To: Linda McDonough  
From: Elizabeth Graue  
Date: November 2, 2008  
Re: Proposal by Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi to change doctoral degree in Curriculum & Instruction with Emphasis in Reading from Ed.D to Ph.D

Thank you for asking me to review the proposal to change an Ed.D program to a Ph.D program by Texas A&M Corpus Christi. I read the proposal with interest. I have spent the last 18 years in a department of Curriculum & Instruction that confers Ph.Ds only and I have often puzzled over the appropriate programmatic differences that might be reflected in an Ed.D vs. a Ph.D. In this brief report I will evaluate this proposal in terms of quality of resources (including faculty) and integrity of graduate training and education. I will structure my comments in terms of strengths of the proposal and potential program and questions I have about design elements that might be finetuned in a final program.

I'll begin with strengths. It is clear that the campus personnel have carefully considered the types of experiences that could serve as a foundation for a high quality program.

- They have designed a program that meets a particular set of needs – provision of a PhD program in C&I in South Texas, a commitment to growing the population of Latino/a PhDs to enhance the diversity of the professorate, continued enhancement of the local campus as a magnet of external funding, and responsiveness to student requests.
- This program would allow local students the have access to a PhD granting program without disruption to family and work responsibilities.
- The commitment to a program that blends three important elements of a graduate program in C&I – theory, specific content related to curriculum, and methodology—is to be lauded as it sets a foundation for the education of a scholar well prepared to succeed in today's demanding academy.
- The university seems well poised to support not only the maintenance but also the growth of this program, by linking aspects of the program to other departments in Education and through the commitment of the institution.
- The faculty in the department represent backgrounds that could blend to support a strong cohesive group.
- The design element that explicitly prepares students to participate in professional conferences through writing conference papers is a
wonderful way to scaffold the public communication aspect of being a researcher.

Now for a few questions. While none of these questions represents a fatal flaw in the design of this program, I think reflecting on their implications could move a middling program to something that is of cutting edge, high quality.

- The program targets only one academic area in C&I for a PhD program—labeled as Reading. Though I wouldn't argue that reading is an unimportant area, I wonder about the wisdom of limiting a PhD program to one and only one curriculum content area. I have two subquestions here: the first is whether this should in fact be broadened to literacy rather than just reading. It is clear from the courses and the interests reflected by the students' dissertations that there is more than reading going on in this program. The program includes also language arts, writing, etc. I wonder if the program might have more power if labeled more broadly. The second question is related to the implications of having only a single content area for a PhD program. This kind of isolation will create a relatively insular experience for students who will eventually need to work in more integrated programs. With more and more departmental work focusing on cross content collaboration, seeing that in action as a graduate student would be very educational.

- As a research methodologist, I was cheered by the research strand in this proposal. Bravo to you! I would suggest that the strand is unbalanced in its current requirements with 75% of courses focused on quantitative methods. A single course in qualitative inquiry puts a terrible burden on not only your students but also faculty who supervise qualitative dissertations. I imagine that there is lots of individual tutoring that could well be managed in a course structure if students have a more balanced research requirement. This has implications for faculty staffing given the course loads pivot on the number of dissertations supervised. Typically only one person would get a load reduction as chair but I can suggest from experience that the qualitative methodologist, if not the chair, will have an overload in work that again could be reduced by a more balanced research strand.

- Finally, I think that given the suggested attention to language diversity issues to justify the program, the program would have a stronger focus on language diversity. Coursework on this topic could be provided by faculty in other areas (linguistics, psychology, etc) if necessary but should definitely be a piece of the program.

I would argue that this is a program proposal that could deliver a strong program to the TAMU-CC community, particularly if the small questions asked were suitably considered. Best of luck in the rollout of the program.