Standard 3: Field and Clinical Experiences

The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school professionals develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn.

1. How does the unit work with the school partners to deliver field experiences and clinical practice to enable candidates to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to help all students learn?

The Unit works with school partners, including members of the University Teacher Education Committee (UTEC), to design, deliver, and evaluate field and clinical experiences (Standard 3a). Data from the Teacher Graduate/Employer Survey also provide information to improve programs. School faculty and university supervisors share their expertise with candidates in conferences and informal and formal evaluations, providing specific feedback about candidate progress and strategies for increasing their impact on student learning.

The Unit and its school partners identify placements appropriate for candidates (Standard 3a). Field experience supervisors provide student teaching supervisors information about candidates that is used to identify student teaching placements. Using this information and the candidate’s request for a region for placement, the supervisor selects a district with which WIU has an established partnership and submits a request for the placement. Approved requests are sent to the building principal who consults with teachers to identify an appropriate placement. The mentor teacher, who must meet WIU criteria, reviews and accepts or rejects the application. This response is sent to the university supervisor who reviews notes regarding previous placements with the mentor and determines the appropriateness of the placement for the candidate.

University supervisors, school principals and mentor teachers work together to identify appropriate field experience placements in local schools (Standard 3a). Communication about candidate progress towards meeting state and professional standards occurs through conferences and formal and informal evaluations. Remediation plans are instituted when candidates are not developing needed competencies.

Field and clinical experiences provide opportunities for candidates to work with diverse populations and reflect the emphasis on empowerment in our conceptual framework (Standard 3b). Candidates’ knowledge, commitment, reflection, and ability to take action to impact student learning are evaluated in unit and program assessments. Although candidates possess foundational knowledge and skills prior to enrolling in field and clinical experiences, candidates continue to enhance their knowledge and skills as they create and implement lesson plans that include the use of technology, construct teacher work samples and reflect on their practice.

Candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are assessed prior to entry to student teaching (Standard 3b). They must pass the appropriate state content test, Disposition Check 1 (DC1), DC2, the Universal Design (UD) assessment, required courses and field experiences with a grade of “C” or better and other specific department requirements; maintain required GPAs; and be recommended by the department. Eligibility for exit from clinical practice and approval for certification includes passage of the state Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT), DC3, the Western Teacher Work Sample (WTWS), Reflective Paper 2 (RP2) and the Student Teaching
Clinical Experience Evaluation (STCEE). Departments must recommend candidates for certification.

Candidates observe students in a diverse school during EIS 302 and deliver instruction and assist teachers in field experiences prior to student teaching (Standard 3b). Candidates develop an understanding of students, teaching, and schools as they interview teachers, parents, and students; tutor students; attend school board meetings; and participate in educational conferences (e.g. the IL Reading Conference, the WIU K-8 Science Update Conference, WIU Math Education Conference) and family science and math nights. They complete one to three field experiences prior to a 12 or 16 week student teaching experience. These experiences reflect the length and intensity needed for candidates to develop and demonstrate professional competencies.

Criteria for mentor teachers are communicated to school and university personnel who place and supervise student teachers and reflect a commitment to utilizing accomplished professionals who can provide guidance for student teachers (Standard 3b). School and University faculty use multiple measures, aligned with state and unit standards, to evaluate candidates, including DC3, WTWS, RP2 and the STCEE. Faculty evaluate the WTWS in the context of specific professional standards, while their evaluation of RP2 provides evidence of meeting state and unit standards. Mentors complete DC3 and the STCEE. Communication among mentor teachers, university supervisors, district liaisons, and student teachers occurs during conferences, weekly reflections, emails, observations of teaching, and formal evaluations.

