

South Dakota Board of Examiner Report *for unit approval*

**SD State Board of Examiners
Team:**

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Representative / No Representative

Accreditation Visit to:

Dakota Wesleyan University

Date:

October 23-26, 2011

Type of Visit:

- First
- Continuing
- Combination
- Probation
- Focused

Summary for Professional Education Unit

Standards		Team Findings	
		Initial	Advanced
1	Unit Mission, Conceptual Framework, and Responsibility	M	M
2	Preparation of Candidates in Teacher Education	M	M
3	Assessment System and Unit Evaluation	M	M
4	Field Experiences and Clinical Practice	M	M

M = Standard Met

NM = Standard Not Met

NA = Not Applicable

Standard 1

Unit Mission, Conceptual Framework, and Responsibility

Higher education programs for the preparation of education personnel shall operate under a written mission statement. The unit’s statements of goals and program objectives, consistent with the mission statement, shall serve as a basis for decision making regarding policies affecting all of the programs for the preparation of education personnel and shall assure that education graduates are prepared to serve in P-12 schools.

This section sets the context for the visit. It should clearly state the mission of the unit. It should describe the characteristics of the unit and identify and describe any branch campuses, off-campus sites, alternate route programs, and distance learning programs for professional school personnel. This section also provides an overview of the unit's conceptual framework. The overview should include a brief description of the framework and its development.

Information reported in the institutional report for Standard 1 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the IR that are incorrect.)

X Yes No

Unit Mission	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of Findings:

In 1883, a small band of Methodist settlers meeting in Dakota Territory secured a charter to establish the college that became Dakota Wesleyan University (DWU). Dakota was still a territory in 1885 when the Dakota Conference of the Methodist Church voted to establish DWU in Mitchell, known as Dakota University until October 14, 1904. The founders of DWU envisioned an institution that epitomized the highest in Christian thought and deed, and thus adopted the motto, “Sacrifice or Service.” By 1920, DWU was the largest independent college in the state.

Now, 126 years later, DWU is still committed to transforming the lives of students. With about 750 students and a student-to-faculty ratio of 13:1, the faculty gets to know each student on a personal basis, providing mentorship, guidance, and professional collaboration as essential parts of the education process. Students come from the Midwest and other locations around the United States. DWU has also welcomed many international students, most recently from Ireland, Venezuela, Canada, United Kingdom, and Nepal.

“Impacting futures ... one mind at a time,” is the motto of the DWU Education Department. The philosophy is that theory and practice need to be integrated to promote excellent teaching. Candidates were able to articulate that constructivism serves as the foundation of their preparation program. A liberal arts education, in addition to early and continuous classroom experiences, prepares teacher candidates for the profession of teaching. The DWU education unit reflects the university’s mission of “Sacrifice or Service” in

conjunction with the most relevant and contemporary educational practices within the framework of the 10 Interstate New Teacher Assessment Standards Consortium (INTASC) standards.

Interviews with faculty and candidates confirm that there is an understanding and a renewed focus to integrate the motto and mission within the programs of the education unit at DWU.

The professional education unit at Dakota Wesleyan University is the DWU Education Department, which is included within the College of Leadership and Public Service. There are two other colleges, College of Arts and Humanities and College of Health Care, Fitness, and Sciences, which deliver content courses for candidates declaring education as a major. The unit collaborates with faculty from outside the education unit as evidenced by secondary content faculty involvement with the writing of program reports.

There are a total of 15 faculty members in the education unit as follows: four full time, five part time, and six adjunct faculty members in the unit.

DWU offers seven programs to prepare candidates for their initial license to teach. All seven are approved by the South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE) and are: Elementary Education, Biology, English, History, Math, Special Education, and a Certification Only program. The Principal preparation program is the only approved program to prepare advanced teacher candidates. None of these programs are offered off campus or via distance learning.

Some of the changes that have taken place in the unit since the last visit have been the addition of an advanced program for Principal preparation, the requirement that all candidates pass both the Praxis content and pedagogy or PLT exams prior to student teaching, the reorganization of the unit, and the addition of a field placement coordinator.

