**Department of Special Education and Education Leadership**

**Special Education Program**

**Closing the Loop 2017**

The faculty members of the department of Special Education and Education Leadership continuously review various types of program data to ensure that 1) the program continues to meet the educational needs of teacher education candidates, 2) the curriculum is consistent with current research, best practices, and legal/educational policy guidelines, and 3) graduates have developed the skills needed to be exceptional educators. Discussions related to program assessment and improvements are held in different venues throughout the academic year including: retreats, faculty meetings, Special Education Directors’ Meeting, committee meetings, and ad-hoc committee meetings, such as Assessment Committee. A brief summary of some of those assessment activities follows.

Section 1: Program Assessment System Transition Point Assessments

The Special Education Program(s) (SPED) continues the process of updating its assessment system in order to better align with Washington State’s certification requirements. In addition, the revisions meet specific CEC National Recognition. During 2017, Special Education received National Program Approval from Council for Exceptional Children, special education’s primary professional organization.

The following are descriptions of the current assessments:

**Admission:**

Admission criteria is 2.75 for both the Special Education and Elementary Education Dual Endorsement program and for the Special Education plus Content Program. All candidates must pass the WEST –B. In addition, candidates are scored on three different essays that address the department’s focus upon diversity.

**Retention:**

* **GPA.** Candidates are required to maintain a 2.75 grade point average. Candidates are dropped from the program if the grade point average is below a 2.75. Candidates may petition to remain in the program the first time the GPA falls below the criteria. Candidates are automatically dropped from the program the second time the GPA falls below the criteria. In that case, candidates must reapply for admission back into the program.
* **Content Signature Assessment**. A vocabulary assessment for progress monitoring throughout the program for acquisition of knowledge that is linked to the NES and West-E was completed. This assessment is based upon research in curriculum-based measurement of Espin and Deno (1993), Espin and Foegen (1996), Espin and Tindal (1998), and Mooney, Benner, Nelson, Lane, and Beckers (2007). All candidates take the assessment each quarter. The assessment is 100 randomly sampled terms from over 1,000 special education terms in a data-base. Candidates are presented with 10 pages. Each page has 10 definitions and 10 terms that match the definitions. Candidates have 10 minutes to complete all pages. The content assessment measures accuracy as well as fluency with the terms. Correct matching of terms to definitions show growth in content knowledge across the program. Scores are reported as total number correct.
* **Disposition Assessment.** The Disposition Assessment is linked to theories (e.g., Marzano, Danielson) and to InTASC standards. Furthermore, indicators on the assessment are aligned with the Professional Document, signed by every candidate when admitted into the program. Nine domains are measured: (a) Effective Oral Communication, (b) Effective Written Communication, (c) Professionalism, (d) Enthusiastic Attitude, (e) Preparedness in Teaching and Learning, (f) Value for Cultural and Academic Diversity, (g) Collaborates, (h) Self-regulation, and (i) Social and emotional maturity. Validity and reliability has been established. Practica supervisors complete the Disposition Assessment at the end of each practicum. Scores for each domain is reported. In addition, the assessment is documented when/if difficulties arise with an individual candidate. In addition to showing that candidates are at mastery for dispositions/professionalism or working towards that goal as a requirement for the assessment system, the assessment is used to provide feedback and remediation for the candidate.
* **Program assessments to meet state and national standards.** Faculty have developed eight separate assessments that meet CAEP/CEC/Washington State/InTASC standards. Seven of these eight assessments are given to students in courses and are linked to progress through the program. The assessments are scored by rubrics and are not necessarily linked to grades. The criteria is “Above Sufficient, Sufficient, and Below Sufficient. All candidates must at least meet all the dimensions at the “Sufficient” level or redo the assessments until the sufficient level is obtained. The seven assessments are the following: (a) Assessment 2: Decodable Book, (b) Assessment 3: IEP Plan, (c) Assessment 5: Team Meeting, (d) Assessment 6: Behavior Assessment and Intervention, (e) Assessment 7: Integrated Report, and (f) Assessment 8: Individual Differences. Each assessment has been thoroughly vetted through multiple faculty. (See Assessment Plan for full details of each assessment.)

**Entry into Full Time Internship or Culminating Project:**

* Candidates must have a Cumulative GPA of 2.75 to move into internships, passing scores on the WEST-E and NES, and a passing score on Assessment 5: Team Meeting, and meet criteria for Professional Dispositions.

**Completion:**

* Candidates must pass the EdTPA and their Student Teaching Internship. Assessment 4: Student Teaching Internship Final Evaluation is used to determine successful pass scores for internship.
* Candidates participate in an exit survey

**Post Completion:**

* Candidates participate in follow-up surveys.

**Section 2: Use of Data for Improvements of Programs and/or Operations**

Selected program faculty meet as a standing committee at the program level to review assessments once per quarter. The assessment committee reports back to the full program faculty with results and recommended changes at least yearly. During 2017, Council for Exceptional Children

**Internal Assessments**

* **Content Signature Assessment.** While results from Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 indicated that growth in candidates’ special education content knowledge from quarter 5 through quarter 7 did not occur at the expected rate, faculty elected a wait-to-see attitude until the assessment could be administered again. The results confirmed that indeed, candidates appeared not to maintain as much content knowledge as expected. Faculty hypothesized that this was the result of the majority of the special education content courses were in the first part of the program and candidates took other courses (e.g., elementary education math, science, literacy) towards the end of the program. Faculty revised the program to increase the number of special education content courses distributed evenly throughout the program. Faculty then administered the assessments Spring ’17 and Fall ’17. Results from the assessment indicated that the changes were successful. Data throughout the quarters showed ascending trend lines from 1st quarter through 6th quarter, a leveling effect for 7th quarter and then again an increase in trend for 8th quarter. A hypothesis was generated that the order of courses did determine acquisition and knowledge of important content. This in turn verified that the sequence of courses was indeed important to program.
* Faculty also created more of a modified cohort model in order to build more sequentially upon prior course content, thus providing for planned review and proactive teaching. Faculty also developed course content for more practica and course content in the area of complex needs. This was because the scores on the assessments demonstrated candidates needed more information and practice with students with complex needs. Results suggest that candidates are now more prepared for teaching students with “low-incidence disabilities” because of these changes.

**External Assessments**

The three external assessments for the special education programs are the edTPA, two subtests of the NES and also the WEST-E. Candidates continually perform at either at the state and national levels or above. For examples, average edTPA scores for Spring 2017 were 48.55 for special education, state average was 46.70 and national average was 46.80. In addition, the average score of the WEST-E in Spring 2017 was 271.75; whereas, the state average was 259.47.

**Improvement of operations**

• Advising

* Faculty improved advising through the following: (a) establishing cohort models, (b) forms updated and uploaded each year on the Special Education website, (c) Student Handbook updated and uploaded each year on the website. This effort has made an overall impact on the advising for candidates interested in the program. In addition, all documents that support and are needed by candidates are also located on the website (e.g., Additional Professional Requirements, Disposition Document). A comprehensive website with necessary documents and information acts as a one-stop center for the benefit of candidates and faculty.
* Faculty revised and updated all programs in order to establish a modified cohort model. Candidates who enter the program during a particular quarter (e.g., Fall, Winter, Spring) take the same courses in succession. This plan then provides for consistency in scheduling and is beneficial for both faculty and candidates. Candidates are required to visit with their advisors once per quarter. The difference is, however, that now advisors work within a “relational advising” model instead of spending time figuring out what courses candidates should take each quarter. The course schedule is predetermined for the candidates, unless there is an unusual circumstance. This practice then provides time and space for faculty to create relationships with candidates.