

Internal Review Committee Report
Response to:
Graduate Studies in Education's Self-Study Report

(IRC Committee Members: Cayla Bland, Steve Cole, Lois Perrigo, Pam Smith, Willadee Wehmeyer, Chair)

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

Criterion Statement: The division operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

The IRC finds that the Division of Graduate Studies in Education (GSE) provides sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its conceptual framework. The GSE narrative articulates mission statements for each graduate degree program and these mission statements are supported by statements of purpose and the conceptual framework. The IRC is generally satisfied with the evidence provided and finds only a few areas that require additional attention—these details are provided in the sub-components below.

Core Component 1A: The division's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.

The IRC commends GSE for its clear articulation of mission. The program publicly documents its mission statement in the *MNU Catalog*. However, the IRC finds that while the GSE narrative documents the mission statements of its graduate degree programs, these mission statements are not made as clearly as is possible in the *Graduate Studies in Education, Candidate Handbook* (Appendix D). The *Graduate Studies in Education Faculty Handbook* (Appendix E) lays out the University mission and background. However, the IRC believes the spiritual emphasis of the University mission is not strongly conveyed in the degree program mission statements and *Candidate Handbook*. The IRC recommends that the University mission statement and background be published in the *Graduate Studies in Education, Candidate Handbook* (as it is in the *Faculty Handbook*). The IRC believes that this action will enhance the ability of GSE students to understand and appreciate the University's mission and to become more fully integrated into the life of the University.

Core Component 1B: In its mission documents, the division recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Diversity is very well addressed in GSE's Self-Study documents. The IRC commends the GSE for its clarity in addressing diversity in its statement of purpose, mission, and conceptual framework. The IRC recommends the GSE programs utilize a more diverse teaching faculty.

Core Component 1C: Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the division.

The IRC commends GSE for its understanding of and support for the conceptual framework as it pervades the organization. The IRC recommends communication of the mission in documents made available to students in order that GSE students are made aware that MNU is distinctly Christian. The IRC believes that the strengthening of the spiritual content of the degree programs' curriculum upholds MNU's mission and should, therefore, be encouraged. In this regard, the IRC notes that the MED program curriculum includes an ethics course (EDUC 6002) and recommends the following:

- the MET and SPED programs include an ethics course
- all the ethics courses be taught from a distinctly Christian perspective

Core Component 1D: The division's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable it to fulfill its mission.

GSE's structure and governance is documented in the *Graduate Studies in Education Faculty Handbook* (Appendix E) and can be reasonably expected to enable the program to fulfill its mission. The evidence presented suggests the majority of the faculty teach in the graduate programs on an adjunct basis. GSE has one full-time faculty member whose teaching and administrative responsibilities are solely in the graduate programs.

The utilization of an advisory council (involving faculty, students, administrators, teachers in local schools, and graduates) endorses collaborative efforts. There is also *School Partner Collaboration* as expressed in *Graduate Studies in Education Faculty Handbook* (Appendix E). This partnership keeps the graduate programs current and strengthens learning opportunities for teacher candidates.

The IRC finds that GSE demonstrates that its governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes.

Core Component 1E: The division upholds and protects its integrity.

The IRC agrees that the evidence provided is complete. GSE is commended for its demonstration of adequacy in the fulfillment of this core component.

The IRC commends the program for its clear communication of its conceptual framework and purpose.

The IRC commends GSE for the METB initiative and recommends the GSE provide more information on the METB program in terms of its mission and integrity.

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Criterion Statement: The division's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

The IRC finds that GSE has appropriate planning documents and makes a real effort to use them in program development. It uses multiple sources for evaluation and has made an effort at "environmental scanning" to determine future directions. It has worked to support its human resources with appropriate facilities, services and budgetary support. GSE's self-assessment is broad, inclusive, and continuous. This has produced effective program revisions, promising initiatives, appropriate use of technology, and sufficient budgetary support. GSE has recognized the need for clarifying lines authority in its administration and the need for additional human resources.