Conceptual Framework	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of findings:

The mission of the DWU Education unit is “Impacting futures... one mind at a time”. To support that mission, the unit has a goal of preparing competent, effective, and dedicated teachers and principals. The DWU educational unit provides a liberal arts program to help the teacher/principal candidate develop in five domains, which are referred to as The Five Foundational Pillars. These Pillars guide the general education courses and also furnish support for the education program.

The Five Foundational Pillars are:

Knowledge: The teacher candidate/principal will understand central concepts, tools of inquiry, and the structure of the discipline(s) they teach. They will understand how children learn and develop intellectually, socially, and personally. They will know and use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills. They will understand and use formal and informal assessment strategies to ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

Communication: The teacher candidate/principal will be able to create learning experiences that make subject matter meaningful for students; they will use their knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

Environment: The teacher candidate/principal will apply an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. The candidate's understanding of student differences in approaches to learning will allow them to create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners. They will affirm the value of diversity through experiences, study, and integration of extra-cultural examination and educational application.

Relationships: The teacher candidate/principal will plan instruction and undertake action based on knowledge of the students, parents, and community as well as curricular goals. They will foster relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Teacher Attributes: The teacher candidate/principal will be a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of their choices and actions on others and who actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally. The creation of a professional community wherein candidates develop the capability, confidence, efficacy, and sense of authority, enabling them to create a community that will positively transform the lives and actions of all learners that engages them in attaining their full potential.

The conceptual framework has been realigned within the last couple of years to better reflect current standards. A priority of the unit and DWU is continuing to work on the alignment of this framework to current standards and curriculum.

Summary of Strengths:

DWU has recently completed a realignment of the conceptual framework and the education unit is demonstrating a renewed focus on their mission. There is strong collaboration with faculty from other colleges within DWU and their effort is focused on the candidates and their success.

Areas for Improvement: None

Rationale: N/A

Recommendation: Standard Met

Corrections to the Institutional Report: None

Standard 2

Preparation of Candidates in Teacher Education

The unit shall print and distribute a policy with specific admission standards and procedures that govern student recruitment and acceptance into the preparation programs. The unit shall provide written verification that candidates are informed about state laws and rules that govern the issuance of certificates for educational personnel.

The unit shall prepare candidates to work in a school as a teacher, administrator or school service specialist, these candidates must know and demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills necessary to help all students learn. Assessments shall be given to the candidate to ensure the candidate meets professional, state, and unit standards.

Information reported in the institutional report for Standard 2 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the IR that are incorrect.)

X **Yes** **No**

Candidate Knowledge and Skills	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of Findings:

Evidence documents that there are clear criteria for program admission at both the initial and advanced levels. These criteria and policies are regularly distributed and readily available for candidates in program and college materials. For example, on page 95-97 of the college catalog (2011-2012) admission criteria is clearly laid out, delineating three levels of admission into the initial program as well as what is referred to as the “professional semester” and clinical practice. Through conversations with candidates and graduates, it was also apparent that the criteria are known. For the advanced level, there are application requirements as well as levels of acceptance as specified on pages 191-192 of the college catalog.

The overall pass rates of teacher candidates in initial teacher preparation programs on state-required tests of content and pedagogical knowledge are 100% for all applicable program areas for the AY 2009-2010 and AY 2010-2011. Thus, on the ETS Praxis II content exams (elementary, biology, English, history, math, and special education) as well as the Praxis II Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) exams (K-6 or 7-12 certification), 100% of the candidates achieved a passing score. This data show that candidates at Dakota Wesleyan University meet the necessary requirements as set forth by the state and through their performance on PRAXIS tests.

Interviews with administrators and education and content area faculty indicate that there has been a recent push for all faculty to take these exams to help familiarize faculty with what is required of their teacher candidates. Moreover, there is also a push by the content professors to utilize local and national content area conferences to widen candidates’ intellectual horizons in the areas of both content and pedagogical knowledge. Candidates are expected to actively participate and make presentations at these conferences. Though it is more of a recent development, the strong relationship between education and content faculty regarding the

preparation of teachers was striking. It seems evident that there is a concerted effort across disciplines to prepare teachers, and that this is part of the institutional culture at DWU.

There are two key assessments administered by the unit to teacher candidates to assure the unit that the candidates meet the professional INTASC standards articulated in the Administrative Rules of South Dakota (ARSD). The two key assessments are the Professional Electronic Portfolio (PEP) and the Final Teacher Candidate Evaluation.

