

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
St. Lawrence University
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: September 20-23, 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*:

The *Inquiry Brief* was written by James C. Shuman, and approved by St. Lawrence Teacher Education Faculty on June 5, 2006.

Introduction:

Founded in 1856 as a co-educational liberal arts college and as a theological school of the Universalist Church, St. Lawrence University, located in northernmost New York State in Canton, NY, is now a private non-denominational undergraduate liberal arts institution with graduate programs in education. With a total faculty of 204 members, the University enrolls approximately 2100 undergraduate and 130 graduate students (about 58% are women and 10% are minority students). About seventy percent of the undergraduate students graduate within four years.

The Department of Education, one of 30 departments, graduates about 30 students each year and has two full-time faculty members and five other full-time faculty members at the university who teach at least one course in the program each year. In addition, there are about 20 adjunct faculty members assigned to the program.

The program has three options, which lead to a bachelor's or master's degree and to initial and/or professional certification in New York State, and has always been grounded in a liberal education with a subject matter major (or its equivalent). The faculty has adopted a developmental constructivist approach to teaching with attention to technology, sociopolitical perspectives, differentiated instruction, and literacy development. The curriculum is based on four benchmarks of professional development, and is research informed, learner-centered and standards-based.

Program's claim:

The program faculty members make one basic claim -- that their students are competent in the liberal arts and meet the requirements of *Quality Principle I* and its embedded cross-cutting themes. They claim in other words that their graduates understand their subject matters, pedagogy, and can teach in a caring manner and that their understanding of technology, multicultural

perspectives and independent learning is embedded in each.

Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims:

The evidence for their claim comes from the entire group of 296 program completers from 2000-06. Some of the students who completed the program graduated from SUNY Potsdam in Art. The claims for the program are based on the following sources:

1. License test results (LAST, ATS-W, and the CST)
2. Grades, and grade ratios (education GPA/overall GPA), in the liberal arts, education, and subject matter
3. Surveys of alumni and the employers of their students
4. Mid and final student teaching evaluations by cooperating teachers and faculty supervisors
5. Portfolio evaluations by the faculty
6. A higher education shared data survey of seniors

The faculty has studied the reliability and validity of their measures, most notably with surveys of the raters' experience with the instruments and with considerations of *consequential validity* and were satisfied in the main with reliability and validity of the sources of evidence upon which they rely.

Results:

On the whole the measures converge systematically and are of sufficient magnitude (over 75% of the maximum scores) for the faculty to believe their claim (and its parts) is supported. The program's undergraduate students earn grades that are the equivalent or superior to those earned by non-program students in the liberal arts and subject matter, have high pass rates on the license tests, and are highly rated by supervisors, cooperating teachers, employers and by the graduates themselves.

Plan for program improvement:

The faculty has undertaken a systematic design and re-design of its locally developed instruments and based each re-design on the results of its validity surveys. They as well have plans to address the relatively lower ratings their faculty members report in the student teachers' writing.

Internal audit results:

The faculty described a QCS that has about 12 components (2 faculty groups,

4 councils & committees, and six administrators). Five staff members undertook the internal audit of the system, beginning the audit trail with 25 randomly selected student folders, about 10% of the students enrolled in education classes in the Fall 2003. They checked on 18 aspects of the seven dimensions of capacity and found that, on the whole, 100% of the probes were successful, the major exception being that only 42% of the courses were taught by full-time, less than the 51% required by the state for program registration.

Evidence of commitment and capacity:

The faculty examined approximately 34 indicators of commitment/capacity with respect to the program and the institution overall. On most of these indicators there were trivial differences or differences that favored the program. Two that did not favor the program were intended and did not indicate a lack of institutional commitment. Three were of concern to the faculty (their lower cost per student, less administrative and support staff, lower course ratings at the 400 level), but overall the faculty concluded that the long-term record of support for the program indicated that the university was committed to the teacher education program.

Overview of the audit opinion and commitment finding

Overall, the *Inquiry Brief* earned a *clean* audit opinion because 98% of the targets of the audit could be verified as accurate and acceptably trustworthy.

¹ **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.**

- Adolescent Education, grades 7-12
- English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Physics, French, German, Spanish, Social Studies
- K-12 Special Subjects: Art