Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources

The unit has the leadership, authority, budget, personnel, facilities, and resources, including information technology resources, for the preparation of candidates to meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

6a. How does the unit’s governance system and resources contribute to adequately preparing candidates to meet professional, state, and institutional standards?

Leadership and authority for the unit come from a coherent governance system and the resources necessary to prepare candidates to meet required standards (NCATE Standard 6a). This begins with the clear explication of the organizational structure and the policies governing it. Cross-campus connections include undergraduate and graduate committees, and the University Teacher Education Committee (UTEC), headed by the COEHS Dean, is primarily responsible for governance. UTEC’s composition reflects Western's commitment to an interdisciplinary and integrated governance structure. Members come from all of Western's four colleges and include teaching partners from the community. The diverse backgrounds of unit faculty and practicing teachers and administrators from P-12 schools permit review and analysis of program design, delivery, and assessment. The Dean of the COEHS serves as spokesperson for teacher and professional education concerns in conversations with central administration, the media, and public servants. Owing to the unique character of this committee, policy-making bodies across the campus regularly solicit its guidance and recognize it as the repository of critical information about teacher education and the systems that undergird it.

Unit faculty collaborate with content area faculty and school partners to enhance and revise existing curricula to support teaching and learning in the 21st century (Standard 6a). UTEC coordinates and approves all curricula and program changes to ensure that all candidates meet state and professional standards. Unit faculty work with school partners to implement and evaluate curricular changes. Webpages provide current university policies and academic calendars. The unit follows all university policies including grading and academic integrity policies, which offers guidance for students and faculty. Catalogs are updated annually, reflecting all system-wide, governance-approved changes. Departments, colleges, and the Provost's Office work closely with Admissions, Advising and Academic Services, University Marketing, and University Relations to ensure that information is current and accurate, that admission requirements are published, and that approved recruitment strategies are utilized. For the past two years, recruitment/retention specialists from Noel-Levitz have worked with campus entities to clarify and hone efforts in these areas.

Advising services are available in CPEP and the Advising and Academic Services Center (Standard 6a). The Counseling and Disability Resource Centers provide a full range of services, including intervention for traumatic events, tutoring, and accommodation referrals. The offices of Student Development and Orientation (SDO) and Student Assistance and Parent Service strive to remove barriers to student success. SDO and the Counseling Center work collaboratively with Student Judicial Programs, Student Legal Services, Public Safety, Beu Health Center, and the Threat Assessment Team to help guarantee a safe and secure learning environment. At the end of their programs, teacher education candidates may utilize Career Services.

Despite significant statewide fiscal challenges, the unit has maintained funding levels and addressed needs by redirecting appropriated dollars (Standard 6b). While the University budget was faced with a 3.5% rescission for the current fiscal year, these funds were not drawn from the unit’s operating budget. The unit addressed the rescission by utilizing the differential between the salaries of retiring senior faculty and those of newly hired faculty. A top priority of the unit is to maintain strong programs to ensure the preparation of highly qualified candidates who meet standards. Complementing sound fiscal management that provided enhanced levels of support, the unit’s grant activity provided
financial support for undergraduate and graduate students and students and faculty in P-12 partner schools, including technology, software and other instructional supports.

Unit teaching personnel must demonstrate talent in teaching, research, and service (Standard 6c). Per the Contract, faculty are expected to maintain ACE loads (Academic Credit Equivalents roughly correspond to semester hours) of between 18 and 22 each academic year, allowing them to engage in professional and scholarly activities and collaborate with content area faculty and P-12 partners. The unit’s clinical faculty are seasoned professionals respected by their university colleagues and those in area P-12 schools. They collaborate with colleagues to enhance strategies and structures to improve teacher and professional education and work closely with P-12 liaisons and mentor school personnel to establish the culture and climate required for success. The unit maintains program integrity and coherence through the reliance of full-time faculty rather than adjuncts and graduate assistants.

Professional development opportunities address pressing concerns such as providing quality education for those whose primary language is not English and guaranteeing that the legal and ethical considerations surrounding the needs of persons with disabilities are understood (Standard 6c). In addition to these opportunities, the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR) provides new faculty orientations and workshops designed to enhance teaching and sponsors the Annual WIU Symposium on Teaching, Research, and Creative Activities. It also provides faculty mentors for new faculty and for those struggling with specific elements of teaching.

