

## Final Assessment Report

### Academic Review

### Child & Family Studies

#### **A. Summary**

- i. The Self Study was presented to the PPC on January 18, 2013.
- ii. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Dr. Judy Finlay Corkum, Ryerson University and Dr. Tom O'Neill, Brock University and two internal reviewers, Dr. Greg Brown and Dr. Tracey Curwen.
- iii. The site visit occurred on February 14 and 15, 2013.
- iv. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 2, 2013.
- v. The Department's response was provided on October 21, 2013.
- vi. The Faculty Dean's response was received on October 21, 2013.

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

BA Honours Specialization  
BA Specialization  
BA Major  
BA Minor

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by the Nipissing University Senate on May 17, 2013, and ratified by the Quality Council on June 28, 2013.

#### **B. Strengths**

The Review Team noted the following regarding the strengths of the CHFS program:  
*"Nipissing University Child and Family Studies is a successful and growing program that contributes significantly to the field of child and family studies in Ontario. It has found a niche in offering a degree program to college transfer students and high school graduates from all over Ontario who wish to study in a small campus environment that has smaller class sizes and more opportunity to connect with other students and Faculty. The Review Team commends the dedication and commitment of the Program's Faculty and staff."*

#### **C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement:**

The Review Team offered the following specific recommendations:

1) The Faculty complement needs to be expanded. The current plan to add an additional Faculty member to address the Human Development and Learning is to be applauded, but the University should consider additional positions commensurate with the growth of the Program. Given that a significant amount of this growth seems to be attributable to the concurrent BA/Bed program, a Faculty hire in the area of education would be desirable.

In its response, the Department stated *“CHFS agrees that the full-time Faculty complement needs to be expanded beginning with the Human Development and Learning Stream.”*

The Faculty Dean advised *“that in the short-term, the program requires at least one additional faculty member in the area of human development and learning stream. For the longer term, all Schools and Departments in the Faculty are currently working on five-year Faculty HR Plans. Additional staffing requests will be dependent on program growth.”*

*It should be noted that, starting in 2014, the School of Education has decided to end enrolments in the concurrent BA/Bed program. Contrary to the suggestion from the Reviewers, a faculty hire in the area of education would not be desirable in the future. The impact of this decision on future growth of the CHFS program has not been fully realized not articulated yet”.*

**PPC response is as follows: Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this recommendation may no longer be pertinent. The recommendation will be reconsidered after the transfer of the program to the North Bay campus as part of the normal budgetary process.**

2) The part-time Faculty needs to be further developed. Much of the curriculum will continue to be delivered by part-time staff for the foreseeable future, and the CHFS Program should explore ways to ensure that they deliver this curriculum in a manner consistent with the overall Program. Sharing past course syllabi, for example, would help new instructors understand the role each course plays in the Program and reduce overlap; full-time Faculty mentors assigned to part-time instructors and team teaching are other means of assuring the quality of the courses they deliver.

The Department stated that *“Part-time faculty members make an important contribution to the program, and we are fortunate to have many long-serving, experienced teachers, with experiential, practical knowledge and expertise in related fields of employment. We do collect syllabi that are available to part-time instructors, but we need to formalize this process (make it part of an orientation); the additional suggestions provided by reviewers are excellent.”*

The Faculty Dean suggested that *“they agree that the needs of part-time Faculty should be further developed, on this campus and the North Bay campus. The University needs a centralized Teaching Learning Center who would support the professional development needs of all staff. Part-time staffing is critical and crucial for all programs, especially CHFS because of its location away from the main campus and because of the heavy reliance and need for stable, long-term part time faculty members. In the meantime, the sharing of syllabi and mentorship from full-time faculty has been in place for many years.”*

**PPC response is as follows: Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, the recommendation is no longer pertinent.**

3) Nipissing University should consider the diversification of admissions to the CHFS Program to ensure the program is sustainable regardless of shifts in the economic or political landscape in Ontario. This would include admissions from a range of Faculties at Nipissing University and other provincial universities. The capacity to offer courses to other Faculties at the North Bay campus may encourage broader interest in the Program.