The PEP measures candidates' ability to meet the 10 INTASC standards. Each standard is rated on a 0-6 scale as follows: 0-2, Incomplete; 3-5, Acceptable; and, 6-7 exemplary. A review of the PEP data provided for the academic years of 09-10 and 10-11 indicates that all ratings for this assessment over the reporting periods are 6 or higher, with one exception. In the AY 2010-2011 reporting year, the average score for INTASC standard #2 ("candidates understand how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development") was a 5.9. When comparing this score to the scale, it is evident that the standard is acceptably met.

The second key assessment is the Final Teacher Candidate Evaluation. This evaluation is completed by the cooperating teacher upon a candidate's completion of their semester of clinical practice. Each INTASC standard is rated on a 5-point scale with a range from a score of 1 indicating that the candidate has not yet developed this skill to a score of 5 indicating that the candidate appropriately and consistently uses this skill to a high degree. In the reporting years of AY 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, all scores ranged from 4.4 – 5.0, indicating a high degree of competency.

As articulated in the IR and through the assessment instruments of the PEP and Final Teacher Candidate Evaluation, the data show that Dakota Wesleyan University teacher candidates know and demonstrate content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills necessary to help all PK-12 students learn. The data suggest the unit meets these standards and is in compliance with ARSD. Furthermore, interviews with current student teachers, recent graduates, and professionals in the field indicate that this unit competently prepares candidates, and that it has been improving over the course of the past few years. Review of results from follow-up survey data, which is aligned with the INTASC standards, provides further evidence that candidates are well prepared for their roles in today's classrooms (09-10, 78%; 10-11, 42% return rate) and employers (09-10, 63%; 10-11, 57% return rate).

At the advanced level, there was one key assessment provided regarding the PK-12 Principal Program. According to the IR, university PK-12 Principal candidates demonstrate their professional knowledge and ability to create positive environments necessary to help all PK-12 students learn by completing an administrative internship self-assessment. This assessment tool is aligned to national standards articulated by the Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC). The candidates rate themselves on a 5-point scale with a score of 1 indicating that a candidate's skill on a given standard is emerging and a score of 5 indicating that the candidate's skill is exemplary. For the AY 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 reporting years, candidates rated themselves from a 4.3 to a 5.0.

There was no evidence provided or available for review which documented the ongoing and cataloged feedback from a supervisor/mentor, a director/chair, or from the constituents of the graduate program while in their new role as a principal. In addition, no follow-up surveys from the "principal employers" were received and thus were not available for review.

The other assessment tool provided pertains to the graded evaluation of a case study presentation. This data, in the form of grades, doesn't clearly indicate advanced program

candidates' knowledge of their field or their skills and abilities to create positive school environments necessary to procure learning.

Interviews with faculty indicated that revised forms are being employed for the purpose of advanced program candidate performance assessment; however, no data were available for review. It was also commented that in the past data were used to assess the progress and direction of the program, however, no data was available for review.

Summary of Strengths:

The high level of collaboration, communication, and cooperation between the unit and content area faculty is a strength of the unit and creates a shared understanding of program requirements and expectations.

Areas for Improvement: None

Rationale: N/A

Recommendation: Standard Met

Corrections to the Institutional Report: None

At the advanced level a rubric and evaluation process is in place to assess principal candidate’s internship experience; however assessment results were not available for review.

Unit and content faculty are involved with writing SD DOE Program Review Report and indicated that as a result of candidate feedback, changes are being made to address the need for specific discipline method content instruction. Cooperating teachers and recent graduates confirmed the need for some specific discipline related secondary methods instruction. Unit faculty have an awareness of the issues involved as it relates to individual departments and course enrollment and have articulated a plan and vision for accomplishing this task.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of Findings:

The Education Department Academic Support Specialist has the primary responsibility to gather and input assessment data in the system utilizing both excel and access databases. It remains unclear as to whether these are duplicate systems. The Support Specialist indicated that she primarily updates the excel versions more often than the access database. Additional support staff development is being considered to address areas of database management. The Support Specialist is responsible for monthly monitoring of the data and candidate expectations to ensure candidates are transitioning through the program and are meeting program requirements.

