

Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
Michigan State University
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: April 8-11, 2008

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.

Authorship and Approval of the Inquiry Brief:

The *Inquiry Brief* was written by Professors Wilson, Sedlak, Bird, Kennedy, and Floden. Subsequently the program requested that the full faculty be listed as the IB authors.

Introduction:

Michigan State University was founded in 1855. It was the first agricultural college in the country and served as a model for later land-grant colleges established under the Morrill Act of 1862. A Department of Education was established in 1907, becoming a College by mid-century.

MSU's College of Education has a long history of pedagogical research and curricular innovation. Since the mid-1970s the College has been the home of federally-funded centers such as the Institute for Research on Teaching, the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, and most recently, Teachers for a New Era. The College was also the first headquarters of the Holmes Group.

The College is very large, with well over 3000 students, approximately one-half of whom are enrolled in the Teacher Education program (roughly 500 each at the junior, senior, and internship levels), and 125 faculty FTE, 50 of whom have appointments in the Department of Teacher Education. It is the MSU Teacher Education Program, with more than 20 different majors and nearly 30 minors that has applied to TEAC for accreditation.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Holmes Group, the College requires extensive experience in liberal studies before students are allowed to take education courses. By graduation, students as undergraduates have taken courses in "learners and learning" (before admission to the College) and subject-specific teaching methods (senior and internship years). All professional education courses (beginning in the junior year) have required field experiences. Following graduation with a baccalaureate degree, students participate in a year-long internship in a K-12 school while they continue to take courses in subject-specific pedagogy and professional

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studies. At the end of a successful internship, students earn a recommendation for teacher licensure.

The over-riding philosophy of the College is that learning to teach is the “mastery of a practice.” This philosophy is expressed as a program-wide focus on eight “problems of practice” which are mapped onto TEAC’s Quality Principles. The problems, with slight modifications of language, constitute the Program’s claims:

- Claim 1. Our graduates are liberally educated
- Claim 2. Our graduates know their subject matter
- Claim 3. Our graduates have relevant pedagogical knowledge
- Claim 4. Our graduates are caring and skillful teachers
- Claim 5. Our graduates demonstrate sensitivity to student diversity and multicultural perspectives
- Claim 6. Our graduates demonstrate an ability to use technology
- Claim 7. Our graduates have learned how to learn

The other organizing principle driving the *Brief* is that student and program assessment should be maximally useful to faculty for program improvement. The program has chosen to do this by encouraging a large number of “local” studies, 25 in all, “*designed to examine students in (sometimes) small corners of the overall program.*” The program’s rationale is that diverse subject matters require diverse methods of assessment, and that institutional change will require concrete, local information about what prospective teachers are learning (or not).

The *Brief* also presents evidence from program-wide studies, including ACT scores, GPAs (disaggregated in various ways), Licensure Exam scores, an Exit Survey, and assessments of descriptions of clinical placements from 231 students out of 300 registered in TE 250.

Liberal Education:

The *Brief* addressed this claim by reporting grades the students earned in their liberal studies courses and results of a self-assessment exit survey developed by the Michigan Department of Education. For the former, the program compared teacher education candidates’ grades in the University’s Integrative Studies courses with those of non-teacher education students in the same classes, and found that the teacher education students scored consistently higher in the liberal arts courses than their non-teacher education peers. On the exit survey, students strongly supported statements about the quality of their liberal education. On this claim, as with others made in the Brief, selected local assessments are cited as further support for the claim.

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Subject Matter Knowledge:

The Brief reported the pass rates of candidates on the *Michigan Tests of Teacher Certification* (MTTC) in 45 program options. On average, 97.4% of the candidates ultimately passed the MTTC. The Brief asserts that this record of accomplishment reinforces the faculty's conviction that teachers prepared at MSU have attained satisfactory mastery of their subject matter content. In a GPA study, the faculty reported that 483 interns in Integrative Studies Classes had GPAs that were generally higher than non-teacher education students and ranged from 3.33/4.00 in Social Science to 3.48/4.00 in Biological Sciences. The complete set of subject matter major GPA studies indicates that teacher education students outperform their non-teaching counterparts in virtually every major or minor field. The Brief concludes that the interns achieve subject matter mastery at least to the extent of their non-teacher education disciplinary counterparts. The Brief also included a study of ACT scores of teacher education interns. The interns' scores were spread between 24.1/30 (Science) to 25.3/30 (Social Science). Data cited in the Brief from the Michigan State Department of Education exit survey showed that over 95% of those queried judged their subject matter knowledge to be at least satisfactory.

