

2007-2008 School of Education Annual Report on Academic Program Assessment

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School of Education Assessment Plan

The School of Education assessment plan has not been updated in the past year. The plan was shared with members of the School of Education's Programs Committee (our curriculum committee) this past spring. Since the plan has not been reviewed or updated since 2003, the Programs Committee agreed to review the plan as part of its agenda for academic year 2008-09.

Broad Assessment Efforts

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Teacher Education Program Review

The School of Education's teacher education program was reviewed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in late April, 2007. This was the first review for the School's programs under the 2004 PI 34 regulations of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. PI 34 was a watershed for Wisconsin teacher education in that it required programs to move to a performance-based approach to preparing teachers and evaluating teacher education programs. Under PI 34, six program components are specifically reviewed: institutional relevant policies and practices; conceptual framework and program standards; institutional assessment system; clinical program; institutional evaluation of program performance and outcomes, including graduate follow-up studies; and collaboration.

As part of the review, each teacher education program was required to document its required courses, assessment processes, knowledge/performance tasks, and criteria for evaluation. Course syllabi and course instructor curriculum vitae were also provided. Find most of this information at the School's PI 34 website: <http://www.education.wisc.edu/pi34/>. (Note that some areas of this website are password protected.) While the overall teacher education program was reviewed in spring 2007, individual program reviews continued through summer and early fall, 2007.

The eight-member team from DPI reviewed the Schools' Institutional Report, student electronic portfolios, program documentation, and additional materials. Team members interviewed faculty, staff, administrators, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, current students, program completers, and employers. Based on its review, the DPI team recommended approval to the state superintendent for the teacher education programs (contact Associate Dean Jeff Hamm, hamm@education.wisc.edu, for a copy of the final program review report, dated June 22, 2007).

The DPI review included a few recommendations for improvements in some areas. These included the following: (1) greater clarity about how assessments are linked to clinical experiences and how data from assessment of clinical experiences then inform program improvement; (2) development of a consistent assessment process to assure that students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of environmental education and history and culture of Wisconsin Indian tribes and bands; (3) development of an exit survey for teacher education program completers based on the state-approved 15 teacher education standards.

These recommendations were either implemented or initially addressed during the 2007-08 academic year. For more than two decades, student teachers and their cooperating teachers have been surveyed at the end of the student teaching experience. This year the survey was modified to reflect the State's teacher education standards. Results will come to the faculty and staff in fall 2008. The School's Coordinating Council on Teacher Education convened a subcommittee on the statutory requirements surrounding history and culture of Wisconsin Indians. This subcommittee made several recommendations, including that assessments for this topic be included in the electronic portfolio of each teacher education student. Finally, initial discussions began among faculty program coordinators regarding assessments of students in their clinical settings. Discussions will continue in the upcoming school year.

Survey of Teacher Education Graduates

For over ten years the School of Education has surveyed its teacher education program students who had graduated five years previously. This survey of graduates is now required by Wisconsin teacher education program regulations. In winter 2008 we surveyed our academic year 2002-2003 program graduates. Almost 40% of the students responded to the survey. Respondents mainly identified the same three areas of concern that had been seen in past surveys: less satisfactory preparation for working effectively with English language learners, integrating technology into teaching, and promoting positive behaviors in the classroom (commonly understood as “classroom management”).

Over the last year the School’s teacher education programs have been responding to graduates’ concerns about their preparation for working with English language learners. This area in the School has been somewhat under-resourced given the demands to prepare English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education teachers for area K-12 schools. With the addition of another faculty member and increased support for graduate students, faculty and staff from this area will begin providing supplemental instruction for secondary education students this coming academic year. Discussions continue regarding how to provide enhanced or additional instruction for students in all other teacher education programs.

For the first time the School included more specific questions in the survey related to classroom management and the use of instructional technology. These responses were reviewed initially by the School of Education’s Coordinating Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) at their meeting in May, 2008. Follow-up analysis and action steps will be on the agenda for the CCTE in fall 2008.

School of Education Liberal Studies Requirements

In April, 2006, the School of Education approved significant changes in its undergraduate liberal studies (breadth) requirements. These requirements had not been subject to a thorough review in more than 20 years, despite changes in Wisconsin State teacher licensing rules, academic directions, and course offerings. Professor Ken Zeichner, associate dean for teacher education and undergraduate education, convened a task force of faculty and staff from both the School of Education and the College of Letters and Science in February, 2005, to review these requirements.

At one time all School of Education undergraduates completed identical liberal studies requirements. Over the years, mostly due to changes in teacher licensing rules, teacher education students and non-teacher education students in the School of Education were subject to significantly different requirements. The task force was charged to consider ways that these differences might be reduced and that School students might complete common requirements once again. The task force also considered more recent changes in teacher education regulations from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as well as the goals of the School’s teacher preparation programs.

Some of the most significant changes proposed by the committee and ultimately approved by the School of Education’s Programs Committee and Academic Planning Council included the following:

- (1) development of a new “global perspectives” requirement for all undergraduates,
- (2) addition of a literature requirement for students in all non-teacher education programs,
- (3) a mandated fine arts requirement for all undergraduates, not just teacher education students,
- (4) required physical and biological science courses for all non-teacher education students, and
- (5) the requirement that teacher education students complete an ethnic studies course (previously this requirement had been met entirely by these students’ completion of the Human Relations/Multicultural Education requirement).

