

**Summary of the Case<sup>1</sup> (from the Inquiry Brief)**  
**Fort Lewis College**  
**Teacher Education Program**  
**Audit Dates: November 14-16, 2007**

**Introduction.**

Fort Lewis College is a public liberal arts college in Durango, Colorado. The College has a distinctive history: originally named for a military post, the campus sits on lands set aside by the federal government for an Indian Reservation School. In 1911, Congress transferred the property to Colorado, with the provision that the state would support a school that would serve the region and allow Native American students to be admitted free of charge and on a status equal to white pupils. This historical legacy is reflected in the College's official mission: "[to offer] accessible, high quality, baccalaureate liberal arts education to a diverse student population, preparing citizens for the common good in an increasingly complex world" (College website).

The Department of Teacher Education adheres to these liberal arts principles. The Department's stated mission is

... to serve the long-term interests of a global society by preparing effective teachers who celebrate learning, value diversity and excellence, promote creative and critical thinking, and are compassionate and reflective. The department prizes its special obligation and commitment to Native American and Latino students, and strives to enhance educational opportunities for other under-represented groups. (*Brief*, p. 6)

In the 2005-2006 academic year the Department used a change in state policy guidelines to undertake a systematic curriculum review, done in tandem with revisions to general education requirements made by the College. Curricular changes were approved by the faculty in November 2006, and the new curriculum was phased in during the Fall 2007 term. The central driving force for the new curriculum was "based on a desire for [the] merging of theory and practice to be even more immersive and explicit than its [previous] incarnation," while maintaining a focus on "introspection, scrutiny, and inquiry" (*Brief*, p. 5).

The Department offers programs in ten licensure areas: Early Childhood; Elementary Education; Secondary Programs in English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Spanish; and Art; Music; and Physical Education. Additional endorsements are

---

<sup>1</sup> The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.

available in Linguistically Diverse Education and/or Bilingual Preparation. A total of 349 students completed these programs between September 2003 and August 2007. The Department has eight fulltime faculty and two staff; two tenure-track positions are open.

The Teacher Education Licensure Program was awarded “New Program Accreditation Status” by TEAC in 2001; it now submits its Inquiry *Brief* for full accreditation.

**Claims.** In its *Brief* the Department claims that program completers:

- meet each of the Colorado Department of Education’s eight *Performance Based Standards for Colorado Teachers* (PBSCT’s);
- “demonstrate a broad, interdisciplinary knowledge related to the critical issues of today’s complex society” and implement teaching strategies that reflect this interdisciplinary knowledge; and
- “demonstrate thoughtful, considerate, and compassionate interactions with students, coworkers, parents, and community members” (*Brief*, p. 9).

**Methods of assessment.** Two assessments are used to support all claims – a “summative portfolio rating” documenting proficiency on each of the eight Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers (PBSCT), and evaluations of student teachers by cooperating teachers. Additional assessment measures specific to the three claims include:

- For Claim 1, “literacy” GPA (PBSCT 1); math GPA (PBSCT 2); “methods” GPA (PBSCT 3); cumulative GPA, “content” GPA, and either the appropriate Colorado Place test or Praxis II (PBSCT 4); grade in individualized instruction course (replaced in 2007 with two new courses) (PBSCT 5); “methods” GPA and individualized instruction course (PBSCT 6). No additional assessments are done for PBSCT 7 & 8.
- For Claim 2, general education GPA, grades in interdisciplinary units, and the ACT Outcomes Survey.
- For Claim 3, “diversity” GPA.

Assessments planned but not yet implemented include a video case study, a third-year graduate survey, and program evaluations by classroom teachers.

**Results.** Strong support for Claim 1 and each of the eight PBSCTs is reported, as evidenced by portfolio ratings, cooperative teacher ratings, course grades, and standardized test scores. While nearly all cooperating teachers rated students as “satisfactory” on nearly all criteria, Department faculty note a desire to improve cooperating teachers’ ratings in classroom management (PBSCT 5) and individualized instruction (PBSCT 6). Similar support is evidenced for Claims 2 and 3. Noteworthy are data from the ACT survey showing that students at the College rate themselves equal to or higher than those at similar institutions on 35 of 37 items relating to liberal learning

outcomes. Because of low correlations with other measures, Department faculty intend to thoroughly overhaul the form used by cooperating teachers to evaluate student teachers.

**Internal audit.** A single faculty member performed the audit. His report was reviewed and approved by the entire faculty. The audit was concerned with two overarching questions: “How well is the quality control system working in the program?” And, “is there evidence of student learning that is attributable to any capacity dimension?” The auditor reviewed every tenth student file, plus faculty syllabi, vitae, classroom and office space, fiscal and administrative support, and college support services for students. The audit demonstrated that generally the quality control system works well. The curriculum is clearly organized; faculty are experienced and professional; facilities, supplies and equipment are adequate; fiscal and administrative capacity is strong; student support services are comprehensive; the admission process is clear and fair; and student complaints are handled effectively. Areas to develop include more consistency in course syllabi, upgrading the curriculum library, better processes for the recruitment and retention of minority students, and written documentation concerning student complaints.