

A. Overview and Conceptual framework

1. Institutional Historical context and unique characteristics

When Mankato Normal School was founded in 1868, it served 27 students. In 1921, the school became Mankato State Teachers College. The institution became Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) in 1999. The first master's degrees were awarded in 1954, and the first doctorates were awarded in 2009. With an enrollment of 14,500, the university has expanded its focus beyond preparation of teachers to include six academic colleges as well as the College of Extended Learning that offering programs in distant sites and online packages.

2. University Mission

MSU promotes learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region and the global community. Our institution continuously strives to be a university where people expect to go further than they thought possible by combining knowledge and the passion to achieve great things. This vision is based on a heritage of both dedicated teaching and the direct application of knowledge to improve a diverse community and world. The University community strives to achieve this vision by actively nurturing the passion within students, faculty and staff to push beyond possibility on the way to realizing dreams. MSU is an innovative, student-centered learning community that values:

- **Integrity** and respect in the way we conduct ourselves;
- **Diversity** in who we are and what we do;
- **Access** to our programs and services that create opportunities for all to pursue their dreams;
- **Responsibility** to those we serve by providing and education that inspires solutions to society's challenges; and
- **Excellence** in our academic and non-academic pursuits

Further, the University has committed to developing and assessing growth using the following student learning outcomes:

- **Academic Achievement**- Students will demonstrate competence in specific areas of academic disciplines that will directly impact their career endeavors.
- **Civic Engagement**-Students will demonstrate the awareness, knowledge, skills and to actively participate individually or collectively on issues of /societal concern.
- **Communication**-Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate verbally, in writing, and through digital and/or visual media.
- **Critical Thinking**-Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze situations and problems in order to identify and test solutions.
- **Global Citizenship**- Students will demonstrate an awareness and knowledge of international cultures and societies.
- **Multiculturalism/Diversity**-Students will demonstrate an awareness and knowledge of social, cultural and personal values of others.
- **Self-Directed Learning**: Students will demonstrate the ability to autonomously acquire knowledge and develop skills.

3. Professional education unit and its relationship to other units involved in the preparation of professional educators

The professional education unit includes programs across five colleges (Education; Allied Health and Nursing; Science, Engineering and Technology; Arts and Humanities; and Social and Behavioral Sciences). As head of the unit, the Education Dean holds responsibility for assessment, program quality, field experiences and licensure recommendations. In initial licensure programs content faculty from the Arts and Sciences provide coursework for background content knowledge development for elementary education majors, special education majors, and content coursework as well as content-specific methods for secondary and K-12 education majors. Coursework and field experiences that correspond to the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice (based on the INTASC standards) for elementary and special education are offered in the Elementary and Early Childhood and the Special Education departments. The K-12 and Secondary Department (KSP) offers coursework and field experiences that correspond to the standards. The College of Education is also responsible for student teaching through the Office of Field and International Experiences. Faculty from both the Arts and Sciences and College of Education meet regularly to collaborate on curriculum, assessments, and field experiences through the Secondary and K-12 Education Coalition.

Advanced programs are administered across colleges as well. Programs are offered as graduate certificates, Masters, specialist, and doctoral degree levels. Coursework for advanced programs is concentrated in the program department home with the possibility of courses in related graduate departments. Similar to initial licensure programs, the College of Education dean serves as the head of the unit while working collaboratively with deans from other colleges.

Since the last NCATE review, the College of Education received approval from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system to offer applied doctoral degrees. The College of Education awards Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degrees through the departments of Counseling and Student Personnel and Educational Leadership. A doctor of psychology (Psy.D.) is also offered through the School Psychology Program. Another significant change occurred in 2010 when the College of Education was awarded a grant from the Archibald Bush Foundation. The partnership of the College of Education with the Bush Foundation is known as the Minnesota State Mankato NExT (Network for Excellence in Teaching) Initiative. Through this partnership, the College made a deep commitment to innovating further as a college, as a university, and as a P-20 consortium in order to accomplish goals set by the Bush Foundation related to improving student learning and teacher quality and teacher retention. Our proposal was the result of several years of intensive development of partnerships, expansion of responsive professional and leadership development structures and offerings, refined domestic and international field experiences, expanded student and program assessment, increased sophistication of research capacities to analyze and refine programs, involvement in collaborative state and national assessment projects, and development of celebrated induction and mentoring services and supports to teachers, mentors, schools, and districts.

