
Introduction

Vision and Mission of the Institution and Unit

Faculty, staff, and candidates within the Professional Education Unit (Unit) at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) collaborate to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Building on the distinctive heritage of our University as a normal college, we prepare our candidates to engage in creative, bold, and determined actions that positively influence a culturally diverse, global community.

The vision of The University of Southern Mississippi is to emerge as the premier research University of the Gulf South -- engaging and empowering individuals to transform lives and communities. Supporting the institutional theme of empowerment, the Professional Education Unit is dedicated to the delivery of high quality academic programs in all areas of professional education. Candidates develop knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions through exposure to exemplary teaching, research, and professional service. The Unit contributes to the mission of the University through all aspects of scholarship that promote a climate for academic success; that enhance the image of the University and its professional education programs; and that foster connections with P-12 partners and external agencies.

The Professional Education Unit's conceptual framework is consistent with the University's historical roots as a normal college, its mission, and its future. The University, since its founding in 1910, has been committed to the exemplary preparation of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel. In accordance with this history and the present vision and mission of the University, the Unit is committed to improving the educational attainment of the citizens of Mississippi, and in turn, the economic development of our state. Therefore, the mission of the Unit is fivefold: a) prepare high quality teachers and education leaders for our state; b) conduct innovative, relevant research that informs decision-making in education; c) establish strong relationships with local school districts and the Mississippi Department of Education to improve education in our state, d) promote a healthier populace; and e) enhance cultural understanding among our citizens.

Conceptual Framework Core Themes & Constructs

Shared Vision

The Professional Education Unit's conceptual framework provides the underpinning that supports the governance of the Unit by the Professional Education Faculty (PEF) members, the delivery of instruction, as well as the learning outcomes for candidates at all levels. It provides clarity of vision to the Unit by defining how teacher education candidates and other school professional candidates are to be prepared. Unit faculty members and administrators developed outcomes consistent with the University mission statement, as well as

state, subject-area accreditation, and NCATE standards. These core outcomes support the critical constructs embedded within the vision and mission of the University and Unit. Furthermore, the efficacy of the Unit's vision is continually validated through the assessment of outcomes based on candidate performances.

The professional education faculty members are committed to diversity and the preparation of educators who help all students learn. Unit faculty members demonstrate their commitment to the integration of technology to enhance candidate and student learning through scholarship, service, and teaching. Furthermore, the Unit has embedded knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitment to diversity and technology throughout its teacher education program. Thus, Unit faculty members prepare candidates to become creative, bold, and determined educational leaders who possess the characteristics embodied within the following four core themes: the power of knowledge to inform, the power to inspire, the power to transform lives, and to empower a community of learners.

Within these four themes lie the overarching constructs for all professional education candidates, encompassing the vision and mission of the Unit:

1. Power of Knowledge to Inform

- a. *Understands general, as well as technological, content-specific pedagogical skills* (Content Knowledge*, Technology*, and Pedagogy*)
- b. *Understands and employs data-driven assessment processes* (Assessment of Learning*)
- c. *Competent in content knowledge* (Content Knowledge*)
- d. *Understands implications of diversity in the classroom* (Diversity*)
- e. *Understands standards-based content knowledge* (Content Knowledge*)
- f. *Understands theoretically-based knowledge of student learning processes* (Assessment of Learning*)

2. Power to Inspire

- a. *Believes all can learn* (Diversity* and Dispositions*)
- b. *Believes in ability to foster learning* (Dispositions*)
- c. *Believes that best teaching is based on sound educational theory and research* (Pedagogy*)
- d. *Resilient* (Dispositions*)
- e. *Values lifelong learning* (Professional Development*)
- f. *Inspires and engages learners* (Classroom Management*)
- g. *Demonstrates ethical and professional dispositions* (Dispositions*)

3. Power to Transform Lives

- a. *Effectively demonstrates general, as well as technological, content-specific, pedagogical skills* (Pedagogy*)
- b. *Interprets and uses assessment data to ensure and improve learning outcomes* (Assessment of Learning*)
- c. *Is able to teach so that all can succeed in a complex, changing society* (Instructional Planning*)
- d. *Is a critical thinker and problem solver* (Assessment of Learning*)
- e. *Communicates effectively* (Communication*)
- f. *Monitors safety and creates a physical environment which is conducive to learning* (Classroom Management*)

