissions that the faculty has engaged, the department has voted unanimously for the pool of candidates put forward and we have
successfully recruited an excellent student cohort, the majority of whom are students of color. The issue of admissions is not one of departmental areas of study per se but rather the requirement that links admission to full funding which in turn requires centralization of decisions about who should receive that funding.

While we applaud the move to full funding and support having our students receive admissions offers competitive with our peer institutions, we also realize that different tasks require different solutions. Our new approaches to hiring, for example, make use of the area strengths and the faculty crossover between areas to suggest creative and imaginative ways of recruiting outstanding faculty who then draw outstanding graduate students. The new admissions process requires a different kind of creative solution. The areas still have an important role to play in drawing strong applications and faculty review prospective applicants in their areas with deep knowledge of the specificity of content. We believe that the manner in which the area structure of the department has and will evolve in the coming years, and that the very real intellectual and community value of the areas (see Recommendations section below) offer compelling reasons for its continued evolution. The current situation provides a functional inflection point that should be permitted to grow and change in ways that preserve what is good about the area’s flexible structure and that adjust to the different kinds of tasks required.

Faculty workload. The external review committee noted the issue of faculty workload and asked whether there were creative solutions for acknowledging this load in different ways: “Are there possibilities, for instance, in currently informal practices becoming venues for credit and expertise?” We concur with the committee’s assessment of the extensive nature of our mentoring and non-course-based time commitment to students. Faculty regularly engage in giving extra time to mentoring for such things as anti-racist pedagogy, addressing xenophobia, building connections with disadvantaged communities beyond campus, running weekly reading groups in addition to set seminars, teaching writing and publication skills, practicing interviews and public presentations with students, and more. This goes beyond simply advising students how to do a research thesis or dissertation and constitutes a large unspoken, informal and time-heavy commitment to the department’s principles of social justice and excellence in teaching. These informal practices are essential to the department’s graduate mission. They reflect a mature workforce who understands the holism of graduate mentoring and takes responsibility for addressing structural issues within increasingly time-poor institutional circumstances. We appreciate the suggestion to more creatively explore ways of acknowledging how these non-formalized contributions can be recognized and legitimated beyond word of mouth or intangible understandings. We will explore these positive possibilities going forward.

Range of student assistantships. The external review report considered the balance and weight of different kinds of assistantships that our graduate students could take up. The report noted that “The issue is a balance across these experiences. Some students appear to spend time teaching; others working with advisers who have grants, spend time in research but have little teaching opportunities.” Faculty remain cognizant of the wide array of possibilities for mentoring that occurs through different kinds of assistantship. To respond to the complexities and balances of assistantships, we have created a specific committee devoted to assistantship
allocation in the department that operates in tandem with the new funding model. That committee gathers pertinent information before allocations are made, balancing departmental instructional needs with graduate student strengths and experience and state-mandated licensing requirements in teacher education.

While we are working toward a vision that would enable all students to experience a variety of assistantships that offer opportunities across teaching and research there is a cost to this process that requires campus attention. Currently, project assistantships cost significantly more than teaching assistantships due to the departments having to carry the burden of a differential scale for tuition remission. We cannot afford to organize assistantships across such a variety of possibilities at this point, and the difference cannot be made up by simply appealing to external funding. External funding bodies typically privilege certain kinds of subject matters over other kinds (e.g., STEM), meaning that not all areas of the department have genuine access to funding bodies dedicated to their area. We remain hopeful, however, that our vision of parity across assistantships can be realized in the future.

Minors. The department offers four minors: Curriculum and Instruction, Qualitative Research Methods, International Education, and Science Education. The review team did not comment on these minors, and per the instructions given to the review team, we interpret that to indicate that they did not have concerns about or see challenges in regard to the minors. While we will be maintaining the courses listed in our minors, we would like to work with XXXX and the marketing office to make students across campus more aware that these minors exist. We expect that with new certificates potentially coming on board, more attention may be drawn to what our department offers and anticipate further demand for these minors in the future.

Recommendations

The three concluding recommendations addressed issues of funding, faculty areas, and new Master's degrees and Graduate/Professional Certificates.

