



# The Senate of the State of Texas

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**Senator Eliot Shapleigh**  
District 29

March 24, 2008

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Dr. David B. Prior  
University of Texas System  
201 W. 7th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2981

VIA FACSIMILE AND UNITED STATES MAIL

RE: UTEP's Masters in Education Counseling

Dear Dr. Prior:

I write a second letter with respect to UTEP's Masters in Education Counseling program. I ask you again to take action on the request of UTEP students for national accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) in the Masters program. Further, more staffing is urgently needed now. The program desperately needs more professors and supervisors for the on-campus counseling center.

On Friday, February 22, 2008, I met with students from the Masters program, and here are the points the students made:

1. The students were promised both by UTEP administration and professors that the Master's program would be seeking CACREP accreditation. For example, if you look at the enclosed SACS accreditation compact priority list from UTEP's current website, the CACREP accreditation is set forth as Priority 7. Why did UTEP list this as a priority on a publicly-accessible website, including specific objectives, strategies, and obstacles to progress, if they "have no current plan to apply for accreditation through CACREP," as your March 7, 2008 letter states? Was the inclusion of Priority 7 merely window dressing for potential students? Further, why were students promised by a professor that it was "looking good" regarding CACREP accreditation and that the department was "working on the application?" Students also asked a professor whether by the time they graduated the program would be accredited, and the professor said "yes." These facts directly contradict what is contained in your March 7 letter. In our visit on March 13, you admitted



that you only obtained information from the Provost. Perhaps you should consult with faculty and students, too.

2. The CACREP program is the gold standard. CACREP is used by many state mental health licensure boards to determine licensure portability. It is also used by many state school counselor certification boards. Additionally, by graduating from a CACREP accredited program, students have an advantage of being able to take the national certification exam in their last semester of studies, leading to national certification. National certification is a major advantage when seeking employment with school districts and community counseling agencies. During our March 13 meeting, even Dr. Studer admitted that there's a benefit to being able to say that you graduated from an accredited program.

With CACREP accreditation, students wanting to work as school counselors can immediately seek national certification. By comparison, a graduate from a non-CACREP accredited program would have to work for two years before they are eligible to take the national certification exam. With the extremely high numbers of troops and dependents transferring into the El Paso area as a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process, a graduate from the UTEP counseling program may encounter problems getting licensed as a mental health counselor or certified as a school counselor in another state. The ability to immediately seek national certification takes on a special importance for these highly mobile military families. The portability of their degree is a major concern, and the potential for lost salary and benefits during transfer to another state will lead these students to a CACREP accredited program.

3. Graduates from non-CACREP masters programs may be forced to take additional hours when seeking induction into a counseling doctoral program. For example, at Texas A&M University - Commerce, if a student's Masters degree is not from a CACREP-accredited program and the courses completed are not equivalent to those required in a CACREP Masters degree, then a deficiency plan is required. Additional Masters level courses must be completed before the student can start with the doctoral program. This assumes the student is accepted into the doctoral program in the first place. This is yet another factor that El Paso students weighing their different options will consider when deciding which school to attend.
4. By not providing the promised program, UTEP misled their students. A number of students left the program immediately upon hearing that the program would not be accredited. I believe that this will continue once the word spreads that UTEP has decided not to seek accreditation, despite their earlier statements to the contrary. Students seeking to graduate from a CACREP-accredited program should be informed so that they can make the choice what is best for them, instead of UTEP deciding for them after the fact.

5. Finally, students are extremely concerned with the lack of adequate staffing levels in the on-campus counseling center. As a result of the staffing levels, the UTEP counseling students do not train with real clients in their first clinical course. This is unheard of in any counseling preparation program, CACREP accredited or not. All counseling programs, including the one at UT-Austin, have practicum courses that train students with real clients, both on- and off-campus. UTEP is doing both the counseling students and the community at large a disservice by not providing adequate staffing in the counseling center.

