

**Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards  
Post Approval Site Visit  
University of Texas of the Permian Basin  
4901 E. University Blvd., Odessa, TX  
April 15-17, 2009**

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This post-approval site visit was conducted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Team in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10 – Approval Process.

**Background Information**

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB) is a general academic institution of The University of Texas System. Authorized by the Texas Legislature in 1969 as an upper-level university offering junior, senior, and graduate level programs, UTPB opened its doors to 1,011 students who registered when classes were first offered in September 1973. UTPB achieved four-year status and began offering freshman level classes in September of 1991. As the only four-year University for Midland, Odessa, and the surrounding rural areas, UTPB's enrollment is now more than 3,400 representing a diverse population of non-traditional students, first generation students, and transfer students. According to its website, UTPB served students from 129 Texas counties, 35 states, and 20 countries during fall 2008.

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The University is also accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to accredit programs for the preparation of teachers and other professional school personnel.

Prior to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) visit, the UTPB School of Education (SOE) submitted a self-report which addressed all five components. The program also ensured that required document review items were in order. In addition, TEA emailed an electronic survey to fall 2008 and spring 2009 student teachers prior to the visit.

Attendance at the opening session of the post-approval visit, which focused on the traditional undergraduate program, included 19 participants. Evidence of administrative support for the teacher certification program was demonstrated by the attendance and introductory remarks of Dr. David Watts, President; and Dr. William Fannin, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Guy E. Mills, Dean of the School of Education (SOE), welcomed the attendees. Dr. Roy Hurst, Department Chair of Curriculum and Instruction and Certification Officer, presented an overview of the UTPB School of

Education teacher certification program and components covered in the self-report. Advisory Council representatives discussed their active participation in the committee, and members of the faculty shared highlights of the educator preparation program.

The number and roles of people interviewed by the Texas Education Agency program specialists during this post-approval site visit included the following 45 participants: 3 Advisory Council members, 9 Cooperating Teachers, 10 Directors/Deans/Faculty, 7 Field Supervisors, 4 Principals/Administrators, 1 Program Staff, and 11 Student Teachers. Additionally, as of April 16, twelve student teachers responded to the previously emailed electronic survey questionnaire.

## **I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration**

Two advisory groups actively participate in advising the leadership of UTPB's School of Education regarding the educator preparation program. This dual system of collaboration and advisement provides guidance and recommendations from a wide variety of individuals. There is also extensive collaboration between the University and the K-12 public and private campuses in the surrounding urban and rural school districts.

### **Findings**

The UTPB School of Education's Advisory Council is comprised of 15 members. Categories represented include university faculty, school district and campus personnel, Region 18 Education Service Center, and business/community individuals. The Council meets at least once each semester. Agendas provided evidence of the members' participation in providing input and feedback on a variety of issues impacting the educator preparation program. The document review revealed that members also participated in focus groups prior to the previous year's NCATE accreditation visit. As a result, the grade point average (GPA) in the teaching field was raised to 2.75 or higher as a response to minimum standards required by several of the NCATE professional areas.

Interviews of Advisory Council members revealed that they felt they were kept abreast of information and special projects through a strong communication system. They indicated that they received updates through emails from the School of Education and newsletters from the President's Office. Being informed allowed them to come to meetings more prepared to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

During the Opening Session, faculty expressed the need for a Learning Resource Center to support student teachers; however, it was noted that current budget and space constraints limited the opportunity for its implementation. Interviews of Advisory Council members indicated that the administration attended meetings and provided support for partnerships, grants, and the NCATE accreditation process. They emphasized that more budgetary decisions by the administration in favor of the School

of Education would provide opportunities for improvements and additions such as the Learning Resource Center. During the Closing Session, the Dean of Education noted that the Provost had already designated an area for the Resource Center to be in place by fall 2009. In addition, some equipment has already been purchased for this purpose.

According to the Self-Report, the School of Education also benefits from the input of a Teacher Education Council. Faculty members representing the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education serve as members. They participate in discussions that may affect degree programs, such as decisions to increase the major GPA and minimum Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) scores required for certification program admission.

