

Major Field Assessment Report

Degree Program: Special Education - Graduate

Year: 1994-1995

A major field assessment plan was developed by faculty members in the Department of Special Education for the graduate special education program. Sources of assessment data for this plan include: computer-generated reports of student GPAs, Exit Questionnaires, Comprehensive Examination records, Structured Interviews, and Employer Surveys. Other evidence of achievement of outcomes can be located in the graduate admission records, NCATE accreditation file, graduate program core course syllabi, and records of the Graduate Credentials Committee. Assessment results are presented.

The **first goal** of the special education graduate program is to develop and maintain a quality education program.

Credentials for all faculty members, full- and part-time, are submitted to the Graduate Credentials Committee and individuals must be approved before teaching courses for the department.

When student admission procedures were examined, the graduate admission procedures continue to be implemented effectively.

Reports of student GPAs were obtained for each semester. For the Summer, 1994, Fall 1994, and Spring, 1995 semesters, 97.9%, 98.3%, 96.2% of graduate students respectively, met the "good standing" criteria.

The Department has NCATE accreditation and the majority of courses are taught by full-time faculty.

When student preparedness for positions in the field of special education was examined, 100% of students rated their preparation as satisfactory or better on the Exit Questionnaire.

Employers responding to the Employer Survey, one to two years after graduation, considered 100% of graduates well-prepared when teaching in their area of certification.

The **second goal** of the special education graduate program is to provide a curriculum to develop professional competencies in the teaching, supervision, and/or administration of special education.

Employers indicated that 100% of graduates were satisfactory or better on targeted items.

On the Exit Questionnaire, 100% of graduates indicated that they were satisfactorily prepared on targeted competencies. Eighty percent of graduate students successfully completed comprehensive examinations on their first attempt.

One hundred percent of students who retook comprehensive examinations passed.

The five comprehensive examination areas with the percent of students passing on the first attempt include: General, 85%; Research, 90%; Methods, 71%; Assessment, 83%; Management, 80%.

On the Exit Questionnaire, 87% of graduates indicated that they were satisfactorily prepared on targeted competencies for Summer, 1994; 100% of graduates for Fall, 1994; and 100% for Spring, 1995. One student taking comprehensive examinations in the Summer, 1994 identified weaknesses in the following skill areas: training and use of paraprofessionals, team decision-making, health and safety issues relative to students with severe/profound disabilities. These topics are addressed primarily in elective courses leading to severe/profound certification and this student specialized in courses leading to mild/moderate certification.

The **third goal** of the special education graduate program is to develop sensitivity to the unique needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

The core special education courses required for master's degree students include SPED 600, SPED 662, SPED 581, and SPED 602. One hundred percent of syllabi for these courses include a component on disability awareness and current best practices.

On the Exit Questionnaire, 87% of graduates indicated that they were satisfactorily prepared on targeted competencies for Summer, 1994; 100% of graduates for Fall, 1994; and 100% for Spring, 1995. One student taking comprehensive examinations in the Summer, 1994 identified weaknesses in the following areas: knowledge and use of professional resources, and knowledge of effective family involvement.

The **fourth goal** of the special education program is to foster and maintain a positive environment for student's professional development.

During Structured Interviews, 95% of students indicated that they had participated in at least 1 professional organization or activity, and 68% indicated that they had participated in two or more organizations or activities.

### Use of results:

Discussion of 1994-1995 assessment data focused on scheduling difficulties and use of adjunct faculty. Every semester efforts are made to develop a schedule that serves the needs of the wide variety of students seeking graduate courses. Because the primary demand is for courses required for mild/moderate certification, these courses are considered a priority. It is difficult to offer special courses required for severe/profound and assessment teacher certification because a minimum of five students is required. Efforts will be made to publicize these course offerings to ensure that students needing these courses are notified. A limited number of courses are offered off-campus and in the summer primarily due to budget constraints. During the meeting creative approaches were discussed for locating the best qualified adjunct faculty and for allowing department faculty members to teach off-campus courses. Faculty members also continue to seek external grant funding as a means of supporting innovative courses.

Another major concern discussed was the pass/fail rate for comprehensive examinations. Reasons for some students lack of success were examined. Often students begin taking graduate courses for certification only and then after 3-4 courses decide to work toward a master's degree. Courses are often spread over 5-6 years and often important courses were taken with adjunct faculty. Also many students take the majority of their courses during 4-week summer sessions, with typical enrollments of 30-40 students. Faculty members teaching courses agreed to review their examination and course requirements to ensure that written communication skills are evaluated more carefully and that students receive feedback. The guidelines provided to students regarding preparation for comprehensive examinations were also discussed. It was agreed that a formal comprehensive examination manual was needed. Two faculty members were assigned the responsibility for development of the manual. Procedures for providing a remediation plan for students taking comprehensive examinations a second time were revised.