In its response, the Department agrees *“that this is a priority, and simply notes that this requires a commitment of faculty/administrative resources, as well as an overall commitment to the Muskoka campus. We have noted several initiatives currently undertaken by our faculty in this regard, and we strongly support the recommendation of diversification as a notable contribution to long-term sustainability and success.”*

The Faculty Dean advised they *“are not quite sure what the Reviewers mean by this recommendation. The CHFS program is a multi-disciplinary program that is already diversified. The program is the primary program that stabilizes the Muskoka campus so any and all initiatives to further this program is welcomed.”*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, the recommendation may no longer be pertinent. The recommendation will be reconsidered after the transfer of the program to the North Bay campus.**

4) The curriculum of the CHFS Program is offered by means of core courses and two thematic coursework areas: Human Development and Learning and Child and Family Wellbeing: Issues, Services and Social Justice. This curriculum is consistently under review and courses are added strategically based on current developments in the field. Curriculum related to younger children is well-developed and a partnership with the developing Social Work Program will ensure adequate focus on families. Youth is an essential field of study when considering the life span and there is an obvious gap in the curriculum related to this field. It is strongly recommended that the CHFS Program include youth and services specific to youth as a core area of focus in the curriculum.

The Department advised that *“while we do not have an obvious gap in curriculum for youth, perhaps we can re-title some of our courses to emphasize the fact that we do cover a wide range of youth-related issues in various courses. We could also consider additional courses. But it needs to be recognized that CHFS is not a Child & Youth only program and our lifespan approach needs to be maintained. The lifespan approach is deliberate and we view it as a program strength that allows us to situate program and course content within a more comprehensive and ‘continuous’ framework – for example, human development within a lifespan context, rather than limiting the focus or context by prescribing an age ‘cutoff’.”*

The Faculty Dean advised they *“would support and echo the response from the Department in this area. However, given the shift in demographics and increased number of older people, I would add that the ‘human development with a lifespan context’ approach be strengthened in the area of gerontology rather than youth. The area of youth, as described by the Department, is adequately covered in the program.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC recommends that the Department reviews its curriculum to see how a stronger emphasis on youth and services specific to youth could be included as a core area of focus in the curriculum. Given the transfer of the program to the North Bay campus, additional resources may already be available which would enable this to be done easily.**

5) The Review Team strongly recommends that a meaningful partnership be maintained between the CHFS Program and the Social Work Program during all phases of its development and introduction to Nipissing University and the Bracebridge campus. The sharing of resources and curricula serves to enhance both Programs in the interest of students.

The Department *“strongly agrees with this recommendation. We have fostered this connection for many years, both in our programming and in our hiring of individuals with educational (M.S.W.’s), practical, and research experience related to social work. The Social Work program will be integral both to CHFS and the Muskoka Campus, and a strong first step in terms of developing more breadth of programming and greater opportunities for students.”*

The Faculty Dean stated *“as described the business case for a Social Work program, the three sister academic programs under a School of Human and Social Development structure, within the Faculty of Applied & Professional Studies will be CHFS, Social Work, and Social Welfare & Social Development. There is and will always be a strong partnership and direct relationship between CHFS program and a Social Work program. As highly recommended by the Quality Assurance Council, when approved by the Ministry, the University intends to build the Social Work program on the North Bay campus first before any expansion is considered on the Muskoka campus.”*

PPC response is as follows: **The University is in the process of transferring the CHFS program to the North Bay campus. PPC therefore recommends that the Chairs of both CHFS and Social Welfare and Social Development, as well as the Director of Social Work, evaluate areas of close collaboration among all three programs.**

6) The CHFS Program should develop a range of “service learning” opportunities for its students within the existing curriculum such as community placements.

