

## Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development

### 5.2.b Continuous Improvement [10,000 characters]

- Summarize activities and changes based on data that have led to continuous improvement of candidate performance and program quality.
- Discuss plans for sustaining and enhancing performance through continuous improvement as articulated in this standard.
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In Fall 2011, the PEU Leadership Team refined conceptual frameworks by operationalizing proficiencies to initiate dialogs about dispositions and skills sought to develop teacher candidates. This provides educators a common language to facilitate communication between candidates, faculty, clinical faculty and other stakeholders. The PEU leadership team felt this would help candidates understand the developing nature of these expectations. Seven proficiencies outlined in the conceptual framework, “*Learning to Teach – Teaching to Learn*”, include students’ abilities to: exhibit content knowledge; increase pedagogical knowledge; use assessment to improve learning outcomes; demonstrate professional behaviors; cultivate dispositions; embrace diversity; and enhance learning through effective use of technology. Ongoing explorations of proficiencies throughout a candidate’s preparation program provide a deepening awareness of knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with teaching and learning. We will continue to review conceptual frameworks annually to ensure consistency and alignment with professional knowledge and practice.

Professional education faculty have in-depth understandings of their fields and are teacher scholars – specialists who integrate what is known about content fields and teaching and learning in instructional practices. One example is the newly appointed (2012-13) Coordinator of the Early Childhood Program and advisor to the Leet Early Childhood Center. As the Coordinator of Early Childhood she directed many program changes and oversaw the construction of a new early childhood center re-modeled to reflect constructivist philosophies about ways child-centered, interest-based, hands-on curriculums encourage each child’s growing independence. The Leet Center provides an educational setting for community children, and a teaching and research laboratory for university students. Another faculty member who serves as the Coordinator of the Teacher Leader Program holds National Board Certification and has a thorough understanding of the certification process and graduate coursework needed to assist candidates completing portfolio entries that meet NBPTS and NCATE standards. We will continue to sustain and enhance programs like these by employing faculty with expertise in such specialized fields and focus on current research and inquiry-based activities.

Professional education faculty instruction reflects proficiencies outlined in professional, state and institutional standards, promote appropriate performance assessments, integrate diversity, and use technology throughout coursework, field experiences, and clinical practices. Educator candidates are inducted into the profession by learning about local, state and national standards embedded in our Conceptual Framework, in education courses, in the TWS and exit assessments. Faculty continually review course matrices and syllabi, making certain that course content matches program standards at all times. The alignment process occurs departmentally, in Secondary Education Coordination Council meetings and in advanced program reviews. For example, special education faculty regularly review course content including the effectiveness of assignments and artifacts in demonstrating knowledge and skills that reflect understanding of standards. As a result, all special education candidates meet the new extended proficiencies as measured by the: 1) realignment of portfolio requirements to meet the new standards; 2) evaluation of artifacts from specific courses; and 3) revision of project rubrics including specific reflection on standards. Meaningful technology integration into course content has been a significant focus of the university and PEU throughout the accreditation cycle,

ensuring that all campus facilities and efforts provide candidates with foundations of state and national standards as they prepare for the profession.

With regard to technology, professional development offerings specifically address uses of technology in classrooms by faculty and students (ex. 5.4.g.1 Professional Development Available to and by the PEU). Pre-professional candidates who observe/teach in the Horace Mann Laboratory School (Horace Mann) and Leet Center for Family and Early Childhood, and in other technology-rich classrooms, are exposed to multiple teaching and learning strategies that use full technological integration. A collaboration project designed by three instructors of elementary and special education methods courses provide undergraduate students an authentic collaboration experience by simulating school conditions where face-to-face meetings are often not possible due to geographic and time constraints. Candidates in two methods courses collaborated via online via threaded discussions to identify elementary school students needing further assistance in the classroom. At present Horace Mann and the Department of Professional Education (DPE) share more than 30 iPads for use in classrooms by undergraduate/graduate students, thereby allowing teacher candidates to develop skills in integrating this technology into instruction. In the future, technology will continue to be a focus as we provide candidates with multiple ways to support current teaching best practices.

Northwest's faculty value candidate learning and adjust instruction appropriately to enhance educational opportunities. Multiple assessments are provided to ensure candidates meet learning objectives based upon state standards and competencies. Faculty are well-versed and employ reflection techniques to adjust instruction and ensure learning and application beyond the classroom. Faculty also use clinical assessments and candidate performance reviews to adjust instruction or to coach candidates. Recently the PEU began training faculty and clinical faculty on ways to implement a co-teaching model which we piloted in the Kansas City area with a clinical supervisor who trained and implemented it with P-12 faculty. Feedback from candidates about these experiences is utilized by faculty to improve instruction and professional practice. Student satisfaction is a driver for our university and NSSE survey data indicates that our students are well satisfied. Hence, findings suggest that this experience was worth repeating – and replicating. We continue to focus on “student success” as we value learning and adjust instruction for future candidates.

Faculty continually look to new systems for delivery and meeting candidate's needs, are actively engaged in designing and delivering instructional programs in both professional education and P-12 schools, and make concerted efforts to integrate multiple teaching, learning, and assessment strategies in support of undergraduate and graduate candidates. A needs assessment completed by PEU faculty in 2009 assisted in determining topics faculty perceived as needs for further development. Survey results identified: a need to improve ITV/distant learning delivery and course management systems and to learn about Quality Matters, a review process of online instructional components and online courses. Several faculty from DPE participated in university-wide training on AVID learning strategies designed to engage students at all levels in more interactive learning.

Professional education faculty collaborate regularly and systematically with P-12 practitioners and faculty throughout the university. For example, the PEU's Middle School Program Advisor, Ms. Pat Thompson, supervises candidates, serves on middle school teams, and meets multiple times a month with grade level teams or entire staffs to plan curricular and instructional initiatives. Institutionally, the PEU retreats are held once a trimester to deliver professional development, investigate and implement new practices, craft or support conceptual framework development, and inform and train faculty involved from departments across campus. Collaboratively, the DPE chair instituted learning cohorts known as Teaching Circles through which presentations are made to help meet specific faculty teaching and learning needs. Topics covered in the 2012-13

program included: collaborative learning across courses; teaching engagement strategies through cooperative learning; and teaching using technology for student-created artifacts.

The Teaching & Learning Center, opening in fall 2013, has been established to provide programs and services that enhance professional development opportunities for faculty in order to promote student success and retention. Simultaneously a new freshman experience is being implemented Fall 2013 as the results of a 2-year self-study and professional development sessions led by the Gardner Institute. Such ongoing continued collaborations across campus, between colleges and departments, and with our P-12 partners will continue to enhance human performance.

The PEU has policies and practices encouraging all faculty to be continuous learners. Our Conceptual Framework statement – “*Learning to Teach – Teaching to Learn*” – is operationalized by both candidates and faculty. Collaborative action is exemplified by the presentations of projects, at state and regional conferences, with faculty and pre-professional candidates as full-blown collaborators. Engaging candidates in synthesis and application of research in the classroom also occurs significantly at the graduate level. Graduate candidates are required to complete action research projects during their courses of study as part of a class devoted to the design of research questions; here they also gain experience collecting and analyzing data, and writing results. A single research course is required in all DPE graduate programs.