Pedagogical Knowledge:

The Brief presented three lines of evidence pertaining to pedagogical knowledge. One line assesses assignments embedded in core curriculum courses. The assessments reported in the *Brief* dealt with preparing lesson plans in Art Education, Literacy Studies, and elementary Social Studies interns. The results of the independent studies were consistent. A second line reflects the direct assessment of candidates during the internship year. As reported in the Elementary Practice Work Studies, at least 63% of the interns were judged to be in the two highest rating categories. Third, findings from the Michigan State Department of Education Exit Survey were cited to address the claim that MSU candidates have relevant pedagogical knowledge. In responding to the survey, more than 90% of the MSU students checked the two highest categories on items speaking to their pedagogical knowledge.

Caring Teaching:

Two sources of evidence were included in the Brief to speak to this program claim. The first is an on-line exit survey completed under the aegis of the Michigan State Department of Education. Over 80% of the MSU graduates agreed with items relevant to the claim of caring teaching cited in the survey. The second source is the direct assessments of interns by field instructors. The evaluations assigned by field instructors were seen as acceptably high even though the ratings were not standardized and thus not directly

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comparable. Here, students receiving the highest two ratings ranged from 64% to 76% across items.

Multicultural Education:

The Brief presented three lines of evidence to support its claims concerning multicultural education. First, the Brief reported a survey of students in TE 250. Second, a series of embedded, local performance assessments were described. Finally, data from the Michigan State Department of Education Exit Survey were arrayed in the Brief. The Brief described the results of these studies as “mixed.” The survey of students in TE 250 (N = 231) indicated that students at MSU have an “emergent” multicultural perspective but many have not yet successfully challenged pre-existing attitudes. The TE 250 study included as one of its conclusions the following: *“They gained an awareness of the relationship between social inequality, social differences, and students’ K-12 schooling opportunities and experiences. In addition, it appears that most have developed a positive opinion of the capacities of students from social groups that have been historically disadvantaged with U.S. society and schools and those students who have been positioned as “struggling” in school settings.”* In the study of embedded assignments, 80% or more of the interns were rated on dimensions related to multicultural education at least at the level of “a strong intern.” The Exit Survey included eight items which asked graduates to assess their own strengths in the area of multicultural education. Roughly 80% of the interns indicated confidence in their strengths in this area.

Technology:

While technology is not the focus of any particular course at the College, the Brief did report findings from the MSDE exit survey that over 85% of the graduates either mostly agree or strongly agree with statements that characterize themselves as ready to use technology effectively in the classroom. Students received similarly high ratings on technology from their field instructors in various local studies.

Learning to Learn:

No College-wide data are presented in support of this claim; however, assessment of “reflection” and “professional learning cycle” appears in some local assessments. In one example the Brief described the ratings instructors gave to a variety of assignments that called for problem solving, designing research, developing a line of arguments, and reflection on professional readings. From 78% to 90% of the student reports were rated either strong or excellent on these assignments.

Reliability and Validity of Measures:

The Brief accepts the State of Michigan assurances that the ACT examination yields reliable measures. The Brief reports correlation coefficients between ACT scores with MSU GPAs as being significant from zero as evidence of the validity of the ACT examination. MSU conducted psychometric studies of the ELSMT scores whose results were interpreted as sufficient for using the results of the examination in this Brief. The Brief includes more than 30 separate “local” studies inquiring into the assessment of student learning. Almost every study report addresses the issue of “quality of the measures.” In general, the local reports align their assessment instruments with course goals or the “problems of practice.” In the area of reliability, 4 studies report inter-rater consistency in applying the assessments; 2 others reported inter-item correlations.

Discussion and Plan:

In the Discussion and Plan section, the Brief presented a large number of proposed studies that were motivated, at least in part, by the evidence collected by MSU for the Brief and/or for other purposes. The plan includes an elaborated discussion of the role of standards in teacher education and the need for better measuring instruments. The discussion also acknowledges the program’s lack of credible psychometric data at this time – a lack which inhibits the faculty from placing great trust in the Finding reported here.

Internal Audit:

In Appendix A of the Brief, the authors present a report of an audit of the quality control system that includes both a description of the system and a careful plan for auditing the system. The Brief cited examples of instances in which the faculty learned a great deal about the quality control system and some issues associated with it, such as missing evaluation forms.

Commitment:

In the Internal Audit Report, there are a number of tables pertinent to the issue of parity, including distribution of faculty by ranks, salaries among ranks, accessibility to Teaching and Learning Environment Funds, and the extent to which teacher education is subsidized by the central administration. The auditors interpreted these findings as demonstrating that the University is committed to teacher education.

¹ **The program includes options in the following areas and Michigan, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program’s graduates:**

The Michigan State University's Teacher Education Program's options are in elementary and secondary education and the state, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program's graduates.