

Weber State University-Evaluation Team Report
Master of Education
March 3, 2014

1) Overview/Introductory Statement

The program review for the Master of Education at Weber State University revealed a quality and effective program for the College of Education. Following a thorough review of faculty, students, curriculum, and program resources, the evaluation team compliments administration and faculty on their team approach, quality mentoring, outcome based curriculum, formative and summative assessments, community partnerships, and for moving in a direction that will continue to align their program and student graduates with Utah Common Core, USOE state licensing requirements, and national accreditation. With some confusion in the presentation of the Master of Education and the Licensing track, it is our recommendation to separate these tracks regarding differentiated program outcomes for clarity with students, faculty, and accreditation. Overall, the Master of Education program is a quality program. Details on program strengths, challenges, and recommendation are listed below.

2) Program strengths (please reference Standard where appropriate)

Program Strength 1: Students reported that the faculty is very approachable. Faculty members seem very well prepared and qualified for their teaching assignments and provide the needed advisement once the student formed his/her committee. Students appreciated that the faculty has maintained strong and quality connections to the K-12 setting, have a strong understanding of K-12 schools, and have significant K-12 experience (mean:10.33, SD: 6.78) that allow them to connect theory with practice that places their instruction in real world contexts. (*Standard E: a-h*).

Program Strength 2: Current programs, such as Gear-Up, help enhance the relationship between the program and surrounding school districts. It is evident there are formal relationships between the program and external communities. (*Standard G: a, b*).

Program Strength 3: The program demonstrates appropriate allocation of resources and administrative support (e.g., facilities, financial, endowments, technology, etc.) for curriculum delivery (*Standard B: c; Standard F: a, c*).

Program Strength 4: The program demonstrates thoughtful curriculum planning that meets the requirements for post-bacc and M.Ed. programs. Courses are offered in a timely manner (*Standard B: a, d*). It is noted that the program is in a transitional period of changing to new standards that will incorporate WSU mission statement, state (UETS), and national accreditation (TEAC/CAEP) standards (*Standard B: b*).

Program Strength 5: The program has developed measures for assessments that has clearly defined outcomes (Standard: a).

Program Strength 6: The program has a defined strategy for advising students which provides assistance in making career decisions and seeking placements (*Standard D: a, c*)

Program Strength 7: Evidence of addressing recommendations from a previous program review is documented in the report (*Standard H*).

3) Program challenges

- New faculty induction/culture due to retirements.
- Placement and length of time for field experiences in the post-bacc licensure track.
- Development of new assessment protocols and reliability measures.
- Decline in applicants.
- Low graduation rates in M.Ed. program since licensing (post-bacc) track.

4) Areas where the program did not meet the Standards and why

Program Concern 1: Program outcomes are appropriate and stated for a graduate M.Ed. program (*Standard C: a-c*). However, there is not enough distinction between outcomes for the post-bacc licensure track when compared to the M.Ed. program mission. Learning outcomes should be defined for each measure/standard which has created some confusion with the dual track program (Standard C: b).

Program Concern 2: With a dual track, students need a clear process for advising. A single office advisor may not be sufficient for this need (Standard D: b).

Program Weakness 1: It seems there are two missions in the M.Ed. and post-bacc programs. There is need for a dual role explicitly stated, one for the traditional M.Ed. program, and another for the licensure program. While these are both valuable and laudable, their missions feel distinct from one another. Students, especially, stated different, discrepant missions for the program (*Standard A: b, c*).

Program Weakness 2: It was not evident that data collection was done in a systematically manner and used to improve and direct program change (*Standard C: e*).

5) Recommendations for change – suggested changes for meeting Standards

Recommendation 1: The M.Ed. and post-bacc licensure program need to be two separate programs. The M.Ed. and post-bacc licensure should have separate mission statements and sets of learning outcomes.

The team recognizes that moving the post-bacc licensure out of the undergraduate program into the M.Ed. program solved several concerns for the undergraduate program; however it introduced multiple problems into the M.Ed. program, which has distracted from and weakened the M.Ed. program. The team would recommend that the post-bacc licensure program be a second track in the undergraduate program that strives to fast track students, allowing them to enter the K-12 classroom in the timeliest fashion possible.

When considering national accreditation and state program approval, separating the post-bacc licensure from the M.Ed. would place the WSU licensure programs on the best footing. It seems unnecessary to accredit the entire M.Ed. program, particularly when its mission is to serve student populations outside of the field of education, just for the post-bacc licensure portion of the program.

Recommendation 2: The program should create three sets of admission criteria—a set for the undergraduate program, a set for the post-bacc licensure program, and a set for the M.Ed. program. Each program has a different mission and is catering to a slightly different set of students. Having criteria specifically for the M.Ed. that isn't impacted by the post-bacc licensure, will strengthen the program and allow the faculty to select the best students to mentor in graduate studies.

Recommendation 3: The program should continue its efforts to transition to the Utah Effective Teaching Standards (UETS). The program should align curriculum and program assessments with the standards.

Recommendation 4: When interviewing Dr. Peggy Saunders, program director, the team learned that Dr. Saunders is providing the majority of the advisement for post-bacc licensure student since they have yet to form their three-member masters committee and select a chair. This places a large strain on Dr. Saunders time and energy. The program should evaluate ways that the post-bacc licensure students can receive advisement that relieves pressure from Dr. Saunders. The program indicated that Lynda Goucher, part-time program secretary, does help with this effort along with her other duties. The program may consider assigning a temporary faculty chair once a masters student is accepted to the program, regardless of being traditional M.Ed. or M.Ed. plus licensure, to help with advisement. This temporary chair would be replaced once the student is far enough in the program to form a permanent chair and committee. The program may also consider using the teacher education advisement office, since the M.Ed licensure students are initially taking similar course work as the undergraduate students. The advisement office should be able to adapt their advisement to include the licensure portion of the M.Ed. experience.

Recommendation 5: The program indicated that Lynda Goucher's position, part-time program secretary, should be reevaluated for an increase in compensation commensurate with responsibilities. The team further recommends that the position be expanded to a full-time FTE providing additional resource to support the M.Ed. program.

Recommendation 6: The program is encouraged to reach out to their K-12 and community partners and reconvene the Advisory Committee that hasn't met since spring 2011.

6) Additional recommendations and comments from the review team

- One of the masters student reported a very strong push for the post-bacc licensure program even though the student had no desire to get licensed. The student only wanted a M.Ed. experience, but felt they had no other choice. The student indicated the M.Ed. program is too focused on the post-bacc licensure experience. The student continued by saying that the M.Ed. is not a very strong masters program because the post-bacc licensure program detracts. The student felt that the program was not challenging and it didn't challenge the "master" teachers in the program.