Date: October 13, 2014

To: Faculty Senate

From: Academic Programs Working Group (Randy Babbitt, Chair)

Re: Level II Proposal for a Ph.D. Degree in Education program

The APWG received the proposal for a Ph.D. in Education program from University Graduate Council on 9/30/14 and posted it on the Faculty Senate web page for comments. Two comments were received via email. The APWG reviewed the proposal and comments and met on 10/9/14 to develop our recommendations. The APWG had a few remaining concerns, which were discussed with the Education Department on 10/10/14. The Education department modified their proposal and addressed all the concerns to APWG’s satisfaction.

The APWG unanimously recommends approval of the Education Ph.D. proposal in its revised form dated 10/13/14.

The Ph.D. in Education program addresses the need for distinct programs that are in line with students whose career trajectories are primarily K-12 educational administration versus those planning to go into academic research and scholarship as a university faculty member. The program has sufficient interest and is expected to increase the quality and number of doctoral degrees awarded at MSU, as well as increase the level of research in the Education Department.

The APWG’s concerns and how they were addressed are listed here:

1. The APWG was concerned with the admission requirements of the Ph.D. versus the Ed.D. in Education and the procedures and requirements for current Ed.D. students to be converted to Ph.D., given the high interest of current Ed.D. students in the Ph.D. program. The Education Department modified the proposal to clearly state that students currently pursuing an Ed.D who wish to pursue a Ph.D. must reapply to MSU for admissions in the Ph.D. in Education program (page 8 and 22) and they must meet the admissions requirements outlined in Table 9 (page 22). Table 9 now lists the admission requirements for both the Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs. The admission requirements for the Ph.D. are stricter than for the Ed.D. in the areas of testing, statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and personal interview. The career goals for Ph.D. and Ed.D. students were also clarified at the end of Table 1 (page 6). The number of Education graduate students indicating interest in the Ph.D in Education program has also been clarified (page 8). Though the interest is high, it is estimated that less than 10% of the current Ed.D. students would meet the admissions and residency requirements of the Ph.D. program, because many of the current students enter the Ed.D.
program with the career goals in line with the Ed.D. (See Ed.D. and Ph.D. comparison chart in Table 7). The proposed program is expected to attract more doctoral students to MSU with qualifications and career goals in line with the proposed Ph.D. in Education.

2. The APWG was concerned with how the Education Ph.D. overlapped with current Ph.D. in Mathematics Education and Physics Education programs. Education added a paragraph (page 6) to the proposal outlining the differences between the current programs and the proposed program. Whereas the current Ph.D. programs in Math and Physics are focused on discipline specific education research, the Ph.D. in Education is focused on more general STEM education research, as well as other general education research areas. The career paths of the graduates of these programs are also different. Ph.D. in Math and Physics education research graduates are likely to apply for positions in Math and Physics Departments, whereas Ph.D. in Education graduates are likely to apply for positions in Education Departments.

3. The APWG was concerned that part-time students (particularly summer only students) would be enrolling in a Ph.D. in Education program that would require a high degree of full-time concentration to succeed in the program. The Education Department clarified that this program is designed for full-time students, as was previously indicated in Table 7. The Ph.D. residency requirement was modified to require enrollment in three fall or spring (not summer) semesters (Page 10).

4. The APWG passed on the concerns of other faculty that Ph.D. committees should be chaired or composed of only faculty holding Ph.D. degrees. The APWG did not concur with this concern. All the faculty in the Education Department are hired and receive tenure based on their effectiveness in research. Many institutions that only have an Ed.D. program are graduating students who have the qualifications to be tenure-track research faculty. Thus, whether a faculty member has a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. does not translate into their ability to chair and advise Ph.D. or Ed.D. students. The confusion over the qualifications of faculty with Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees is a national issue, which is being addressed nationally. Universities are establishing separate Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs, in line with the proposed program. To address the concerns of the faculty comments, the Education Department added a statement about the qualifications a faculty must meet to serve as the chair of a doctoral committee. Both Ed.D and Ph.D committee chairs must be approved to serve by the Dean of the College of Education and Health and Human Development. Evaluation of faculty qualifications to serve as doctoral committee chairs will be based on their disciplinary content knowledge, research, skills, prior committee experience and program knowledge. (See page 11) The APWG was satisfied that this addressed the concerns in this area.

5. The APWG was concerned about which courses must be taken by a student pursuing the different Ph.D. in Education options. Education Department modified Table 8 to clarify that all Ph.D. students have the same options for research electives, but they must take a different set of “Options” credits depending on their option area. (page 21).

6. The APWG had a question about the requirement to have a Master’s degree for admissions into the proposed program. The Education Department clarified in table 9 that the Master’s degree is required for both the Ph.D. and Ed.D programs. In addition, they clarified that students with a Master’s Degree from MSU can use a maximum of 30 credits toward the Ph.D in Education, whereas students with a Master’s degree from another institution may use a maximum of 9 credits toward the Ph.D. in Education.