May 11, 2010

Dr. Renu Khator  
President and Chancellor  
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University of Houston  
Houston, TX 77004

Dr. Jerald Strickland, Provost  
4800 Calhoun  
University of Houston  
Houston, TX 77204

Dr. William E. Fitzgibbon, III  
Dean – College of Technology  
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Dr. Carole Goodson, Chair  
Dept. of Human Development and Consumer Sciences  
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Houston, TX 77204-6020

Dear Dr. Khator, Dr. Strickland, Dr. Fitzgibbon, and Dr. Goodson:

In its April 23, 2010 meeting, the Council for Accreditation of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences voted to grant accreditation to the Department of Human Development and Consumer Sciences at the University of Houston. This action followed careful review and consideration of the Self-Study Report, the report of the site review team, and the institution’s response to the team’s report.

The Council commends the Department of Human Development and Consumer Sciences and faculty members for the high quality Family and Consumer Sciences program. The following strengths are particularly noteworthy:

1. The Program, Department, and College have demonstrated a commitment to assessment and accreditation. The Assessment and Continuous Improvement (ACI) plan addresses five key areas tied into the mission and program objectives. These include curriculum and instruction, physical facilities, graduate placement, student services and outreach, and alumni and industry. To support the assessment and continuous improvement process and to encourage and support accreditation, the College was the first on campus to devote an Assistant Dean’s position specifically to Assessment and Accreditation.

2. The Department Chair is respected by students and alumni, departmental faculty members as well as faculty members across campus, and college and university administrators. She has strong leadership skills and, although she does not have a background in Family and Consumer Sciences or Merchandising, she is seen as an advocate of the program. Faculty members and administrators report her to be innovative and supportive. She empowers
the Consumer Science and Merchandising faculty members to assume ownership of the program and to steer the course for future directions.

3. The Consumer Science and Merchandising faculty is innovative, enthusiastic, productive, and student-centered. Faculty members have a reputation for working collaboratively and for being proactive. Students and alumni consistently identify their relationships with faculty members and the mentoring they receive as being the greatest strengths of the program.

4. The support services available to students at the University, College, Department, and Program level are exceptional. These services include, but are not limited to, advising, careers, academic assistance, the library, and technology. The online tutoring program, available both to traditional and distance education students, is unique. It is obvious that the primary goal of student success drives resource allocation throughout the university.

5. Students and faculty members have access to state-of-the-art technology and equipment in their offices, classrooms, and computer laboratories. The equipment, software, and personnel meet the needs of faculty members and students, including those in hybrid classes and the online program. The department takes a proactive approach to meeting technology needs.

6. The Consumer Science and Merchandising Advisory Board, which has been in existence for 10 years, is an asset to the program. Membership is diverse and includes individuals representing a variety of employment opportunities for graduates. The Board is active. Members of the Board coordinate and finance the Star Awards event and the Movers and Shakers program. They provide a direct connection with industry and are often sources of internships. The Board periodically reviews curriculum and suggests revisions to ensure that the program remains current and relevant.

7. Notable strengths of the Consumer Science and Merchandising degree program are the required internship (HDCS 4393-4394) and the research course (HDCS 4300). The internship provides an opportunity for students to put their learning into practice in a supervised, supportive environment that often provides an entrée into the workforce. Current students look forward to the internship while alumni indicate it to be one of the most beneficial components of their program. The research course includes application as well as basic concepts; this type of course is not always present in merchandising programs and is a strength of this program.

To assist in further development of the programs in the Department of Human Development and Consumer Sciences, the Council recommends the following to strengthen compliance with accreditation standards:

1. Maintain alignment of the mission statement for the program so that it is current with the philosophy and body of knowledge of the Family and Consumer Sciences profession. [Criteria 1.1(1) & (2); 4.1(1)]
2. Assure that the Family and Consumer Sciences philosophy and body of knowledge is apparent not only in core courses, but permeates throughout the curriculum. [Criteria 3.1; 4.1(1)]

3. Continue to monitor and support faculty development to promote opportunities for diversity in faculty ranks. [Criterion 5.4(3)]

4. Seek potential faculty candidates with professional commitment to Family and Consumer Sciences scholarship and practice. [Criteria 5.2(2); 5.2(3)]

5. Provide opportunities for greater student participation in professional associations such as the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences for informal learning in state, regional, and national meetings and experiences. [Criterion 6.4(2)]

Actions taken in response to these recommendations are to be described in the unit’s next report. You will receive notification of the date the report will be due to arrive in the Office of Accreditation for consideration in the Council’s subsequent meeting.

Accreditation is granted by the Council for Accreditation for a period of ten years. Any extension and/or provisional accreditation periods are counted as part of the ten year period. Therefore, this accreditation expires Spring, 2020. The next self-study report will be due February 1, 2019.

Members of the Council for Accreditation join us in congratulating you and the faculty on the quality of the program offered by the Department of Human Development and Consumer Sciences. This comes with our good wishes for continued success of the program.

Sincerely,

Hazel Forsythe, Ph.D., Chair
Council for Accreditation

Gay Nell McGinnis, CFCS, Director
Credentialing, Professional Development, and Public Policy