

Summary of the Case¹ (from the Inquiry Brief)
College of St. Scholastica
Teacher Education Program
Audit Dates: February 24 –27, 2008

Introduction & program demographics

The College of Saint Scholastica (CSS) was founded in 1912 by Benedictine Sisters in Duluth, Minnesota. The School of Education (SOE) houses the teacher education program within the College of St. Scholastica. CSS enrolls about 2,800 undergraduate and graduate students, and has graduated more than 13,000 alumni. The mission of Benedictine Liberal Arts Education at the College is to engage students in defining and practicing responsible living and meaningful work.

In 2006, U.S. News and World Report ranked St. Scholastica as one of America's best colleges—in the top tier of regional universities in the Midwest. St Scholastica focuses on professional education supported by the liberal arts and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The college also has extended sites in Brainerd, St. Paul, St. Cloud, and Rochester, Minnesota. In addition to traditional semester programs, the College offers an Accelerated Degree Evening Program (ADEP), which has six, 8-week terms running over the course of one year.

CSS's School of Education was first established as the Education Department in 1912, becoming the School of Education in 2006-2007, one of six disciplinary schools, offering both undergraduate and graduate programs. Programs in the SOE are guided by the mission and vision of the Benedictine Sisters.

The School of Education (SOE) offers 13 (undergraduate and graduate) licensure programs which are based on the Standards of Effective Practice in the Minnesota Licensure Rule and have been approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching. The SOE also offers Master's degrees in Curriculum and Instruction (currently being phased out), and Educational Media. Students are prepared to teach at the elementary/middle (K-8) and middle/secondary levels (grades 5-12). Licensure programs are also available in K-12 library media

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.

specialist, vocal and instrumental music education, and school social work. Middle/Secondary licensure programs are available in Communication Arts and Literature, Social Studies, Mathematics, Life Science (Biology), and Chemistry.

The Graduate Teaching Licensure Program (GTL) of the SOE is an innovative program designed to provide those with baccalaureate degrees in other fields with professional preparation for elementary, middle level, and secondary licensure and for K-12 educational media & technology licensure. The GTL Program was first offered in fall of 2004 and is the most recent addition to the School of Education; it offers the same licensure options (except for vocal and instrumental music) as the SOE undergraduate program of CSS.

Program's claims

The SOE faculty make program claims that are based on and aligned with the standards contained in the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice, which in turn are based on the INTASC Standards. The SOE faculty make three claims in the Brief: 1) that their students are well grounded in the subject knowledge of their certificate area; 2) that they have pedagogical knowledge of methods that are linked to student achievement; and 3) that they can teach in a caring and professional manner.

Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims

The evidence for the three claims comes from data collected on program completers between fall 2004 and spring 2007. The study includes 91 undergraduate teacher licensure program completers; four Educational Media and Technology (EDM) undergraduate program completers; 84 GTL program completers over three academic years (2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007), and 94 Masters level EDM and Curriculum and Instruction completers over two academic years (2004-2005 and 2005-2006). Sources of assessment data include overall GPA's, Praxis I and II test scores, Cooperating Teacher Final Evaluations from the student teaching experience, items from an Alumni Survey, items from an Employer Survey, and documentation from the program completers' working portfolios. For undergraduate students, the SOE employs a "progressive admission process," using multiple assessments to determine students' eligibility to continue in the program.

Reliability and Validity of the measures

The program faculty addressed the reliability and validity of their assessments and the concerns each raised for future modifications in the assessment forms (surveys, Praxis II scores, major GPA, education GPA, PDE 430 Category III and IV scores, interim evaluation of cooperating teacher, EDUC 4100, 4110, 4129, 4130, EDUC 4200, EDUC 4050, 4061). They concluded that they had a

reasonable basis 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

Undergraduate licensure students' GPAs are above the general GPA for CSS students for the years of the study (2004-2007). GPAs for ECI and EDM students were above 3.8. GPAs for secondary licensure students were compared with the GPAs for non-teaching majors in the fields; in general, the licensure students' GPAs were comparable (sometimes slightly higher, sometimes slightly lower) than their non-teaching counterparts.

Over 95% of students taking the Praxis 1 scored above the required score; a high proportion of students passed the Praxis II tests. Portfolio data from 2005-2006 indicated that 98% of artifacts students submitted were evaluated by faculty as "sufficient" for INTASC Standard 1. Data reported on Portfolio data was reported as incomplete or missing for 2004-2005 and 2006.

Selected items from Cooperating Teachers' Final Evaluations and from surveys of alumni and employees were used; from each survey, the items used to support the claims all reported means above 3 on a 4 point scale. For ECI graduate students, all mean responses were 2.3 or above on a 3 point scale.

In relation to the student portfolios, 94 to 100% of artifacts submitted were judged by faculty members as providing sufficient evidence for the relevant INTASC standard.

The GTL program correlated completers' overall GPA's with each of the PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II scores as one way to determine consistency of these measures (Table 4.5). The relationships between the GPA and PRAXIS I Writing, and Praxis P2 Math 5-12, are positive and significant at the .05 level. The relationship between GPA and the other PRAXIS tests were not statistically significant.

Plan for program improvement

SOE faculty indicate that they will begin to track the scores on the Praxis Exams, and that they may want to explore using a rating scale for evaluating portfolio artifacts instead of a simple "sufficient/ not sufficient" notation used currently. Low return rates were also noted on the alumni and employer surveys; faculty plan to consider means of increasing return rates and improving the validity of the data from those sources. Three areas of concern expressed by alumni warrant more attention in curriculum revisions: evaluation of student learning against standards, using assessment results to make instructional decisions, and increasing students' knowledge of and attention to

diversity in their teaching. At the graduate level, alumni surveys indicate that greater assessment of subject matter knowledge is needed.

Based on findings from the internal audit, the surveys of students and cooperating teachers, the program faculty members have concluded:

1. An assessment of content areas for subject matter knowledge is needed.
2. Faculty must be able to work with student populations in diverse areas.
3. Faculty, including adjuncts and especially faculty in remote areas, need to be more aware of program assessment.
4. Assessment data for the graduate programs needs to be gathered in a more systematic manner. Faculty need to have a better understanding of the database and how it can be utilized and monitored for insuring student learning. Support from the IT department is needed to develop an all-inclusive database.

Internal audit results

The program faculty began an internal audit of its quality control system on February 24, 2006 during a full day faculty retreat. After the audit process was completed for the 13 program completers (drawn from all program options), fourteen faculty members discussed their findings and compiled their notes to be reviewed at a later faculty meeting.

Some improvements since the completion of the internal audit include the following:

1. Observation forms are used for field experiences.
2. Checklists are maintained for application to program, student teaching, and licensure.
3. The database, incomplete for 04-05, has been fully implemented.
4. The SOE has developed a process for documenting future student complaints.

The internal audit revealed that, on the whole, the quality control system works reasonably well, and the probes included a variety of strategies and resources.

Evidence of commitment and capacity

The internal audit also revealed that the CSS has parity with counterparts at the institution in terms of space, equipment and supplies; staff assignments and salary; fiscal and administrative recourses and access to university facilities and services.

The SOE has a higher cost per credit hour than several other departments and the institution as a whole.

Student support services are housed on the main campus. Students enrolled in CSS programs at these remote sites have limited access to these services. Access to the Financial Aid, Business, and Registrar's Offices are via email and telephone. Academic advisement for GTL students is provided by GTL faculty both at the Duluth campus and the remote sites.

Overall, the faculty concluded that the college is committed to the program and meets the TEAC standards of capacity for program quality.