The Department advised that *“while this would be ideal, we require a great deal more faculty and administrative capacity to do this. We are also conscious of competing with Social Work for placement options (a professional and applied program), and it likely makes sense for us to wait until we build the Social Work program and secure our placement partnerships with the community in that program, before we develop such opportunities for CHFS.”*

The Faculty Dean noted that *“the suggestion of more “service learning” opportunities for current students should be considered and explored by CHFS faculty. Service learning, or practical learning, should be part of all APS programming.”*

PPC response is as follows: **See response to Recommendation 5.**

7) Consistent with other similar programs in Ontario, the CHFS Program should consider incorporating case management, advocacy in child and youth services and program evaluation as additions to the curriculum.

The Department responded that *“such courses would have to fit the context of a lifespan program, but having said that, case management (across the lifespan) and program evaluation (for lifespan programs) are courses already in development as part of the Human Development and Learning stream, courses which will map seamlessly with the incoming Social Work offerings and program mandate.”*

The Faculty Dean advised that *“it is my understanding that the CHFS Program already incorporates case management, advocacy in child and youth services and program evaluation within the curriculum.”*

PPC response is as follows: **See response to Recommendation 5.**

8) The CHFS Program should make elective courses more available, either by finding ways of students to take courses in the Liberal Arts or Arts and Culture programs in Bracebridge, or by on-line or courses at the North Bay campus or by letter of permission from elsewhere.

The Department advised that *“additional course offerings on campus would be ideal. This would require more breadth of programming at the campus, and FT or PT faculty capacity (i.e. more resources). We already allow students to take on-line courses, or courses in NB or from elsewhere; doing more of this is feasible, but would also require administrative/faculty resources.”*

The Faculty Dean noted that *“the Muskoka campus is not diverse enough in overall programming but it does offer electives within a set limited numbers of course electives currently offered within the University. The program also utilizes distance learning technologies and offerings from other institutions as best as possible but adding more electives means decreasing core content within the program. An academic and strategic plan for the campus is being developed within the context of the University’s strategic planning process.”*

PPC Response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, the recommendation is no longer pertinent. With a transfer of the CHFS program to the North Bay campus, more elective courses will be available.**

9) The Review Team strongly recommends that Nipissing University and the CHFS Program investigate distance education as an alternative teaching modality. This will broaden accessibility to the Program. There is an array of models for providing distance education that are practiced throughout the province and Canada.

The Department advised that *“at present, we are limited by having a small FT faculty complement and limited administrative support. More FT faculty capacity and administrative support would allow for exploration of some of these initiatives in a*

*conscientious way. Our priority – and struggle at times – is to build/maintain a quality ‘on-the-ground’ program for students; focusing on distance education, at least at this point, would be impractical.”*

The Faculty Dean responded “*as noted above, and in the Departmental response, there are limited resources and capacity to expand the program to a distance learning modality. I would not support this suggestion or direction for the CHFS program because the program currently stabilizes the Muskoka campus.”*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this specific recommendation is no longer pertinent. The University is in the process of transferring the CHFS program to the North Bay campus.**

10) Faculty members of the CHFS Program should develop methods of integrating their research projects into the classroom in meaningful ways to enrich student learning. This will engage students in research activity at the undergraduate level in preparation for graduate studies and encourage this practice when they are working in the community.

The Department responded that “*we already do this to some degree, in terms of introducing or including research in classroom discussions/activities, and we have recently added a Muskoka-specific research fair, with presentations at times related to classroom work and research-focused discussions. But we agree that there may be ways to enhance this integration for the benefit of students, and this is something that could be explored.”*

The Faculty Dean responded that “*it is my understanding that faculty members of the CHFS Program do integrate their research into the classroom in meaningful ways to enrich student learning.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC considers that this is a worthy objective, but notes that faculty members have the ultimate decision as to what pedagogical activities will be integrated into the classroom.**

11) Nipissing University should ensure resources are in place that supports the research agenda of Faculty members. It was evident to the Review Team that Faculty members are fulfilling their responsibility to teaching and community service. However, there appears to be less emphasis on research enterprise due to a lack of necessary resources.

