

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
Northern Michigan University
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: April 5-8, 2009**

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 K.C. Holder, Associate Professor of Education, and Joe Lubig, Associate Professor of Education and Director of Field Experiences, and was approved by the NMU Teacher Education Program faculty on October 16, 2008.

Introduction:

Located in Marquette, Northern Michigan University was founded in 1899 as Northern State Normal School to provide teachers for the public schools of the Upper Peninsula. NMU's 319 full-time and 205 part-time faculty members in its four constituent colleges (Arts and Sciences, Professional Studies, Business, and Graduate Studies) offer a comprehensive array of academic and professional programs to over 9000 students from the UP, the rest of Michigan, neighboring states, and across the country.

The School of Education, situated in the College of Professional Studies, works with faculty from other colleges to prepare teachers for initial certification; approximately one in seven NMU graduates earns a degree in education. In the fall of 2008, the program enrolled 355 students preparing for elementary teaching, and 317 preparing for secondary teaching. The program faculty includes thirty-one full-time faculty, of whom eighteen hold appointments in the School of Education and thirteen others (secondary education program faculty) hold appointments elsewhere in the University, and 16 part-time faculty.

The program works closely with a variety of schools, including schools in Marquette, in rural communities with widely dispersed populations, some with high proportions of Native American students, charter schools, and private schools. Students in the program are provided with a wide range of field placement options in these schools, as well as in schools in neighboring states and in international settings. Program is sequentially structured and student performance is closely monitored beginning with admission to the program and through pre-methods, methods, and student teaching phases; authentic field placements are seen as a critical component of each phase of the program.

Program claims:

The faculty grounds the program in a philosophical vision of education and teaching that emphasizes development of character and judgment, seeing

content as the medium for education, not its aim. Teaching is viewed as artistry with concern for societal justice aided by use of technology. The program makes five claims about its program completers, namely that they:

- 1) are proficient in relation to Michigan's State standards for beginning teachers,
- 2) integrate technology into their work as teachers,
- 3) are knowledgeable about the liberal arts in general and their special subject-matter in particular,
- 4) can demonstrate pedagogical proficiency by promoting student learning in diverse settings, and
- 5) are caring teachers and committed professionals.

Evidence supporting the claims

Four main lines of evidence are presented in support of the claims: student course grades, evaluations of field placements, program completers' performance on Michigan Tests for Teacher Competence (MTTC), and follow-up surveys of program completers and alumni conducted by MDE and by NMU.

The central evidentiary mechanism relied upon by the program faculty is a continuous quality control system designed to ensure that students maintain an appropriate standard of performance as they progress through the program. Quality checks are conducted at the point of admission to the program, prior to progress to the methods blocks, prior to student teaching, and again at program completion.

Evidence regarding candidates' academic progress (GPAs in liberal arts and content major courses, as well as GPAs in professional education courses) and dispositional 'fit' for the profession (through notification of concerns if any are raised) is considered at each 'gate.' Program completers' MTTC performance is also monitored; as a group, candidates' pass rates on MTTC Subject Area Tests are over 85% for 2006-2007 and over 87% for 2007-2008, though pass rates for specific subject areas range widely.

Evidence from candidate performance in field placements is another central line of evidence. Rating from university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and from the candidates themselves are collected via placement-(phase-) specific evaluation forms that provide evidence relevant to a broad range of outcomes.

Plans for program improvement

The program faculty met three times in September 2008 to review and discuss data and consider plans for program improvement. Faculty worked in groups of two or three to consider data related to each claim and to compile recommendations which could become the basis for ongoing discussion and action. Plans that were considered included new data gathering (focus groups of program completers) changes in the required technology course, reviewing and revising field experience evaluation forms to more closely match Michigan expectations for beginning teachers, and engaging students in experiences that increase their capacity for (or confidence in) addressing the learning needs of students from diverse cultures, students with exceptionalities, and students who are English language learners.

Internal audit:

An internal audit of the program's quality control system sampled program approvals, syllabi, student files (for evidence of completion of requirements) faculty (qualifications, hiring practices and promotion), facilities (office space and technology support), administrative support, student services, recruiting and admissions practices, and student feedback. Findings generally supported the functioning of the quality control system as well as the University's capacity for and commitment to the program.

The faculty concluded that Northern Michigan University is committed to the Teacher Education Program and that there is sufficient capacity to offer a quality program.

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:

Program options include: provisional certification in elementary education, secondary education (biology, chemistry, economics, English, geography, earth science, health, history, industrial technology, integrated sciences, mathematics, modern languages [French, German, and Spanish], physics, political science, social studies, and special education [cognitive impairments, emotional impairments, or learning disabilities], art, music, and physical education (K-12), and additional endorsements in early childhood and special education. The full list of majors and minors available in conjunction with the provisional certificates and endorsements for which NMU makes recommendations is available at <http://webb.nmu.edu/Departments/Education/SiteSections/Programs/Certifications.shtml>