1. Funding

The external review report noted that increased funding is the central issue for current and future efforts of our graduate programs and that this included in particular issues pertaining to students beyond their fourth year of study in the doctorate, in addition to the need for a long term plan for retaining a robust cohort of international students. The department of Curriculum and Instruction draws on a variety of funding sources to support new and existing graduate students. These include the four fellowships earned through the former Graduate School Support Competition that offer two-years funding, two EDGRs/AOF fellowships offered by the School of Education, university-wide fellowships that our students compete in (e.g., Kemper-Knapp fellowship), and allocated funds from the department budget. With the transition to the full funding model the department was faced with blunt decisions that impacted the number of students we could admit relative to the past and how long we could fund them for. For equity reasons, the department made the move to full funding for all existing Ph.D. students within their first four years of study. This meant in practice that instead of ‘grandfathering in’ the
change in funding model across time, we gave funding to all Ph.D. students simultaneously in their first four years of study. This was introduced in the academic year of 2019/2020 and generated a very positive response from existing students in that category.

Our budget models demonstrated that to fund into the fifth and sixth years would have resulted in no more than 2 or 3 new admits. In a department of 30 professors, currently holding the number one ranking in the nation, and being the third largest Ph.D. program on campus this was judged as deleterious to the existence of the program and its national and international reputations. Given the available resources we chose to maintain the integrity of the graduate program by funding incoming students for four years. The department has, however, subsequently developed several models of support. We have a new endowment for graduate students pursuing dissertation research in their fifth and sixth years in the area of mathematics education (the Romberg fellowships). We have endowments for students studying in the area of science education available to students in their fifth and sixth years (the Pella awards). We have additional fellowships for all existing students that graduate students at any dissertator stage compete for. We have also worked with procuring for our senior graduate students teaching assistantships and project assistantships in units within and outside the School of Education, such as in WCER, computer science, teaching languages, and the Graduate School. Last, we have used grant budgets to fund advanced students in their later years of study.

We recognize that this range may not cover every case and propose several pathways based on the recommendations. First, we need to develop a longer-range plan with the School of Education for endowments that ensure gifts for these purposes. Second, we recognize the potential of new Master’s degrees and certificate programs to generate revenue and provide employment opportunities for our advanced students. And third, while the external review noted our excellence in median time to completion for the Ph.D. and the outstanding quality of our graduates’ work, at both the point of orientation and in one-on-one advising we can underscore the differences that would be faced if doctoral study took more than four years. This would be enhanced by a new tracking system developed by our Graduate Program Coordinator to identify in the fourth year of study any doctoral students who had not completed their program and who had simultaneously not procured funding for a fifth year of study. This situation that could then be communicated to the department committee responsible for allocating assistantships.

The department has recognized its commitments to diversity and to equality in its admissions practices. International students are admitted via the same processes as our domestic students and the pools are not separated. International applicants compete for the same fellowships as domestic students, except for the EdGr/AOF fellowships. In addition to having a student-led organization for international students in the department we have worked with international students to procure grants for holding events and workshops that are meaningful to students. Two challenges remain. The first are the challenges presented by a new full funding admissions model and which pertain to the practice of provisional admission and parity in regard to how waivers are administered. The department recognizes the equity issues that arose this year around domestic applicants who are working full time in the Madison area and seeking
admission to the Ph.D. program relative to full time employees in other domestic locations and
to international applicants. Domestic applicants working full time, such as teachers or
applicants working in IT, elect not to accept departmental funding and to pay tuition out of
private means. Domestic students not in the Madison area and/or international students who
are restricted from full time employment by immigration and visa policies, may have similar
desires to not participate in the assistantship structure and to fund their own study at the UW
out of private means. This may especially be the case for more mature age applicants who have
already had a long and robust career in an educational system. Seeking consistent solutions
with the Graduate School regarding students paying for credits once they have equally gone
through the approval process and are deemed admissible would enable us to retain our good
standing in national and international education and underscore our concern for equitable
pathways to completion. The second challenge pertains to social integration of international
students. Over the last two years the department has hired a greater number of international
faculty and indeed the current Director of Graduate Programs has been an international
student in the US. Despite this representation, we agree with the review that a longer term
plan that addresses attitudinal, linguistic and epistemic barriers to full inclusion and the power
dynamics among domestic and international students and faculty would be helpful in
addressing more subtle social issues that can arise and would sustain our very high ratings from
graduate students for their satisfaction with overall program quality.