The Department advised that “*faculty responsibilities to CHFS and the campus can be onerous on the teaching/service front, particularly since there are relatively few faculty members and limited administrative supports. Despite these teaching/service commitments, faculty members – as the reviewers note – each have ‘active research programs’. The reviewers call for the support of a ‘research culture’ is welcomed, and while Nipissing generally is attempting to foster this through various initiatives, campus participation also needs to be prioritized. We have provided some suggestions (p. 6) in this regard.”*

The Faculty Dean suggested that “*because of the inherent impact of working on a smaller campus coupled with a limited number of faculty, staff and resources, CHFS faculty members are required to do more administrative and service work than faculty on the main campus. Despite this context, each FT faculty member, and some PT staff, have full research agendas. I*

*do not agree with the reviewers that CHFS faculty members place less emphasis on research. And, CHFS faculty has the same access and support from the University's Research Office as any other faculty member on the other two campuses."*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this specific recommendation is no longer pertinent. All faculty will have access to resources at the North Bay campus.**

12) The CHFS Program should ensure consistency in the preparation of syllabi related to the provision of course objectives, rubrics, course schedules and methods of evaluation.

The Department advised that they *"agree that this is a priority."*

The Faculty Dean also *"agrees that the CHFS Program should ensure consistency in the preparation of syllabi related to the provision of course objectives, rubrics, course schedules and methods of evaluation and the department has indicated they will work on this suggestion."*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC suggests that faculty should ensure consistency in the preparation of syllabi related to the provision of course objectives, rubrics, course schedules and methods of evaluation.**

13) Nipissing University and the CHFS Program should find ways of making support services more available, on a regular basis, at the Nipissing campus. This includes student advising, counseling, and career services etc., which are available to students on a full-time basis on the North Bay campus, but only periodically on the Bracebridge campus.

The Department advised that they *"agree that this is a priority."*

The Faculty Dean advised that *"this is a constant and consistent request made by the campus administrator on the Muskoka campus. The University is making headway in making support services more available by working more closely with student services. Additional student and campus services have been added this year."*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this specific recommendation is no longer pertinent.**

14) The Bracebridge campus should make study resources more available to its students. One important part of this is making more comfortable study and group work space available on campus, and expanding the hours in which these spaces could be accessed (late hours and weekends).

The Department advised that *"we will take this under consideration and may be able to facilitate access to study rooms, with recent expansion of the campus via the purchase of the Victoria street property."*

The Faculty Dean advised that *“The Lakehouse space has been converted this year into comfortable study space this year. As well, the campus is in the process of refreshing all computers in the classroom and around campus. As well, the addition of more student space is being considered within the new building on Victoria Street.”*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this specific recommendation is no longer pertinent.**

15) The convocation ceremonies for the CHFS Program should be held on the Bracebridge campus.

The Department advised that they agree. *“This is a good idea, particularly since student/alumni feedback was the source of this request.”*

The Faculty Dean suggested that *“this recommendation is something to consider when the Muskoka campus has the critical mass of graduating students to justify the costs involved in having a separate event.”*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, this specific recommendation is no longer pertinent.**

#### **D. Specific Recommendations**

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or unit identified as the being responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty of Applied and Professional Studies has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken.

<b>PPC Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Projected Date</b>
<b>(1) That the Department reviews its curriculum to see how a stronger emphasis on youth and services specific to youth could be included as a core area of focus in the curriculum</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
<b>(2) That the Chairs of both CHFS and Social Work evaluate areas of close collaboration between both programs, including “service learning opportunities”, case management, advocacy in child and youth services and program evaluation as additions to the curriculum.</b>	<b>Dean</b>	<b>October 2017</b>