

## Report of Assessment Results 2006-2007: Education

The goals for Elementary and Secondary Education, as stated in the unit assessment plan, are designed to help students (future teachers) to

- acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to being a competent teacher;
- understand central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of disciplines taught in schools;
- understand children and adolescents and their individual and group behavior;
- plan and implement instruction adapted to learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities;
- communicate effectively;
- encourage critical thinking and problem solving;
- use formal and informal methods of assessment;
- collaborate with parents/guardians, families, school colleagues, and the community in an ethical manner.

These goals are based on the ten Standards of Effective Practice set forth by the state of Minnesota.

### Part One: Program Summary Data

Results pertaining to the goals listed above are obtained through a variety of assessments including both internal and external measures of goal achievement. The assessments included in this report are the following: scores on the PRAXIS II Exams of content and pedagogy, summative evaluation scores for the final student teaching experience, and scores on key assignments in EEd/SeEd 4901: The Teacher and Professional Development. Assessment results of these measures are presented in Table One.

#### 1. PRAXIS II Exams

PRAXIS II exams of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are required by the state and form one data point of external review. All teacher education students in the 2007 graduating cohort took the required exams. Every student passed the Pedagogy, Learning and Teaching (PLT) exam surpassing the required scores by 25.55 points (elementary) and 19.69 (secondary) points. As shown in Table Two, *all* teacher education graduates have passed the PLT since 2002. The UMM 100% pass rate exceeds the state's 98% pass rate.

2007 UMM teacher education graduates also surpassed the minimum cutoff scores for their various content areas by an average of 27.9 points (elementary) and 18.52 points (secondary). *Every* student in this group passed required content examinations allowing them to apply for state licensure. As shown in Table Two, the UMM pass rates for PRAXIS content exams generally exceed state rates. Because of low numbers of students taking some exams, one student with a failing score can have a large negative effect on the pass rate. For example, only two students have taken the earth science PRAXIS exam and since one of them failed it, our pass rate is only 50%.

The PRAXIS exams are high stakes for our students because they cannot be licensed to teach in Minnesota without earning a passing score. The teacher education faculty members discuss, analyze, and use the PRAXIS results. For example, we had concerns about the number of our students who were unable to pass the Spanish Productive Language test required for K-12 Spanish licensure (See Table Two). Though our 64% pass rate was higher than the 61% state rate, we wanted to understand the

problem and work to improve student performance. A UMM Spanish professor and the instructor of the world language methods course attended a state meeting. They gave feedback to the state about possible problems with the test and were able to determine instructional adjustments in their courses to assist the students. In the 2007 cohort, 100% (5 out of 5) of students taking the Spanish test were successful in their attempt.

This set of data revealed to us that UMM teacher candidates do well on state measures and that they are well prepared for this part of the licensure process. We continue our work in assisting students who may be unfairly affected by this standardized test. In our entering elementary cohort (class of 2009), we have two students who speak English as their second language. Their ability to understand pedagogy, understand content, and use their understanding in successful instruction may not be adequately assessed by the PRAXIS exams.

## 2. Summative Evaluations of Student Teaching

Elementary and secondary education students complete eleven weeks of student teaching as their final field experience. During that field experience, they apply the knowledge and skills studied in the programs. In this experience, all ten Standards of Effective Practice are implemented and assessed. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors complete at least three formative evaluations that highlight strengths in performance and assist the student in identifying weaknesses. Goals are established, additional coaching is provided, and students are given the opportunity to address areas of concern. The summative evaluation assesses all of the program goals and is completed by cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Data from final field experience evaluations for the 2006-2007 cohort reveal that all but one student met minimum proficiency for licensure (please see Table One). No other student received less than an “average” rating on any part of their field experience evaluation. In fact, most earned high marks from cooperating teachers or university supervisors.

In analyzing the data, the teacher education faculty noticed that university supervisors’ ratings for the experience are slightly higher on average than those of the cooperating teacher. The difference may not be statistically significant, but research in the field typically describes the opposite case, with cooperating teachers assigning higher ratings. We will analyze the specific cases to understand the results.

