



Compliance Desk Audit Report Summer of 2009 Rice University Initial Teacher Certification Program

According to Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(c), " An entity approved by the SBEC under this chapter...shall be reviewed at least once every five years under procedures approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff; however, a review may be conducted at any time at the discretion of the TEA staff." Per TAC §228.1(c), " All educator preparation programs are subject to the same standards of accountability, as required under Chapter 229 of this title." The Texas Education Agency administers Texas Administrative Code rules required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all educator preparation programs in the state. Please see the complete Texas Administrative Code at www.tea.state.tx.us for details.

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Program Specialist, Tabita Gutierrez, conducted a Texas Education Agency Compliance Desk Audit of Rice University. The focus of the compliance audit was the initial teacher certification program. The following are findings and recommendations for program improvement.

SCOPE OF THE COMPLIANCE AUDIT:

The scope of the audit was restricted solely to verifying compliance with Texas Administrative Code §227, §228, §229,

Data Analysis:

Information concerning compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) governing educator preparation programs was collected by various qualitative means. A self-report was submitted to the Texas Education Agency via Survey Monkey along with requested verifying documents. Because student records contain confidential information and could not be transmitted to TEA, student records were checked by the program using a check list supplied by TEA. In addition, electronic questionnaires developed by TEA were sent to Rice University stakeholders. Forty-four (44) stakeholders responded to the questionnaires: Six (6) advisory committee members; fourteen (14) student teachers, clinical teachers, interns; one (1) field supervisor; two (2) principals; and nine (9) cooperating teachers/mentors responded. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence. Evidence of compliance was measured using a rubric aligned with Texas Administrative Code. After the review of the information, the program specialist arranged a telephone debrief to cover the findings of the audit. The findings were incorporated into the

original survey monkey form and sent to the program. This summary report provides the findings and recommendations resulting from the audit.

COMPONENT I: Governance of Educator Preparation Programs- Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20

FINDINGS:

Rice University is not in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Rule §228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs. There was no Rice University Advisory Committee information provided for the 2008-2009 academic year because the advisory committee was non-existent during the 2008-2009 academic year. Two current committees, the Education Council and the mentor teachers group, did provide guidance and served in an advisory capacity. The Education Council is comprised of the subject matter liaisons from appropriate departments in the University. The mentor teachers group is comprised of those mentors who support student teachers as they write and deliver curriculum in the program. Both met once a year to make recommendations on program-wide issues and structure.

Specific plans are in place to create an advisory committee for the 2009-2010 academic year that will meet a minimum of twice per year as mandated by Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Rule §228.20(b). Eight individuals have been recruited to serve on the newly formed committee. Invited members include three from the public/private schools, one from the education service center, two from the University, and two from business/community. Meetings are scheduled for September 10, 2009, and January 28, 2010.

As per the self-report responses, the advisory committee will address all areas mandated by rule in an advisory capacity. The advisory committee will have the added advantage of having at least one representative from each of the current committees. They will provide issues for the advisory committee to deliberate. It is noted on the self-report that agendas and minutes are required. These will be archived. It appears that sign-in sheets were not required or archived in the past; thus, the program is advised to require sign-in sheets and archive these along with the agendas and minutes for all future advisory committee meetings. To facilitate training of advisory committee members, the program should consider creating an Advisory Committee Handbook.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.20 - GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM. In light of the findings detailed above, Rice University is not in compliance.

COMPONENT II: ADMISSION CRITERIA - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10

FINDINGS:

Rice University is in compliance with TAC Rule §227.10 Admission Criteria. Candidates must have a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) for admittance into the Rice University educator preparation program. Test scores on the THEA, SAT, and ACT are also considered. Besides an application and transcript information, candidates must submit three letters of recommendation, preferably from professors in the applicant's major field.

The program utilizes standard avenues to publish its admission requirements: website, catalogues, and brochures. In addition to these avenues, Rice University also participates in Academic Fairs on campus and Education Club meetings to recruit candidates.

As per the program's self-report, records, which are stored both electronically and in paper format, are retained for at least five years. All records are kept under secure conditions.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA. In light of the findings detailed above, the educator preparation program (EPP) is in compliance.

COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30

FINDINGS:

Rice University is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum. The 17 subject matter topics mandated in Texas Administrative Code Rule §228.30 are taught throughout the curriculum offered by Rice University's educator preparation program. Although no modules or courses are offered online, technology is readily available in virtually all classrooms and is used regularly as desired by professors.

Specific classes, as noted in the self-report, address each of the 17 topics initially. They are then also integrated in other courses throughout the curriculum. Assessment varies as applicable to the topic. The Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, for example, is integrated throughout the candidates' course of study. Thus, candidates address the Code of Ethics before making observations in classrooms, when creating lesson plans, when discussing assessment methods, and while considering classroom management. It is also considered in discussions about job searches and the student teaching experience. The candidates' understanding of the Code of Ethics is assessed through participation in discussions and by candidates' behavior. Their understanding of the actual Code of Ethics document is also assessed during their preparation for the TExES exam.