In your March 7 letter, you disputed my characterization of this program. What I see at UTEP is a consistent pattern to maximize revenue to the administration without regard to maximizing the value of the degree for the students. Tuition has risen more than 55 percent, but graduation rates have actually dropped. Parking can cost up to \$250, but for most students, the recent parking situation has deteriorated. During entrance counseling, students are exposed to marketing by student lenders rather than unbiased financial advice. Now, Masters candidates are promised accreditation, but none is delivered so that the administration does not have to address faculty-to-student ratios that do not meet CACREP standards. Students in my district deserve better.

I would like your response to this letter within 10 days. In April, I will take steps to let all students in the counseling program know of the misrepresentations that have been made and the options that they have as students at the University.

I hope that we can resolve this matter by having a fully accredited CACREP program at UTEP as promised. In my view the expectations created ought to be honored. Universities should not sacrifice quality for cost and hurt those to whom they owe a primary duty, especially when a quality standard has been promised and is so important to the quality of education at schools that serve Fort Bliss and the community.

I look forward to your response and visiting with you further on this matter.

Very truly yours,



Eliot Shapleigh

ES/jlp/de

Enclosure

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO



Educational Psychology


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## Ed Psychology and Special Services Compact

### I. Mission

The mission of the Educational Psychology and Special Services Department is to prepare effective special education teachers, community/agency and school counselors, and educational diagnosticians to successfully address the needs of schools and other youth-serving agencies, especially those in our multi-cultural communities. Our undergraduate and graduate programs are based on established educational research and essential knowledge of sound professional practice.

In conjunction with the College of Education's goals, our department works in collaboration with local area school districts and community agencies to provide quality professional training. Our faculty strives to support life long learning and professional development in all of our students. Our Department believes it is highly important to review, revise and update our programs to assure we continue to meet the highest quality of developmental standards for licensure and certification requirements of our educational professionals.

The department, like UTEP as a whole, has adopted the following goals:

1. Learning and Teaching - Prepare our students to meet lifelong intellectual, ethical and career challenges and to be the leaders of the 21st Century.
2. Research and scholarship, and artistic production—Create, interpret, evaluate, apply, and disseminate knowledge; encourage the addition of perspectives based on UTEP's geographic and social setting; and contribute to the formation of a broader intellectual and artistic foundation for the 21st Century.
3. Administration - Provide infrastructure support for the achievement of our mission in learning, teaching, research, scholarship, and public service through responsive, effective, and efficient administrative and staff services.
4. Public Service - Work in partnership with public and private agencies to improve the quality of life in our region and world by providing appropriate university expertise and leadership.

The Educational Psychology & Special Services Department (EPSS) offers programs at the Master's level in special education, educational diagnostics, and community/agency and school counseling. The department also provides the content courses for the generic special education specialization in the Bachelor of Independent Studies (BIS) degree program. In addition, the department provides three "service" courses (EDPC 2300, EDPC 3300 and SPED 3310) to all education majors. There are approximately 200 undergraduate special education majors; 180 graduate counseling students; 60 students in the educational diagnostics program; and 45 students in the graduate special education program.

The department currently has 12 full-time faculty members, six male and six female. Five of the 12 (42%) are members of culturally diverse groups. In addition, there are seven adjunct faculty members used on a fairly consistent basis. Four of these are male, and four are members of culturally diverse groups.

### II. Major Ongoing Priorities and Initiatives

#### Short-Term

##### Priority I. Graduate Program Refinement

The Department has experienced robust graduate program growth during the past five years, particularly in the school counseling program. Having more applicants than we can handle, given the size of our faculty, has led to a rigorous selection process including personal interviews with all applicants who meet basic criteria for admission, and evaluation of a writing sample completed on site. Although very labor-intensive on the part of the faculty (101 interviews for counseling faculty over two semesters), the faculty believes this process leads to selection of better candidates for our programs. However, the volume of administrative detail needed to process all the applications to the department is incredibly time consuming and demands more than the 20 hours per week currently available through our very efficient graduate assistant. In addition, even with this selection process, some graduate classes remain very large (40+), limiting the kinds of experiences that can be offered to these students.