Faculty and staff involved in these curricular revisions agreed that the development of the “global perspectives” requirement was one of the most significant changes to the curriculum, that it was linked directly to the goals of our teacher education programs, and that assessment around this new requirement would be especially important. Associate Dean Zeichner will be spear-heading assessment efforts related to “global perspectives” and “global competence” among School of Education teacher education students in the next year.

Academic Program and Department Assessment Activities

Most School of Education programs have active assessment plans. All teacher education programs (including our K-12 administrator program) have assessment plans as required by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) teacher education regulations. See above for more specific information on the assessment of teacher education programs as part of the five-year DPI review process. Some programs have regular and robust accreditation review requirements, including Art, Athletic Training, Occupational Therapy, School Psychology, Counseling Psychology, and Rehabilitation Psychology. Other programs have been actively assessing their students as part of ongoing program evaluations, although these programs have not necessarily published a formal assessment plan at this point. Some examples of ongoing student learning assessment are below.

Art Department

Over the last three years the Art Department has been systematically gathering information on undergraduate student experiences and reviewing student academic records. Several areas of concern have emerged:

- Graduating seniors could not identify a specific artistic area of interest or competence. They seemed to lack artistic focus; students were seen by faculty and staff as “just moving through the program.”
- Students were not completing advanced work in a discipline, leaving them less well prepared at graduation as the faculty wished and ill-prepared for graduate work.
- Relatively few students (8% of majors) were completing the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree, when many more BFA’s would have been anticipated.
- Although designed as a four-year program, Art degree students were unable to complete their programs in a reasonable time. Time-to-degree for all Art majors averages almost five years.
- Undergraduate major enrollments began to drop precipitously in Fall 2007—almost half as many new freshmen were declaring Art as their major as had been declaring two years before.

In academic year 2006-07 several actions were taken to increase the rigor of the Art degree programs. All students are now required to complete successfully a 500- or 600-level Art Department studio course in at least one discipline. BFA students are now required to complete these courses in at least two disciplines. While once admitted based on minimum GPA and successful completion of a set of courses only, BFA students were now admitted to that degree program based on these requirements as well as a successful portfolio review. BFA students will be required to participate in a solo or group public exhibition in their final year and must earn a minimum 3.0 grade-point average in all major and upper-level major course work to graduate.

Students reported repeatedly that one of the chief obstacles to completing the Art degree program in a timely way—and the major reason why students did not choose the much more studio-intensive BFA—was the workload connected to each studio course. Students argued that much more than three credits worth of work was required in each studio course. For this reason, students rarely took more than two studios and almost never took more than three. With this, students had difficulty making reasonable progress toward graduation. The Art Department faculty realized that the structure of their studio courses had changed dramatically over the last ten years. Studio courses now included lectures, demonstrations, critiques, and group discussions. With less in-class time available for work on projects, the outside-of-class workload increased. Faculty estimated that studios were requiring 7-10 hours of outside-class time—this on top of class periods that were already twice as long as the usual lecture. A review of other institutions revealed that their studio courses were commonly four credits rather than three. For these reasons, in the academic year 2007-08, the Art Department proposed and had approved a change in nearly all studio courses from three to four credits.

Art faculty and staff believe that these changes should result in (1) decreased time to degree for both BS-Art and BFA students, (2) an increase in the number of BFA degree candidates, (3) more focused work in a discipline for all majors, and (4) higher quality work from all seniors, but especially BFA students. Art Department faculty and staff will be assessing student performance in light of these anticipated outcomes over the next few years.

Dance Program

The Dance Program faculty and staff continue to review carefully their program and assess their students. Over the last few years, concern about the quality of student performance has led to major changes in the program. These changes have included the following:

- Institution of a required audition process for students in order to be admitted to the Dance major
- Required reviews of students at the sophomore and junior/senior level
- Major changes in the curriculum for both the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree programs,
- Development of a required capstone senior seminar
- Regular meetings with groups of students for feedback on what students need from the program to be successful

Dance Program staff look for many opportunities to assess students' work and progress on a regular basis. Concerts are obvious opportunities for careful review, but technique classes also have end-of-semester showings where student work can be observed. The Program's curriculum committee collects, analyzes, and considers student feedback and performance information. At this point the sense is that the overall quality of student dance performance is increasing. At the same time there is some concern about the loss of majors from the program, especially after the first year. This will continue to be monitored.

Assessment Activities for the Upcoming Year

- As noted above, the Programs Committee has agreed to review the School of Education's 2003 assessment plan. The Committee will also be asked to address the need for department and program assessment plans where they do not exist.
- The School's Coordinating Council for Teacher Education (CCTE) will consider numerous issues for teacher education students raised by recent assessment activities. Issues already mentioned include students' preparation in using instructional technology in the classroom and classroom management. The results of a 2007-08 assessment project related to literacy instruction (sponsored by Professor Mary Louise Gomez) and a 2006-07 assessment project related to students' multicultural competence (sponsored by Associate Dean Ken Zeichner) will also be shared with the CCTE.
- Preliminary discussions will begin around ways to assess the impact of the new "global perspectives" requirement for all School of Education students.
- Continued conversations with the Art Department and Dance Program regarding next steps for assessing the impact of their curricular changes. These might include surveys of graduating seniors and/or alumni, which are not done currently.