To ensure candidates possess content knowledge prior to student teaching, they must pass their state content test (Standard 3c). Evaluations completed during field experiences provide evidence that candidates have developed professional and pedagogical knowledge required to enroll in student teaching. Continued development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions embedded in the unit’s conceptual framework, state, and professional standards during student teaching is evident in the DC3, the WTWS, mid-term and final STCEE, RFP2 and the state Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT). Faculty evaluate the WTWS and RP2, while mentors complete DC3 and STCEE. The WTWS provides direct evidence of candidates’ impact on student learning. While candidates reflect on student learning throughout field and clinical experiences, the structured reflections in the WTWS require them to analyze observational and formative assessment data for typical students as well as students with exceptionalities and from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups, identify changes made while teaching and changes needed in the next lesson, and determine the impact of those changes on student learning. In RP2 and the WTWS, candidates discuss the impact of their teaching on students’ successes and challenges and identify strategies for improvement that will impact student learning. This cycle of assessment, reflection, and action leads to enhanced teaching skills and greater student learning.

In the Educational Leadership programs, school principals and superintendents serve as site supervisors for the internship experience. They collaborate with interns to draft a proposal of activities, share insights and provide guidance to interns, allow access to school activities, and complete evaluations.

Counselor Education candidates complete 100 hours of practicum and 600 hours of internship. A Clinical Coordinator networks with school partners. School site supervisors are provided yearly training and a field manual, and faculty visit each site. A supervisor contract is used to make school partners and candidates aware of expectations and responsibilities. Site supervisors provide written evaluation of candidates.
The School Psychology Program places candidates in local districts during the first two years of training. A school psychologist or certified other school professional provides on-site supervision. The first year practicum courses introduce candidates to school systems and professionals who work in schools and provide practice in assessment and data collection procedures with students not referred for special education services. Second year candidates are supervised by school psychologists and complete assessment cases referred for special education services. Internship sites complete a contract and follow internship requirements outlined in the IL School Psychology Internship Manual. Faculty visit interns each semester and maintain contact through email and the course website.

Candidates in the Reading Specialist program complete two practicums, tutoring K-6 and 7-12 students in after school programs that serve diverse students. Faculty and school partners identify students likely to benefit from tutoring services. As candidates complete case studies, they analyze data, discuss the achievement of established goals, and reflect on the effectiveness of instruction, congruence between their practice and learning theories, and use of research-based strategies. Faculty observe candidates and provide feedback.

Candidates in the Elementary and Special Education graduate programs complete field experiences in their classrooms which reflect gender, socioeconomic and ethnic diversity. They document their effects on student learning through an action research project in which they analyze their practice in the context of research on teaching and learning, identify an aspect of their practice to improve, review related research, and select and implement an approved instructional strategy. They use pre- and formative assessment data to guide instructional decisions, analyze student growth data, and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in implementing the intervention. Special Education faculty observe candidates and provide feedback.

2. Briefly summarize the most significant, changes related to Standard 3 that have led to continuous improvement.

In 2004-2005, the Head of the Unit created the Center for the Preparation of Education Professionals (CPEP) to begin the process of centralizing field and clinical experiences under the responsibility of a single center. Supervision Field Specialists for the secondary and multicultural field experiences and clinical supervisors work within the Center to meet the needs of candidates in those experiences. Three new Supervision Field Specialists were hired Fall, 2004 to place and supervise candidates and collaborate with clinical supervisors and faculty and administrators from initial programs. The new configuration improved the alignment of the field and clinical experiences for secondary education students. The creation of CPEP also provided for more interaction among advisors, candidates, and field and clinical supervisors. Additionally, CPEP, in collaboration with EIS 302 professors, was charged with the responsibility for developing and implementing a diverse field experience required of all initial candidates. This field experience was piloted Fall 2005 and fully implemented Spring 2006. In 2005, an additional Supervision Field Specialist was hired and three graduate assistants were assigned to support the work of the supervisors, though they do not engage in any direct supervision themselves.

In 2006, UTEC approved a revision of the secondary field experience. Before that time, candidates were required to participate in a single field experience that could be repeated a second time. The approved revision required candidates to participate in two field experiences,
EIS 303 and EIS 304, to better prepare them to have a positive effect on student learning. Field supervisors continued to expand the sites being used for the diverse field experience in EIS 302 to include additional urban sites.