2. **Organization of areas**

The external review report recommended delimiting the number of areas through which the
faculty affiliate and then allowing cross-affiliation between areas. The external review
committee was right to note that “faculty expressed a strong desire to uphold a basic
commitment within their program to intellectual vibrancy, autonomy, and flexibility across all
matters of program concern. These include faculty governance and program area
maintenance.” The report also noted that our website lists five general areas and that faculty
researched and taught within groupings that exceeded what the website portrays.

While the previous design of five areas was mentioned in the self-study, underscored as now
non-functional, and its genesis explained in meetings, the committee was not aware that the
five areas listed on our website (Curriculum and Global Studies; Disciplinary Studies;
Multicultural Education, Teacher Education, and Childhood Studies; Digital Media; and
Languages and Literacies) were a function of a request from a previous Dean to reorganize for
the purposes of hiring. They have no practical purposes within the instructional program or
graduate student course or research interests. They are not used for hiring or recruitment, did
not generate the desired clarity, and should be removed.

The values of the current departmental organization are multiple.

**Hiring:** The departmental areas our faculty work within and across enable our department to
recruit excellent hires who then attract excellent graduate students. The current area titles
match the demarcations in the field, the research lines of faculty, the teaching and
programmatic commitments of the department and job market classifications. The areas in
alphabetical order are: Bilingual/ESL/World Language Education; Curriculum Studies and Global Studies; Design, Informal and Creative Education (DICE); Early Childhood Education; Literacy; Mathematics Education; Multicultural Education; Science Education; Social Studies Education; and Teacher Education. Many faculty cross-affiliate with two or more areas and participate in search committees and admissions decisions for our graduate students in multiple areas.

**Allowing Flexibility and Responsiveness to Changing Intellectual Movements and External Educational Priorities:** The area arrangement structures both stability and innovation. The areas align with yearly teaching assignments, intellectual practices, and communities and cohorts of students, and they allow cutting edge research and innovations to evolve into new formations (e.g., the redefinition of the old Educational Technology area now as DICE). The epistemological diversity that the department is renowned for has been supported in part by this flexible structure. The stability of intellectual communities permits national and international visibility and recognition of their contributions e.g., in mathematics education, science education, literacy, etc., and aligns well with professional organizations, journals, intellectual communities, and funding agencies. As new social and intellectual movements arise and epistemologies evolve, the area structure permits their introduction and is flexible enough to allow morphing into new domains, such as the introduction of a multicultural education area, the addition of global studies to the curriculum studies area, and the expansion of ESL into world languages and bilingual education.

**Mentoring of Graduate Students:** The area arrangement generates and maintains an intellectual vibrancy that operates to attract the most outstanding graduate students domestically and internationally. Prospective students are drawn to the robust cohorts studying in the areas and these affiliations often end up in lifelong networks of alumni and influence. In addition, because so many faculty work across more than one area our intellectual and professional mentoring of students delivers a breadth and depth that has become the hallmark of our department. Thesis and dissertation committees are typically cross-area which also gives our graduates the opportunity to compete for multiple positions upon completion.

To that end, we recognize the areas are more than administrative conveniences. They allow our students and faculty to forge social and intellectual connections within and across interests which constitute our department’s signature and its reputation for a kind of interdisciplinary focus that remains robust. These connections are communicated in our required class C&I 712 Introduction to Research in Curriculum and Instruction in which faculty from all areas present their research to new students and in the methodology requirements of our doctoral program. There is also a tremendous amount of cross-fertilization already occurring, reflected in the topics and titles of theses and dissertations and joint grant applications. The department, therefore, has to weigh the multiple functions and dimensions that areas fulfill alongside the most effective and efficient ways for implementing its mission. We recognize the challenges that a new centralized admissions process layered over the top of departmental areas has posed in the last two years and we are working through the process to refine it for upcoming rounds.
3. **New Master’s degrees and graduate/professional certificates**

We are appreciative of the questions and challenges raised by the committee in regard to potentially developing a new Master’s degree and/or Graduate/Professional certificates. The report captured the difficulties of implementing such projects in a time of transition and uncertainty and we are appreciative of the external review committee’s recognition of the complexities of both structure and timing. As a department, we have already taken steps to consider what and how such innovations could be developed. In the last several years, two committees, the Graduate Program Committee and the Curriculum Committee, took up the responsibility of examining different possibilities for redesign and the impact that the addition of new certificates and a new Master’s degree would have on our existing graduate programs, on faculty workload in the context of other duties, and on the wider community need for such programs.

