

## **Review of MFA Results and Report on Curricular Change**

### **M.Ed., Special Education Department of Special Education**

December 1, 1997

Review of the results of the 1996-97 assessment activities indicates areas of strength and weakness within the Special Education program. All students met admission criteria and all graduate students enrolled during 1996-97 met the "good standing" requirement. The special education department continues to be approved by its honored society (CEC) and 100% of faculty members were approved to teach graduate courses by the Graduate Credentials committee.

When questioned about their preparation, as expected, 100% of graduates indicated that their program was "satisfactory" or better on the Departmental Exit questionnaire. One hundred percent of graduates also indicated at least satisfactory preparation in selected competencies in the following areas: knowledge of field of special education; knowledge of identification and needs of students with disabilities; knowledge of instructional assessment; knowledge of curriculum development and implementation; knowledge of instructional strategies; knowledge of instructional materials; knowledge of classroom management; knowledge of classroom organization; knowledge of team teaching, medical and related health personnel and the role of the professional; knowledge of professional resources, organizations and journals; knowledge of affective qualities which support positive interpersonal functioning with children and adults; knowledge of effective family involvement; and knowledge of problem solving skills.

One area of concern has been the rate of passage of comprehensive examinations. Ninety percent, rather than 100%, of graduate students passed the comprehensive examinations on the first attempt. Of students taking comprehensive examinations for the first time, 100% of students passed the research and the general questions as expected. Of this same student group, the passage rates on the methods, management, and assessment questions were less than expected: 87% for the methods question, 93% for the assessment question, and 91% for the management question. Several discussions have taken place between faculty members, although no decisions have been made about substantial changes to the comprehensive examination process. It is only recently that the Comprehensive Examination Manual has been disseminated, and stricter guidelines have been followed.

Examination of the syllabi for the core courses required for the Master's degree indicates that all courses include a component on disability awareness and current best practices, as expected.

Data were also gathered through Structured Interviews conducted by graduate faculty members during the Summer, 1996; Fall, 1996; and Spring, 1997 semesters. Summaries of the results of the Structured Interviews are attached. While there is general agreement about the many strengths of the program, some weaknesses were identified. Some concerns expressed were related to the content of specific courses, including SPED 662, 663, and 612. The content of these courses is dictated by state department of education certification requirements, and faculty members do not have a great deal of flexibility. Students lacking education backgrounds also indicated that they felt they were at a disadvantage, in contrast to those graduate students with teaching experience. Additionally, some concern was expressed about the use of adjunct faculty. Use of adjunct faculty will continue to be monitored by the department head and curriculum committee members have discussed ways to provide more uniformity across sections of the same course.

Another area of weakness is related to student participation in professional development opportunities. Much less than expected, only 21% of graduates reported that they participated in at least two professional organizations or activities. Thirty-seven percent reported that they had participated in one professional organization or activity. Because the vast majority of graduate students are teaching full time while enrolled in one to three graduate courses in the evening, they report that they do not have time for these additional activities. However, they do indicate that they recognize the importance of professional involvement in their teaching careers.

Overall, based on the data available, students in this program are generally performing at the levels expected when criteria for the Major Field Assessment were established. It should be noted that Employer Surveys are no longer mailed, as it was decided that the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment would take over this responsibility.

## **Summary of Structured Interview Summer 1996**

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### **STRENGTHS**

Two(50%) of the four students who took the exam in the summer mentioned the faculty as the major strength of the program. Their comments included “individualized attention from faculty”, “ faculty supportive, knowledgeable and accessible”, “very organized.” The other two (50%) expressed their satisfaction with hand-on, exploratory activities. They commented on the teaching strategies, practicum, and on-site visits. Three students (75%) believed that as a result of the program, their skills improved in instruction related activities such as, assessment, teaching strategies. One (25%) student perceived she developed more professional skills such as attending conferences and conducting research. All four students gave favorable statements about faculty members.

### **WEAKNESSES**

Two (50%) students indicated that the courses were essentially geared toward students with teaching experiences. These students expressed a need for more “on-the-job” training. One student (25%) noted weaknesses in adjunct faculty teaching, and one student mentioned time and scheduling as problems. Two (50%) students requested more reading and language arts methods courses and one (25%) requested more instruction on curricular modification strategies for inclusion. Two(50%) students opted for eliminating the assessment practicum for teachers and substituting it with teaching basic subjects.

### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The students felt they needed more encouragement to engage in professional organizations. Several students belonged to various organizations such as CEC, Career Awareness Club, NAME. They attended various professional conferences including the Louisiana Super Conference and workshops offered through their school districts.

