

Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
Robert Morris University
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: November 4-6, 2007

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 Jon A. Shank, Gretchen Generett, Mary Hansen, and Anita Iaquina, and was approved by the Teacher Education Faculty on April 18, 2007.

Introduction & program demographics:

Founded in 2003, the School of Education and Social Sciences (SESS), one of six schools within Robert Morris University (RMU), houses the teacher education program. RMU enrolls about 5000 undergraduate & graduate students, with 1000 resident students at its campus in Moon Township, Pennsylvania (also the location of the teacher education program). RMU's 176 faculty currently offer 30 undergraduate and 18 graduate degree programs.

The SESS has three departments, two of which prepare teachers -- Elementary Education, Secondary Education & Graduate Studies. Sixteen full-time and 13 part-time faculty members offer the program, which has seven options: Business Education (K-12), English (7-12) Mathematics Education (7-12), Social Studies (7-12), Biology (7-12), Instructional Technology (certificate only, K-12), and Elementary Education (K-6). About 500 students (60% female and 90% white) are enrolled in the program, 60% at the undergraduate level, and about 40% in elementary education.

The program has an eclectic approach, which favors constructivism but includes behaviorism and humanism, and yields graduates who are claimed to be "*critical thinkers, adept problem solvers and collaborative professionals.*" The program is distinguished by its block scheduling of related content and clinical courses and experiences, a mix of faculty and practitioners, technology and media laboratories, host to annual professional conferences, advisory committees comprised of local professionals and alumni, an annual urban field experience, and overseas clinical opportunities.

Program's claims:

The RMU education faculty members make three claims that are also aligned

with the state's content and performance standards for teachers. Basically, the program claims that its graduates (1) understand their teaching subject, (2) can plan, deliver, and assess instruction that is based on research and appropriate resources, and (3) can teach in a caring and professional manner. They also understand and can do the above in ways that demonstrate multicultural understanding, technological competence, and independent learning.

Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims:

The evidence for these claims comes from three samples: one sample of students (drawn from five program options over the 2003-06 years who completed at least 75% of their program studies at RMU); one sample (drawn from five program options over Spring '06 and Fall '06 semesters who did not complete at least 75% of their program studies at RMU); and one sample of students (drawn from those who successfully completed student teaching from F '05 through F '06 and completed at least 75% of the education required for certification at RMU). It also comes from surveys of alumni, employers, cooperating teachers, and student teachers. The evidence itself is from the following sources:

1. Praxis II scores in the teaching content area
2. PDE-430 (a state form) Category III and IV evaluations by faculty supervisors of student teachers
3. Grades and grade point averages in the academic major courses, in methods courses, a portfolio course, clinical courses,
4. Cooperating teacher evaluations of student teachers
5. Survey results from student teachers, alumni, cooperating teachers and employers (response rates 33-85%).
6. Program admission minimum criteria of combined SAT of 900 or ACT of 19, and high school GPA of 3.2, and candidacy minimum criteria of college GPA of 3.0 and Praxis I scores submitted.

Reliability and Validity of the measures:

The program faculty addressed the reliability and validity of their assessments through traditional correlation techniques and analyses coupled with arguments of construct and content validity. They felt they had a reasonable basis as a result for concluding that their RMU assessments were reliable and valid and that the state's license tests were likely to be valid as well.

Results:

In all but two or three semesters, 100% of the students passed the appropriate Praxis II test, but in some semesters and for some tests the pass rate was as low as 75%. However, the lower percentage reflected three or fewer students who did not pass in a given term. GPA's were uniformly above 3.0/4.00 for all

options and semesters in all categories of interest. Survey results were 4.00/5.00 or better on items related to the program's claims. Cooperating teachers gave ratings of 3.5/5.0 or better. Similarly, the PDE-430 ratings of student teachers were generally above 2.5/3.0.

Internal audit results:

A five person audit committee (The Appendix A Committee) drew a random sample of 37 students (21 undergraduate students and 16 post-bachelor students) from the teacher certification program options. The faculty selected six targets, related to TEAC's requirements, and undertook approximately thirty probes into these areas of their quality control system. These probes were comprehensive and included surveys, examination of records, and interviews. The data from these probes revealed that, on the whole, the quality control system works as intended, but some thirty recommendations for no change, improvements and remedy were made and accepted by the faculty. From the thirty probes the faculty did derive about 13 specific issues for further action and the faculty agreed to undertake these.

Plan for program improvement:

Based on the results in the IB, the program faculty members have come to the following main conclusions about steps that would strengthen their quality control system:

1. There needs to be an easier system to access information from the RMU databases.
2. Faculty need to be able to use the University's existing computer programs to compute major and education grade point averages and identify undergraduate course grades earned by post bachelor students.
3. Multiple raters on assessment forms should be used to strengthen the validity and reliability of program claims.
4. Inter-rater reliability for university supervisors' use of assessment forms should be undertaken.
5. Both cooperating teachers and university supervisors should use the PDE 430 state form to assess the student teacher's performance.
6. A representative sample of undergraduate and graduate current students seeking certification should be surveyed annually; alumni and employer surveys should be processed every two years; cooperating teacher surveys should be processed every semester.

Evidence of commitment and capacity:

The faculty's investigations, reported in Appendix B, revealed that the SESS has parity with counterparts at the institution in terms of space, equipment and supplies; staff assignments and salary; fiscal and administrative resources and access to university facilities and services. There were concerns about

classroom facilities, the large number of adjuncts, and the lack of access to information from the University's technology data system, but overall, the faculty concluded that the University is committed to the program and the program has the capacity for quality.

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

Secondary Education with certification in Business, Computer & Information Technology, K-12; Communication, 7-12; English, 7-12; Mathematics, 7-12; Social Studies, 7-12; Instructional Technology Specialist K-12; Biology, 7-12. Elementary Education with certification in Elementary Education K-6.