4. Empower a Community

- a. *Continues professional and personal development* (Professional Development*)
- b. *Are responsible citizens of their communities* (Professional Development*)
- c. *Is able to contribute to society in meaningful ways* (Professional Development*)
- d. *Is able to build a learning community partnership* (Professional Collaboration*)

**Constructs assessed*

Knowledge Bases

Power of Knowledge to Inform

Professional education faculty members at The University of Southern Mississippi, produce candidates as education professionals who have the *power of knowledge to inform*. Using the conceptual framework constructs as the underpinning of the expected outcomes, candidates will:

- Apply a content and theoretical knowledge base supported by technological and pedagogical skills to enhance learning in the classroom.
- Develop appropriate assessments, monitor student progress, and use data to make instructional decisions.
- Apply knowledge, awareness, and understanding of their own culture and other cultures in and beyond the classroom to enhance student learning.
- Use state curriculum models as well as local, state, and national standards to advance identified knowledge and skills in the classroom.
- Develop knowledge, awareness, and understanding of student learning processes and apply that knowledge to support learning in the classroom.

Candidates will apply a content and theoretical knowledge base supported by technological and pedagogical skills to enhance learning in the classroom.

Candidates gain content and theoretical knowledge through specific programs of study in each educational discipline. Additionally, candidates complete a core of professional education courses required of all teacher education students at USM. These core courses include data analysis and evaluation, classroom management, and education of exceptional learners. The professional education courses provide an important foundation for each of the specific programs of study.

Within the professional education coursework, candidates develop skills in designing engaging lessons that apply interdisciplinary curricula knowledge in authentic situations. Specifically, the lessons apply appropriate teaching strategies, incorporate technology, integrate depth of knowledge, and utilize assessment to improve student learning outcomes. These skills are further developed through observation of professors modeling appropriate pedagogy, application in practicum experiences, and evaluation through professional reflection. Candidates also complete comprehensive portfolios to explore and demonstrate depth of knowledge.

The Unit is also committed to integrating technology into instruction for candidates in both initial and advanced program areas. Current research emphasizes that candidates must be trained to apply technology to enrich and enhance student achievement. For example, Becker (2000) reports that technology-rich environments promote

active learning that is necessary to master principles and concepts. Cradler, McNabb, Freeman, and Burchett, (2002) state “. . . alignment between content-area learning standards and carefully selected technology uses can significantly increase test scores” (p. 47). Additionally, research and evaluation show that technology can enable the development of critical thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills when technology tools are used for constructing artifacts and electronic information (Cradler et al., 2002).

Faculty members in specific program areas assess candidates for their technological knowledge and skills in accordance with specific program needs and standards. However, in an effort to establish baseline technology skills, all undergraduate candidates must successfully pass a Basic Technology Literacy Exam (BTLE) or become certified via Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³) prior to beginning teacher candidacy. USM’s initial certification candidates are also required to purchase and use Tk20 CampusTools (Tk20) to document and manage their academic activities throughout their internship. Candidates can develop additional skills in the use of computer technology appropriate to teaching, learning, and managing education. They are expected to use educational technology to more effectively engage students and increase student learning outcomes, to broaden communication with parents and enhance parental involvement, and to complete routine work associated with teaching in the P-12 setting.

Candidates develop appropriate assessments, monitors student progress, and uses data to make instructional decisions.

According to McLeod (2005), the five fundamentals of effective data-driven instruction are “good baseline data, measurable instructional goals, frequent formative assessment, professional learning communities, and focused instructional interventions” (p. 1). Baseline data are used to identify the mastery levels and learning needs of students. This information is critical in terms of establishing measurable instructional goals to guide pedagogical strategies. Collecting and analyzing formative data also represent an important and powerful process that supports student learning and enhances student outcomes. When teachers meet collaboratively in professional learning communities to discuss data-driven evidence, student achievement and teacher satisfaction increase. Wilkins and Shin (2011) emphasize the importance of teachers using data-driven decisions to increase student learning as well as teacher preparation programs training future teachers to use data to increase student learning.