***The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.***

### **Commendations**

The UTPB School of Education is commended for utilizing a dual system of advisement to provide input in issues impacting the teacher certification program. Moreover, members are encouraged to actively participate in other capacities, such as in focus groups to address specific goals and objectives.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for adding Advisory Council members on the mailing list and distributing newsletters from the President's Office to keep them abreast of all activities of the University. This effort kept all members informed of news and activities.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for including all five categories of stakeholders as per TAC §228.20 in its membership.

## **II. Admission Criteria**

Requirements for admission to the teacher certification program at UTPB are the same for all certification fields. As per the Self-Report, admission criteria, developed through a collaborative process, are based on state-mandated requirements, NCATE accreditation standards, and input from advisory committees and program faculty.

### **Findings**

Candidates for admission to the program must submit an application that includes the following criteria:

- Completion of at least 60 semester hours toward the bachelor's degree, with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

- A GPA of 2.75 or higher in all coursework for the major (or teaching field), with no grade below “C”.
- THEA (TASP) Reading score of 260, Writing score of 240, and Math score of 240, or equivalent scores on other accepted TSI assessments of basic skills.
- Oral communication proficiency as demonstrated by completion of COMM 1315 or an equivalent speech course with a grade of “C” or better.
- Completion of the teacher education core courses with a GPA of 2.75 or higher and no grade below “C”. The core courses include PSYC 3341 Child/Adolescent Psychology, EDUC 3352 The Exceptional Child, EDUC 3362 Foundations of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, and EDUC 3370 Foundations of Education.
- Completion of an early field experience while enrolled in the core courses. (The host districts perform initial criminal background checks at this time.)
- Completion of a one-page essay and 15-minute interview on “Why I Want to Become a Teacher.”
- Current degree and certification plans on file.
- Submission of three letters of recommendation.

The Self-Report addresses how the program equitably applies admission criteria through a review process that compares each applicant’s credentials against the established criteria. Applicants who meet the state-mandated criteria but fall short of the higher local criterion may be admitted conditionally for a set period of time. Within an appropriate time frame, the program reviews the candidate’s status to determine if the condition has been met or if dismissal is in order. If denied admission, applicants may submit a petition requesting an exception in the area of deficiency. Such petitions are reviewed by the faculty advisor and the certification officer, prior to final review and decision by the Dean of the School.

The creation of the candidate’s portfolio of assignments is initiated during some of the core courses, including EDUC 3370, EDUC 3352, and EDUC 3362. The portfolio assessment is due and assessed as a part of the application for admission to student teaching. It is a vehicle utilized to demonstrate the learning outcomes that teacher certification candidates have acquired.

Student files are kept in lockable cabinets in a secured office. Files are color-coded to denote the following categories: those working toward certification, undergraduates, and Post-Baccalaureates. Upon acceptance into student teaching, candidates’ files are pulled and placed in separate lockable cabinets, where pertinent information and observation documents are filed.

***The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 – Admission Criteria.***

### **Commendations**

The UTPB School of Education is commended for adopting the GPA of 2.75 or higher in the teaching field. This requirement exceeds the state-mandated minimum.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for raising the THEA scores required for admission above the state's minimum level in order to promote the skill level required for successful completion of upper division courses.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for requiring educator candidates to create a portfolio before admission into the teacher education program that continues as an ongoing product and assessment until completion of student teaching.

### **III. Curriculum**

The document review indicated that, in most cases, faculty adheres to a syllabi format that includes standards adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC). Thus, most syllabi addressed domains, competencies, and the Conceptual Framework based on the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES). The Self-Report also stated that the curriculum was impacted by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (INTASC) as well as the NCATE standards.

#### **Findings**

Candidates for all areas and levels of certification complete a common core curriculum that includes the four courses listed in the admission component. Participation in these courses help the candidates assess and determine if teaching is truly a profession they want to pursue.

UTPB School of Education ensures that alignment with the 17 Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) topics in Texas Administrative Code §228.30(b) is included in the teacher certification program curriculum. It spirals through multiple courses to assure that concepts are reviewed and revisited for better comprehension. The document review provided evidence of this alignment.