In order to provide quality clinical student teaching experiences in diverse, urban settings concerted efforts were made to collaborate with Elgin Unit District 40 and the Chicago Public Schools. Placement and supervision in the Chicago suburbs has expanded with the addition of 10 new districts including Elgin U-46 (2nd largest district in the state). We collaborate 3 times a year with members of the U-46 District faculty and administration to review district curriculum, mentoring program, diversity changes and special education needs. The district works with our student teaching supervisor to find placements that provide a variety of experiences in diverse settings. Our partnership with this district provides additional options for placements in schools that have students with unique interests and backgrounds.

Our partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has evolved over the past 7 years from 3 WIU student teachers to 16-20 student teachers being placed in the CPS per semester. We have developed a list of schools that we know to be of good quality with experienced faculty and administration in safe neighborhoods. WIU assists student teachers in the selection of schools with one-on-one guidance to assure the schools being considered reflects diversity. Clinical supervisors meet with building principals for placement considerations. WIU meets once a year with an administrator in CPS central office in Chicago to discuss partnership changes and plans. Phone and e-mail communication is usually once a month with that central administrator.

Field and clinical supervisors also routinely collaborate with departments to enhance assessments to meet program and unit needs. In 2009-2010 clinical supervisors assisted with the implementation of one new assessment, the Western Teacher Work Sample (WTWS) and three revised assessments, the second RP2, the third DC3, and the Student Teaching Clinical Experience Evaluation (STCEE). Though the WTWS and RP2 assessments are facilitated and evaluated by program-specific faculty during the student teaching semester while the DC3 and STCEE are evaluated by mentor teachers, the clinical supervisors make critical contributions to all of the assessments by familiarizing mentor teachers with WIU expectations, facilitating placements that support the successful completion of the assessments, providing on-site assistance when difficulties occur, communicating directly with programs if needed, and affirming that the assessments accurately reflect the abilities and performances of the candidates while student teaching.

Initial programs are also using the WTWS process to inform their evaluations and revisions of their programs, including their field experiences. The secondary Field Experience Supervisors revised the required activities and assessments in field experiences in Spring 2010 to better support candidates as they develop the skills necessary to engage in a successful WTWS experience. Initial programs in Elementary, Early Childhood, and Special Education continue to evaluate candidate skill development through the teacher work sample completed during their field experiences.

Advanced programs have also been making changes to support continuous improvement. The Reading Specialist program is currently piloting the use of iPads in one practicum and have added a required literacy coaching practicum to more fully prepare candidates for their roles as reading specialists and literacy coaches. This course will provide an authentic experience that will better prepare candidates to assume leadership roles as districts seek to improve literacy instruction for all students.
The Communication Sciences and Disorders department is discussing a future expansion of their school internship from the current 8 weeks to 12 weeks.

The Counselor Education program strictly follows the accreditation guidelines from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP; 2009) with regard to supervision. Their candidates receive a minimum of one hour per week of individual supervision from their site supervisor, a minimum of one hour per week of individual supervision from their internship faculty member, and 2.5 hours per week of group supervision from the Department. Whenever concerns arise candidates are also provided with additional supervision experiences.

The School Psychology program continuously surveys their interns and intern supervisors in order to obtain feedback and suggestions about what was useful for preparation for the internship and what training was not provided and could be better provided. These suggestions are shared and discussed by the faculty during the annual summer retreat. Faculty also analyze the data collected from the program assessments that occur during the internship and use that data to determine needed program changes.

The Educational Leadership department has frequent discussions about the use of assessment data for improvement and has made minor modifications to the activities used to assess the ELCC standard elements and the corresponding rubrics, instruction, and curriculum. In addition, interns were asked in Fall 2010 to respond to a web-based survey to identify topics of high relevance to interns for future seminars.