Core Component 2A: The division realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

GSE identifies its "Conceptual Framework" as the document that defines its standards and best practices. However, it also uses the GSE component of the Next Steps document as a guide for assessment and planning. These documents are used by three groups of evaluators (GSE faculty, GSE Advisory Council, and the Division of Education) to produce "significant changes" in its degree programs. Specific program initiatives and revisions are presented as evidence of this. As additional sources of information for decision-making, GSE has used a focus group (using the "NCA Core Components") and multiple surveys.

It is evident that the structures and instruments exist for shaping GSE's response to its past and its preparation for the future, however, several things are left unclear. It is not apparent how the Next Step documents and the NCA Core Components inform the crafting of the Conceptual Framework. It is also unclear how the evaluating groups interact in decision-making. How the processes identified in the narrative actually identify and respond to "societal" and "economic" trends is not made explicit.

The IRC recommends that GSE clarify how the guiding documents relate to each other.

The IRC further recommends that GSE make clear how information provided by evaluating groups impacts the decision-making process.

Lastly, the IRC recommends that GSE consider and make explicit how the processes of evaluation actually identify and respond to societal and economic trends.

Core Component 2B: The division's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

It is evident from the narrative that GSE has taken care to provide sufficient human resources. Although the level of participation is not given, it is apparent that faculty members are provided multiple workshop and conference opportunities. Facilities for instruction are equipped with suitable technology and the technology seems to be utilized. Serious effort has been made to provide financial resources through grant development. The level of funding obtained has been significant. This resource base has allowed GSE to respond to changes in the levels of student interest with appropriate adjustments of program and personnel.

The IRC took particular notice of the concern expressed in the narrative of “a lack of communication” and “the misuse of human resources” that seemed to result from unclear lines of authority and responsibility in the supervision of Master of Arts with a Concentration in Special Education. GSE should be commended for understanding the need for addressing this situation in its administration.

It is the strong recommendation of the IRC, that clarification of the lines of authority and responsibility in the Master of Arts in Special Education program be addressed immediately and effectively. If it is not, the strength of the program could be seriously compromised.

The IRC recommends that, even though the number of faculty in the Master of Education (MED) and Master of Education Technology (MET) programs was reported as “adequate,” growth of the programs means serious pursuit of additional human resources is necessary. The vigor and sustainability of the programs depends on it.

The IRC recommends that GSE more clearly document the level of faculty participation in improvement opportunities and the use of technology in courses and that GSE make clear the amounts and timing of significant grants.

Core Component 2C: The division’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

The IRC finds evidence that the mechanism to evaluate GSE programs’ effectiveness is broad and inclusive, and that evaluation is regularly scheduled and continuous. Instructors meet often to review assessment data; most evaluation instruments appear to be well-developed; and, top administrators are significantly involved in evaluation and response.

What is not so clear, from GSE’s narrative, is whether all the instruments presented have actually been used to effectively evaluate programs. Few data summaries or descriptions of resulting actions are provided. The data from the Housing and Food Survey (Appendix O) is revealing and the IRC believes that data from other surveys could be equally instructive. Significant effort has been given to obtaining feedback on matters of

program structure, operation and administration, but it is not so apparent what GSE has done to assess academic quality. Additionally, the narrative does not make clear how the interaction among the various administrators has led to effective decision-making. This is especially true of the relationships with the consortium-sponsored program in Special Education.

The IRC recommends that attention be given to providing summaries of data gathered through the survey and evaluation instruments accompanied by descriptions of the conclusions reached and the actions taken in response to them. The IRC also recommends that there be increased focus on assessing the quality of the academic experience in the programs.

The IRC recommends that the relationship of the various administrators in decision-making be made clear especially in the program in Special Education

Core Component 2D: All levels of planning align with the division's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

GSE's commitment to the mission-centered Conceptual Framework is evident in the willingness of the leadership and the faculty to "work together" to monitor the programs' effectiveness. Program planning appears to be closely tied to institutional leaders and councils and guided by the Next Step documentation. This is evidenced by GSE's ability to make effective revisions to existing programs, to initiate new ones, respond to the demand for online course work, and to provide appropriate budgetary support.

The IRC recommends that GSE identify its need for budgetary support and make explicit how the necessary support can be obtained.

The IRC recommends that GSE make clear how the program initiatives identified in the narrative actually help accomplish the mission of the Institution.