Embedded throughout the curriculum is ongoing preparation for certification tests. Weekly test preparation sessions at no cost and an in-depth two-credit course focusing on the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) competencies and test-taking skills are offered to teacher certification candidates.

In addition, UTPB offers courses in cooperation with the three area community colleges in many locations throughout the region via the Regional Electronic Academic Communications Highway (REACH). The University began offering classes taught at Midland College and at the Center for Energy and Economic Diversification in fall 2003. Presently, six undergraduate degrees are offered by UTPB at Midland College campus.

***The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum.***  
**Commendations**

The UTPB School of Education is commended for its curriculum which is extensively based on state and national standards.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for the portfolio assessment project which seamlessly flows through the educator candidate's path through the education department from the initial courses to student teaching. Thus, the portfolio demonstrates the learning outcomes the candidate has achieved throughout the entire teacher certification program.

#### **IV. Program Delivery and Evaluation**

According to the UTPB website, over 90% of tenure track faculty members hold doctorates in their teaching fields. During the Opening Session, it was noted that School of Education faculty and administration are also engaged in a wide range of research projects and grants. These research activities also impact program delivery and evaluation.

#### **Findings**

The website as well as administrative interviews indicated that curriculum delivery is available through various means. The traditional on site classes are complimented by academic flexibility. There are daytime and evening classes, Internet-based courses, Audit (no credit lecture classes), self-paced instruction, internships, and contract courses. Scheduling options, such as evening hours, interactive televised instruction, or weekend programs also exist. In addition, UT Permian Basin is involved with first year basic courses through the UT TeleCampus, a virtual campus that includes every component of the UT System.

Field supervisors are supported by the Director of Field Experiences. At the beginning of the student teaching semester, periodic meetings are held to share ideas, practices, and expectations. Although a midterm evaluation is conducted, documentation is not made available to the Director of Field Experiences in a timely manner. It is vital to adhere to procedures that are in place to identify struggling student teachers so that appropriate intervention can take place.

*The Gateway to Initial Teacher Certification at UTPB Handbook* was created by the faculty of the UTPB School of Education. It provides comprehensive information ranging from the vision and mission of the School of Education to the Code of Ethics for Texas educators. It clearly communicates the requirements and regulations established by the faculty. In addition, the required knowledge, skills, and dispositions are discussed and the responsibilities of the candidate are specifically outlined. Extensively

covered in the handbook is the portfolio creation and assessment requirement. The candidate's commitment and understanding are documented by a signature page.

Field-based experiences at UTPB are multi-faceted. Initial field experiences are utilized to help the candidate self-assess their commitment and qualifications for pursuing a career in education. After admission to the program, candidates complete from three to seven additional field experiences, dependent on the certification being sought.

Prior to entering student teaching, candidates complete field experiences which are progressive in nature. The Self-Report indicate that this process begins with observations, moves into tutoring and working with individuals, working with small groups, instructing larger groups and culminating with student teaching. Hours of field-based experiences range from 30+ for secondary education candidates to 100 for bilingual elementary education candidates.

Field Supervisors observe student teachers at least five times during the semester and also provide formative evaluations and a midterm summative evaluation. The midterm and summative evaluations are conducted through three-way conferences, involving the Field Supervisor, the Cooperating Teacher, and the Student Teacher. Feedback is given both orally and written. A final evaluation is done at the end of the semester. In most cases, Field Supervisors only supervise 4 to 5 student teachers during a semester. This low Field Supervisor to student teacher ratio allows more opportunities for timely feedback sessions. Field Supervisors also are able to communicate with student teachers during the monthly seminar sessions.

According to the University's documentation, UTPB has a 98% pass rate for teacher certification and ranks third in the state for placement in employment and graduate school. Initial and final Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) scores were consistently high for the past three years: Completion Years 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Interviews revealed that the School of Education administration and staff conduct an annual data retreat during which they reevaluate the curriculum. All types of data are reviewed and considered during this all-day session. A breakdown of the ASEP scores is utilized to determine if changes need to occur. Domains, proficiencies and the Conceptual Framework are considered. If there is a lack of success in any domain, the staff determines how to restructure the curriculum to assure optimum success in the designated domain.

