

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
University of Southern Maine
Initial and Continuing Teacher Preparation Program¹
Audit Dates: March 8 – 11, 2009**

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 writing of the *Inquiry Brief* was coordinated by the director of the program (Ken Jones), the chair of the department (Cathie Fallona) and a faculty member (Jean Whitney). The *Brief* was approved by the program faculty on November 14, 2008.

Introduction:

The University of Southern Maine (USM), one of seven campuses of the University of Maine System, is a comprehensive regional university that acquired its name in 1978, although it has historical connections to several prior normal school institutions from 1878 onwards that provided teacher education programs in Maine. USM currently operates three campuses (Portland, Gorham, and Lewiston), and its 400 faculty members serve approximately 10,000 students (8000 undergraduates) in 115 areas of study.

The teacher education program is housed in the USM College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), which has 37 faculty members and approximately 1300 students. The program seeking accreditation is given by 11 faculty members and one full-time lecturer (66% female and 91% white), and 27 part-time faculty members in the Teacher Education Department (TED), one of three departments in CEHD. The program enrolls 217 students annually and about 90 students (76% women and 90% white) complete the program each year.

Since 1990, the program has been structured as a post-baccalaureate/partnership school model program, called the Extended Teacher Education Program (ETEP), and in 1998 a companion certification option, called Teachers for Elementary and Middle Schools (TEAMS), was developed. The program also has a recently developed secondary education option, or pathway, for majors in the College of Arts and Science who seek teacher certification in mathematics and foreign language (German, Latin, and Spanish).

Program claims:

The program, which seeks to develop the graduates' committed to equity and teaching that engages the student, is grounded in seven core values – democracy, civility & caring, equity & diversity, social justice, ethical practice, scholarship and professional development – which in turn guide eight USM professional practices and five TED commitments to the program (infuse it with

fieldwork, make it performance based, organize it by cohorts, increase the use of mentors, and genuine collaboration with partner schools & districts). The mark or “stamp” of a USM teacher is the teacher’s inquiry into practice, providing a variety of opportunities for student learning, holding high expectations for student achievement, collegiality, expertise in pedagogical content knowledge, making valid inferences about student learning, appropriately adjusting pedagogy to student needs, and contributing to and applying the scholarship available in the field to professional practice.

The program holds itself to ten standards, eight of which are aligned to one of the ten Maine teacher standards and to the components of TEAC’s *Quality Principle I*. Five of the standards emphasize what the prospective teacher must understand – viz., (1) human diversity, (2) the teaching subject, (3) appropriate uses of technology, (4) a variety of instructional strategies, and (5) how to assess student learning. In addition, five other standards emphasize the USM prospective teacher’s performance, but each standard blends understanding and performance. The USM teacher is expected (1) to be able articulate his/her beliefs about how to insure success for all students, (2) to demonstrate ethical and legal professional practices, (3) to create a democratic learning environment, (4) to plan effective lessons, and (5) to engage in career long professional improvement.

Evidence supporting the program’s standards:

The faculty make multiple assessments, most of a formative purpose during the year long internship. The main lines of evidence the faculty relies on to convince itself that the candidates have met its ten standards were collected over a period of three to five years, but mostly from the interns in 2004-2008. They are:

1. Grades (in method courses, content areas, and overall undergraduate GPA), which consistently yield means above 3.0
2. Standardized test scores: Praxis I and II mean scores for the interns, which exceed the state standard and national averages.
3. Admission interview: ratings by two to three interviewers (faculty and mentors) of the candidate’s understanding of content, technology, and equity as exhibited in prompted essays, Q&A, philosophical statement, portfolios, etc., which met or exceeded the program faculty’s expectations in these areas.
4. Intern Assessment System: ratings of instructional units on six standards by faculty supervisors & mentors, and ratings of the semester’s aggregate evidence on the ten program standards at the mid-point and end of the program by faculty supervisors, mentors, and the intern, which usually met or exceeded the program faculty’s expectations.
5. Entry and Exit Surveys: at the end of the program, the mean ratings from candidates on the importance of the program’s values & practices are at the top of the scale, and ratings of the degree of candidate preparedness met or

- exceeded the program faculty's expectations.
6. Partner School Principal Survey: mean ratings by employers regarding program completers' preparation in the areas of the ten standards were in the *adequately to well-prepared* scale range.
 7. Employment information: upon completion of the program, 76% of the candidates, on average, are employed as teachers and another 14% assume other positions in a school.
 8. Program impact: assessment scores made at the program endpoint are invariably higher than those at the midpoint of the program and significantly higher in the areas of program emphasis.

The program has a mastery oriented internship which means that all program completers are given the time they need to finally meet the program standards and all completers must satisfy all the standards. In addition the program faculty requires interns to do an in-depth study of a class of students, draft a *vision of teaching* statement, keep a dialog journal of reflections about the internship, maintain a teaching file of key teaching events, videotape segments of lessons, devise a classroom management plan, and develop a portfolio of artifacts for panel presentation.

With regard to its own locally developed assessment instruments and practices, the faculty's inquiry into the reliability of the assessments gave acceptable percents of agreement and correlations between raters.

Plan for program improvement

In addition to its current inquiry into the reliability of its assessments, the program faculty has conducted several inquiries into some factors (e.g., cohort and gender) that may influence candidate attainment. Their plans include strengthening the program in the areas of relative weakness revealed in the exit surveys and standard reviews, improving the reliability and consistency of all assessments, modifying and tailoring the assessments, and investigating the success of graduates through longer spans of their careers.

Internal audit:

An internal audit of the program's quality assurance system (QAS) was designed, piloted, revised, and implemented by a team of five (the director, chair, two support staff and a graduate assistant). The auditors selected five targets and made 26 probes which entailed random sampling of 10% of the available evidence. The audit team examined course & program approvals, student folders, syllabi, faculty hiring practices, meeting minutes, interviews with administrators and staff, questionnaires, surveys, websites, handbooks, and facilities. On the whole, the auditors concluded that the quality assurance system worked as it was expected to but few problematic quality issues were uncovered in the audit. Those that were discovered triggered responses to re-align all

course “blueprints”, syllabi, and catalog descriptions, to produce written criteria for the selection of part-time supervisors, mentors and cohort coordinators, address a cohort relations problem, and to monitor in the future the advisement in TEAMS, lagging computer upgrades, and school district weakening support for cohorts.

The faculty also concluded that the College of Education and Human Development and University of Southern Maine are both committed to their teacher education program.

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

The program has twelve options which lead to Maine teaching certificates: K-8, K-8 dual general and special education, 7-12 in Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Life Sciences, Physical Science, K-12 Foreign Language, and 7-12 dual general and special education. Also K-8 dual gen ed & K-12 ESL, K-8 Special Education and 7-12 Special Education