

**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION UNIT QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE – YEAR THIRTEEN  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2015**

**Members Present:**

Laura Aboyan, Office of Assessment  
Allison Anders, EDST Representative  
Mary Anne Byrnes, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Shana Harper, Alcorn Middle School  
Tommy Hodges, ITE Representative  
Jim Mensch, PEAT Representative  
Cassy Paschal, Oak Pointe Elementary School  
Nicole Spensley, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment  
Doyle Stevick, EDLP Representative  
Cindy Van Buren, Assistant Dean for Accreditation & Professional Preparation  
Craig Wheatley, White Knoll High School

**Program Representatives:**

Christine Christle, Program Coordinator, MAT and MEd Special Education  
Kathleen Marshall, Program Coordinator, PhD Special Education

**I. Call Meeting to order**

Dr. Van Buren called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**II. Introductions, Overview of Meeting, and Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Anders moved to approve the minutes. Dr. Hodges seconded the motion. The minutes were subsequently approved.

**III. Review of the MAT and MEd in Special Education**

Dr. Christle provided background information on both masters level programs. There are two masters programs in special education: the MAT and MEd. The MEd program is designed for those who already have a teaching license, but are seeking licensure in special education. The MAT program is for non-licensed teachers seeking their first level of licensure. Each degree program has four areas of concentration: Learning Disabilities, Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, Intellectual Disabilities, and Severe & Multiple Disabilities. Students pick a primary area of concentration, but many complete coursework in a second area as an add-on for multi-categorical licensure. Because the programs are designed primarily for working professionals, it uses a fluid structure rather than a cohort model. In Fall 2015, there were 10 MEd students and 32 MAT students enrolled.

Dr. Christle shared the program's perceived strengths. Program graduates are very highly sought after for teaching positions in both the Columbia area and throughout the state. All graduates are employed within one month of graduation, and most are employed before graduation. Graduates report high levels of satisfaction with the program. The program surveys graduates as part of their program improvement grant, in addition to participating in the College of Education's exit and graduate surveys. Graduates generally report that they feel well prepared for their teaching positions.

Perceived weaknesses were also shared, the most pronounced of which is candidates' need to learn how to teach math to students with disabilities. Graduates also report strong dissatisfaction in the required courses outside of the program, specifically EDRM 700, which they do not find useful in their teaching careers. In response to the need for a math course, program faculty developed a course in conjunction with ITE for teaching math to at-risk learners. The course has been approved and is in the University bulletin, but cannot yet be taught. The curriculum is being adjusted to meet the Read to Succeed requirements, which makes it more difficult to find a way to add the math course without requiring additional credit hours. Enrollments in the MEd are also a challenge. Most competitors have moved to online programs, but this is not a step that the program is interested in pursuing.

In the future, the program wants to add the math course to the curriculum, increase enrollment, particularly in the MEd, and implement effective and clear systems for advising and mentoring. Over the past few years, there have been several personnel changes, which have contributed to difficulties in advising and mentoring. The primary goal of the program is to stabilize instruction and to determine how to replace EDRM 700 with the math course. The program's concerns about changing coursework are related to state licensure and Read to Succeed requirements. In order to address the low enrollments in the MEd the program plans to hire outside marketing agency to assist in marketing and recruiting efforts. Dedicated advisement days for each disability area will be implemented so students are more prepared for the upcoming semester. There is a doctoral student who is helping to develop a mentoring program including possible online mentoring and mentoring for new teachers in the field.

Ms. Paschal said the perception of the program needs to be bolstered to help with recruitment. Clemson does this through word of mouth and through their undergraduate program. Mr. Wheatley suggested extra encouragement from professors may help with the perception issue. Lexington School District One holds social events for mentor and mentee networking. Ms. Harper suggested highlighting student and graduate accomplishments on both the College of Education and program websites to help draw attention to what students are doing in the community and what they bring back to the College, which would also help with the perception issue.