The unit’s commitment to quality graduate education includes online offerings (Standard 6c). To ensure quality, the unit and the University have policies regarding course development and delivery. For the preceding three years, all new online courses have been required to conform to an approved structure and faculty are required to participate in training provided by CITR. Faculty either receive a stipend or Professional Achievement Award points for development and are assisted in the design process by specialists from Western’s Center for the Application of Information Technologies. The Contract provides procedural guidelines, protections, and levels of compensation for faculty teaching via this medium.

The unit’s facilities contribute to candidates’ success (Standard 6d). Virtually all classrooms have electronic capabilities, and because of COEHS’s early entry into this area, many classrooms have recently been upgraded with state-of-the-art technologies. While much of the technology is attached to a particular room, the unit also provides mobile capabilities with portable computer labs and SMART Boards. Owing to the unit requirement that candidates be technologically competent, learners come to the classroom with the necessary skills. Faculty model the use of technology, and many value-added learning opportunities (e.g., Facebook privacy workshops, the use of mobile technologies and iPads) and expect candidates to be proficient in their use. The Office for Partnerships, Professional Development and Instructional Development Services provides comprehensive assistance in instructional design, including the two-year Faculty Innovators intensive program.

The unit ensures that the necessary resources are available (Standard 6d). During the past two fiscal years, resource funding has been increased to support the purchase of software, materials, equipment, and travel support for candidates and faculty. The unit has also received from the Provost approximately $200,000 for the development of a custom-designed data-collection and management system. The system has proven to be flexible and sophisticated. The unit has also received approval for an assessment coordinator to direct these activities.

The main library and four branch libraries offer access to standard research materials but also to curricular resources used by candidates in their field and clinical experiences (Standard 6d). As a depository and the principal archival source in the region, the library serves a critical function for both the University and the community at large. With its vast electronic database and interlibrary loan capabilities, the system is fully able to meet the needs of resident candidates and candidates in Western’s distance learning programs. The system has also contributed to the significant growth of
Western’s distance learning degree offerings over the past four years.

2b. Briefly summarize the most significant changes related to Standard 6 that have led to continuous improvement?

The unit has experienced considerable change in leadership since its last review. Three deans have directed the unit during this period, and Dean Sterling Saddler is poised to become the new leader July 1, 2011. In the 2004-2005 Academic Year, the necessary resources were provided to create the Center for the Preparation of Education Professionals (CPEP) to improve services offered to candidates. CPEP strengthened communication, collaboration, and alignment and linked field and clinical experiences and certification needs. This shift necessitated additional funding for staff and operations and resulted in the conversion of a director’s position to that of Assistant Dean for Undergraduate and Teacher Education.

At the same time, Western changed its model for clinical supervision in order to increase timely feedback to teacher candidates. The model utilizes a second professional, a district liaison working in school districts where our teacher candidates are placed, to provide additional supervision and support. As part of the upcoming state-mandated program redesign this model will be reevaluated.

Since our last visit, the Unit has allocated additional resources to enhance teacher candidates’ experiences with diverse populations. Currently these experiences occur in EIS 302 and involve group travel to locations that differ from school populations and communities like Macomb, Illinois.

During the period of review, a Secondary Education Discussion Group was created to help ensure that matters affecting the entire unit were more thoroughly addressed. This group included representation from the K-12 programs that include Art, Music, and physical education. The chair of the group serves as an ex-officio member of UTEC.

In 2005-2006, the Dean initiated a series of visioning conversations that have continued to the present. These conversations were tied to theoretical and empirical research and satisfaction data from our annual survey of graduates. They led, for example, to the development of a required ELL component for the TEP and to a faculty hire and faculty reassignments intended to aid instructors in research and analysis and to better prepare advanced candidates for making data-informed pedagogical decisions.

Recruitment and retention of qualified candidates have become vital elements for the unit. This is much more than a concern about numbers. It is tied to the recognition that candidates and the communities in which they reside deserve the strongest and most effective educators that teacher education programs can prepare. Toward that end, the principles of the COEHS Enrollment Management Plan have been integrated into each department’s EMP and define optimal enrollment targets, provide orientation strategies, and ensure necessary student support systems. These plans contain preferred diversity “profiles” of candidates and include considerations of ethnicity, disability, first-generation status, military service, and experience. The overall plan also provided justification for the development of a system to assist candidates in passing the state exams required for certification.

Attention to recruitment and retention has resulted in strengthened ties between Western and 23 community college partners (many in urban settings) through the Program2Program initiative and has led to greater facility with interactive media and social networking systems such as PatronMail, Facebook, and YouTube. These efforts, in conjunction with the unit’s first recruiting trip to HBCUs, also hold promise for increasing diversity in Western’s teacher education program.