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Criterion Statement: The division provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

The IRC finds that GSE provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its education mission. GSE has supplied the IRC with adequate evidence to demonstrate its strength in this area and the IRC finds only a few areas that need additional attention as stated under the following Core Components.

Core Component 3A: The program's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

The IRC finds that GSE clearly states its goals for student learning outcomes. These goals are stated in the narrative and are also found in the following documents: The Conceptual Framework (Appendix A); The Candidate Handbook (Appendix D); the Faculty Handbook (Appendix E); and the Advisory Council document (Appendix F). In addition, GSE has a clear process in which assessment data is evaluated and reviewed. Transition points and assessment criteria are clearly outlined in the Faculty Handbook (Appendix E, pgs. 16 – 19). Regularly scheduled committee meetings for Program, Faculty, and Advisory Council members allows for review of assessment data as documented in various meeting minutes (Appendix H). Finally, GSE gives evidence of improving their assessment tools by revising the Creative Project and shifting to an action research model in Practicum I for overall assessment of candidate knowledge, skill, and disposition for the M.Ed. and M.E.T programs. GSE reported that “this change has resulted in more consistent assessment and data collection.”

The IRC recommends that GSE reference more clearly its supporting evidence found in the various appendices. The evidence is there, but left to the reader to find without guidance to the appropriate appendix in this particular section.

Core Component 3B: The division values and supports effective teaching.

GSE's narrative demonstrates its value and support of effective teaching. Full time and adjunct faculty have advanced degrees and training as well as PreK – 12 experience. Faculty development opportunities are provided to full time and adjunct faculty alike as cited in Appendix N. In addition, Appendix J provides evidence that Program faculty have attended and presented papers at professional conferences, written articles for professional publications, and been involved in professional leadership opportunities.

The IRC recommends that GSE provide its students with a list of its current full time and adjunct faculty to include information concerning their degrees, experience, professional involvement, etc. in the student handbook.

Core Component 3C: The program creates effective learning environments.

GSE's narrative demonstrates its ability to create effective learning environments. The instructors use a variety of teaching and assessment methods. Teaching methods include lecture, project-based learning activities, and cooperative learning activities. Assessment methods used include presentations, projects, essays, and tests. Appendix I provides a course syllabus which demonstrates the various teaching and assessment methods implemented.

GSE's narrative states that it requires instructor evaluations and uses the information to give face-to-face feedback to instructors as well as making decisions related to rehiring. Program directors review course evaluations with instructors and provide an in-class evaluation. This feedback loop demonstrates the opportunity to create an effective learning environment for student candidates. GSE's narrative further states that its instructors are evaluated by the program director (Appendix P) and by student candidates (Appendix N). Yet Appendix N includes a Faculty Development Schedule *not* an evaluation form. As a consequence, there was no evidence to support the evaluation by student candidates.

The IRC recommends that the student candidate evaluation form be added to the program's documentation so that evidence is available to reviewers.

Core Component 3D: The division's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

The IRC finds that GSE provides students with information and training concerning campus resources including the use of technology, library resources, and campus services. Training in the use of campus technology and services is provided during convocation and in one of the first courses provided by the M.Ed. and M.E.T programs. Student candidates are able to assess campus services and availability through an exit survey (Appendix Q).

The IRC recommends that survey data results be provided as evidence as to whether students found the existing training and resources to be adequate. In addition, we note that the narrative did not mention how services are communicated to and evaluated by student candidates in the M.A. program for Special Education. Greater clarification of this is recommended. Finally, the GSE narrative cited the course evaluations as evidence for Core Component 3D, but again Appendix N (cited) did not contain an evaluation. Clarification of this evaluation is recommended.

In conclusion, GSE noted that funding and staffing is adequate for current initiatives, but insufficient for any additional new initiatives. The IRC is in agreement with GSE's concern for the need to increase funds to attract and maintain highly qualified faculty and recommends the pursuit of increased funding.