Dr. Stevick asked if there were specific prerequisites for the MAT program. Dr. Christle said that students from any undergraduate major may be admitted. Dr. Stevick asked Dr. Byrnes if there were specific majors in the College of Arts and Sciences who would be interested in pursuing the MAT program. Dr. Marshall said the program receives quite a few applications from psychology students. Dr. Christle reiterated the need for outside marketing help to assist with recruiting.

Dr. Van Buren asked if the MEd leads to licensure. Dr. Christle said it does. It is generally the second license, but the initial license is in special education. MEd students complete a final practicum, similar to student teaching, that generally requires about half of the number of hours as a student teaching semester. Dr. Hodges asked about the course requirements for the MEd and how the program differentiates between those students who are licensed and those who are not. Dr. Marshall said that it hasn't been an issue. The students with more expertise enhance the classroom environment by providing everyone with a range of experiences and contexts within the course.

Dr. Stevick asked about the length of the MAT program. Dr. Christle said it takes at least two years, partially because of the program size and the frequency of course offerings. Dr. Mensch asked about practicum and student teaching experiences and who the link is between the candidates and the schools. Dr. Christle said she and Ashley Holt make all of the placement decisions. Dr. Mensch asked how the program identifies whether a site is acceptable or not. Dr. Christle said she makes the decision, but she also works with district special education coordinators and faculty to ask for recommendations for the best coaching teachers. The program does not make placements through the College's Office of Clinical Experiences. Placements, coaching teachers, students, and supervisors are all formally assessed through

the Office of Clinical Experiences surveys. Dr. Mensch suggested quantifying what the program considers to be an acceptable placement.

Dr. Van Buren mentioned that all eight tracks in the MAT and MEd programs were nationally recognized with conditions through CEC during the SPA review in September 2014. Dr. Christle has been revising rubrics based on the CEC feedback and will be using Chalk and Wire to help with her assessment. She also wants to explore methods of gathering employer satisfaction data.

Dr. Byrnes asked how often overall feedback is given to students. Dr. Christle said during student teaching, there are specific assignments and reflection, so she answers questions weekly. She provides comments that point out the positives and offer suggestions for improvement. She has also instituted a plan to assist students who may not be progressing as they should be. The program faculty meet together, review student progress, and then decide on the best strategies for assisting the student.

#### **IV. Review of the PhD in Special Education**

Dr. Marshall gave a brief program overview. There are two tracks in the PhD program: Leadership and Special Education Administration and Higher Education Research. There is some overlap with the research courses, but otherwise the two tracks have separate curricula. The leadership track incorporates much of the Educational Administration curriculum because there isn't a special education administration area of licensure. In Fall 2015, there are 40 doctoral students, an increase from previous years which is primarily due to increased grant funding. The program is able to support both full-time and part-time students. There are currently five full-time students who are supported by a grant. Three are in the leadership track, and two are in the higher education track.

Graduates achieve employment in either administration or higher education as soon as they are ready for them. USC has the only program in the state to offer the special education administration track. It is also one of two special education PhD programs in the state. The program has been able to recruit because of grant funding. Dr. Marshall said the program requires a minimum of three years teaching experience for admission to doctoral program, and five years is the preference, which is one of the most stringent requirements in the country.

Dr. Marshall emphasized the need to continue funding to recruit more students. Ideally, the program would like to increase out-of-state enrollments. There are currently students from all over SC, NC, and GA. An additional issue is coursework in the leadership track. The leadership track incorporates much of the MEd in Educational Administration coursework, but students are entering the program with these skills already. The program wants to evaluate curricular options for that specific track.

In the future, the program hopes to increase advertising at both the state and national level, continue to apply for leadership grants, and to meet with EDLP faculty and graduates in the field to determine what coursework would be most beneficial. The program also wants to work on its evaluation process. Currently, the process is a bit piecemeal because the majority of students are on grant funding, so they have different evaluation requirements from students who are not funded. Those who are grant sponsored must meet specific requirements in order for the federal funding to continue.