Further, research from exemplary schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004) indicates that in order to reach a range of diverse learners, teacher education should emphasize student performance assessment evaluated by scoring rubrics. This approach demystifies the notion of competency and makes it possible for all students to succeed by giving them the opportunity to develop products, receive feedback, and internalize the standards, as well as allowing them to steadily revise their work in order to become increasingly proficient.

The Unit strives to produce candidates that use data-driven evidence to employ focused instructional interventions to improve student learning. Candidates develop skills in data collection and analysis and data-driven instruction through authentic assessment strategies in required courses and practicum experiences. Candidates complete assignments in coursework that require them to review and analyze the impact of data on teaching strategies as well as student achievement. Candidates also administer and analyze proper assessments during their internship to demonstrate student growth. At the Unit level, data are available to evaluate

instruction, identify necessary changes in curriculum, and improve learning outcomes. In addition, individual disciplines rely on data to ensure continuous improvement of educational programs.

Candidates will apply knowledge, understanding, and awareness of their own culture and other cultures in and beyond the classroom to enhance student learning.

Today's teachers work with school populations that are vastly different from those they experienced as students. The demographics of these school populations are ethnically, linguistically, and socially diverse, representing a variety of value systems, perspectives, and academic preparation. Understanding this, the Unit makes candidates aware of current demographics and prepares them to teach using culturally responsive methods and embedded content literacy. The aim is to transform education so that students from all socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and gender groups have an equal opportunity to learn. Nieto & Bode (2008) report a multicultural curriculum based on an understanding of social justice can motivate teachers and students to work together to promote social change. Transformation in education occurs when teachers reach all students, regardless of their socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and gender group.

The vision of the Professional Education Unit is to equip candidates with a depth of knowledge regarding multicultural issues, a commitment to equity for all, an ability to bond with all students, and skills to accommodate different learning styles and abilities. Gay (2010) states, "... examining beliefs and attitudes about cultural diversity, *along with* developing cognitive knowledge and pedagogical skills, are included as essential elements of teacher education" (p. 151). Thus, both of these aspects of teacher education must be incorporated in preparation and practice. Therefore, the Unit is committed to instilling in candidates the values, beliefs, creativity, knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function cross-culturally.

Professors within the Unit seek to honor individual differences by communicating respect, fairness, and high expectations to all students. Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) comments that field experiences which target specific skill training for reaching the diversity of student populations is an important advance in our training of teachers. Active planning for students' varied interests, strengths, and needs is key to differentiating instruction (Tomlinson, 2008). Therefore, candidates focus on instructional strategies that allow multiple learning paths for students. Opportunities to observe and teach a variety of students are facilitated by Unit faculty members and monitored by the Placement Specialist of Educational Field Experiences.

Candidates will use state curriculum models as well as local, state, and national standards to advance identified knowledge and skills in the classroom.

The Conceptual Framework model for educator preparation programs at USM is based on the expectation that all programs are aligned with professional standards, including professional standards that are embedded in state curriculum models. The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Principles represent the core of the professional education undergraduate program. In addition, the five core propositions from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) provide the basis for assessment throughout the field experience portion of the program. Curricula within advanced teacher preparation programs are also aligned to the five core propositions from the NBPTS. The program areas within the Unit that have reciprocal agreements with non-NCATE associations are required by the Professional Education Unit to align their curriculum and syllabi with the corresponding association standards. Program areas that are not classified in either category, yet operate with national or state standards, are also required to demonstrate alignment with established standards. The State of Mississippi has adopted the Common Core State Standards that provide a clear understanding of what students are expected to learn. Professional standards and

curriculum models are stressed through classroom activities, course assignments, and practicum and internship experiences.

Candidates in both initial and advanced programs are required to develop lesson and unit plans aligned to the appropriate standards and proficiencies designed to meet the needs of students. The professional education faculty at USM encourage candidates to develop innovative strategies for educating students within P-12 settings while considering the mandated requirements set forth by institutional, state, and national standards. Candidates are evaluated on their development and use of these strategies when employing them in various P-12 settings.

