

Summary of the Case¹ (from the Inquiry Brief)
University at Buffalo
The State University of New York
Teacher Preparation Program
Audit Dates: November 3-4, 2005

Introduction

The University at Buffalo, founded in 1846 as a private medical college, became a part of the State University of New York system in 1962. Now the largest public university in the state with over 25,000 students and 300 degree programs, the University at Buffalo is one of Western New York's leading employers and is working toward becoming a world-class research university.

The Graduate School of Education of the University at Buffalo, which serves almost 1400 students (15% of the University's graduate enrollment), offers a Master of Education (Ed.M.), a Master of Arts (M.A.), a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) through three departments: Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology (CSEP, or as a course prefix, CEP); Educational Leadership and Policy (ELP); and Learning and Instruction (LAI). All program options being considered for accreditation, which are listed below, are offered through the LAI department:

- Childhood—Grades 1-6
- Childhood with Bilingual Extension—Grades 1-6
- Early Childhood—Birth-Grade 2
- Early Childhood with Bilingual Extension—Birth-Grade 2
- Literacy Specialist
- Languages Other Than English (LOTE): French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Japanese or Russian
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)—All Grades
- English Education
- Math Education
- Science Education: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, or Physics
- Social Studies Education—Grades 5-12
- Music Education—All Grades

Program Claims

The faculty of the Graduate School of Education make three categories of

¹ 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.

claims: (1) *primary* claims, (2) *integrating* claims, and (3) *supporting* claims. The *primary* claims are:

1a. *Subject matter knowledge*: Program completers possess a thorough background in their respective disciplines that will allow them to teach effectively in that field.

1b. *Pedagogical knowledge*: Program completers possess knowledge of planning, guiding, and evaluating learning in a variety of settings. This knowledge is grounded in educational policy and in research on learning and human development, society and culture, and curriculum and instruction.

1c. *Pedagogical content-knowledge*: Program completers demonstrate an ability to combine subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and deliver instruction in a manner that maximizes student learning.

The *integrating* claims are:

2a. *Educational technology*: Program completers are able to access and use technology in curriculum-related ways to enhance learning.

2b. *Learner differences*: Program completers possess an understanding of students' individual differences and are able to teach all students, building upon background, diversity, and abilities.

2c. *Independent learners*: Program completers are able to update their content-specific and pedagogical knowledge, understanding, and skills to ensure ongoing excellence in teaching.

2d. *Reflective practice*: Program completers are able to monitor and adapt their instruction based on classroom processes and student outcomes.

The *supporting* claims are:

3a. *Committed and caring*: Candidates are committed to the achievement of students across all backgrounds and are able to provide safe and equitable classrooms conducive to individual growth and development.

3b. *Qualified*: In addition to demonstrating success in student teaching and coursework, our program completers must meet New York State certification requirements, including a passing grade on three NYS teacher certification exams LAST, ATS-W, and CST. , completion of a two-hour seminar for Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect, and a two-hour seminar as

per SAVE Schools Against Violence in Education, legislation, and an FBI fingerprint check.

3c. *General education*: Program completers possess a broad array of general skills and knowledge that will enable them to make associations between students' existing knowledge and experiences.

Evidence supporting the claims

For Claim 1a (Subject matter knowledge), measures used are:

- Undergraduate GPA in subject area
- CST score
- Student teaching evaluations
- Graduate content GPA
- Exit surveys
- Alumni surveys
- Administrator surveys
- School liaison surveys

For Claim 1b (Pedagogical knowledge), measures used are:

- ATS-W score
- Student teaching evaluations
- Graduate pedagogy GPA
- Exit surveys
- Alumni surveys
- Administrator surveys
- School liaison surveys

For Claim 1c (Pedagogical content-knowledge), measures used are:

- Student teaching evaluations
- Graduate pedagogic content GPA
- Exit surveys
- Alumni surveys
- Administrator surveys
- School liaison surveys

For Claim 2a (Educational technology), measures used are:

- Course coverage
- Student perceptions
- Employer and supervisor perceptions
- Artifacts (examples of student work)

For Claim 2b (Learner differences), measures used are:

- Course coverage
- Student perceptions
- Cooperating teachers' and teacher education associates' perceptions
- Artifacts (examples of student work)

For Claim 2c (Independent learners), measures used are:

- Course coverage
- Alumni survey
- Cooperating teachers' and teacher education associates' perceptions
- Artifacts (examples of student work)

For Claim 2d (Reflective practice), measures used are:

- Course coverage
- Cooperating teachers' and teacher education associates' perceptions
- Artifacts (examples of student work)

For Claim 3a (Committed and caring), measures used are:

- Student perceptions
- Employer and supervisor perceptions

For Claim 3b (Qualified), measures used are:

- Requirements check

For Claim 3c (General education), measures used are:

- Transcript review

Reliability and Validity of Measures

Course grades:

Reliability of the graduate GPA was demonstrated with a split-half Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.80.

New York State Teacher Certification Exam scores (CST, ATS-W):

General reliability of these exams were demonstrated by the National Evaluations System.

Student teaching evaluations:

Reliability of the evaluations was demonstrated using correlations between cooperating teachers' ratings over time, which were between 0.74 and 0.75. Rubrics were evaluated by the Accreditation Committee to ensure validity.

