Section V: ACEI UNDERGRAD

During the past two years, Niagara University’s program underwent changes that addressed faculty concerns shown in candidates’ performance and their analysis of assessment data. The following improvements have been made based on the assessment results within the program.

Content Knowledge

Assessments for content knowledge included the New York State licensure examinations [Liberal Arts and Science Test (LAST), the Elementary Assessment of Teaching Skills-Written) ATS-W, and the Content Specialty Test-Multi Subject Exam (CST)], Unit Resource Report, Consecutive Lesson Plans, Literacy Instructional Strategies Unit Plan, and the Final Student Teaching Report. The Unit Resource Report, Consecutive Lesson Plans, and the Literacy Instructional Strategies Unit Plan evaluate candidates’ understanding, knowledge and skills prior to student teaching while the Final Student Teaching Report provides evidence of candidates’ ability to put their knowledge, understanding, and skills into practice in the classroom.

Candidates demonstrated passing rates for the various licensure exams. One hundred percent of the candidates passed the LAST, over 85% of the candidates passed the CST, and 100% of candidates passed the ATS-W. Faculty noted that candidates' score lower on the constructed response portion of the CST exam. As students progress through the program assignments require less essays and constructed response answers. Faculty have begun to revamp their assignments to include more constructed responses in their assignments. Overall, these exams provide external evaluation of the candidates’ understanding of content knowledge.

Prior to the 2007-08 academic year candidates submitted portfolio reflections to demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge. In the fall 2007 the Unit Resource Report, and the Consecutive Lesson Plans were implemented in methods courses. Because these assignments are specifically aligned with ACEI standards they provide a more accurate picture of candidates’ knowledge.

The Unit resource Report and Consecutive Lesson Plan assignments were designed to evaluate candidates’ Knowledge of Content and Curriculum and Instruction. These assessments were first implemented in the 2007-08 academic year. The data for these assessments indicate that candidates understand and can successfully plan instruction. Over 90% of the candidates demonstrate knowledge and understanding of English Language Arts. Faculty are concerned about the percentage of candidates that did unsatisfactory on the Health, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Studies, and Science on the Unit resource Report. Candidates are accepted into this program with required content completed as part of their undergraduate degree allowing little control over the content coverage. During 2009 faculty are scheduled to analyze this requirement and how the program can support the candidates’ need for greater understanding of the content areas.

The Literacy Instructional Strategies Unit Plan assignment has been used in some form for several years. In fall 2007 a rubric specifically aligned with ACEI standards was put into place. The data for
this assessment provides evidence that candidates demonstrate knowledge of literacy and English Language Arts. Faculty are pleased with the change from a general portfolio reflection evaluation to a more specific rubric and the candidates’ performance on many elements of this assignment’s rubric.

Prior to 2007-08 a general student teaching form was used for all candidates in the College of Education. Student teaching reports were analyzed, changed, and implemented in the Fall 2007. Candidates in the 1st-6th grade placements are supervised and evaluated based upon criteria that are specifically aligned to ACEI Standards. Candidates have been successful in their student teaching field experience as evidenced by the results of the Final Student Teaching Report. This provides additional evidence of our candidates’ content knowledge and their ability to apply their understanding and skills to ongoing, actual classroom practice. Faculty will continue to monitor all data sources to make informed decisions and adjustments.

**Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions**

Assessments for professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions, include the Unit Resource Report, the Consecutive Lesson Plans, the Child Case Study, the Measurement Report, and the Student Teaching Final Report. Candidates demonstrate strong ability to plan lessons using a variety of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies and to actually teach them. This is evident in our course assignments requiring planning (the Unit Resource Report, the Measurement Project, and Consecutive Lesson Plans) and in the application during student teaching.

The Student Teaching Final Report changed from a general college wide form to one aligned with ACEI standards in the fall 2007. The data from the 2007-08 academic year indicates our candidates demonstrate pedagogical knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.

Although the faculty is pleased with candidates’ overall performance in “becoming a professional,” they are monitoring candidates’ performance throughout the program and in student teaching. Candidates demonstrate their ability to engage in continuous learning and the ability to be reflective in a wide variety of assessments including the Child Case Study Report, the Measurement Project, and the Unit Resource Report.

The faculty continues to monitor the “Not Observable” category on the Final Student Teaching Form. There were a number of instances were cooperating teachers could not rate a candidate’s ability to adapt instructional strategies for diverse learners or learners with special needs. This is due to limited or no opportunities in the placement. The Field Report forms which university supervisors complete while doing observations has been revised to include specific examples that candidates might engage in during student teaching. The supervisors are sharing these with the candidates and the cooperating teachers. Additionally, the Student Teaching Office continues to search for diverse placements for all candidates.

**Student Learning**

Assessments for student learning include the Child Case Study Report, Measurement Project, and the Final Student Teaching Report. The Child Case Study Report was developed for fall 2007 to be
closely aligned with ACEI Standard 1: Development, Learning, and Motivation, Standard 3: Instruction, and Standard 5: Professionalism. Results indicate candidates are able demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of child development and learning and using appropriate assessment tools and approaches.

The Measurement Report has been used in some form for a few years. The candidates were evaluated using a general portfolio reflection. For fall 2007 faculty developed a rubric aligned with ACEI standards. Faculty are pleased that candidates are highly successful at demonstrating their understanding of Standards 1, 4, and 5 with this assessment.

The Final Student Teaching Report is completed during student teaching providing evidence of candidates’ ability to apply their knowledge, skills, and understandings and successfully affect student learning. Niagara University has a long history of a Vincentian Mission. The College of Education wants its candidates to be prepared to work with diverse populations. Based on analysis of field placement data, the faculty adopted a policy regarding placements in 2007. Although faculty advised students to choose a variety of diverse placement settings not all candidates did. Candidates are now required to complete 30 hours of field experience in a New York State defined high needs school or one of their student teaching placements will occur in this type of school.

Conclusions

Some of the assessments within the program have been in existence in some form for a few years. The scoring rubrics have been in an on-going refinement process of standardization. Faculty has more clearly aligned the sub-elements of the assessments and rubrics to ACEI standards. Their efforts have resulted in the data provided in assessments 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 from fall 2007 to present. Additionally, the generic Final Student Teaching Report has been replaced with a form that is closely aligned to ACEI standards. Our focus is now on continuously improving the inter-rater reliability using the standardized assessment rubrics.