Candidates will develop knowledge, awareness, and understanding of student learning processes and apply that knowledge to support learning in the classroom.

Candidates are equipped to support learning in the classroom by an immersion in coursework related to student learning processes. Candidates study Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, multiple intelligences, and cognitive and social constructivism philosophies of education. They develop the skills necessary to translate theory into practice in order to support student learning in the classroom. Candidates demonstrate the ability to apply differentiated instruction, depth of knowledge in planning instruction, response to intervention techniques, and content literacy methods to improve student learning during practicum and internship experiences.

Both content and professional education licensure pass rates for USM education candidates indicate a high level of content and theoretical knowledge base. These pass rates illustrate that USM candidates have the knowledge to positively impact P-12 student learning within educational settings. Candidates demonstrate their technological and pedagogical skills in content courses based on professional standards applicable to the subject area. In addition, candidates are assessed by both University supervisors and classroom mentors on their ability to demonstrate their use of best-practices teaching strategies, application of problem solving, and initiation of critical thinking skills of P-12 students.

Power to Inspire

Professional education faculty members at USM transform candidates into teachers who have the *power to inspire* students, parents, and other educational professionals. Using the conceptual framework constructs as the underpinning of the expected outcomes, candidates will:

- Demonstrate through their actions a belief that all individuals can learn and benefit from a quality educational experience.
- Demonstrate through their use of best practices, actions and interactions with others, the ability to foster learning for all persons.
- Demonstrate personal and professional resolve by embracing and addressing challenges, supporting and assisting others in difficult situations, and displaying respect and value for others at all times.
- Serve as role models of lifelong learning, professionalism, civic responsibility, and commitment to the education of others.
- Demonstrate professional values and high moral principles by conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct and ethics that distinguish them as professional educators pursuing excellence and equity for others.

Candidates will demonstrate through their actions a belief that all individuals can learn and benefit from a quality educational experience.

The Professional Education Unit strives to instill in education students a belief that every individual can learn. Furthermore, the Unit stresses that a teacher's own actions and interactions with others have an impact on an individual's desire to learn and can inspire learning in others. Michael Fullan (2001) reminds us that education's moral purpose is to make a difference in students' lives regardless of their background. Candidates can fulfill this moral purpose in their professional careers through a commitment to all students, the development of a high-quality curriculum, the delivery of instruction that meets the needs of all students, the effective use of data, and high expectations of all students.

Camp and Oesterreich (2010) indicate that there are unique elements that exist in multicultural classrooms and that there is interdependency among these elements. Understanding this interdependency informs educators on creating programs to include multiple opportunities, differentiated instruction, pedagogical support, and educational experiences. The professional education curricula, regardless of training level, provides multiple opportunities for candidates to develop an awareness of and implement differentiated instructional strategies during a variety of educational experiences.

Candidates will demonstrate through their use of best practices, actions and interactions with others, the ability to foster learning for all persons.

The power of believing in one's capacity for success, self-efficacy, is central to fostering learning for all students. Therefore, candidates explore both learning theory and evidence-based practice to build a foundation for success. In addition, the teacher education program prepares candidates to apply best practices in planning and delivering instruction, to identify and address diverse learning styles, and to acknowledge the unique background and needs of the individual learner. Students also explore Lambert and McCombs' (1998) theories of intrinsic motivation that emphasize the centrality of relevance in instruction. When students see relevance and value to their learning, motivation for continued growth occurs. Marzano (1998) refers to this ability to build connections between old and new learning as direct schema activation.

To foster this ability to build connections, candidates at USM complete practicum and clinical experiences that are purposefully designed to be diverse in terms of settings, student demographics, and student needs. Placing candidates in such settings is key to the Unit's ability to assure that all candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to foster learning for all persons. Within these settings, candidates design and deliver contextually relevant teaching that inspires intrinsic motivation. Undergraduate candidates participate in at least three different school settings during their course of study, while graduate interns participate in at least two different school settings.

Candidates will demonstrate personal and professional resolve by embracing and addressing challenges, supporting and assisting others in difficult situations, and displaying respect and value for others at all times.

