

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)**  
**St. John's University**  
**Teacher Education Program<sup>1</sup>**  
**Audit Dates: September 12 – 14, 2005**

*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 Jerrold Ross, Barbara J. Nelson, Zarif Bacilious, and Nancy Garaufis.

**Introduction:**

St. John's University is a private, Catholic, research-intensive university comprised of six schools and colleges at five campuses, with its main campus in the Jamaica section of Queens, New York. The School of Education was founded in 1908. The university has expressed a commitment to offering programs strong in the liberal arts and sciences, and teacher preparation. Throughout its history St. John's has served primarily first-generation college students, many from immigrant families, and close to 40% of its current 20,000-student population is Hispanic, African-American, or Asian.

St. John's School of Education offers both graduate and undergraduate degree programs through the Queens and Staten Island campuses, plus coursework leading to degrees via distance learning through the Queens, Manhattan, and Oakdale (NY) campuses. The University seeks accreditation for its teacher education program, which at the undergraduate level leads to a degree at the undergraduate level and a license in one of following areas:

1. Childhood Education
2. Dual: Childhood/Special Education 1-6,
3. Adolescent Education (7-12).

At the graduate level, options are offered through three different entities:

- The Department of Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescent (DECCA), in three areas (with multiple tracks):
  - Adolescent Education (Career Change, Field Change, and Continuing)
  - Childhood Education (Career Change, Field Change, and Continuing)
  - Early Childhood (Career Change and Field Change)
- New York State Teaching Fellows, in three areas:
  - Childhood Education
  - Special Education

- Mathematics
- Department of Human Services, in three areas:
- Teaching Literacy B-6, 5-12
- Special Education Teaching Children with Disabilities in Childhood
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

In 2003, 1665 students were enrolled in the teacher education program. Additionally, since 1988, the School of Education has housed the Teacher Opportunity Corps, whose purpose is to enhance preparation of teachers of at-risk students.

The 38 program faculty and 6 part-time faculty members characterize their approach to teacher education through their mission statement; they are “*committed to academic excellence and the pursuit of wisdom which flows from free inquiry, religious values and human experience. They strive to preserve and enhance an atmosphere in which scholarly research, imaginative methodology, global awareness and an enthusiastic quest for truth. .*” They follow the Judeo-Christian ideals of respect for the rights and dignity of every person and embrace the characteristics of St. Vincent, the founder of the Vincentian Community, which created St. John’s University (*IB* pg. 2). The program is based upon, curriculum standards and the students’ ability to teach those standards (*IB* pg. 3). Overall, the faculty members assert that their students are caring professionals who are competent in content and teaching skills and qualified to teach in New York. They further claim their graduates understand the following topics that embody TEAC’s *Quality Principle I* and were derived from the program’s longstanding goals and objectives, which were also aligned with the core teacher education curriculum standards of New York:

**Claims:**

St. John’s University School of Education makes the following claims:

1. Graduates of the Teacher Education Program have acquired a breadth of knowledge (foundation in the liberal arts and sciences) and the subjects they will teach.
2. Graduates of the Teacher Education Program have acquired pedagogical knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary for competent and qualified professionals.
3. Graduates of the Teacher Education Program have demonstrated that they can promote the well-being of students by providing a supportive and nurturing learning environment for students of diverse backgrounds and varying abilities.
4. Graduates of the Teacher Education Program satisfy the New York State Standards for Teacher Education Programs.

**Method:**

The St. John's faculty members investigated their claims by examining course grades aligned with program requirements, scores on the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST), scores on the Assessment of Teaching Skills-Writing (ATS-W), ratings from cooperating teachers, university supervisors and from self-evaluation scales. The evidence for their claims came from a sample of 58 students selected from the 955 students who completed the (undergraduate) teacher preparation program between 1999 and 2003. These 58 were derived from a sample randomly selected by the program faculty from among the 328 students who had completed the program between 1999 and 2003 and were currently enrolled in the St. John's University graduate school. [In New York State, in order to obtain a permanent (professional) New York State teaching certification, individuals must obtain a master's degree in education.] Of this sample of 75 students, data for 58 was deemed usable.

**Results:**

Regarding Claim 1 (relating to subject matter knowledge), the program faculty noted that the mean LAST score (for which 220 is passing) for students in their sample was 238, with a standard deviation of 16.55, and that the mean GPA for arts and sciences courses was 3.38 with a standard deviation of 0.63. The faculty reported that reliability estimates obtained from NES for LAST scores are typically between 0.91 and 0.95. To establish the validity of the measures, the faculty determined the correlation between the sample students' LAST scores and their subject matter course GPA's: this value was 0.30, which the faculty characterized as "very low," but they predicted that average grades of courses in the new University Core Curriculum, implemented in 2001, would yield a higher correlation with the LAST scores.

