The faculty members of the department of special education continuously review various types of program data to ensure 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 improvement are held in different venues throughout the academic years including: retreats, faculty meetings, committee meetings, and ad-hoc committee meetings. A brief summary of some of those assessment activities follows.

**Program Admission Data:**

For several years, the department had required a minimum 3.0 GPA (overall or for the last 45 credits) but a 2.75 quarterly GPA for students to remain in the program. Faculty expressed concerns that the 3.0 GPA may in fact be discouraging some talented student from applying to the program, so a decision was made to maintain a consistent GPA requirement of 2.75 for both admission and continued enrollment in the program. Subsequent statistical analyses failed to find a significant difference in the success rate of students with a 2.75 compared with those with a 3.0 GPA at time of admission.

We have recognized a need to review and update our application paperwork requirements. For example, we want to determine whether the information we request is really needed to make an admission determination. We are trying to determine whether there are actions we could take to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds.

Faculty members expressed concern that freshman and sophomore students might benefit from additional guidance in selecting GUR courses that would provide the most beneficial background information for future teaching positions and passing the WEST-E. A listing of suggested GUR courses was developed and has been made available to prospective students, WWU advising, and on the department webpage.

**Advising:**

Each student must meet with an advisor on a quarterly basis to develop a schedule and receive permission to register for special education courses. To help facilitate advising and guide students in taking courses in the correct sequence, a “Course Sequence” document was developed for students in both the SPED and Dual Endorsement programs. Given recent changes in enrollment management and changes in the number times certain courses are offered, the “Course Sequence” documents are being revised to provide better guidance. There are relatively few degrees of freedom for ECSE students in terms of course selection and sequencing, so a “Course Sequence” form was not developed for ECSE students.
To assist students plan for their program and try to manage course enrollment, we have implemented an electronic plan of study. The program is being refined, but the goal is that it will provide information that will allow for better enrollment management.

Curricular Issues:

The special education major consists of a tightly aligned and sequential course of studies. We are beginning the process of a curriculum review to verify the alignment and address any changes that may have happened since our last curriculum review. Since the last review, we have added credits and content to some courses to meet expanding professional and legal standards (e.g., Response to Intervention, and IDEA 04 regulations). We have completed a crosswalk of course competencies across courses and will do the same with the Professional Standards from the Council for Exceptional Children as well as Standard 5. We have also begun review of practicum competency rubrics and associated alignment with Standard 5 and will align course outcomes on syllabi with Standard 5 language.

Student Outcome:

Small groups reviewed program assessment data regularly collected, reported their findings to the entire faculty at a faculty meeting, identifying both strengths and areas for further development. Our current student outcome data is very positive with students reporting that they are prepared to enter the classroom, 100% pass rate on the WEST-E for SPED majors, Dual Endorsement Students (who take the SPED and ELED tests) and ECSE majors (who typically take the ECSE and ECE tests). Major sources of data and the findings are presented below:

EBI Teacher Education Alumni and Principal Surveys and the Woodring Intern Survey—Survey results indicate that the respondents were satisfied with the teacher education program at WWU. The survey did not provide information specific to the Department of Special Education, so the utility of the information is limited.

Program level assessment for students are collected at three different points during the program, the first block, reading block, and final block. In each block, students are enrolled in a content course and complete an associated practicum. Two pieces of data are collected at each point, the first is grade on a key assignment from the course and the second is teaching performance in the practicum. The data demonstrates that students are meeting standard. However, faculty are discussing whether there might be different data to collect that would better identify students who are at-risk of not meeting standard and whether the grade required to indicate satisfactory teaching performance should be raised from the current standard.

Several years ago, an ad-hoc faculty group developed a professionalism standards document in response to demonstrated need to clarify professional standards/behaviors for pre-service teachers who will be spending a considerable amount of time in public school settings. Faculty members are considering implementation of a simple procedure to be conducted every quarter to identify students for whom professionalism is a concern. The goal is to identify those students early and deal with the issue in a proactive manner. We are also considering whether professionalism should be a data point collected in the Woodring Information System.

Placement data indicated that graduates were gainfully employed at high rates, with an average of 70% holding a teaching position and 17% seeking a position. Informal meetings with district representatives have provided extremely positive input regarding the quality of special education graduates.
Summary:

Tasks that are in process include:
Review of application procedure
Curricular alignment with CEC and Standard 5
Review Alignment of practicum performance standards and course syllabi outcomes with Standard 5
Full implementation of the electronic plan of study
Review program level assessments, including adoption of a professionalism procedure
Continue consideration of factors to encourage and develop a more diverse student population.