

Compliance Report for Monitoring Visit 2009-2010 University of Texas - Dallas

Executive Summary

A continuing approval visit of the initial undergraduate educator preparation program was conducted on January 21 - 22, 2010 by TEA Program Specialists Sandra Jo Nix and Dr. Phillip Eaglin.

Self Report Submitted: October 27, 2009

COMPONENT I: COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Findings:

The University of Texas - Dallas is not in compliance with TAC §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs due to lack of two advisory committee meetings per academic year, and the committee's lack of involvement in program policy decisions, program design, and long-term planning.

The ten (10) committee members constitute a balanced membership. Minutes for the one advisory meeting were available. However, there were no sign-in sheets to document attendance. Responses from the advisory committee and program staff questionnaires confirmed that only one advisory committee meeting had been held.

According to the advisory committee questionnaire, the advisory committee was not involved in major policy decisions and no respondent could answer the question asking how the program influenced policy. Since the membership of the advisory committee tends to be somewhat fluid and in light of the limited involvement of the committee, it is recommended that a handbook be developed and yearly training be provided for the members to define their roles and responsibilities as cited in TAC §228.20.

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

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

Findings:

The University of Texas – Dallas is in compliance with TAC §227.10 – Admission Criteria. The University requires a 2.7 GPA overall or the last 60 semester hours of coursework. In addition, the University requires a higher than state mandated score on the TASP/THEA and ACT for entering candidates. Candidates must have completed a public speaking course or have documentation from an employer that the candidate has professional level oral proficiency. In addition, the candidate must complete 18 semester hours of appropriate professional development courses, including six semesters credit for student teaching. Candidates must also complete courses in reading, demonstrate computer literacy, and complete twelve semester hours of English. Final admission into the teacher education program requires that the candidate make an appointment for certification plan advising with the Teacher Development Center where an oral interview is conducted with the applicant as to their commitment to teaching. It is recommended that the University investigate various software programs to use as a screening device for appropriateness to teach.

The admission process, as confirmed from the University of Texas-Dallas website, includes an application, THEA/TASP score of 260 in Reading, 240 in Math, and 240 in writing. The candidate must have completed the 54 semester-hours of undergraduate coursework with no grade below “C”. Upon review of the student folders, admission requirements as stated in the self-report were confirmed.

A variety of avenues are used to share admission criteria with prospective candidates. Recruitment is carried out by appropriate methods such as Scholar Days, school recruiting visits, website and advisory committee members. This was confirmed in the document review.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA. In light of the findings detailed above, the University of Texas - Dallas is in compliance.

Commendations:

The University of Texas - Dallas is commended for requiring higher standards than those required by TAC §227.10 for grade point average and admission tests.

The University of Texas - Dallas is commended for using a multiple tiered admissions process for entry into the teacher education program.

COMPONENT III. CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM

Findings:

The University of Texas – Dallas is in compliance with TAC §228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum. The faculty consists of 24 instructors and 8 field supervisors. Eleven staff members have PhDs and 18 have Master degrees. All are Texas certified and have many years of experience in the public school environment.

The program is currently in a temporary location until their new building is renovated. However, the temporary classrooms are spacious and contain several white boards as well as a media station incorporating an Elmo, projection device, CD player, DVD player, audio sound system, video camera, and a Questron for controlling all the equipment. The equipment has been installed in such a manner that it easily be moved. All students are required to complete an online technology course which provides comprehensive training executing educational technologies, choosing tools and resources to improve educational practice, and to construct electronic media to support teaching and learning.

The syllabi all follow a similar format. While the 17 required topics required in §228.30 appear to be covered, it is recommended that a more intentional presentation of the topics be included in the appropriate courses. These items should be clearly delineated in the syllabi. It is recommended a review of all the education courses be conducted and revised to create a cohesive instructional program covering the 17 mandated curriculum topics and their activities. The six hours of test preparation are currently embedded in all courses. The University should consider the addition of a free-standing workshop on test taking skills.

In reviewing the student teacher questionnaires, they expressed that a few courses need to be strengthened. 40% of the candidates that responded stated that reading strategies across the curriculum for all grade levels needed improvement. In addition, candidates felt that the teacher's responsibilities for Administering the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam (100%), how to use formative assessments to diagnose student learning needs (80%); laws and standards regarding students with special education needs (60%), standards and teaching strategies for students with limited English proficiency (60%), conducting parent conferences (); and incorporating instructional technology into their lesson plans (60%) need strengthening in the curriculum.

Cooperating teachers, in their questionnaire, expressed concern that candidates had not received enough practice in teaching lessons prior to the student teaching experience. It is recommended that opportunities for micro practice of the content delivery be embedded into courses. Explore the possibility of videotaping the micro lessons so that candidates may critique themselves and reflect on changes and growth in their teaching performance over time. Also, other teacher candidates and faculty could model best practices.

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

Commendations:

The University of Texas - Dallas is commended for installing state of the art media stations in each classroom.

The University of Texas - Dallas is commended for conducting advanced training in educational technology.

COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING

Findings:

The University of Texas – Dallas is in compliance with TAC §228.35 Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training. The program is delivered primarily face-to-face with one totally online course (Educational Technology ED 4372). All students are required to take this course. Reinforcing the skills taught in this course, fifteen other courses require utilization of technology in producing a product or in a lesson where technology is incorporated. From the faculty questionnaire, predominate methods for instruction included lecture, classroom discussion, cooperative learning groups, and modeling.

The program consists of 310 clock hours. The six hours of test preparation are embedded in the coursework of ED 3342, 4362 or 4361. This was confirmed upon review of these course syllabi. According to the curriculum correlation document, TExES type exam questions are included on the mid-term and the final exam. Practice PPR exams are also available to students. In addition, competencies and standards are reinforced in Curriculum & Instruction courses.