## **Summary of Structured Interview Fall 1996**

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### **STRENGTHS**

All eight students indicated satisfaction in the help and support they received from faculty members. Six out of the eight students believed that course content was effective and productive. They approved of the course content and the small class sizes which allowed for interaction and discussion. They all expressed satisfaction with the quality, knowledge, and accessibility of faculty members. The majority indicated preference for those classes which encouraged application and practical knowledge. They appreciated learning about the new trends in Special Education.

### **WEAKNESSES**

Three students indicated dissatisfaction with some of the courses. They mentioned SPED 662-663 as being too crowded and offering redundant information. One student did not approve of the way SPED 612 was taught. Other students suggested that 662 and 612 be dropped. Two students expressed a need for new ideas and more information on current events in Special Education in other states and in other countries. One student indicated a need for strategies on working with para-professionals, and four students preferred more hand-on activities.

### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Three students did not belong to professional organizations, and five were members of various organizations such as CEC, NAEYC, NCT Math, LA Reading Association. Many attended the Louisiana Super Conference and other professional workshops.

## **Summary of Structured Interview Spring 1997**

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### **Strengths**

Two respondents indicated satisfaction with faculty accessibility and four specifically mentioned the effectiveness of the program. Their comments included: well rounded, practical information, organized, planned, and informative. One student thought the program was outstanding. All six students believed that faculty members were effective in their responsibilities. They mentioned characteristics such as knowledgeable, personable, helpful, and available.

### **Weaknesses**

Four out of six students indicated course content dissatisfaction. They wanted more information on behavior management, technology, specialized courses in early intervention, and a severe and profound curriculum. Two students found fault with scheduling and location and suggested that special education courses be made available for general educators. They expressed a need for additional practical experiences. Two students requested more hand-on experiences.

### **Professional Activities**

Three students did not belong to any professional organizations. Four students held membership in one or more of the following: CEC, NAYC, SACA, ELACA, IRA. All attended professional workshops and/or conferences.

# GOAL ATTAINMENT FRAMEWORK

M.Ed. Special Education  
Department of Special Education

Academic Year 1996-97

December 1, 1997

Expected Outcome	Much Less than Expected	Less than Expected	Expected	More than Expected	Much More than Expected
<b>GOAL I</b>					
EO1a. % of graduate students who meet the admission criteria for entry into the graduate program as indicated in the current catalogue.			100%		
EO1b. % of graduate students enrolled in the Master's degree program who meet the "good standing" criteria as defined in the current catalogue.	<80%	80-89%	90%	<b>91-95%</b>	<b>96-100%</b>
EO2a. The special education department will receive approval from its honored society (CEC) as a component of scheduled NCATE review.			Approved		
EO2b. % of special education faculty approved by the Graduate Credentials Committee.	<90%	90-99%	100%		
EO3a. % of students who rate their preparation as satisfactory or better on the Departmental Exit Questionnaire. Q N.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
<b>GOAL II</b>					
EO1a. % of graduate students who successfully complete the comprehensive examinations on their first attempt.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO1b. % of graduate students retaking the comprehensive examinations who pass.			100%		
EO1c. % of graduate students who successfully pass the <u>research</u> question on their first attempt	<80%	80-99%	100%		

*NA*

<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Much Less than Expected</b>	<b>Less than Expected</b>	<b>Expected</b>	<b>More than Expected</b>	<b>Much More than Expected</b>
EO1d. % of graduate students who successfully pass the <u>general</u> question on their first attempt.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO1e. % of graduate students who indicate that they were satisfactorily prepared in selected competencies on the Departmental Exit Questionnaire. A7, B16	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO2a. % of graduate students, selecting the <u>methods</u> question, who successfully pass this question on their first attempt.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO2b. %of graduate students, selecting the <u>assessment</u> question, who successfully pass this question on their first attempt.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO2c. % of graduate students, who indicate that they were satisfactorily prepared in selected competencies on the Departmental Exit Questionnaire. C23, D37, E47, F55	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO3a. % of graduate students, selecting the <u>management</u> question, who successfully pass this question on their first attempt.	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO3b. % of graduate students who indicate that they were satisfactorily prepared in selected competencies on the Departmental Exit Questionnaire. G64, H72, I81	<80%	80-99%	100%		
<b>GOAL III</b>					
EO1a. % of graduate students who indicate that they were satisfactorily prepared in selected competencies on the Departmental Exit Questionnaire. J86, K89, L97	<80%	80-99%	100%		
EO1b. % of courses required in the master's degree program that include a component on disability awareness and current best practices.	<75%	75-99%	100%		
<b>GOAL IV</b>					

<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Much Less than Expected</b>	<b>Less than Expected</b>	<b>Expected</b>	<b>More than Expected</b>	<b>Much More than Expected</b>
EO1a. % of students who report that they participated in at least 2 professional organizations or activities during the Structured Interview.	<80%	80-99%	100%		