Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation

The unit has an assessment system that collects and analyzes data on applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate performance, and unit operations to evaluate and improve the performance of candidates, the unit, and its programs.

1. How does the unit use its assessment system to improve the performance of candidates and the unit and its programs?

The Teacher and Professional Preparation Programs (TPEP) at WIU utilize our assessment system to collect and analyze data related to candidate performance, unit operations, and program improvement. Our system is designed to reflect the focus of our conceptual framework on the empowerment of all users, including candidates, advisors, faculty members, program chairs/designees, the University Teacher Education Committee (UTEC), and the unit head, through the regular use and analysis of data in order to make informed decisions (NCATE Standard 2a). Unit assessments are aligned with professional and state standards. Data is collected each semester and examined annually. Assessment information is entered into our web-based data-management system, Western Educational and Professional Preparation Assessment System (WEPPAS), which is designed to aggregate data at the candidate, program, and unit levels at various transition points.

The first transition point occurs as candidates seek admittance into the Teacher Education Program (TEP). To be admitted, candidates must pass the Illinois Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and first Reflective Paper (RFP1). Candidates must also meet these additional requirements: clearance of a criminal background investigation and all applicable registries; obtain required major and cumulative GPAs; pass all professional education, methods, major courses and field experiences with a grade of “C” or better; complete online safety training, online ELL modules, and other program-specific requirements; and receive a recommendation from the department in which their program is housed.

The second transition point occurs as candidates seek approval to student teach. To receive approval, all candidates must pass Disposition Check 1 (DC1) and DC2; the Universal Design assessment; and the appropriate state-mandated content-specific test. Candidates must also meet these additional requirements: a second clearance of a criminal background investigation and all applicable registries; maintain required major and cumulative GPAs; pass all professional education, methods, major courses, and field experiences with a grade of “C” or better; complete a TB skin test and other program-specific requirements; and receive a recommendation from the appropriate department.

The third transition point occurs when candidates earn approval for certification and program completion. To receive approval, candidates must pass the state-mandated Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT) test, DC3, the Western Teacher Work Sample (WTWS), the Student Teaching Clinical Experience Evaluation (STCEE), and Reflective Paper 2 (RFP2). Candidates must also meet all program-specific requirements and receive a recommendation from the department.

Candidates who do not meet TEP admission requirements may appeal to the Student Retention and Appeal (SRA) committee if they have a minor problem or to their department if their GPA is relatively close to the departmental requirement. Candidates who are unsuccessful with an appeal or who cannot meet requirements as they progress through the program may be
counseled into other majors. Candidates who are unsuccessful as they seek approval for certification and graduation may be advised to complete a Bachelors in General Studies degree. Policies have been established on how to address candidate complaints (Standard 2b).

The Center for the Preparation of Education Professionals (CPEP) collects data concerning field and clinical experiences, placements, evaluations, hours completed, demographics of school sites, and expenditures for some field and all clinical experiences. CPEP also collects the following data concerning advisement activities: number of appointments made, number of appointments completed, number of walk-in visits, and number of calls concerning advising questions. CPEP maintains a website that provides information regarding field and clinical requirements, advising assistance, and other TEP requirements. The Certification Office, located in CPEP, is responsible for monitoring candidate progress towards certification, making recommendations to the State for certification, and maintaining records of certification exam scores and recommendations. The Certification Office assists with the completion of reports which include Title II, state, SPA, institutional, and the AACTE Professional Education Data System (PEDS).

As a result of our ongoing review of the utility of our key assessments for program analysis and program improvement (Standard 2c), several internal unit assessments of initial candidates have been revised or newly constructed within the past two years. These revised assessments are now scored in the web-based WEPPAS system and results are immediately available to candidates, advisors, programs, and the unit. To assure the credibility of assessments, the Assessment Subcommittee developed a schedule to monitor the reliability of scoring assessments. The Subcommittee also developed a chart summarizing what the Unit will do to insure the credibility of all internal unit assessments. In addition, WEPPAS is designed to assess the reliability of scoring internal unit assessments.

WEPPAS is now used to collect and aggregate all assessment and requirement data for analysis and decision-making at the candidate, program, and unit levels (Standard 2b). The data-management system provides comprehensive data and information on applicant qualifications, such as GPA, grades earned, state exam results, and proficiencies on all key unit assessments and requirements.