Dr. Byrnes asked how many faculty supervise dissertations. Dr. Marshall said nine of the ten program faculty are eligible to supervise a dissertation. Dr. Van Buren asked how the new endorsement in secondary transition impacts the program. Dr. Marshall said it will mostly impact masters programs, but that there are some students enrolled in the PhD program who are taking those courses. Once complete,

this will allow those students to provide the courses to others in their districts and to other places in the state. Coursework is being developed to address this need.

Dr. Mensch asked if the program was concerned about grant funding disappearing. Dr. Marshall said there are usually about 30 students in the program, regardless of funding, so it isn't much of an issue. Grant funding helps shorten the time to completion and decreases the number of students who are ABD. It also increases the number of full-time students, which is a benefit to the program. Most students are part-time because they are practitioners in the field.

Mr. Wheatley asked about conference attendance and professional presentation. Dr. Marshall said students in the higher education track have higher rates of participation. Those in the leadership track tend to focus more on state activities. Grants provide \$2000-3000 for conference travel. It is easier for full-time students to participate because they engage in research with the faculty. Everyone in the program is involved in local presentations.

Dr. Mensch asked if the creation of an undergraduate program had been thought of to help funnel students into the masters program. Dr. Marshall said it has not because they do not have the faculty capacity to run an undergraduate program. Based on faculty feedback, there does not appear to be a desire to move in that direction. It would be a good idea, but the staffing issues would need to be addressed before it could become reality.

## **V. Committee Consensus on Programs**

The committee discussed the assessment materials for the MAT & MEd programs in Special Education and came to the consensus that they are performing at the “**Meets Expectations**” level.

### **Strengths of the program were noted and include:**

- Impact on quality of life in the state
- Support given to students
- Demand for graduates and high employment rates which serve the needs of the state
- National recognition from CEC

### **Areas for Improvement were noted and include:**

- Recruiting and program perception
- Marketing
- Addition of the math course to the curriculum

### **The Committee Further Encourages:**

- Creation of separate assessments for MAT and MEd because of the differences in licensure and experience level between the two groups.
- Differentiate between students who already have a special education teaching license and those who do not have an existing special education teaching license
- Continue to evaluate feedback on EDRM 700 and investigate ways to add the math course or research ways to adjust the EDRM 700 course to be more applicable to special education students
- Development of mentoring program
- Work with the Office of Clinical Experiences for placements
- Further development of employer survey in conjunction with Office of Assessment
- Evaluate faculty capacity and staffing levels and frequency of course offerings

- Course management and frequency of offerings
- Explore cohort options

The committee discussed the assessment materials for the PhD Special Education and came to the consensus the program is performing at the **“Exceeds Expectations”** level.

**Strengths of the program were noted and include:**

- Impact on quality of life in the state
- Number of students
- Grant funding
- Student support
- Conference and presentation participation
- Multiple program tracks

**Areas for Improvement were noted and include:**

- Sustainability plan related to grant funding

**The Committee Further Encourages:**

- Integrate advanced level MEds with PhD courses
- Recruiting expansion
- Faculty capacity

**VI. Election of Committee Chair**

Dr. Stevick nominated Dr. Mensch. Ms. Spensley seconded the motion. The committee unanimously elected Dr. Mensch as chair.

**VII. Schedule for Future Meetings**

- Early Childhood Special Education (MEd) – October 2015
- Early Childhood Education (BA, MEd, PhD) – October 2015
- Elementary Education (BA, MAT) – November 2015
- Language & Literacy (MEd, PhD) – November 2015
- Higher Education (Cert., MEd, PhD) – January 2016
- Educational Psychology & Research (MEd, PhD) – February 2016
- Teaching & Learning (PhD) – February 2016
- Middle Level Education (BA/BS) – March 2016
- Secondary Math (MAT/MT) – April 2016
- Secondary Science (MAT/MT) – April 2016
- Secondary English (MAT/MT) – May 2016
- Secondary Social Studies (MAT/MT) – May 2016

**VIII. Other Business**

Powerpoint template for program presentations and rubric for evaluation will be developed by Office of Assessment and the Committee Chair.

Dr. Van Buren adjourned the meeting at 2:49 p.m.