Surveys:

Reliability of the surveys was demonstrated using coefficient alphas, which ranged between 0.82 and 0.83 for questions concerning pedagogical knowledge, and between 0.73 and 0.87 for questions concerning pedagogical content knowledge (only one question on the surveys concerned subject matter knowledge so no coefficient alpha could be computed). Surveys were designed to correspond to primary claims, although the validity of the surveys depended on the extent to which those being surveyed had direct knowledge of the teaching performance of the student or students of interest.

Course coverage:

Courses were deemed to cover knowledge and skills corresponding to associated primary claims through a review of course syllabi.

Results

For Claim 1a (Subject matter knowledge), the mean graduate content GPA was 3.86, the mean Content Specialty Course Test was 255.43 (relative to a passing score of 220). Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates rated student teachers' subject matter knowledge as more than "proficient." Administrators and supervisors reported that student teachers' demonstration of subject matter knowledge was above average. Students reported feeling "somewhat" to "well" prepared to teach subject matter knowledge.

For Claim 1b (Pedagogical knowledge), the mean graduate pedagogy GPA was 3.84, the mean Assessment of Teaching Skills-Written was 261.12 (relative to a passing score of 220). Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates rated student teachers' pedagogical knowledge as "proficient." Administrators and supervisors reported that student teachers' demonstration of pedagogical knowledge was above average. Students reported feeling "somewhat" to "well" prepared in pedagogy.

For Claim 1c (Pedagogical content-knowledge), the mean graduate pedagogical content GPA was 3.86. Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates rated student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge as "proficient." Administrators and supervisors reported that student teachers' demonstration of pedagogical content knowledge was above average. Students reported feeling "somewhat" to "well" prepared to use pedagogical content knowledge.

For Claim 2a (Educational technology), findings indicated that 72% of courses featured educational technology in academic assignments, 24% in learning objectives, and 4% in the grading rubric. Students indicated they "sometimes" used technology services, and were "somewhat" to "well" prepared to incorporate technology in the classroom. Employers and supervisors rated program completers' utilization of technology as above average.

For Claim 2b (Learner differences), findings indicated that 65% of courses featured learner differences in academic assignments, 45% in learning objectives, and 10% in the grading rubric. Students indicated they were “somewhat” to “well” prepared to work with students with special needs and with diverse backgrounds. Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates rated student teachers as more than “proficient” in their ability to build rapport and maintain a respectful attitude toward student differences.

For Claim 2c (Independent learners), findings indicated that 92% of courses featured independent learners in academic assignments, 54% in learning objectives, and 3% in the grading rubric. Two-thirds to five-sixths of the alumni responding to a survey reported that they had participated in professional advanced study, engaged in a leadership role, and/or engaged in professional service activities; and one-eight to one-seventh reported that they had received professional recognition or had authored textbooks, journal articles, and/or curriculum materials. Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates ranked student teachers as more than “proficient” in their demonstration of knowledge of current educational issues and policies.

For Claim 2d (Reflective practice), findings indicated that 82% of courses featured reflective practice in academic assignments, 37% in learning objectives, and 5% in the grading rubric. Cooperating teachers and teacher education associates ranked student teachers as more than “proficient” in their demonstration of reflective practice and their ability to modify and adjust lesson plans when necessary.

For Claim 3a (Committed and caring), students indicated that they felt “well” to “very well” prepared to create a warm and safe environment for their students. Employers and supervisors rated program completers’ caring attitudes as above average.

For Claim 3b (Qualified), NYSTCE mean scores were reported as well above passing, and pass rates for 1999-2003 were nearly 100%.

For Claim 3c (General education), the faculty note that one-hundred percent of the students accepted into the program have met their general education/liberal arts distribution requirements prior to recommendation for certification.]

Internal audit

A team of five GSE faculty members conducted the internal audit of the teacher education program. They began by each selecting four student folders and performing checks that related to TEAC capacity components 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, and 4.7. The team then performed checks of information that was external to student folders that related to TEAC capacity components 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5.

For TEAC capacity components 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7, the team found that the quality control system was operating as intended. For component 4.1, the team found that the quality control system required modification, and noted concerns about syllabi that were not clear, did not adhere to Faculty Senate Guidelines, and/or were inconsistent with the catalog, and course substitutions that were not properly documented. For component 4.3, the team found that the quality control system was operating at “a minimally acceptable level,” and noted concerns about classroom space. For component 4.6, the team found that “the QCS was operating as intended, but needed tightening,” and noted concerns about consistency and documentation.

As a result of these findings, significant changes were proposed or implemented regarding the admissions process, the advisement process, and the syllabus review process.

Evidence of commitment and capacity

The faculty has made a case that they have the capacity to provide a quality program. Students have access to approved curricula, qualified faculty, suitable facilities, a variety of student support services, and means for registering and resolving complaints.

The faculty has also made a case for institutional commitment to the education program. In most comparisons the education program was on par or compared favorably with other programs or with the college as a whole. The exception to this trend was faculty salaries, which at the time the Inquiry Brief was written were lower than salaries for faculty members university-wide at every rank.