Following graduation, we annually survey graduates from our initial programs and their supervisors one and five years following their graduation (Standard 2b). These surveys reflect the knowledge and skills in the Technology, Literacy, Student Learning, and Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS). Data is reported for the institution, with state-wide data as a comparison. The data is submitted to the Unit Head and made available to interested programs and the entire unit. These data are used to address issues and trends that are also evident in our program and unit data analyses.

Off-campus program data is aggregated at the site level (Standard 2b). Data shows comparable levels of performance for all programs at all sites. The same procedures for data collection and analysis are used on the main campus and all off-campus sites and reported in annual reports.

The Unit has implemented a regular and systematic cyclical process for data collection, analysis, and use which begins with individual candidate assessments during admission to TEP and progresses through all coursework, field and clinical experiences, and unit requirements (Standard 2c). Utilizing WEPPAS, candidates have access to data on their performance as they move through their program, including feedback and scores on all required unit assessments and requirements. They use the information available in WEPPAS when consulting with faculty and
advisors in order to enhance their program performance. The process follows a cycle that includes data aggregation, analysis, revision of assessments and/or curriculum, and implementation of revisions at the program and unit levels. Data for unit operations is collected, evaluated, and annually presented to the Unit Head and the Provost in the CPEP annual report.

At the advanced level, the School Psychology Program continues to collect and analyze data from the six assessments required for program approval. The aggregated assessment data is reviewed by the school psychology faculty members during an annual summer retreat and decisions are made about how to better meet the needs of their candidates.

The Educational Leadership department meets twice a year to examine patterns in the data collected through course-embedded assessments in the principal and superintendency programs. Data patterns are examined and related to instruction, the challenge level of the assessment activities, and the teaching methods. Changes are made in these areas as deemed appropriate.

The Counselor Education program recently added a requirement that candidates complete the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) during their internship semester. Faculty meet at least once annually to analyze the assessment data and make programmatic improvements.

Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 2.75 to be admitted to both the Elementary and Special Education graduate programs. Data from five key assessments in each program are used to monitor candidates’ progress towards meeting program outcomes. These data are also aggregated and analyzed and used to identify changes needed in courses and/or the program to more fully prepare them to facilitate student learning. These data and program improvements are summarized in the university’s annual assessment report.

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

The Unit has made substantive changes in its assessment system since the last NCATE visit in 2003. In 2004, we worked with EBI Benchmarking, Inc. to implement an online survey of graduates and their employers which we continued to use through 2008-09. At the same time, we collaborated with the deans from the public universities in Illinois, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Joyce Foundation in an effort to develop the Teacher Graduate/Employer Survey, to provide annual information about initial program graduates’ knowledge and use of the Technology, Language Arts, Student Learning, and Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. This survey was first administered in 2004 with 68.5% of the 2002-2003 program graduates and 56.7% of their supervisors responding. The survey has been administered annually since then and has maintained similar response rates. In 2008, we added a second survey of program graduates and their supervisors five years after they leave our programs. It was determined at that time that the data obtained from the EBI survey did not provide additional information not already gathered from the Teacher Graduate/Employer Survey, and the decision was made to discontinue its use.

Data from several administrations of the Teacher/Graduate Employer Survey indicated that graduates did not feel well-prepared to address the challenges of working with ELL students in their classrooms. Consequently, we developed a plan to improve training in that area by requiring candidates to complete five on-line training modules prior to receiving departmental approval to student teach. Those modules were developed, put online, and piloted in Fall 2008.
In 2003-04 UTEC approved the addition of a technology competency assessment (TCA) and integrated data from the newly implemented Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT) state exam into the assessment review cycle. UTEC also approved the adoption of TaskStream to collect portfolio assessment data at the program and unit levels. Individual programs developed rubrics and implemented data collection each semester. Data was aggregated, analyzed, and used at the program level for decision-making.

In 2004-05 UTEC established an assessment committee to work on the assessment of dispositions and to initiate a continuous review cycle of all unit assessments. The committee revised the existing disposition assessment instrument and moved the first disposition check so that it is administered when candidates take their required multicultural course.

UTEC reviewed the effectiveness of the electronic portfolio as a unit assessment during 2006-07. Because data from disparate program assessments could not be used to make Unit decisions we were using common program requirements like GPAs and required state test scores as our Unit assessments. It was determined that the assessments contained in the electronic portfolio were providing data at the program level that was useful for some, but not all, programs. In Spring 2007, UTEC voted to discontinue the portfolio requirement at the unit level while continuing to support its voluntary use at the individual program level. UTEC also approved passage of the APT as a requirement for completion of student teaching.

