

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)**  
**University of Virginia**  
**Teacher Education Program<sup>1</sup>**  
**Audit Dates: October 30 – November 3, 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 Sandi Cohen, and was approved by a vote of the faculty on May 18, 2006 and reviewed again on September 15, 2006.

**Introduction:**

The program in teacher education is administered by the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education (CISE), one of three departments within the Curry School of Education of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. The university, which enrolls about 20,000 of the Commonwealth's "brightest" students, is nationally ranked annually as the 1st or 2nd best public university. The Curry School, also nationally ranked (19 th), has over 100 faculty members, one-third of whom are assigned to teacher education, and the school enrolls about 1000 students in 21 areas of educational specialization. The School is a member of the selective Teachers for a New Era (TNE) Carnegie Foundation project owing to it having the potential to transform teacher education in the United States. The teacher education program has 32 faculty members in CISE, but many others from elsewhere in the school and university actively participate in the program. About 650 students are enrolled each year in the program, about 13% of who are minority students. The program is essentially a graduate program with three major options: (1) a masters' degree in elementary, secondary education, and special education, (2) a five-year integrated arts & science bachelors with a masters of teaching degree, and (3) a two year post graduate master of teaching degree in grades PK-6, 6-12 (English, mathematics, science, social studies), PK-12 (health/PE, foreign languages, and special education or early childhood special education).

**Program claims:**

The program faculty views the teacher as a *reflective decision-maker* with an emphasis on the teacher's reflections on evidence and evidence-based decision-making rooted in a balance between generic and content-specific pedagogy. The program claims that it prepares teachers for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation who meet the Virginia proposed teaching standards and the components of TEAC's *Quality Principle I*.

The program faculty makes four specific claims with regard to their students and graduates – that they:

1. Understand human development and that they can enlist families, other school personnel, and communities to support student achievement.
2. Understand the disciplines they teach
3. Can tailor their instruction to meet the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of their students and content and assessment standards of the profession.
4. Continuously improve their teaching through reflection on the evidence of their effects on their students and schools.

**Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims:**

The program faculty manages the quality of the program with fifteen types of evidence and also through the development and research into new measures, some of which it has discarded. The measures can be grouped into five main categories: (1) *scores on standardized tests* (SAT, GRE, Praxis I and II, Virginia Reading Assessment), (2) *grades* (specific courses, GPA overall and in the major, and comparisons of program GPAs in arts and science with non-program A&S students), (3) *ratings* of student teachers' artifacts with regard to Virginia teaching standards by cooperating teachers (instructors) and faculty, ratings of the quality of student-teacher interactions on 10 scales (CLASS), faculty review of student lesson plans on a common rubric on five dimensions, student ratings of 13 factors associated with their learning, effectiveness of the institution, and the overall program experience (EBI), (4) *surveys* about the program undertaken by graduates (exit survey), alumni (graduates of 2000-04), employers, and faculty throughout the university who have taught the program's students, (5) *retention rates* of graduates from 2000, '02, and '04.

The program acquired the evidence over several years from separate samples of students, the samples ranging in size from as few as 36 (lesson plan ratings) to samples as large as 786 (GRE scores).

**Results:**

On the whole the faculty members are satisfied with the strong intellectual competence of their students as shown in their high SAT scores (1255) and GRE scores (1124) and undergraduate grades (program average over 3.50 and 3.25 in the major). The program posts a 100% pass rate on the all the Praxis license tests and 98% on the VRA. In all but one major the program students have higher mean grades in the major courses than non-program A&S students in the major (the lower area is within a rounding error of

difference).

With regard to the surveys and rating scales on the level of preparation for program students, graduates and alumni, the overwhelming majorities of ratings are in the top two rating categories (the high ends) of the scales (with the exception of ratings of prospective math teachers by their clinical instructors).

### **Program research:**

The program faculty members periodically have also undertaken specific studies of factors entailed in their students' performance. In the Byrd-Nottingham study the faculty attempted to discern the value added to the teaching by their students versus the teaching by comparable UVA students who were from other programs as measured by CLASS, in the EBI study the faculty compared the program students' survey ratings with survey ratings of students from six peer institutions, from 14 institutions in UVA's Carnegie classification, and from 39 institutions who participate in the EBI survey, and in another investigation the faculty compared the 2005 and 2006 exit survey results and also the exit survey and EBI results on comparable items.

### **Internal audit results:**

The faculty drew a stratified sample of 20% students from the elementary, secondary and special education options and another 15% from the most recent graduates to check whether their controls for admission, advancement, faculty review, field experiences, and graduation functioned as designed and found that on the whole there was ample evidence in the record of the 55 students for each control. The internal audit findings for the rest of the quality control system with regard to faculty quality and record keeping were positive.

### **Evidence of commitment and capacity:**

The faculty examined points of parity among the program, the Curry school as a whole, and the college of arts and science and generally found comparability between the capacity of their program and the others that they took as evidence that the institution was committed to the program.

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

Elementary education (PK-6), secondary education (6-12 in English education, mathematics education, science education, and social studies education) PK-12 programs (health/physical education, foreign languages, and special education), or early childhood/developmental risk (early childhood special education [ECCR] ages birth-5 and primary education grades preK-3).

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For TED purposes, health/physical education and foreign language education are coordinated within the secondary program area and ECDR is placed within special education.

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