

Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief Proposal)
University of Phoenix
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: December 3 – 9, 2006

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 Proposal*:

The *Inquiry Brief Proposal* was written by Bryan Palmer.

Introduction & program demographics:

The University of Phoenix, established in 1976 in Phoenix, Arizona, as a for-profit institution, enrolls more than 230,000 students and is devoted to educating adults and to developing their knowledge and skills so that they will be able to achieve their professional goals, to improve the productivity of their organizations, and to provide leadership and service to their communities. To achieve this mission, the university has developed a distinctive *teaching/learning model* that is based on (1) the effectiveness of cooperation and collaboration in enhancing learning and (2) the fact that working adults, who have significant life and work experience, can be invaluable resources in enhancing their own and others' learning. In addition to regular course instruction, classroom-based groups of three to six students meet weekly to do research and to do projects in learning teams. Learning teams are small groups of three to six students drawn from within the larger cohort of program students. Learning Teams, a key component of the Phoenix model, facilitate the development of the student's ability to collaborate, an essential feature of information-age organizations like schools.

As of December 7, 2006 the University's College of Education, one of its five separate colleges, enrolls about 9500 students (15% minority and 58% female) in the MAED/TED-Elementary and Secondary options at sites in several states. The college has about 80 full-time core faculty members and employs a mentor-intern recruitment model that requires all faculty to complete a 16-hour certification course followed by an internship in which the prospective faculty member, under the guidance of a mentor, learns the teaching/ learning model of adult learning and demonstrates his/her teaching ability.

In addition to the full-time core faculty there is a cadre of more than 2,000 practitioner faculty members whose practical experience is relevant to the teaching/learning model and helps meet the educational and professional

needs of adult learners. Practitioner faculty members have a masters or doctoral degree, full-time employment in the teaching field, and at least five years work experience in the field.

The curriculum in teacher education is centrally controlled and developed by the Associate Dean for Curriculum, in conjunction with Curriculum Development Managers (CDM) and a board of experts to insure common course objectives, topics, textbooks, course assignments, artifacts, assessments, alignment with state standards. The program is offered in on-ground classrooms and/or through an online format (53% of the students participate in predominately on-line courses).

The college is seeking preaccreditation for its teacher education program in elementary and secondary education at the master's level and at its current sites in thirteen states and nationwide for the online option in states where it has been approved.

Program's claims:

The program faculty members make three claims, each related to a component of *Quality Principle I* and its embedded cross-cutting themes. They claim that their graduates (1) understand their subject matter adequately, (2) have the adequate pedagogical knowledge to teach subject matter content in a manner that meets the needs of students, and (3) have the dispositions and professional characteristics to create appropriate levels of achievement for all their students.

Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims:

The program proposes securing evidence for its claims from a stratified sample of approximately 1000 students, about 10% of its enrollment. To test the feasibility of its approach, the faculty has piloted its measures on two smaller samples -- one stratified random sample of 224 students for demographic information, course grades, and evaluation outcomes connected to electronic portfolio artifacts, and a second stratified random sample of 287 students for data related to evaluations from cooperating teachers and supervising faculty.

The program faculty proposes to support its claims with evidence from the following five sources that it has at hand:

- The Arizona license test scores and other state license test scores (ETS and NES tests in content and professional knowledge)
- Specific course grades in over 14-16 courses in education
- Mid-term and final student teaching evaluations (0-5) on the 31 items of

the four Danielson domains by two raters (the cooperating teacher and faculty supervisor)

- Electronic portfolio artifact scores (0-5) by course instructors
- Renaissance Teacher Work Sample (TWS) scores (0-4) in 7 areas (33 scores)

In addition the faculty is developing two survey instruments to probe the success of its graduates – an alumni survey and an employer survey.

Results:

The faculty satisfied itself that its stratified random samples showed no significant differences across the sites in demographic characteristics, course grades, and pass rates on the license examinations. There were significant differences, however, in the ratings of electronic portfolio artifacts across the sites. The correlations between cooperating teacher and faculty supervisors ratings of student teachers were significantly positive (mid-term and final evaluations were also related significantly).

Plan for program improvement:

The faculty response to finding significant differences in the evaluation of the elementary and secondary electronic portfolio artifacts across the sites is to improve the rubrics and procedures for evaluating portfolios.

Internal audit results:

College of Education campus administrative personnel at each site (chair, lead faculty, associate faculty, campus managers) were surveyed and participated in the audit, doing a separate audit by program site with an unbiased selection of five – ten percent of the students at the site. The audit focused on the quality control mechanisms directed at student progress through the program, program approval, course features, faculty qualifications, and classroom facilities.

The internal audit was thought by the program to be particularly valuable as it revealed several weaknesses in the uniformity of the overall quality control system of the program. However, while there is some form of quality control at each site, there is also considerable variation and inconsistency in recording some important information (faculty scholarship, electronic portfolio, data collection in general, responsibility for the FECOS, and student monitoring of progress through the program). The internal audit results in teacher education have prompted improvements in other programs in the university.

Program's response to the auditors' summary of the case:

The Dean of the College, Dr. Marla La Rue, and the program chairs, accepted

the summary with minor changes made on December 7, 2006. With these changes, the College of Education is in agreement with the summary.

Audit visit logistics:

The audit began on December 3, 2006 with a team dinner meeting with the program administrators. On Monday, December 4, 2006 the team met with program administrators at 4605 E. Elwood, the Administration Building in Phoenix that houses the offices for the College of Education. Tuesday, December 5, the auditors worked on the Phoenix Campus (Rooms 112 & 113). On Wednesday the auditors went to the Online Campus, 1500 N. Priest Dr., Tempe, Arizona where a teleconference with Campus College Chairs, Faculty supervisors, current students and cooperating teachers from campuses in eleven states took place. Wednesday evening the auditors traveled to Tucson, Arizona, to the Southern Campus and worked there on Thursday, December 7, 2006. On Friday, the auditors visited two high schools in the Tucson area – *Empire High School* and *Cienega High School*, both in the Vail School District. Empire High School is a traditional high school with 1700 students and Cienega High School is a technology school where all 700 students are provided computers. On January 8, 2007 an auditor visited and inspected the San Diego site of the program.

Overview of the audit opinion and commitment finding:

Overall 96% of the targets in the *Inquiry Brief Proposal* were verified but there were a very large number (as high as 58% for QP II) of inconsequential errors associated with the targets. Owing to the large number of trivial and real errors, the IBP received a qualified opinion overall but can be considered acceptably accurate and trustworthy. The evidence supports the conclusion that the university overall is committed to its teacher education program.

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

Master of Arts in Education--Teacher Education, Elementary and Secondary