Program evaluation is in place and also aligned with NCATE accreditation requirements. A review of the NCATE requirements and results facilitates the staff's decisions about restructuring of its curriculum to have alignment with both state and national standards.

***The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in compliance with TAC §228.35 (a) & (d) – Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training and with TAC***

## **§228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.**

### **Commendations**

The UTPB School of Education is commended for requiring 30-100 hours of field-based experiences and 14 weeks of student teaching. Thus, in most cases, this is over and beyond the state minimum.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for its consistency in keeping its ASEP scores at a 98% level.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for reevaluating curriculum to improve student success through numerous studies and its annual data retreat.

The UTPB School of Education is commended for conducting a number of observations that exceeds requirements and for its field supervisor to student teacher ratio of 1 to 5.

### **V. Ongoing Support**

Ongoing support for the student teachers is provided by the cooperating teachers and field supervisors. The *Student Teaching Handbook*, designed to provide an overview of the purposes and objectives of the student teaching experience, specifically targets the responsibilities of cooperating teachers and university field supervisors. The handbook includes pertinent topics addressing program information, assignment guidelines, relationships and responsibilities, and expectations and evaluation.

### **Findings**

An advisement system is in place to provide support to student teachers. The teacher certification program (TCP) advisors are members of the UTPB School of Education who are assigned to assist student teachers with matters related to teacher certification. Educator candidates are required to meet with or contact their advisors via email or eAdvisor at least once a semester. Registration for education courses is dependent on this process. The student/advisor session determines registration for the following semester.

Through the interview process, it was noted that additional support was needed in some areas. Both cooperating teachers and student teachers acknowledged a need for additional instruction regarding classroom management. Interviews revealed that student teachers

The cooperating teacher must also conduct two observations with feedback given both written and orally to the student teacher and submitted to the designated Field Supervisor. At the end of the semester, the Field Supervisor submits all observation

records to the Director of Field Experiences. These observation records are filed in the student folders that are stored in the Certification Office. Interviews revealed that observation records are not submitted and filed until after the summative conference so that the Field Supervisor can discuss the final evaluation information with the student teacher. One of the disadvantages, however, that was pointed out was that the Director of Field Experiences did not have an optimum opportunity to review the records during the semester to determine if all procedures were being implemented throughout the semester. It is recommended that a system be created to provide early identification of those needing additional assistance and to ensure that all program procedures are being implemented in a timely manner.

It was noted that oftentimes it was the student teachers that were distributing the Student Teaching Handbook to their cooperating teacher. This practice limited the opportunity for the Field Supervisors to provide the appropriate orientation to the cooperating teachers.

An addendum email to the Self-Report provided information about mentor training for mentor teachers. Although there was no evidence of scientifically-based research training for the cooperating teacher, Ector County Independent School District, the largest UTPB partner district, indicated that they use various types of scientifically-based research training for new teachers and mentors. Interviews revealed, however, that most cooperating teachers did not receive training on mentoring and coaching. In addition, Field Supervisors are required to provide an initial conference regarding UTPB's expectations for cooperating teachers. As indicated earlier though, in some cases, they failed to follow through on this responsibility.

***The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.35 (a) and (d) – Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training but is not in compliance with TAC §228.35 (e), which describes the required training for cooperating teachers.***

## **Commendations**

No commendations were noted at this time.

## **Program Recommendations**

- Adhere to Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35(e) by creating a scientifically-based training program for cooperating teachers.
- Implement a method for early retrieval and documentation of observation records periodically throughout the student teaching semester to better evaluate the progress of the student teachers and assess need for intervention.

- Ensure that field supervisors document their initial conference at the beginning of the student teaching experience with cooperating teachers and student teachers to facilitate clarification of responsibilities and expectations as designated in the *Student Teaching Handbook*.
- Develop a system by which the field supervisor will provide a copy of the written feedback to the candidate's campus administrator.