Assessment data are shared with faculty in numerous ways. The education faculty meet weekly and the education and content faculty meet monthly to address issues and have discussion about unit issues. The formal process of these meetings is indicated in the IR, was verified in interviews with education faculty, content faculty, and administration, and is documented in meeting minutes. In addition, an annual fall assessment retreat is held to review the previous year’s assessment data results. Individuals invited to this annual retreat are education and content faculty as well as area teachers. The Chair of Education indicated that next year the invitation to attend this event will expand to other constituents such as graduates and cooperating teachers. A review of meeting minutes from the past two assessment retreats revealed a focus on initial level assessment data; minutes did not reflect a review of advanced level data.

Even though the unit states there have not been any formal complaints in the past three years, the Education Department does not have a unit-level process for maintaining or documenting formal complaints and resolution records. All formal complaints and/or grievances are directed to the University’s appeals process.

Use of Data for Program Improvement	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of Findings:

All education faculty have access to the “G” Drive where all education assessment data is stored. These files are not secured or protected in a way, such as a “read-only” permission, that might prevent someone from changing the original file. Faculty advisors have access to the University’s “Tiger-Net” administrative system to access candidate schedules, grades and GPA information.

Weekly and monthly department meetings and an annual assessment retreat are held to communicate assessment results and inform the unit's data-driven decision making. For example, a recent decision based on feedback from candidates and cooperating teachers was the addition of a Classroom Management and Discipline Class and requiring the successful completion of the PPST exam as an admission requirement. In addition content faculty indicated the discussion of a content specific methods course developed from data results and feedback from secondary education candidates.

As per interview responses with education faculty and cooperating teachers, some assessment data collection is the responsibility of the candidate, i.e. completed evaluations come from the cooperating teacher to the university supervisor via the candidate.

In addition, it is unclear as to how and when the Support Specialist is formally communicated about the candidates' place in the process for assessment checklists and/or student teaching documentation. Faculty and/or Chair turnover may result in procedural difficulties with this process.

Area for Improvement:

The unit does not regularly and systematically collect and analyze advanced level candidate performance data.

Rationale:

No advanced level candidate performance data was available for review.

Recommendation: Standard Met

Corrections to the Institutional Report: None

In the spring of 2011, the unit created a formal administrative position of Field Placement Coordinator; the individual in this position receives a course release each academic term. The Field Placement Coordinator now serves as the main point of contact for securing field experience and clinical practice placements at the initial level. Student teaching placements are collaboratively determined among the candidate, the unit, and the cooperating teacher/school. School-based administrators, primarily principals, serve as the liaison between the unit and the candidate. Interviews with student teachers and cooperating teachers confirmed this collaborative manner in which student teachers are placed for clinical practice. Student teachers submit information regarding their top three preferences for clinical practice inclusive of cooperating teacher names, schools, and contact information. The unit makes use of this information to provide the starting point for the Field Placement Coordinator's conversation with building principals to secure the placement. The unit does not gather information regarding any pre-existing relationship with the candidate's clinical practice preferences. Interviews evidenced that the close working relationship with the Mitchell School District and area schools ensures that there is no conflict of interest related to the placement for candidates' clinical practice. Principal interns are placed in a similar manner as student teachers with the Director of Graduate Studies taking the leadership to secure internship placements. Advanced candidates typically complete their internship in the school district in which they are employed. Principal interns work under the guidance of a mentor to complete their internship.

The unit supports its candidates engaged in field experiences and clinical practice through its close relationship with its school partners. Cooperating teachers indicated that communication and collaboration with unit faculty is strong and ongoing. Through both formal and informal means, the unit works with its partners to support candidates in field experiences and clinical practice. Student teachers attested to this as well and shared examples of how their college supervisor was available for consultation and feedback throughout their experience. Candidates expressed that they see their supervisors "all the time."

Content area faculty shared many and varied examples of how they support their teacher candidates into and including the clinical practice experience. From differentiating their own instruction to supporting candidates' attendance at professional conferences, there is a high level of commitment and engagement from the content area faculty. Teacher candidates expressed their appreciation of the involvement of content faculty in their program of study.