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Criterion Statement: The division promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

The IRC finds that GSE demonstrates that it promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff and students; that it fosters and supports inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways that are consistent with its mission to help its students to develop spiritually and knowledge through human growth and development, learning theories, research, technology, communication, and the world to develop, implement, and assess learning experiences for all students. GSE has supplied the IRC with adequate evidence to demonstrate its strengths in this area and IRC finds only a few areas that need additional documentation or improvement. The IRC commends GSE for its deliberative and continuous efforts to develop and extend the formal framework within which all constituents are made aware of and are supported in their pursuit of knowledge.

Core Component 4A: The division demonstrates, through the actions of the administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

GSE's narrative demonstrates commitment to a life of learning. For GSE's administrators and faculty this commitment is translated to action by the inclusion of a line item in the budget meant to provide for professional development which includes travel to professional conferences by full and adjunct faculty, books for book studies, resource materials and speakers. Supporting documents, particularly Appendix J, verify that faculty have attended and presented papers at professional conferences; have had their articles published in scholarly journals; and, have served in professional leadership capacities. While the connection between budget allocations and faculty participation in the activities listed is not explicit, it is clear that GSE faculty demonstrate through their actions that they value a life of learning. The second supporting document offered in this section, Appendix N (Faculty Development Schedule), is less satisfying with respect to impact. The IRC recommends that inclusion of this document be accompanied by a list of GSE's participants in order to demonstrate that its faculty are, in fact, availing themselves of these development opportunities. Moreover, it is suggested that evidence of the integration of adjunct faculty into the life and mission of the University will be demonstrated by their active participation in the opportunities provided through the scheduled faculty development events.

With respect to its students, GSE's narrative asserts that "the purpose of MET Practicum I and II, the Action Research Practicum, and presentations is to provide candidates with opportunities to conduct in-depth research in critical areas of education and to share this knowledge with colleagues in the extended learning community." Obviously, this sentiment is in harmony with Core Component 4A, yet the statement alone does not provide evidence of the quantity and quality of research conducted in the classes cited. Moreover, while it is clear that MET Practicum I and II are part of the

MET curriculum, it is less obvious as to whether the Action Research Practicum is part of the M.Ed. curriculum. It should be noted that the IRC found through its reading of other sections of the narrative that the Action Research Practicum is part of the M.Ed. curriculum and suggests that in order to avoid confusion this should be reiterated explicitly in Core Component 4A. Moreover, it is recommended that either specific citations of student work or examples of such work be included in support of the statements made regarding students in the degree programs.

The IRC notes that no evidence is provided with respect to the actions of staff. The IRC, therefore, questions whether professional development opportunities are made available to the staff and how staff members are encouraged through the actions of GSE's administration to value and engage in a life of learning? The IRC deems this an area that provides an opportunity for improvement and recommends that staff training be explicitly addressed.

Core Component 4B: The division demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

In its narrative, GSE asserts that its programs “integrate advanced curricular and experiential offerings to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.” To support this statement, the Program offers a list of classes along with its Conceptual Framework (Appendix A), KSDE, INTASC, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Appendix T). The evidence identified provides support for GSE's commitment to this Core Component. The IRC commends GSE for its planning and development of programs that demonstrate that it values the acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills. However, the IRC notes that while GSE states that its candidates have served their learning communities in various ways (page 33) no evidence is provided. The IRC urges the GSE Program to provide specific examples of this evidence and suggests that this would strengthen the case for fulfillment of Core Component 4B.

Core Component 4C: The division assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

The IRC finds that GSE demonstrates that sufficient time and effort are devoted to assessing the usefulness of its curricula to students and has done so through the involvement of its stakeholders including alumni, employers, and others in the external community. GSE has gathered information through a number of means and instruments including surveys, focus groups, and program evaluations. While it is not explicitly stated, it is assumed by the IRC that programming decisions have been made on the basis of the information received from these sources combined with the expert analysis of its administrators and faculty. The IRC recommends the inclusion of examples to support the argument that GSE assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students. The IRC is

perplexed by the inclusion of Appendix U (Faculty Data) and advises GSE to firm up the connection between the Core Component and the evidence provided in Appendix U.