Secondly, the Educational Diagnostician program also currently has more students that it can handle easily. For example, in spring 2005, 28 students will be enrolled in a cognitive assessment course (EDPC 5344) that requires each student to administer sixteen individual assessments. Each of these assessments has to be monitored and evaluated by the instructor. An additional faculty member with expertise in both educational diagnostics and in special education would ease the burden of this course and other similar courses for faculty members.

##### Objectives

1. Ensure that programs attract high-quality and diverse students and provide excellent educational and research opportunities.
2. Continue or refine current selection process of our graduate candidates.
3. Seek resources for adding a 3/4 time or full time staff member to do administrative work. This would free up the graduate assistant to do more research for faculty members (see #4 below).

4. Seek resources for adding additional faculty member in special education/educational diagnostics and adjunct faculty for the counseling courses.

#### Strategies

1. Develop resources that allow us to ensure that high quality and diverse students apply at UTEP by corresponding directly with applying candidates and assisting them as much as possible through the application process.
2. Review the selection process each semester to ensure a fair and equal process for all applicants.
3. Solicit funding for a 3/4 time or full time staff member to handle details of the application process and other administrative functions.
4. Solicit funding for additional faculty to ease the burden of large classes.

#### Resources

1. With the addition of three new faculty members this year (two in counseling and one in special education), we have been able to add some additional sections. However, more resources are needed.
2. The College has recently created a new position to assist all graduate programs within the College with new student admission procedures.

#### Progress Measures

1. Maintenance of a qualified and diverse pool of candidates for the three graduate level programs.
2. Selection process deemed fair and equitable by all applicants.
3. Addition of resources for full time and adjunct faculty.

#### Major Obstacles to Progress

Funding constraints present the major obstacles to progress in all above areas.

#### **Priority 2: Implement the School Psychology Master's Level Program**

A departmental faculty line was approved in 2001 for a school psychologist. In 2002 a proposal was developed to add a school psychology Master's level 60-hour program. The Graduate Council of the Faculty Senate approved this program in January 2003. To date, this proposal has not left the campus nor been approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). We are currently advertising to fill the position of Assistant/Associate Professor in school psychology even though the program has not been officially approved.

#### Objectives

1. Secure Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) permission to offer this program
2. Hire appropriate faculty member to lead this program
3. Select first cohort of students
4. Implement the new courses (total of six) required for this program
5. Secure additional resources (library, testing materials, and so on) needed to implement this program.

#### Strategies

1. Submit program proposal to THECB for approval
2. Interview and select new faculty member
3. Publicize program and solicit applications for first cohort
4. Engage in active process to solicit resources (library, testing materials, etc.)
5. Constantly update testing materials, required also by our Educational Diagnostician program

#### Resources

1. A faculty line is approved for this program
2. With the generous assistance of Dean Josie Tinajero, we have been able to purchase some new testing materials. However, this is an on-going process, with publishers constantly revising tests and school districts seeking the latest tests as well

#### Progress Measures

1. THECB program approval
2. Hiring of faculty member
3. First cohort beginning classes
4. Some additional resources secured

#### Major Obstacles to Progress

1. Getting UTEP administrative approval
2. Securing THECB approval

#### **Priority 3. Improving Undergraduate Student Success**

In addition to providing three "service" courses to the College, the department's major contribution to undergraduate programs is the coursework in special education under the Bachelor of Independent Studies (BIS) program. Students typically do well in their classes, pass the required state certification tests with at rate of at least 80%, and nearly all are employed within six months of graduation.

However, the state certification plan, which certifies students in "generic" or all types of special education from mild to severe, and grade levels from early childhood to 12th grade, poses some special challenges. To try to meet these diverse needs, the special education plan of study under the BIS degree bloomed to a total of 139 hours. In order to meet the stated goal of reducing the number of hours, particularly those with hidden prerequisites, the number of hours in

these plans has to be revised without sacrificing quality. For example, content of the assistive technology course that we agreed to eliminate is needed not only to pass the state certification test, but especially by special educators on the job. Therefore, knowledge about assistive technology needs to be infused in several courses.