UTEC charged the assessment subcommittee, in 2007-08, to design and implement a functional assessment system that would facilitate the collection and use of data at the candidate, program, and unit levels. The subcommittee was given two major tasks: revise and/or redesign a comprehensive set of credible unit assessments and develop an assessment system that candidates, programs, and the unit could use to access data. A concerted effort was initiated to reevaluate all unit assessments to assure that candidate performance on all standards would be evaluated with integrity. It was also determined that there was a need to aggregate candidate performance on unit assessments in order to make data-driven decisions about the unit. Since many programs were using some form of a teacher work sample, we initiated a plan to replace data that had been collected through the electronic portfolio with data collected from a teacher work sample.

After evaluating numerous assessment systems, the committee determined that a web-based system housed on the WIU campus would provide the Unit with a secure, confidential data-management system capable of aggregating data from candidates’ performances on unit and program standards at the individual, program, and unit levels, integrating traditional candidate information already available within the WIU mainframe, complying with ADA standards, and providing access to users at all levels. We received approval for funding in the spring of 2008, contracted with the Center for Application for Information Technology (CAIT) to design and build a system, and immediately began an ambitious effort to design a system. This new system, the Western Education and Professional Program Assessment System (WEPPAS), was built for eventual use by all teacher and professional education programs. We completed the design phase of the project in Spring 2009, trained users and piloted implementation with initial programs in Fall 2009, and fully implemented the system with initial programs in the spring of 2010.

Concurrently, the assessment subcommittee revised and designed unit assessments to reflect the recently revised conceptual framework which emphasizes our commitment to the empowerment of all learners. We revised the disposition check assessments, created a new Universal Design assessment, revised Reflective Papers 1 and 2, made minor revisions on the Student Teaching Clinical Experience Evaluation, and created a unit-wide Western Teacher
Work Sample assessment. Each assessment was approved by UTEC prior to implementation. In addition to revising and designing key unit assessments, the following requirements for admission into TEP were instituted: passage of the TCA; completion of the English Language Learners (ELL) modules, the safety training module, and the mandated reporter assessment; and clearance of two checks of national registries. UTEC approved the requirement that candidates pass their content test prior to student teaching.

Faculty members, advisors, and program chairs and designees were trained to fulfill their various responsibilities within WEPPAS. The system can be used by candidates to monitor their own performance on program requirements, advisors to assist candidates and monitor their progress through the program, and program chairs to systematically aggregate and analyze data and make data-driven decisions about program change.

In Spring 2011, faculty in SPED 390, MUS 334, and KIN 393 began redesigning the assignment and scoring rubric for the Universal Design assessment to align with the 2010 Principles of Universal Design with implementation planned for Fall 2011.

Recognizing the need to improve our use of data from the diversity proficiencies, the Unit will work with technology staff to determine if the new web-based assessment system can be programmed to generate specific reports on these diversity proficiencies which span several key unit assessments.

Advanced programs made changes following our 2003 visit. In 2003-04 the School Psychology program developed a formalized survey that was administered to recent graduates of their program for the first time during the summer of 2004. They developed an employer survey to be used with the graduate survey.

In 2006-07 the Educational Leadership program collaborated with the other public universities in the state to develop a comprehensive survey of program graduates and their employers. They piloted this survey in Spring 2007 with 2005-06 graduates, revised the survey based upon the results from the pilot, and have since administered the survey annually. At the advanced level, the Special Education faculty are realigning courses and assessments with new CEC and IL state standards and incorporating faculty recommendations to strengthen instruction and assessment of student learning. The Elementary Education program will review the assessment tool used in the area of specialization courses to increase the usefulness of the data collected for program improvement. The assessment of dispositions is relatively weak in both programs. While data regarding candidates’ knowledge and skills is regularly collected and analyzed, the assessment of disposition only becomes a “formal” process when problems arise. These programs are creating a more explicit assessment of dispositions that will be conducted in core course and capstone experiences each semester.

WEPPAS was created to facilitate data collection, aggregation and analysis by all programs at the initial and advanced levels. Currently it is functioning at the initial level. Advanced level programs are in the beginning stages of planning how to use the system to facilitate program improvement.