Core Component 4D: The division provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

The GSE narrative asserts that “...all candidates are required to develop the skills and attitudes of reflective practice” and that “additional support is provided through the Kresge Center and APA workshops.” In support of these assertions, GSE provides evidence in the form of practicum handbooks for each program (Appendices W and X) and notes that candidates are supervised by GSE faculty and observed by administrators. Additional evidence is provided in the form of the requirement of all candidates to enroll in an ethics course. The IRC’s judgment is that GSE has provided appropriate support to ensure that students discover and apply knowledge responsibly. The IRC, however, points out that nothing is said in the narrative regarding the support provided to faculty and staff and, consequently, regards this omission as an area in need of improvement.

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

Criterion Statement: As called for by its mission, the division identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

The narrative provides clear documentation regarding GSE's identification of constituents and examples of mutually beneficial processes that contribute to the mission of developing expertise in teacher education. The interaction with various school districts intersecting with the unit, the utilization of an Advisory Council as a means of providing information and receiving feedback, and the partnering relationship with the University of Saint Mary and Baker University all validate the responsiveness to and collaborative efforts with the GSE program to its constituencies.

Core Component 5A: The division learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Faculty have developed a variety of means to connect with their constituencies and to serve their needs and expectations, i.e. collecting data from program transition points, employer surveys, course evaluations, program completion surveys, and focus groups. Data gathered from these sources are reviewed annually by the Director of GSE, the Advisory Council, GSE faculty, and the Division of Education. The narrative indicates that the annual review provides an understanding of the changing needs of their constituencies and communities. There was no supporting evidence provided in the narrative to demonstrate the results of this process. However, Appendix H included minutes of GSE faculty meetings; Appendix L included focus meeting minutes; Appendix M included M.Ed. and MET employer recommendations for electives; and Appendix T demonstrated the alignment of the conceptual framework with the Teaching Standards for Kansas Educators, INTASC, and NBPTS.

Examples were provided to demonstrate the initiatives taken to address the needs of their diverse constituencies. In particular, the MET blended online program has expanded their outreach beyond the locale to students across the Midwest. Another example given was the offering of programs on site in Kansas City, Kansas and North Kansas City, Missouri as well as on the MNU campus.

Appendix R includes a Survey of M.Ed. Program Completers. The IRC recommends that a summary of the findings of the survey and how the data were considered in continued program development be included in the narrative.

Core Component 5B: The division has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

The narrative clearly reflects the capacity and commitment and engagement with GSE's constituencies and communities, including annual surveys of employers of graduates and regular communication with affiliating school districts. Examples of student, faculty, and

administrators' involvement in professional development activities were described. GSE program students participate in research projects related to No Child Left Behind.

Appendix L included minutes of a May 9, 2006 focus meeting that included NCA and GSE student representatives. No information was provided regarding whether any follow-up decisions were made based on those meetings. Appendix Q included a sample exit survey of program completers and Appendix R contained a sample survey of employers of MEd program completers. No results or follow-up information was included in the report. The IRC recommends that documentation be provided regarding the follow up of the surveys.

The listing of Advisory Council members in Appendix S includes representatives from various constituencies. The IRB recommends that the narrative include references to the corresponding appendices to provide ease in finding related information.

Core Component 5C: The division demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

The narrative describes the mutually beneficial relationship between the GSE's students and the school districts partnering in the educational process of the students. There also is a partnering relationship with the University of Saint Mary and Baker University that enables MNU to offer a concentration in Special Education.

The report addressed the issue of responsiveness to students by describing GSE faculty and staff provision of support for students in planning and implementing professional development and also by implementing policies and procedures to support the mobility of learners.

Core Component 5D: Internal and external constituencies value the services the division provides.

In June, 2006, a Candidate Exit Survey was conducted via Blackboard to gather feedback to assist in future program development. A sample questionnaire was included in Appendix Q; however, no results were provided or information regarding utilization of the feedback in program development. The IRB recommends that information regarding the survey results and the utilization of results in decision-making be reported.

Efforts were documented regarding workshops that have been, or will be, offered to faculty, graduate students from other programs, MNU faculty, undergraduates, local school administrators, and local teachers. Sharing of program resources with internal and external constituencies was reported.

Appendix V lists GSE candidates' contributions to school districts affiliated with the program. However no reference to that information was included in the narrative.