Feedback from undergraduate special education students regarding what they feel is lacking in their program will be used to revise curricula and courses.

Many of these undergraduate classes also are very large (40+). For those classes focusing on how to teach special populations, classes with over 20-25 students reduce the learning opportunities for the students enrolled.

#### Objectives

1. Reduce number of hours in BIS plan for special educators
2. Ensure that program meets students' needs and state standards
3. Seek additional assistant professor with expertise in both special education and educational diagnostics to meet the needs of the department

#### Strategies

1. Revise degree plans
2. Get Undergraduate Curriculum Committee approval (and State Board of Education approval if necessary) of revised plans
3. Carefully revise courses to reflect content needed to meet state standards but also needs of special educators on the job
4. Notify administrators and others of need for additional assistant professor in special ed/diagnostics

#### Resources

1. Plans have been tentatively revised in several meetings this past semester
2. Good will of all involved to meet students' and program needs

#### Progress Measures

1. Revised degree plans approved by necessary committees
2. Revised plans implemented and explained to students
3. Approval to search for new assistant professor

#### Major Obstacles to Progress

1. Plans are well underway for 1 and 2 measures above.
2. Funding constraints are the major obstacles for progress measure #3 above.

#### **Priority 4. Research Development**

One of UTEP's goals is a major expansion in research productivity, an expansion that is in line with UT System and State priorities for increasing external research funding. The department certainly supports these goals, and has secured a number of personnel preparation grants to support students' work, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. We will endeavor to write more grant proposals to do pure research in addition to the personnel preparation grants. However, given our current teaching loads – 9 hours, some of which are the large classes noted above – this goal is difficult to reach without additional resources. At least one, if not more, graduate assistants are imperative to help do some of the library research and other technical work to support this research.

#### Objectives

1. Increase number of proposals submitted and awards received in areas of our strengths within the department
2. Encourage a broader Coordinating Board definition of research that will optimize reporting of research expenditures at UTEP and other public universities in Texas
3. Use of graduate assistant to assist faculty in doing library research, etc. to support their writing efforts
4. Improve working relationship with the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP)

#### Strategies

1. To submit at least two additional grant proposals per year from our department
2. To actively seek an additional graduate assistant in the department to assist with library research
3. To communicate with the designated representative from the Office of Sponsored Projects to improve our working relationship and their understanding of our unique needs

#### Resources

1. A number of faculty in our department are experienced, successful writers of grant proposals. They can assist others, especially new faculty, in strategies likely to achieve funding.
2. Given the importance of this area, in Fall 2004, we appointed one graduate assistant specifically for research and to serve as testing materials coordinator [in lieu of a full-time adjunct faculty member]

#### Progress Measures

1. Number of grant proposals written and funded
2. All faculty need to improve efforts in this area, in addition to their work in teaching and service.
3. Additional graduate assistant to assist in library and other kinds of research

#### Major Obstacles to Progress

Lack of available funding and insufficient number of graduate assistants are the primary obstacles to progress.

#### **Priority 5. Integration of technology in department courses**

##### Objectives

1. Develop more online courses with assistance from UT Telecampus
2. Increase use of Web CT with assistance from UTEP Digital Media Center (DMC)
3. Increase use of multi-media equipment

##### Strategies

##### *Online Courses:*

1. Assess which courses should be developed for online delivery
2. (Discussions in place for two graduate special education courses)
3. Submit online course proposals to UT Telecampus – Provide faculty with due dates for RFP's
4. Develop courses

##### *Web CT:*

1. Provide Web CT training (DMC and inhouse) to all EPSS faculty
2. Provide models on how to integrate Web CT into existing courses

##### *Multimedia equipment:*

1. Provide continued training and assistance to all EPSS faculty
2. Encourage use of multimedia equipment through Graduate Student projects