Instruction in the Unit's core of professional education courses equips candidates to become reflective teacher leaders. Examining one's beliefs, assumptions, and biases regarding teaching is a critical activity of candidates (Schon, 1987). Using this practice of reflection, candidates learn from their experiences by consciously focusing on strategies and interactions that worked well and isolating approaches that need to be modified in the future. Candidates share this philosophy with their students to assist the students to make appropriate adjustments in

behavior and attitudes as well. In fact, candidates study the individual abilities of each learner and submit reflections to supervisors regarding their ability to foster growth for all individuals in their classroom.

When the subject matter is difficult to master, candidates promote an environment that encourages risk-taking and builds confidence. Candidates create a classroom management plan during the undergraduate internship considered to be critical to this management skill. Through this process, candidates are provided ample opportunities for reflection, continuous growth, and ongoing feedback from both P-12 supervisors and university faculty and mentors.

Candidates will serve as role models of lifelong learning, professionalism, civic responsibility, and commitment to the education of others.

John Dewey's (1944) holistic pedagogy, valuing experiences that enable the student to contribute to society, continues to have prominent relevance for today's educators. Dewey notes that education is the only profession concerned primarily with the future and advances the prospect of making a difference (Dewey, 1938). Furthermore, Chen (2002) reports knowledgeable and skillful teachers will not necessarily be effective empowered teachers without certain dispositions that need to come from within the individuals. Thus, classroom activities need to foster the development of these dispositions by helping P-20 students become lifelong learners. Cross (2009) refines the idea of lifelong learning by encouraging the educator to focus on the learning process. Professional education candidates at USM encourage cooperative learning in classroom settings in order to create new understandings about how the world works. They also inspire their students as intellectual and moral role models. Exemplary candidates join honorary societies such as Kappa Delta Pi and Phi Kappa Phi to expand their professional contributions. In some instances, candidates present research within their local school districts or at various levels of conferences and workshops.

Illustrating the views of social constructivism, the four core themes of the conceptual framework further the idea that education is effective only when it moves from the concrete events that are meaningful to the individual to broadly applicable general principles of civic responsibility (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). The *power to inspire* embodies this guiding principle for the Unit. Opportunities to participate in on-campus and off-campus conferences and workshops are encouraged by the professional education faculty and university administration.

Candidates will demonstrate professional values and high moral principles by conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct and ethics that distinguish them as professional educators pursuing excellence and equity for others.

Ayers (2003) claimed that education that nurtures students to make meaningful choices also requires them to act on their knowledge, to create structures, and to change and transform structures so that the world is a better place for all. In order to reform educational practices, Carrington, Deppeler, and Moss (2010) report that candidates must consider the importance of value positions that are grounded by social and cultural beliefs. USM professional education faculty members encourage self-reflection and model ethical behaviors that are grounded in the ideals of distinguished professional educators. Indeed, these professional educators serve as models for ethics in the work place as well.

A Code of Ethics for all faculty, students, and staff of the educational Unit, adopted in 2000 by the Professional Education Council is specifically reviewed and signed by teacher interns prior to the internship. These core values reflect faculty beliefs that teachers are continuous learners and that education professionals should further pursue learning opportunities during their careers and continue to grow and develop as teachers throughout their lives.

Power to Transform Lives

Professional education faculty members at USM produce candidates as education professionals who have the *power to transform lives* of students, parents, and other educational professionals. Using the conceptual framework constructs as the underpinning of the expected outcomes, candidates will:

- Demonstrate general technological, content, and pedagogical skills in the classroom.
- Critically consider data-driven evidence to solve problems and to improve the learning process in order to improve learning outcomes in the classroom.
- Provide differentiated instruction to address and meet the needs of all students in order to enable them to succeed in a complex, changing society.
- Reflect, communicate, and act in a manner that supports and inspires successful learning.
- Create a safe physical environment that promotes learning and positive dispositions.

Candidates will demonstrate general technological, content, and pedagogical skills in the classroom.