Because the student teaching experience is during the summer school session, candidates work with their course instructors and mentor teachers during the spring semester to create the appropriate curriculum, including specific lesson plans, for two six-week units. Candidates are required to contact each summer school student's family within the first two weeks of summer

school classes and to participate in the Summer School Open House during the first week of classes.

In essence, the courses required by the Rice University program are designed to complement each other in providing candidates a foundation of philosophy, skills, and values as they enter their own classrooms. The faculty members from the various departments work together to make frequent references to curriculum topics that may not be the ones on which their particular course focuses. In this way, professors offer the candidates continuity of the curriculum throughout their coursework. According to the document review submissions, the Rice University program also offers research seminars and colloquia on major issues in contemporary education.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.30 – EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM. In light of the findings detailed above, Rice University is in compliance.

COMPONENT IV: Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training (TAC) §228.35

FINDINGS:

Rice University is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.35 Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training.

Candidates are required to participate in a total of 30 clock hours of field-based experiences offered in specific courses prior to student teaching as well as 15 hours of observation, based on ethnographic research through the foundations courses. Candidates document their field-based experience through observation logs and respond to their experiences in a variety of ways based on the purpose they serve in the particular class.

Cooperating teachers are selected based on the following criteria: Texas State certification, a minimum of three years teaching experience, and strong recommendations. Preference is given to those currently teaching in accredited schools in the Houston area.

Cooperating/mentor teachers receive stipends for attendance at the program's training sessions.

Generally, there are just two field supervisors at a time. Field supervisors do not participate in any scientifically-based training regarding coaching or mentoring. Training occurs through observations made in the summer student teaching experience as the two supervisors compare notes and recommendations for candidates.

The Rice University educator preparation program provides two options for students to meet the student teaching requirement: two six-week student teaching experiences taken during two consecutive summers or one six-week summer student teaching experience plus one semester of internship. Candidates participating in the summer experience are engaged with students only four hours of the day. Program personnel stated that the remainder of the summer school day, candidates participated in meetings and/or campus duties.

A minimum of three formal observations are conducted during the student teaching experience and documented through observation notes written by the field supervisor. Specific areas addressed in the comments to the candidate include accuracy and organization of the content, student reactions and interactions, clarity of the lesson objectives, and variety and relevance of questions.

Because the observations are the entire length of the class period, they are generally longer than 45 minutes. The summer student teaching experience lesson is 50 minutes long; the observation during the regular semester may be from 45 to 90 minutes in length. Although the observation documentation notes are shared with the candidates, they are not provided to the candidates' campus administrators. Thus, the program is not adhering to Texas Administrative Code Rule §228.35(f).

Support is provided through various means to those candidates struggling academically. Tutoring and counseling services, conferencing with appropriate university and campus personnel, and interventions regarding specific areas of concern are implemented as extra support for candidates.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.35 – PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ON-GOING SUPPORT. In light of the findings detailed above, Rice University is in compliance.

COMPONENT V: Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40

FINDINGS:

Rice University is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement. Per documentation, the Rice University program evaluation system encompasses course evaluations, portfolio evaluations, department meeting reviews, summer staff evaluations, and interviews of summer school campus personnel as well as surveys from candidates, secondary students, and parents of the students. TExES and ExCET scores are reviewed, and changes in curriculum, according to the self-report, are guided through results of the data and evaluations by the multiple constituencies and state mandates.

Progress of candidates is monitored regularly. A system is in place that requires candidates to meet with the department academic advisor to begin a Plan of Study, which is submitted to the Department Administrator directly connected to the area in which the candidates are earning certification. Candidates meet with the appropriate advisors and administrators who review and verify completion of all requirements at least once a semester. Readiness for TExES testing is also verified before candidates are recommended for testing.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.40 – ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. In light of the findings detailed above, Rice University is in compliance.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Compliance Recommendations are based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency compliance audit. If the program is out of compliance with any component, please consult the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) and correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. General Recommendations are suggestions for program improvement only.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: In order to meet requirements of Texas Administrative Code governing educator preparation programs, the following recommendations must be implemented immediately:

Texas Administrative Code 228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

- Ensure that the proposed advisory committee meets a minimum of twice during the 2009-2010 academic year in order to comply with Texas Administrative Code Rule §228.20(b).

Texas Administrative Code 228.35(f) Program Delivery and On-Going Support

- Provide training for university field supervisors to be in adherence with Texas Administrative Code §228.35(f). Areas presented should include coaching and mentoring strategies.
- Create an observation documentation form to be provided to all campus administrators of student teaching candidates and/or interns. Require that all supervisors submit observations forms to campus administrators in order that the program will be in adherence with TAC Rules §228.35(f).

OTHER PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

None at this time.