4. Basic tenets of the conceptual framework

The overall constructs of the conceptual framework have not changed since our last NCATE review. However, in 2007 unit faculty had opportunities for further refinement during a series of Unit-wide meetings facilitated by the COE dean. The final version was reviewed by the Chair's Leadership Council, formally adopted and reads as follows:

Grounded in a vision of learning communities, the College of Education has at its heart collaboration and connectedness to students, schools, neighborhoods, and society. To achieve this

vision, the College of Education seeks to graduate individuals with passion for and proficiency in content, with thoughtful and principled pedagogy, and a strong sense of educational purpose. Our graduates possess the attributes, knowledge, and skills to effectively promote the success of students, families, and schools. They see their own learning and the learning of others as occurring in a cycle of experience, reflection, and re-conceptualization. This learning occurs through a process of seeking new knowledge that both fits into and changes existing understanding. Furthermore, MSU College of Education graduates understand that individuals are embedded in family, school, and community systems, and they seek to foster positive systems change as well as individual growth.

COE graduates value diverse cultures and communities, seeking to help all students achieve the knowledge and skills needed to flourish as successful members of a pluralistic society. They work to form broad-based, inclusive learning communities which engage in respectful and relevant conversations that promote shared understandings. MSU College of Education graduates value multiple perspectives and use culturally relevant strategies in their work. They guide and nurture individuals with whom they work to live and thrive in a diverse and open society.

In response to new opportunities offered through our partnership in NExT, the conceptual framework has continued to evolve as faculty study the implications of reaching NExT milestones and consider the impact of curricular and organizational reforms on their programs, policies and practices. While faculty commitment to serving diverse communities of learners and their families continues to be a strong foundation of our current framework, a number of specific proficiencies have been added and are more clearly articulated and operationalized for purposes of assessment. Further, these competencies were developed in an ongoing collaborative process between MSU faculty and our PDS partners. During the fall semester of 2010, the Unit convened for a day long retreat to study interpretive implications of our work in NExT and our conceptual framework. We understand that our vision must be coherent to all participants in professional education. We continuously consult the literature on existing frameworks on effective teaching (e.g., Danielson, 2007; Lampert, 2001; Lemov, 2010; Loewenberg, 2010), collect our own data to ensure the needs of the local contexts within the PDS partnership (we have conducted extensive focus groups with all of our eight partner schools as well as administered surveys to COE faculty) and analyze the data to infer central themes, and repeat this cycle to further refine the list. We believe that investment in this *process* of defining and redefining the specific success indicators is utmost important so that we can tackle the most deep-rooted, societal and educational, hurdles in educating all of our children to their fullest potential. After discussions in large and small faculty groups, four main themes and subcomponents were derived from the conceptual framework:

Unit Themes

COLLABORATIVE

- Communicator
- Interdisciplinary
- Teacher Leader

EFFECTIVE

- Competent
- Reflective
- 21st Century Educator

RELEVANT

- Understands Students
- Culturally Responsive
- Versatile

INNOVATIVE

- Critical thinker
- Data-Based Decision-Maker
- Life-long learner

New student outcomes, embedded within the themes listed above, the COE framework, and the University mission, values and student learning outcomes have been delineated for the Unit for both initial and advanced programs. To meet the most current thinking about the high level of preparation of educators and other school personnel, outcomes for the conceptual framework were also modified during 2011-2012 with input from the COE Assessment Committee. The expectations of outcomes for initial and advanced graduates were such that two different sets of parallel outcomes were developed. In order to assure deep implementation and ongoing formative feedback for candidates, a shift in focus to performance assessments and field-based experiences has occurred. The outcome descriptors listed below are evaluated for evidence of proficiency in our graduates (see Exhibit I.5.c for tables showing specific outcomes for initial and advanced programs and aligned assessments):

- Evidence-Based practices
- Differentiation
- Diversity
- Assessment for and of student learning
- Reflection
- Critical and higher level thinking
- Dispositions
- Knowledge and engagement of learners
- Research and scholarly work
- Technology

Unit Assessment System Summary

The unit assessment system represents a comprehensive network of human, technological, information and communication resources used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the unit's policies, programs and curricula in meeting professional, state and national standards, the vision articulated by the conceptual framework, and course and student learning outcomes identified by unit faculty and governance committees representing both internal and external stakeholders.