**Master’s Degree**: The Master’s degree has been a vital component of professional upskilling and a rich intellectual program, historically recruiting largely from Wisconsin-based teachers who received financial compensation for obtaining advanced degrees. Since this state law has changed and only a small number of school districts now offer this incentive we have started to recruit from a more diverse pool of Master’s candidates. We recognize the potential revenue stream that a new kind of Master’s degree may generate and the need for faculty and administrative support to both develop and sustain such programs. The external review committee noted “The general impression is that faculty members are not opposed to these directions but are not highly invested at this time.” We believe that faculty have and do display energetic interest in developing new programs and that we are in the learning stages of what this process requires. Over the last several years faculty have met with excitement around these new possibilities. Multiple departmental committees, repeated faculty meetings, meetings with the Dean’s office, with Continuing Studies, and with other departments within and outside the School of Education who have successfully generated such programs have taken place. The faculty also have recognized that undergraduate certificates can foster opportunities for on-ramps into a Master’s degree, for our graduate students’ teaching experience, and as revenue for our department. Our existing undergraduate certificate in Games-based Design generates a large number of teaching assistantships for our graduates in the summer months, as well as significant revenue for the department as a whole. We also have two new undergraduate certificates in different stages of the program approval process whose relevance here is related to generating opportunities for our graduate students in their future teaching assignments and for recruiting Master’s students. The multiple meetings and efforts in these regards have also been accompanied by an uncertainty in regard to time commitments, to the ethics of creating a Master’s degree online for an inherently social discipline steeped in holism and affective labor, to the overall impact on our existing in-person programs, and in regard to sustainability.

**Graduate/Professional Certificates**: In the years prior to the review, the department developed a list of potential Graduate/Professional certificates that we shared with the external review committee in the spirit of seeking guidance regarding their potential impact on the Ph.D.
program. These certificate development ideas have been previously presented to the Dean’s office, discussed with PLACE, and with Continuing Studies. Such Graduate/Professional Certificate programs could be generated in time, but we remain uncertain about both the possibility for significant direct revenue to the department from them, about the intellectual benefit to our C&I graduate students of such certificate programs, about the logistics of marketing and maintenance of robust enrolment, and about the general impact, positive or negative, on the existing Ph.D. program. Overall, we agree that the external review report represents an appropriate reflection on the questions of balance between administrative burdens, revenue generation, intellectual interests, and institutional capacity.

Conclusion

The department of Curriculum and Instruction is a rarity on the UW campus and globally for all of the right reasons. Despite changing external circumstances, significant faculty attrition over the last two decades, the highly competitive landscape of a large and broad discipline, and the Covid-19 pandemic context, we are the only department that we know of that has sustained the number one ranking in graduate education for nearly two decades. This is not just a rare feat in regard to the University of Wisconsin, but in terms of our ranking and reputation domestically and internationally. It is testimony to the dedication of different and ongoing generations of faculty and staff who create conditions that generate the respect the department has accrued and that remains attractive to graduate applicants. We are grateful to the review committee for recognizing the outstanding quality in our programs and the quality, time and dedication our faculty and staff give to research, mentoring, teaching and service. We are also grateful to the review committee for striking a balance between identifying the unique strengths of our graduate programs and pointing to the real and ongoing challenges that we face. As the committee has observed, the most important of those challenges arise at the intersection of shifting external conditions and long-standing norms of the department – norms that also contribute to our strengths. These challenges, such as the challenge of graduate admissions and the challenge of departmental area structure, require thoughtful long-term solutions that respond to a shifting resource context and build on, rather than seek to replace, constructive departmental norms and traditions related to autonomy, interdisciplinarity, and intellectual and demographic diversity. In many cases our proposed responses are already underway. These responses underscore the excellence of our graduate programs, our faculty’s research, mentoring, teaching and service commitments, and the inherent creativity we bring to sustaining our position at the very forefront of the field.