Pages 36-38 of the IR display a table outlining the field experiences, clinical practice, and internships required for the initial and advanced programs. Initial level candidates complete a wide variety of field experiences prior to clinical practice. The number of field experience hours varies by program as follows: Elementary Education: 217 hours; Secondary Education: 116 hours; Special Education: 261 hours; and Certification Only: 65 hours. Initial level candidates complete a full semester or 14 weeks of clinical practice. Advanced program candidates complete a total of no less than 360 hours of internship. A review of this table evidences the developmental and sequential nature of field experiences leading up to clinical practice. Interviews with candidates reflected that field experiences leading up to clinical practice are a strength of the program and prepare student teacher candidates well for clinical practice. Candidates felt that the wide variety of field experiences gave them a realistic view of education.

In addition to formal field experiences and clinical practice, initial level candidates have other opportunities to work in schools. For example, Dr. Seuss Day was held recently with over 200 area elementary-aged students participating. The institution also hosts the regional science

fair. These kinds of opportunities serve as another opportunity for candidates to be involved and engaged in their chosen profession.

Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Field Experiences and Clinical Practice	Unacceptable	Acceptable X	Target
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Summary of Findings:

Prior to the semester of student teaching, candidates are expected to notify the unit of their intention to student teach the following semester. Candidates must complete and submit a Pre Student Teaching Checklist to the unit before receiving approval to move forward to their semester of clinical practice. Page 35 of the IR outlines the requirements for entry to clinical practice.

Interviews with candidates indicate that these requirements are in place and that candidates are well aware of requirements for student teaching. Before candidates may graduate, they must present their PEP and take part in an exit survey.

At the initial level, assessment tools used to evaluate the performance of candidates are aligned to proficiencies outlined in the unit’s conceptual framework. Rubrics and other scoring guides are included in the Student Teaching Handbook. Interviews with current student teachers indicated they were aware of these assessments. Student teachers indicated that it is their responsibility to make sure that evaluation forms for their student teaching experience are submitted to the unit. Interviews confirmed that this is the current practice. At the advanced level, assessment tools are aligned to the Educational Leadership Constituent Council or ELCC standards.

Interviews with candidates indicated they feel well prepared to integrate technology into teaching and learning. Candidates at both the initial and advanced level complete required coursework focused on the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Candidates were able to describe a variety of technologies including the SMART Board and ELMO or document camera that they employed in the field. Cooperating teachers spoke highly of candidates’ technological expertise and described that in some cases the student teachers provide instruction to them and their colleagues in the use of educational technology. Assessment tools such as the Mid-Term Teacher Candidate Self-Appraisal, the Mid-Term Teacher Candidate Appraisal by Cooperating Teacher, and the Final Teacher Candidate Evaluation by Cooperating Teacher include specific items related to the integration of technology into teaching and learning. At the advanced level, ELCC Standard 2 specifically references the use of technology.

Cooperating teachers must hold a valid State of South Dakota certification in the teaching assignment, have at least two years of teaching experience with at least one of those years in the current grade level/content area, possess a thorough knowledge and understanding of his/her teaching field, be willing to allow the teacher candidates to try different teaching methods, and have an interest in accepting a teacher candidate and guide him/her in clinical supervision. Interviews with cooperating teachers indicated they are aware of these requirements and that the requirements are in force.

Cooperating teachers are provided with hard copies of handbooks and forms related to their role. In addition, orientation meetings are held to communicate expectations. Interviews with cooperating teachers evidenced that this is happening and that they feel well prepared for their supervisory role. University supervisors ensure that cooperating teachers are aware of and can fulfill their supervisory role.

Clinical faculty are expected to provide both formal and informal feedback to candidates. Evaluation forms provide formal feedback, both formative and summative. This formal feedback is supplemented by ongoing conversation and collaboration with cooperating teachers and student teachers. Classroom observations are made with follow up conferences inclusive of written documentation. Interviews evidenced that cooperating teachers and student teachers felt very comfortable contacting their college supervisor at any time to discuss any issues or concerns.

Summary of Strengths:

Candidates have multiple and varied formal and informal opportunities to spend time in classrooms prior to the semester of clinical practice. Candidates characterized this aspect of their program as extremely valuable and felt very well prepared to step into their role as a student teacher.

Areas for Improvement: None

Rationale: N/A

Recommendation: Standard Met

Corrections to the Institutional Report: None