

**Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)**

**Summary of the Case  
Montana State University  
Northern Plains Transition to Teaching Program<sup>1</sup>  
Audit Dates: March 1-4, 2010**

*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 Robert Carson, Jamie O'Callaghan, Annette Chvilicek Carson, and Art Bangert, and was approved via email in January 2010 by the faculty who participate in the NPTT.

**Introduction:**

Montana State University was established by legislative act in 1893 as the state's land-grant institution and is now ranked as a major research university. In the fall of 2009, the university enrolled 12,369 students (10,519 undergraduate and 1,850 graduate) served by 552 full-time instructional faculty and 261 part-time faculty. MSU is located in Bozeman, Montana, a city of about 35,000 people located in the heart of the Rocky Mountains in the beautiful Gallatin Valley 60 miles north of Yellowstone National Park.

The Northern Plains Transition to Teaching Program was developed in 2002 with funding from the U.S. Department of Education to meet the needs of three states: Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota. The program was designed around a sequence of eight 3-credit courses, two of which are specifically attached to the year-long paid internship in which candidates work as teacher of record under provisional licensure. The program was designed to provide highly qualified working adults with a feasible pathway to professional preparation and licensure. NPTT is a licensure program for those seeking certification to teach at the secondary level (defined in Montana as grades 5-12) and includes Art, Music and Modern Languages endorsement areas which are designated as K-12. Candidates have the option of packaging their NPTT licensure program within a master's degree.

The NPTT program reports directly to the dean of the College of Education Health & Human Development and operates as a graduate level program (though candidates may opt for either licensure-only or licensure with a masters degree). The instructional faculty includes tenure track and full time adjunct faculty from within the Department of Education, as well as adjunct instructors drawn from the public school sector. The program currently enrolls 130 students, taught by a combination of tenured or tenure track faculty (3), instructors (3), adjunct (4) faculty members, all of whom teach on a contract basis. Forty-nine candidates completed the program in 2009.

**Program claims:**

Two central ideals pervade the program: a reverence for intellectual culture and the promotion of an ethos of respect and caring as the basis of effective learning communities. The program's four claims address the *academic, social, pedagogical*, and

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*professional* dimensions of education, to wit, program completers:

1. Value intellectual culture, know their subject matter well, and can create interesting and effective curriculum materials and strategies to meet the needs of all students;
2. Use a variety of effective teaching and assessment strategies and instructional technologies to differentiate learning opportunities in the service of all learners;
3. As caring individuals, understand students' characteristics, value human diversity, and create respectful, effective learning communities where all students thrive; &
4. Are committed professionals who meet appropriate ethical standards and expectations.

### **Evidence supporting the claims:**

Five main lines of evidence are put forward in support of the claims: 1) undergraduate GPAs (screened upon application to the program), 2) standardized test scores from the Praxis II (required for admission and ultimately for licensure) and GRE (required of those pursuing the masters degree), 3) course grades in the eight required licensure courses, 4) internship evaluations completed by site school administrators, and 5) portions of the professional portfolio assembled and submitted at the end of the program. Data were reported for the 116 individuals who completed the program from 2007-2009.

- **Undergraduate GPAs** submitted at application for the 116 completers in the sample averaged 3.29;
- **Praxis II scores** for 128 exams taken by 97 of 116 completers (optional for out-of-country candidates) showed 46% in the top quartile of all test-takers nationwide, only 4% in the bottom quartile, and a single test score (and that for a minor field) falling below the informally recognized Montana cut score.
- **GRE scores** submitted by 87 of the 116 completers had a combined (quantitative and verbal) average of 1104.
- **Course grades** across the eight required courses ranged from 3.79 to 3.98.
- **Portfolios** from 53 completers graded under the current scoring rubric averaged 90.42 out of 100.
- **Intern Final Evaluations** conducted by school administrators means ranged from 3.86 (claim 2) to 4.19 (learning to learn) on a scale of 1-5.

### **Internal audit:**

An internal audit was conducted in June, 2009, by Ian Godwin, former Assistant Director of the NPTT. The audit began with a sample of 10 randomly selected program completers; courses were drawn from those students' transcripts, and the audit trail encompassed the relevant components and subcomponents of the TEAC system.

The internal audit reported a number of changes that had taken place over the program's

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first 5 years, and found the quality control system to be working as designed.

### **Plans for program improvement:**

Changes considered as a result of the analysis of data presented in the *Brief* and the findings of the internal audit include further enhancements to the assessment system (including raising the standard expectation for the Professional Portfolio and identifying 'signature assessments' within courses that will ultimately be part of the portfolio) and administration (enhancements to the database, closer monitoring of instructors' effectiveness, and periodic meetings of the faculty to discuss data).

### **Statement regarding commitment and capacity:**

The faculty concluded that Montana State University is committed to the NPTT program and that there is sufficient capacity to offer a quality program.

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<sup>1</sup> Program options include: Secondary endorsements in Agricultural Education, Art, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Economics, English, Family and Consumer Sciences, French, General Science, Government, German, Health, History, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Psychology, Reading, Social Studies, Spanish, and Technology Education. (Art, Music, and Modern Languages are K-12 endorsements).