The theoretical basis of transformative education is constructivist learning, which requires students to actively construct meaning by drawing upon personal connections between their experiential backgrounds and the content being studied. Constructivism is an extension of cognitive theory based on the investigations and research of cognitive psychologists such as Piaget (1955), socio-historical psychologists such as Vygotsky (1962), and semiotic interactionists such as Bruner (1986) and Gardner (1993). The major goals of teaching and learning in a constructivist classroom are concept development and deep understanding, which are the result of active learner reorganization and construction of meaning rather than the acquisition of discrete behaviors and skills.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2004) proposed that technology be fully integrated into teacher preparation programs. Unit faculty members have embraced this idea by incorporating campus-wide university computer resources, electronic classrooms, and technology classes into the teacher candidate preparation programs at USM. Furthermore, Unit faculty members demonstrate this commitment by modeling the use of cutting-edge technology in coursework and seeking teacher candidacy placements in partnering schools that incorporate technology.

Candidates demonstrate their attainment of technological skills through their use of various technology tools such as laptop computers, software packages, and electronic classrooms during their coursework and practicum experiences. Additionally, all candidates use Tk20 Campus Tools to demonstrate their attainment of various content and pedagogical skills and knowledge by publishing their portfolios to Tk20.

Finally, USM's teacher education faculty believe that the premise of transforming lives is based on the effective design of curriculum, assessment, and instruction, which is focused on developing and deepening understanding of important ideas. The concepts proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) in their seminal work, *Understanding*

by Design, provide an approach to curriculum and instruction designed to engage learners in inquiry, promote transfer of learning, and provide a conceptual framework to assist them in making sense of discrete facts and skills which ultimately result in a deep understanding of the big ideas of content.

Candidates will critically consider data-driven evidence to solve problems and to improve the learning process in order to improve learning outcomes in the classroom.

In the transformative curriculum espoused by Henderson and Hawthorne (2000), the core theme is producing education professionals who have the *power to transform lives*. Candidates in USM's teacher preparation programs are actively taught to use assessment data to solve problems they face concerning the learning processes and their outcomes. In order to accomplish this, Unit faculty members incorporate the five modes of inquiry suggested by Henderson and Hawthorne (2000). Indeed, the following modes of reflective inquiry may be found in USM's teacher education programs: (1) creative inquiry—facilitating each student's individual understandings, promoting proactive problem solving, and nurturing aesthetic engagement and expression; (2) caring reflective inquiry—enacting planning and teaching in a caring manner, incorporating the key dimensions of confirmation, dialogue, and cooperation; (3) critical reflective inquiry—becoming more aware of the overt and covert, interpersonal and personal, institutional and societal, historical and cultural factors that affect teaching and learning; (4) contemplative reflective inquiry—examining and embracing the value of growing as transformative teachers; and (5) collegial reflective inquiry—moving beyond the individual classroom and becoming responsible professionals in the school and community. Unit faculty members embrace all five modes of inquiry and actively incorporate them into their teaching. Candidates use these inquiry modes as they solve problems and interpret assessment data to ensure and improve learning outcomes.

Candidates will provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students in order to enable them to succeed in a complex, changing society.

USM's professional education faculty members believe teacher education programs that develop transformative teachers employ assessment-driven, differentiated instruction. According to Salvia, Ysseldyke, and Bolt (2007), assessment involves collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about individuals and groups which results in many lives being touched and transformed. Because of the power of the decision-making role of assessment, it is essential that candidates learn about assessment practices, the decisions that are made based on those practices, the types of assessments used, and the technical adequacy of those assessments.

Competently teaching so that all can succeed in a complex, changing society is a complicated task. Candidates in USM's teacher preparation programs are taught to provide differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of their students. Indeed, candidates work to meet students where they are in the learning process, using a constructivist approach to teaching in order to make learning meaningful. Differentiated instruction allows the candidate to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. This approach to teaching and learning values the individual and provides a way to teach in ways that are responsive to students' learning profiles (Moore, 2005).

To develop transformative teachers, USM professional education faculty have embraced and incorporated successful teacher education strategies used in exemplary schools, as described in Linda Darling-Hammond's study of highly successful teacher education programs. Darling-Hammond (2004) advocates the restructuring of teacher education in order to produce transformative teachers through the collaborative work of universities

and P-12 schools. She advocates true partnerships in which both course work and clinical work revolve around authentic clinical experiences, case studies, analyses of learning and teaching, action research, and performance assessments that help candidates integrate theory and practice while strengthening the shared knowledge of the community of educators involved in teacher education.