##### Resources

##### *Technical assistance:*

1. UT TeleCampus
2. UTEP Digital Media Center (DMC)
3. COE Technical Staff
4. Drs. Barbee and Argus-Calvo, based on their experience in this area, will serve as mentors

##### Progress Measures

1. Currently two courses are taught online with UT TeleCampus: EDPC 3300 (Developmental Variations) and EDPC 5317 (Human Growth and Development). The number of online courses will increase four courses by Fall 2006.
2. Currently several professors have integrated aspects of Web CT into their course design: EDPC 5310 (Applied Research), EDPC 5317 (Human Growth and Development - Traditional course), and EDPC 5324 (Counseling Ethics). We seek to increase this number to six courses by Fall 2006.

##### Major Obstacles to Progress

1. Funding from UT TeleCampus
2. Due to budget constraints and scheduling conflicts assistance from UTEP DMC and College of Education Technical Staff is not readily available
3. Scheduling of class locations outside of COE in classrooms that do not have access to multimedia equipment

#### **Priority 6. Re-align all courses with published standards**

The faculty has worked very hard to align courses with national and state standards and competencies. However, the requirements keep changing on both the national and state levels, so constant revision of courses and, to some extent, requirements, are on-going processes. For example, the very recent re-authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the major law governing special education, will require that courses reflect the new requirements and specifications. In addition, the Texas Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Board is likely to implement new requirements for community/agency counselors as well. The coursework and activities in the courses need to reflect these new realities.

##### Objectives

1. Special education and educational diagnostics programs: ensure that course content reflects new laws and requirements
2. Counseling program: Increase the number of required academic hours in the Community/Agency track from 48 to 60 based on the LPC Board's intent to require this additional training.
3. Counseling program: Revise the Ethics course to reflect the intent of the LPC Board to require a jurisprudence examination prior to licensure.

##### Strategies

1. Special education and educational diagnostics: revise all coursework to reflect new law
2. Counseling: Plan new course offerings and submit them to the Graduate Council for approval.
3. Counseling: Revision of the course description of the Ethics course and submit it to the Graduate Council for approval.

##### Resources

Faculty has the knowledge and expertise to plan and implement all of the objectives above.

Progress Measures

1. Special education and educational diagnostics: relevant coursework revised
2. Counseling: No implementation dates for revision of LPC coursework is yet available at the state level. The faculty is in discussion of these matters.

Major Obstacles to Progress

1. Special education and educational diagnostics: time to revise courses quickly
2. Counseling – None presently noted, other than lack of LPC guidelines at present.

**Priority 7: Secure CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) Accreditation for the Guidance and Counseling program, both School and Community/Agency tracks.**Objectives

1. Various changes to and restructuring of existing courses as required by the accrediting body
2. Increase the number of required academic hours in the Community/Agency track from 48 to 60 hours as required by the accrediting body.
3. Revision of the Internship courses, to include implementation of a 1:5 ratio supervision model and an increase from 300 to 600 hours of on-site experience as required by the accrediting body.

Strategies

1. Revision of course descriptions and requirements and submit them to the Graduate Council for approval.
2. Plan new course offerings and submit them to the Graduate Council for approval.
3. Submit course changes for Internship to the Graduate Council for approval.

Resources

Faculty has the knowledge and expertise to plan and implement these objectives.

Progress Measures

1. Approval of revised and new courses by the UTEP Graduate Council
2. Approval of program by CACREP

Major Obstacles to Progress

Time to discuss, plan for, and implement the program changes and adjustments required by the accrediting body.

**III. Future Initiatives of High Strategic Importance**

1. Develop a Border Research Institute, which could serve all departments of the College of Education as well as other departments. The institute could bring children and their families to campus for specific time periods. This would allow diagnosticians and school psychologists to assess students; counselors to advise them; and special educators to determine needed modifications. Administrators, early childhood specialists, and so on could also be involved in this project.
2. This Institute could also serve as a clearinghouse for research.

**Programmatic Outcomes****Success Indicators****Closing the Loop****Roster of Instructional Staff****Course Syllabi**