Alignment and Coherence

Since our last NCATE Accreditation review, unit faculty members have collaborated to clearly define and operationalize the values and goals articulated within our Conceptual Framework. This effort reflects the deep commitment to assessing candidate competencies through reliable and valid tools and procedures. In addition, all programs evaluate the capacity of their policies, curricula and assessments to produce program outcomes that align with the unit's conceptual framework, and professional, national and state standards. These evaluations are conducted through the use of a series of unit-wide, aligned measures that are administered at critical transition points along a programmatic, developmental continuum. The information gleaned from these measures is collected through several database systems and analyzed by multiple internal and external stakeholder teams to produce unit, departmental, program and course level changes. Organizational coherence and assessment integrity are critical factors in this mission. Our assessment is built upon the following tenets: 1) Assessment is learning; 2) Performance is measured in context; 3) Assessment is dynamic and principled; 4) Assessment practices rely upon an interpretivist approach; 5) Assessment reflects coherence of competencies and outcomes across the unit; 6) Assessment of outcomes aligns with professional, state and national standards.

Organizational Structure of the Assessment System

The unit has historically engaged in the collection and analysis of data for purposes of candidate, program and unit evaluation. In 2008, the unit launched the Student Information Management System (SIMS) to handle much of the data collection process. After continuous evaluation of the capacity of this system to conduct increasingly sophisticated data analysis procedures required by the unit to effectively evaluate its performance at both micro and macrosystem levels, the unit decided to engage a new data system (Pass-Port) to collect and analyze candidate, program and unit level data. The SIMS system continues to be used to process candidate variance requests, professional communications and advising. The Pass-Port System is used to handle unit-wide assessment data for initial and advanced programs, course and program-related core assessments, standardized state licensure data, field placement data, communications with students, and evaluations of candidates by field supervisors and cooperating teachers. Unit-wide assessments and data include, among other information, common metrics survey results and faculty scholarly work. The unit also accesses data stored through the University and MnSCU database systems. Typically, data retrieved from these sources include admissions, enrollment, candidate demographic, transcripts, and standardized assessments.

Organizational Networks for Continuous Improvement

The unit relies upon various internal and external stakeholder working groups to ensure that data is used to effect systems change that leads to improvement. Indicators of improvement are defined by these groups to reflect the unit's mission, conceptual framework, professional and state and national standards, and student learning outcomes. Data is gathered through MnSCU and institutional databases, the COE SIMS system and Pass-Port. The Coordinator of Assessment and Research, NCATE Coordinator, and Education Research Systems Liaison hold primary responsibility for accessing, analyzing and reporting information to key organizational groups and conducting studies on the psychometric integrity of measures used. The groups with key responsibility and roles related to data review for purposes of evaluation and continuous improvement include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) COE Leadership Council; 2) COE Assessment Committee; 3) Unit Program Coordinators; 4) Secondary Education Coalition; 5) NExT Area Leads; 6) Professional Education Advisory Council and 7) PDS Governance Council. There are many working groups that serve under the leadership of the groups named above to carry out the work of policy, programmatic and curricular change. In addition, the entire unit faculty are convened several times each semester to review data, evaluate the impact of curriculum and program features on unit goals and objectives, and create action plans for program improvement. The Coordinator of Assessment and Research also serves as representative to the NExT Common Metrics group and convenes regularly with the 14 NExT partner institution representatives to design common measures, conduct analyses to evaluate the psychometric integrity of these measures, and evaluate signature program and instructional initiatives. In addition, unit faculty, NExT Area Leads and School District partner assessment teams meet annually with researchers from the Value-Added Research Center to evaluate the capacity of our teacher preparation program to produce desired competencies in our graduates who, in turn, accelerate learning in their P-12 students.