The program reported 40 clock hours for field-based experiences in both urban and suburban settings. The first 20 hours of field experience require tutoring in either Plano or Richardson ISD. The students are required to tutor in their subject specific areas as part of the course requirements. The second field experiences are structured and occur in Richardson, Plano, and Dallas ISD. Each district provides an orientation for the candidates and the candidate's attendance is mandatory. An observation time record is utilized which must be signed by the classroom teacher. All instructors integrate the field experience assignments into their courses by requiring projects or papers related to the students' observation/tutoring. These field experiences are part of the overall course grade. The program meets standards for first contact, first observation, number of observations, and debriefings. According to the document review, it was stated that five observations are conducted during the 12 week period of student teaching.

The self-report stated that a copy of the formal observation was provided to the campus administrator. However, in the field supervisor questionnaire, 88% of the field supervisors stated that they had not supplied this information to the campus administrator. In the document review, the observation form was a 2-part NCR that showed distribution to the field supervisor and the student teacher only. It is recommended that a copy of the formal observation form be provided to the campus administrator as per TAC §228.35(f).

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the field supervisors and 75% of the cooperating teachers reported that they conference together to help the student teacher's performance. The field supervisors are all Texas certified. The field supervisor's questionnaire reflected that they were provided training by the University on an as needed basis and were provided a Student Teaching Handbook which outlines their responsibilities in detail. It is suggested that training be provided at least once a year for the field supervisors in order to update operating procedures and bring new information on mentoring and coaching techniques. The ratio of field supervisor to student teacher is one to seven per the field supervisors' questionnaire.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of the cooperating teachers responding to the questionnaire indicated they had more than 11 years of teaching experience. They also reported frequent interaction with the field supervisors. The cooperating teachers received training from their respective school districts and received a handbook from the university. According to TAC §228.35(e), if the school district provided training for the cooperating teacher, the University of Texas - Dallas must maintain documentation that the cooperating teachers have been trained for auditing purposes.

Compliance status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING. In light of the findings detailed above, the University of Texas - Dallas is in compliance.

Commendations:

The University of Texas – Dallas is commended for the required 40 hours of structured observations which occur prior to entering the teacher education program.

The University of Texas - Dallas is commended for requiring five formal student teacher observations.

COMPONENT V. PROGRAM EVALUATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 228.40 - ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

Findings:

The University of Texas-Dallas is in compliance with TAC §228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the faculty responding to the questionnaire reported that they had no knowledge of the frequency of the overall program evaluation. In addition, they were not aware of the types of data collected to evaluate the program. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the responding faculty indicated that they had no knowledge of the frequency

of curriculum evaluation and 67% indicated that again they did not know what types of data was collected to evaluate the curriculum. The self report indicated that both a program and curriculum evaluation were conducted every two years. A number of individuals were identified as being involved in the evaluation. However, the faculty/instructors were not listed as part of the overall program evaluation, but were listed as involved in the curriculum evaluation. It is recommended that the faculty be involved in both the overall evaluation of the teacher preparation program and the curriculum evaluation.

The program has established benchmarks to monitor the success of the students as they move toward provisional and formal admission into the teacher preparation program. Indicators include specific standards for provisional admission, formal admission, student teaching, and testing. However, in the faculty meeting minutes, the indicators reported for assessing student progress in the courses were the mid-term and final examination grade. The syllabi mentioned the numeric grading system but did not refer to any other benchmarks used to measure intervals of student professional growth. It is recommended that additional benchmarks for performance assessments be developed. It is possible that indicators contained in the PDAS-like observation form and the SACS review objectives be used as the core of additional performance indicators.

The instructors need to include in their syllabi more information regarding the presentation of assessment strategies such as rubrics that will be used in evaluating student content and skill attainment. This allows the students to experience and exposed to the various assessment strategies available to them as teachers. With the level and accessibility of technology at the university, the program should consider having each student develop an e-portfolio with relevant artifacts. This will help candidates secure future employment

ASEP initial and final scores have remained relatively the same for the past three years with passing rates ranging from 97% to 100%.

Records are maintained for five years in a secure location in both electronic and paper format.

Grievance procedures are outlined in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures. Copies of the rules and regulations are available in the Office of the Dean of Students.

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

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency Continuing Approval Visit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the TAC rules and correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A progress report will be required in one year to ensure compliance with recommendations.

General Program recommendations are suggestions for program improvement. No progress report is required.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: A Progress Report will be required in one year.

- Conduct two advisory committee meetings per academic year as required by TAC §228.20(b) Governance of Educator Preparation Programs. This must be corrected immediately.
- Involve advisory committee members in program planning, design as required by TAC §228.20 (b) Governance of Educator Preparation Programs. This must be corrected immediately.
- Provide a copy of the formal observation form to the campus administrator as required by §TAC 228.35(f) Program Delivery and Ongoing Support. This must be corrected immediately.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a handbook which outlines the full roles and responsibilities of the committee members
- Conduct yearly training for advisory committee members
- Involve faculty members in evaluating both the overall teacher program and curriculum
- Provide training yearly for the field supervisors
- Provide students with more opportunities to practice teaching and incorporating technology into their lesson plans
- Bring the terminology into line with TAC definitions
- Explore means of videotaping students presenting micro lessons for critique by faculty and their peers
- Explore opportunities to collaborate regarding resources between U Teach and the Teacher Development Center
- Investigate using propensities to teach software to screen prospective teaching applicants
- Improve the benchmarking process
- Add a free-standing workshop for candidates on test taking skills.