Regarding Claim 2 (relating to pedagogical knowledge), the program faculty noted that the mean ATS-W scores (for which 220 is passing) for students in their sample was 245, with a standard deviation of 19.98, and that the mean GPA for pedagogical courses was 3.76 with a standard deviation of 0.25. As with the LAST, the faculty reported that reliability estimates obtained from NES for ATS-W scores are typically between 0.91 and 0.95, and they also presented data establishing the reliability of course grades by showing that the variation in average semester grades over the five semesters from Spring 2001 to Spring 2003 was within 0.25 points for 10 of 14 courses. To establish the validity of the measures, the faculty determined the correlation between the sample students' ATS-W scores and their pedagogical course GPA's: this value was 0.47, and the faculty asserted that the higher correlation here as compared with the subject matter correlation described above was due to less variation in the pedagogical courses as compared with the subject matter courses.

Regarding Claim 3 (relating to teaching skill), the program faculty considered ratings of student teaching by two different cooperating teachers as well as by a University Supervisor who observed the students throughout their student teaching semester. The program faculty noted that the mean rating of 51 students by the University Supervisor was 4.58 (on a scale of 1-5 in which 5 is best) with a standard deviation of 0.63, while the mean rating of the cooperating teachers of 56 and 50 students, respectively, was 4.71 for both, with standard deviations of 0.55 and 0.43, respectively. Additionally, the faculty considered students' self-evaluations, which averaged 3.91 (also on a scale of 1-5 in which 5 is best).

Regarding Claim 4, the faculty presented a table (Table 2.1, page 11) demonstrating the alignment of the language of Claims 1-3 with that of the eight New York State Standards.

**Discussion:**

While the faculty concluded that their findings supported their claims, there were a number of issues that needed to be investigated and examined further. There was a change from required course work to the Core Curriculum which is aligned with Quality Principle I. Many of the sampled students had tested out of courses, which resulted in absent course-grade data in these cases. The faculty felt that this absent data, as well as data that were missing since students were allowed options under the system then in effect, caused the correlation between subject matter GPA's and LAST scores to be unrepresentatively low (pg. 35). The faculty expects that the implementation of the Core Curriculum will result in a more uniform instructional experience for the students in the program, which will result in subject matter GPA's that are more highly correlated with LAST scores.

The faculty also reported a concern about the quality of the students' writing, which they felt could have impacted standardized test scores (including the LAST and ATS-W). This concern for students' writing (across the University) led to the University's establishment of a Writing Center, as well as more emphasis among the education faculty on written examinations, rather than multiple-choice tests. Additionally, the education faculty raised the GPA admission requirements from 2.75 to 3.0 in the fall of 2003, and required students to achieve and maintain a 3.0 GPA throughout their academic program.

**Internal audit and capacity:**

The internal audit team was comprised of twelve faculty and staff members. The team began their internal audit by selecting 160 students whose birthdays were in some proximity to the randomly-selected date of March 15. The 160 students comprised approximately 10% of the students in each specialization.

The audit trail began with these students and consisted of examination of their student folders, their program sheets, their courses, their classrooms, and their faculty.

In most cases the internal auditors could confirm that the system worked as designed, but there were incomplete folders issues. As a result, the School Policy Committee will convene and discuss the creation of a program-wide advisement form in order to standardize the contents of the folders. Of the 116 courses examined in the internal audit, 54 had syllabi less than three years old. As a result, updated syllabi are now requested by the Dean to be inserted into official folders housed in the Dean's office. As of Fall 2004, 24 new replacement faculty have been added since 1996. The School of Education was consolidated into a single building by the spring of 2005, alleviating many issues with lack of office and classroom space.

As a follow-up to the November of 2002 Internal Audit, surveys were distributed to students and faculty seeking feedback about the extent to which the program was fulfilling goals deemed by the respondents to be important. The faculty was presented with the survey data and was asked to reflect on how the data addressed the following three questions posed by the Dean:

1. How do we need to change our curriculum to respond to the data?
2. How do we need to change our own teaching strategies to respond to the data?
3. How can we ensure that our students receive the same information in courses whether taught by full or part time faculty?

In November, 2001 an academic program review was conducted by the entire faculty at St. John's University. Ten criteria were used to provide a deeper understating of the quality of the undergraduate and graduate programs. As a result, he Provost and Dean made recommendations to maintain and strengthen the quality of curricula in the School of Education.

With regard to the program's capacity for quality, the evidence supports the conclusion that the program and institution monitor quality and that the program has parity with the other schools at the University.

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**<sup>1</sup>The program includes options in the following areas and New York, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program's graduates:**

Undergraduate degree and a license in:

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- Childhood Education
  - Dual: Childhood/Special Education 1-6,
  - Adolescent Education (7-12).

Graduate degree and a license in

The Department of Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescent (DECCA), in three areas (with multiple tracks):

- Adolescent Education (Career Change, Field Change, and Continuing)
- Childhood Education (Career Change, Field Change, and Continuing)
- Early Childhood (Career Change and Field Change)

New York State Teaching Fellows, in three areas:

- Childhood Education
- Special Education
- Mathematics

Department of Human Services, in three areas:

- Teaching Literacy B-6, 5-12
- Special Education Teaching Children with Disabilities in Childhood
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology\*

\*prior accreditation by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is recognized by TEAC

Master of Library Science\*

\*prior accreditation by the American Library Association (ALA) is recognized by TEAC