Change is an integral part of educational systems. To meet the challenges of a changing world and knowledge base, candidates in graduate programs must be capable of recognizing the need for change, developing a plan for implementing change, and then implementing change. In the advanced programs, candidates are prepared with the foundational skills and knowledge bases needed to act as change agents in professional activities. To manage change, candidates assess important variables inherent in the environment and determine strategies to use those variables to meet organizational needs. The Unit faculty believe that proactive, successful change agents: 1) recognize that change is a process; 2) become active, integral elements of the change; and 3) help others to participate in new, evolving organizational structures.

Candidates will reflect, communicate, and act in a manner that supports and inspires successful learning.

Candidates engage in good classroom communication making a difference between a motivated learner and a reluctant learner. As stated above, the modes of reflective inquiry suggested by Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) are utilized throughout USM's teacher preparation programs. Indeed, these five modes of reflective activity allow candidates to use reflection to support and inspire their students to be successful.

Candidates will create a safe physical environment that promotes learning and positive dispositions.

Candidates promote learning by making the classroom physically and psychologically safe. Every teacher holds his/her own dispositions and attitudes. However, Moore (2005) reports that effective teachers hold common dispositions such as (a) effective teachers are real, (b) effective teachers have positive expectations for all students, (c) effective teachers are caring about their students, (d) effective teachers are excited about teaching and learning, and (e) effective teachers value diversity. Candidates in the USM professional education program are held accountable for their dispositions as evidenced in the In-Class Evaluation document completed by Mentor Teachers and University Supervisors during the candidate's field experience.

Empower a Community of Learners

USM Professional education faculty members transform candidates into education professionals who *empower a community of learners*. Using the conceptual framework constructs as the underpinning of the expected outcomes, candidates will:

- Reflect on their own practices and engage in professional development activities to improve their abilities.
- Institute the highest standards by acting as stewards to the profession.
- Actively participate in their community and foster an environment that promotes teamwork and collaboration.

Candidates will reflect on their own practices and engage in professional development activities to improve their abilities.

Participation in professional development activities is not only encouraged by professional education unit faculty, but it is required for them in order to promote the missions of both the University and the Unit. Professional development opportunities can help individuals grow professionally as they share and benefit from each other's teaching experiences and content knowledge (Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). Professional education faculty members model the use of reflection on their own practices, both professionally and personally, and support candidate engagement in these types of practices. Candidates engage in reflective practices throughout their programs. Unit faculty members believe that this engagement will foster continued professional development as candidates move into their professional lives. Attending workshops and conferences during their programs instills a desire to continue to develop professionally post graduation.

Candidates will institute the highest standards by acting as stewards to the profession.

In order to become effective teachers and educational leaders, Unit faculty members' underlying belief is to transform the learning process from disseminating knowledge to encouraging shared leadership throughout one's program. By promoting active engagement and shared leadership, Unit faculty believe that graduates of education programs at The University of Southern Mississippi will become good citizens engaged in their profession which will contribute positively to American society. Candidates graduate and begin a professional career that is normally considered to be service oriented. Not only will candidates serve their profession but they will also have a broader notion of service that includes the love of learning that enables them to live a "good life" as well as enabling them to further their profession as one who models the ideals of stewardship (Simpson, 2010).

As stated elsewhere in this framework, USM professional education faculty members encourage self-reflection and model ethical behaviors that are grounded in the ideals of distinguished professional educators. By doing so, candidates are exposed to the high standards of the profession and will thus be more inclined to act as stewards of the profession once graduated. Additionally, candidates are exposed to core values of the profession that embody the ideas of continuous learning and continuous growth both in the profession and personally.

Candidates will actively participate in their community and foster an environment that promotes teamwork and collaboration.

