1. Status of Action Items from Prior Review

Instruction Goals: 1—Convert Dr. Heflin’s line to full-time coordination and instruction in autism and hire a new tenure-track faculty member in special education to support a joint undergraduate degree and certification in Birth-5 with the Department of Early Childhood Education. (COMPLETED) Dr. Heflin’s line was converted. She has since resigned her position and replacement faculty was hired to coordinate the autism program. Special education in partnership with early childhood education offers degree programs leading to dual certification in early childhood and special education and a certification program in Birth-5. 2—Improve recruitment and increase the quality of students applying to the department. (COMPLETED) The department hired a student recruitment team and the Dean’s Office hired a public relations coordinator. Together they have increased our recruitment success. We have recruited stronger students and become more selective with an acceptance rate that improved from 26% to 21%. 3—Provide greater instructional technology support. (COMPLETED) The Dean’s Office hired staff to provide faculty with real-time support and training for instructional technology. 4—Investigate opportunities for undergraduates to enter our department graduate programs. (COMPLETED) See Goal 1 above, re: dual certification. Additionally, we offer multiple concentrations in the Bachelors in Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) and a minor in educational psychology, and we work closely with the Departments of Psychology and Communication to recruit students into the ABA and CSD master’s degree programs. 5—Upgrade and standardize communications among prospective students, current students, alumni, and faculty. (COMPLETED) The Dean’s Office hired a web coordinator who supports the college and individual department web pages, and email discussion groups have been created. Research Goals: 1—Improve grants management and compliance in order to maintain and extend levels of external funding. (PARTIALLY COMPLETED and still relevant) The college Office of Research and Sponsored Projects was expanded to achieve this goal. Currently, our level of funding success has outpaced the Office’s ability to provide sufficient post-award support. Our business manager’s responsibilities have been expanded temporarily to meet this need. 2—Increase the visibility of department research activities through publications, a webpage, enhanced networking, and distinguished speakers. (COMPLETED) The college web coordinator and the public relations coordinator help the department provide greater visibility of our research activities, and the Dean’s Office publishes Research & Innovation biannually. Additionally, the Dean’s Office supports a distinguished speaker series and accepts our nominations for speakers. 3—Support development of distinguished professorships. (COMPLETED) We have welcomed and continue to welcome distinguished visiting scholars to our department. Service Goals: 1—evaluate the extent and nature of faculty service activities. (COMPLETED) 2—enhance the national profile of the department faculty. (COMPLETED) Faculty members are encouraged to accept journal editorships and positions of leadership in national professional organizations. Time and travel support for these leadership positions are provided as needed.
2. Major Findings in Current Review
Several strengths were identified. We have a diverse, high quality, and productive faculty; three large and productive research centers; high quality graduate students; a favorable location within a major metropolitan area; and full-time doctoral students. Additionally, external reviewers identified several areas for growth: (1) a lack of undergraduate programs in special education and communication disorders, (2) inefficiencies in available working space, (3) low enrollments in some of the masters’ programs, (4) a lack of strong programmatic effort in faculty mentoring, (5) a need for college and institutional support for grants acquisition and management, (6) a need for partnerships with Atlanta area corporations and businesses that could support new programs and a strong alumni network that could help us recruit and support graduate students. In addition, in the self-study we identified the desire to (7) continue to improve doctoral student quality and (8) sustain our transdisciplinary research.

3. Action Steps for the Coming Cycle¹
1. The special education program will begin accepting students into an undergraduate special education program by Fall 2018. The CSD faculty will evaluate the feasibility of an undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences and report on that feasibility at the April 2018 ESC faculty meeting. If it is feasible to offer an undergraduate degree, they will submit a proposal for this degree by October 1, 2018.
2. The 7th floor of the college will be cleared, cleaned, and renovated for educational psychology and special education faculty to occupy by fall semester 2018. The CSD faculty labs and clinic space will be expanded to occupy more of the 8th floor, allowing CSD faculty to move to a single location rather than occupying three separate ones.
3. A representative from each program will join the college website team and the college recruitment team by January 2018. By October 2018 they will create a one-minute recruitment video for each of the programs. By the fall 2019 application deadlines, each program will increase the number of applicants for admission by 5% and by the start of fall 2019 will increase the percentage of accepted applicants who enroll by 5%. This increase in applications and in the percentage of accepted applicants will remain a goal for each application deadline and the start of each fall semester going forward. By April 2019 the ABA program with work with school system administrators to identify at least one school where ABA courses can be delivered synchronously to interested teachers while being presented in an on-campus face-to-face classroom. By fall 2020, we will deliver at least one synchronous online ABA course.
4. The ad hoc mentoring committee will finalize a proposed department mentoring policy based on college guidelines by February 2018. The committee will also establish a repository of mentoring resources on the department server.

¹ Unless otherwise specified, the program directors or department chair will direct these activities, as appropriate.
5. By the end of fall 2017, the Dean will provide financial support to hire a Fiscal Grant Specialist for the department. The chair of the department will allocate indirect cost recovery from externally funded grants to supplement grants administration as needed so that by March 2018, the ESC faculty will have the grants administration post-award support they need.

6. The ESC chair will meet with the CEHD Development Office to request names of potential donors and report the outcome of this meeting each year at the September ESC faculty meeting. In collaboration with the CEHD Recruitment Office, the ESC recruiters will create an alumni database and a storehouse of narratives in reference to PhD programs (e.g. quotes, short videos) and will share accomplishments with alumni through an electronic newsletter. The alumni database will be completed by April 2018, the first set of narratives will be completed by November 2018, and the first electronic newsletter will be distributed by April 2019. The alumni database will be updated and shared at each April ESC faculty meeting, additional narratives will be shared annually at the November ESC faculty meeting, and the electronic newsletter will be distributed each year by the April ESC faculty meeting.

7. The recruitment innovations in #3 above will be used to attract high quality students at the doctoral level as well. Further, to enhance the research training of doctoral students, the faculty will create a colloquium/pro-seminar series that will be required of doctoral students every semester and will feature research talks by alumni, faculty, students, and invited guests. A faculty committee will propose the design of the series by September 2018 and implement it by September 2019.

8. The innovations to improve faculty mentoring (#4 above) and to enhance doctoral student quality (#7 above) will further strengthen the already excellent research community of our department. Our research endeavors separate us into disparate labs and field sites, but instituting a colloquium/pro-seminar series with strong faculty investment and involvement will enhance both community and collaboration and will create new synergy and shared resources.

4. Signatures

Laura D. Fredrick, PhD, Chair

Paul Alberto, PhD, Dean

Risa Palm, PhD, Provost

11-2-2017

11-3-17

11-6-17