## 3. Key Assignments from EEd/SeEd 4901: The Teacher and Professional Development

Along with student teaching, 4901 is a capstone experience. It is a course that is collaboratively designed and is taught by all faculty in the Elementary Education and Secondary Education disciplines. In this shared course, elementary education majors and secondary education certification students are mixed together in course groups. The goals of the course are to facilitate professional reflection, to enable students to explore professional issues related to teaching, and to assist students in evaluating the effects of their professional choices and actions on students, parents, other professionals, and the larger learning community. Assessments in this course are designed not only to assess what the student has learned during the course, but also to reflect students’ professional growth since they began the program.

The primary assessment of student learning in “The Teacher and Professional Development” is the professional portfolio created by students. Students begin creating this portfolio when they enter the program and continually revise it throughout. The portfolio has ten sections, one section for each of Minnesota’s Standards of Effective Practice—standards in which students must demonstrate competency before being licensed as teachers. For each standard, students write an essay that describes their growth and development in the standard, provides evidence of that growth and sets new goals for deeper understanding. This process again exemplifies the formative assessment built into the teacher education program. Students have multiple opportunities to write, reflect on feedback, and reconstruct their portfolio throughout the program. In this course, the students write their final statements. Each faculty member is responsible for evaluating 10-12 professional portfolios. Prior to the evaluation period, faculty members engage in a reliability session to ensure fair and reliable grading practices across faculty members. In this session, faculty read and grade sample essays and discuss the reasons for their grades and discuss any discrepancies. The process continues with multiple readings and discussions until the faculty are grading in a manner consistent with one another.

Assessments also include a senior presentation. To prepare for the presentation, students write an education philosophy paper which is read by their professor who then gives feedback. The presentation is evaluated on the basis of the student's professionalism, understanding of various aspects of their content area and of pedagogy, responses to questions, and communication skills. Due to the large number of students (approximately 80 per year), not all faculty attend and evaluate each session. Student attendees also help to informally evaluate the sessions.

Table One reports student scores on the portfolio and senior presentation assignments. Previous data (See, for example, 2003 assessment report) indicated that the portfolio scores were slightly below scores on other course assignments. In reviewing assessment data, faculty members suspected that the writing required by the portfolio assignment might not fit with some students' preferred style or modality of learning; the faculty might grade the portfolio more rigorously than other assignments since it is the linchpin of the course; or, the assignment is more extensive, lasting two weeks in duration and it is difficult for students to maintain the same level of excellence throughout. In response to the data and other concerns, the faculty decided to make changes in the course scheduling. Some students may now choose to begin the course one week earlier to allow extra time to complete assignments. Others follow the traditional schedule. Students complete the same assignments for both options of the course. Additional instruction and support is given for the writing of the standards, and students have responded positively. In the 2007 data, the slight gap in grades between the portfolio assessment and other course assessment remains. As in most courses, some assignments are more difficult than others, and the portfolio is such an assignment.

## **Part Two: Sample Course Assessment**

All courses in the elementary and secondary education programs are crafted around the ten Standards of Effective Practice. Lectures, readings, and assignments are linked to specific standards and the links are usually recorded on the syllabus. The courses also are based on mastery learning. This means that students must perform all tasks at a proficient level. If a student does not successfully master a task, he or she continues to work on this task and repeat an assignment until it is mastered. Formative assessment is also embedded into most courses. An example from EIED 3101 Teaching and Learning Strategies is included in Appendix A. The instructional and assessment process for this EIED 3101 assignment exemplifies the process found for other assignments in teacher education courses. The instructions are given orally and in writing. Several class sessions are devoted to instruction and guided practice. Students receive the scoring rubric *in advance* and thus understand the grading criteria. Students meet individually or in small groups with the instructor. Sections of the assignment are due at different times and the students receive feedback. If the student does not meet required standards, he or she must meet with the instructor and correct deficiencies. Because the teacher education courses are linked to *performance* in the field, the students must also teach the lessons to their practicum students. They complete a self assessment prior to submitting the unit for a final grade.

## **Part Three: Students Who Fail to Meet Requirements**

Some students in the 2007 graduation cohort who struggled self-selected out of the program at various points in the process. Additionally, formal and informal data on course performance did indicate that a few particular students struggled to meet minimum standards of proficiency throughout the program. This year, one student failed to pass student teaching despite ongoing assessment and instruction. The faculty is discussing ways to support student development so that all can succeed in student teaching and then in their own classroom. We also are looking for ways to identify earlier in student teaching whether or not a student is having serious difficulty.

Though we always have concerns about students who have marginal or failing performance, the data clearly show that most of the students far surpass the minimum requirements set by our own program and those of the state and national accreditation agencies.