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To: Sherry Queener, Ph.D.
Director, Graduate Office, IUPUI

From: Alison Ford, Ph.D. *AJ*
Associate Professor, Special Education
Chair, UWM Council on Professional Education

Re: New Program Proposal: Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Education at IUPUI

I have been asked to provide a brief review of IUPUI's proposal for a Ph.D. program in urban education. I am a graduate faculty member from a higher education institution that offers a Ph.D. in urban education. I found IUPUI's proposal to be very strong and have written comments related to several essential program features.

Importance of Program

IUPUI's proposal for Ph.D. program is a logical extension of its already strong, interdisciplinary work in urban education. I view the Ph.D. as a distinctive and research-oriented degree; IUPUI's proposal is consistent with this view, while also emphasizing the college teaching and leadership preparation that is essential in the field of Education. A degree of this nature will enhance the standing of the university and further its reputation in urban education.

Academic Soundness

The proposed program has the rigor expected of a doctoral program. The 36 credit Urban Ed and 12 Inquiry (research) core makes the foundation clear. The design takes advantage of current graduate-level courses, and plans to add eight doctoral level courses in urban education, for further depth. The sample program of study provides a helpful layout of the urban education major and research strand. One cautionary note –the proposal indicates that “our promise will be that the core courses needed for the Ph.D. will be offered at least once every two years;” while I understand the resource issues with establishing a small, high quality program, I would do whatever is necessary to ensure annual offerings.

This proposal recognizes that the academic strength of doctoral level preparation relies heavily on both advanced, specialized coursework *and* experiential requirements that solidify understanding and develop expertise. There are many important experiential requirements in this proposal (e.g., “Community-based, participatory research;” “Teaching internship”, “Qualifying Dossier” and “Dissertation”) which is good to see.

Program Stages: From Admission to Completion

Doctoral applicants gain entry by meeting a set of admissions criteria; but the final selection is based on an interview and further review of the credentials. This “interview and commitment” stage is essential to the admissions and it was good to see that IUPUI’s proposal includes this. The “Advisory Committee Structure” is the place where two faculty members in the major (plus one in the minor) make a commitment to the student. Although it looks like this happens later in the first year, I would try to make sure that the faculty members who are most likely to work with an applicant are involved in the interview and stay involved for further recruitment if needed. Early commitment and mentoring are essential. Also, some programs incorporate a “First Year Review” which may be worth considering at IUPUI.

The proposal does a nice job addressing the “Residency”, a critical feature of any doctoral program. The “Qualifying Dossier stage” also looks like an excellent way to assess a student’s readiness to advance to the “Dissertator” stage of the program.

Faculty Quality and Recruitment Ability

The faculty at IUPUI is very strong with many scholars in urban education. The existing Centers provide places for interdisciplinary work and research activity. It appears that both internal and external funding can be used to provide multiyear funding packages to students, and can help with recruiting a diverse pool of applicants. It also looks like doctoral students will have a place to work collaboratively with faculty and with each other. The proposal discusses 8-12 students per year which I think this is a good move; keeping the program smaller and high quality is a critical goal. I would also try to make sure at least one-third to one-half of the students attends full-time.

In summary, the Ph.D. in Urban Education is a well-designed program that builds on an already strong foundation of graduate and undergraduate studies at IUPUI. IUPUI has the faculty, the reputation, and the resources to provide a high quality doctoral program in urban education.