

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WSU Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
Self-Study Document, Fall, 2013

Peggy J. Saunders, Ph.D.
Director, M.Ed. Program
McKay Education 235, x7673
psaunders@weber.edu

Introduction:

As the oldest master's degree on campus, the Master of Education program is celebrating its 35th year in existence (fall, 2013). Begun in 1978 as a joint effort with Utah State University (however, all courses were taught by Weber State College [WSC] faculty and diplomas were from WSC), it became its own designated program in the fall of 1988. Hundreds of local teachers, campus staff and faculty (including several current teacher education faculty members), and community members have completed their master's degrees through the program.

The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full self-study document.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction program is to extend the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators including those in schools, business, industry, and higher education. The program is designed to advance the theoretical and practical applications of curriculum and instruction for all learners.

Curriculum:

During the past five years, the program has added a pathway for people with bachelor's degrees to obtain their teaching licenses. Three licenses are available: special education, elementary education, and secondary education. The secondary license can only be obtained if a person has an undergraduate degree in a subject currently taught in Utah junior or senior high schools. People complete the coursework and student teaching prior to obtaining the M.Ed. This pathway has been very popular and accounts for approximately two-thirds of our student population. However, it has reduced the percentage of students actually graduating with the M.Ed. degree because once they begin their new careers, they find it difficult to return, or in many cases, these people already possessed graduate degrees. People pursuing licensure must complete more coursework, a practicum, and student teaching, which are not requirements for the "regular" master's degree. Please see the full report for the required courses.

With that said, the program is strong, graduating approximately 35-50 students each year. The degree is 36-credit hours with 21 of those hours being "core" courses required of all students, and the other 15 credits are electives. Each candidate completes a project/thesis under the guidance of a three-person committee: the chair from the Teacher Education (TE) department and committee members either from the TE department, another department on campus, or a community member who holds at least a master's degree.

Learning Outcomes/Assessments:

The learning outcomes have remained stable during the past five years even though various professors have taught the courses. We will be revisiting those outcomes during the upcoming national accreditation self-study. The accrediting board, Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), soon to become Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), will do their site visit in fall, 2014. The master's program has not in the past been a part of the accreditation process; however, because of the addition of the licensing tracks, the M.Ed. program will undergo this level of accreditation during 2014.

Students tend to score high on all assessments. Due to the nature of a master's project/thesis and other course assignments, most assignments can be turned in multiple times for feedback from instructors. We focus on the learning not just the correct answer. Most professors use rubrics to grade major assignments. These rubrics are disclosed in the syllabi, and the students know from the beginning how an assignment will be graded.

Academic Advising:

Academic advising is handled by the program director and the program secretary for much of the students' time in the program. Towards the end of their studies, a graduate committee is formed and at that point, advisement is done by the committee chair (a teacher education faculty member) in consultation with the program director.

Faculty:

The faculty members are highly qualified in their fields with each holding terminal degrees. Another factor that is important to the business of teaching teachers is that most of the faculty members have taught in the k-12 system; some have been administrators in school settings. Nearly half of the professors have 10 or more years in the k-12 system. This type of experience makes the faculty more credible to the future teachers in the program.

Most courses are taught by teacher education faculty within their teaching load. A full complement of courses is offered each summer with the professors paid with funding from Continuing Education. The M.Ed. program does not have a designated graduate faculty, which allows professors teach within their areas of expertise in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. On the rare occasion that an adjunct faculty member is hired, areas of expertise as well as graduate degrees are considered in the hiring process.

Program Support:

The program is supported both academically and financially by the department chair of Teacher Education and the dean of the Moyes College of Education. This support is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. The program added a tuition differential in the summer of 2013, and these extra monies are coming directly to the program to support professors and program outcomes.

The McKay Education building is adequate to support the program. During the academic year, all courses are held in the evening from 4:30 to 7:10. The classroom space is more than adequate. Also, all classrooms are equipped with a projector, document camera, and Mac and PC computers. Many of the classrooms also have SmartBoards®.

Relations with External Community:

Maintaining relationships with the school districts and the Utah State Office of Education is critical to the success of the program, especially now that we have the licensing tracks. The school districts are the main employers of our graduates. Many formal and informal meetings are held to discuss the quality of the candidates who are licensing through WSU.

The program will be integral to the new Weber State University Mentor Academy which will provide a free graduate-level course in mentoring student teachers to any cooperating/mentor teacher in the school system. School district administrators are supportive of this new initiative.