Community engagement, civic responsibility, and teamwork are all aspects of an educational environment that supports the integrity and betterment of our future educational landscape. Unit faculty believe that effective teachers set high expectations for their students and enable them to meet those expectations by maintaining a caring, structured, cooperative classroom environment that acknowledges their students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds (Adkins-Coleman, 2010). USM professional education candidates are encouraged to participate in local and national workshops and conferences. In addition, they actively work as a community of learners in their courses to create lessons and interpret data as they seek to improve education in their communities. Partnerships between Unit faculty and local P-12 schools are critical in order to produce effective teachers. Partnerships that marry coursework and clinical work produce teachers who can integrate theory and practice and strengthen the educational level of the community in which they reside.

Conclusion

Mississippi's Blue Ribbon Committee for the Redesign of Teacher Preparation (BRC) was formed to increase both the quality and quantity of teachers for Mississippi's schools through a collaboratively-developed redesign initiative targeted for all teacher preparation programs. The BRC developed seven initiatives to guide Mississippi's teacher preparation programs: meaningful field experiences, subject content preparation, differentiating instruction, classroom management, recruitment and retention, strong partnerships, and accountability.

Overview of Assessment

The Unit's assessment system is a comprehensive structure developed and maintained by a variety of stakeholders. The assessment system is designed to address the unique needs of each program and to support the combined mission of the Unit based on the core themes of the conceptual framework. Additionally, the assessment system was developed to collect and analyze data relative to the operations of the Unit and candidate performance. The assessment system reflects the Conceptual Framework for the Unit and encompasses outcomes as outlined in the professional and state standards for each program area. Many of the components of The University of Southern Mississippi's assessment system have been in place for years – particularly those pertaining to admission to the university and its teacher education programs as well as to programs that prepare other educational personnel. In addition to the longevity of the admissions assessment component, assessment systems for both retention in each of those programs and the evaluation of candidates during clinical experiences are well established.

Each program has identified *Key Assessments* for data collection and evaluation during admissions, coursework, and field/clinical experiences. Additionally, graduation and follow-up data are collected and evaluated. *Key Assessment* data are collected according to identified transition points for initial certification, advanced programs, and other school professional programs at three levels: candidate, program, and unit. A core component of the assessment system is the linkage between the Conceptual Framework, Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's), and Course SLO's. Course-based assessments are conducted using *Key Assignments* from core coursework and field experiences. The Tk20 CampusTools, an electronic data management system, is used to collect and compile data on candidate, program, and unit performance. Data are aggregated and used to promote a cycle of programmatic continuous improvement in order to affect policy, curricular decisions, and program modifications. These data are evaluated by internal and external stakeholders in order to make data-based decisions that foster improvements to both programs and ongoing operations of the Unit.

Through the Unit Assessment System, data are collected within and across programs for analyses. The Unit Review Committee (URC), established in 2006, formalized the process of reviewing Unit operations and aggregated candidate performance data. The Professional Education Council (PEC) charged the URC with the evaluation of the Unit's assessment system to determine if the Unit operations and candidate performance are being assessed properly and if Unit-wide improvements are actually occurring as a result of the assessment system. Data-driven recommendations for program and Unit changes are reviewed by the PEC before decisions are shared with Unit faculty.

The coordination of the assessment system and the major responsibilities of aggregating and summarizing data at the Unit level are performed by the staff in the NCATE Office. At the program and Unit level, data are

routinely gathered about admission to programs, enrollment, retention, external funding, and scholarly activity. Annual program summaries are presented to the PEC for ongoing stakeholder involvement.

Assessment data are collected, stored, and analyzed using two systems and one office—the University’s PeopleSoft data base, Tk20 data management system, and the Office of Institutional Research. The PeopleSoft data base provides the Unit with Praxis, ACT, SAT, GRE, MAT, and other standardized test scores; admission data; candidate demographic information; enrollment data; faculty data and demographics; and advising transcripts for monitoring candidates’ progression through the programs. The Office of Institutional Research provides the Unit with student course evaluations, faculty activity reports, and official enrollment data for our programs.

The use of Tk20 allows for systematic processes of data collection on unit-wide assessments as well as program-level SPA assessments. In addition, candidate field experience placements, communication between instructors, cooperating teachers and teacher candidates, and reporting concerning assignments or portfolios is all handled within Tk20.

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