Section V. Use of Assessment Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance (12,000-character maximum narrative)

Describe how faculty are using the data from assessments to improve candidate performance and the program, as it relates to content knowledge; pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and student learning.

Introduction
The results of our assessment data are quite positive across each of our program assessment measures. We recognize a few challenges that we have faced in using assessment results to improve candidate and program performance. The following changes have been made based on the assessment results for candidates within this program.

Content Knowledge (Assessments 1 and 2)
We have 2 core assessments of candidate content knowledge in Special Education. The New York State Teacher Certification Examination Content Specialty Test – Students with Disabilities provides external validation of our program. The Exceptionality Project completed in EDU 239 provides additional validation of each candidate’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to CEC standard 1. We are pleased that more than 90% of our candidates have passed the Content Specialty Test and only 1 candidate failed to reach the minimum criteria on an element of the Exceptionality Project. The consistency across these two measures of content knowledge provides an indication of reliability and validity.

The Exceptionality Project itself has been in existence for a number of years. In the fall of 2007 a more structured rubric was developed and aligned to CEC standards. This enabled us to gather information on specific sub-elements of the assessment and further detail candidate pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Planning (Assessment 3)
We assess each candidate’s ability to plan instruction using the IEP Planning Project. We believe the results of this assessment indicate that our candidates are skilled at planning based on knowledge of the content, diversity, and planning. The IEP project itself has been in existence for a number of years. In the fall of 2007 a more structured rubric was developed and aligned to CEC standards. This enabled us to gather information on specific sub-elements of the assessment and further detail candidate pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Student Teaching (Assessment 4)
Candidates have been successful in their student teaching field experiences as evidenced by results of the final Student Teaching Report. After reviewing the results from the 2006-2007 academic year, we recognized that our student teaching evaluation process was too general to effectively measure special education content knowledge, skills and
dispositions. We therefore consulted the CEC Standards and subdivided the previous indicator of content knowledge into 7 specific inquiries aligned to CEC Standard 1. We felt that this revision provided additional detail from which we could determine candidate and program strength and weakness as it related to content knowledge. We also slightly revised and updated the remaining inquiries to more closely align with CEC standards. Furthermore, we have worked closely with our Office of Field Experiences to ensure that our annual reports are broken down by grade level certification area and not simply presented as a comprehensive report of all candidates in undergraduate special education. The Office of Field Experience has also directly assigned one full time staff member to the data collection and review of student teaching experiences.

Impact on Student Learning (Assessment 5)
Assessment of impact on student learning is integrated throughout the program and the 8 assessments we use for program review. More specifically, the Measurement Project in EDU 451 enables candidates to focus on assessment and instructional planning for students within the Teaching Assistantship field experience. The requirement for EDU 451 was created 2 years ago and the first cohort of candidates progressed through the course in fall 2008. The data gathered prior to this semester in the Teaching Assistantship Evaluation generally indicated that our candidates were effective in “using informal/formal assessment strategies to monitor student learning and adjust instructional strategies”. We are hopeful that as more candidates complete EDU 451, they will take a more comprehensive look at their impact on student learning further demonstrating their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions as it relates to all aspects of CEC standard 8.

Additional Assessments that Address CEC Standards (Assessments 6-8)

The Achievement Testing Project required in EDU 455 Assessment of Students with Exceptionalities has been required for a number of years. In the fall semester of 2007 a standardized rubric was developed and implemented to document candidate competencies. Prior to this semester the project was evaluated as a component of the final course grade.

The Case Study Project required in EDU 236 Human Learning, Development and Motivation has also been required for a number of years. Prior to the fall of 2007 this project was evaluated as a component of the program portfolio using a very generalized rubric aligned to program expectations. In the fall of 2007 a standardized rubric was also developed and implemented for this project.

The Assessment of Teaching Skills –Written is an additional external assessment of pedagogical skill required of candidates applying for New York State Certification. Our candidates have been 100% successful on this exam. Despite this on-going success, we continuously monitor the results as they are provided to us for all candidates, regardless of their program completion status.
Summary of Program Changes

Standardization of Rubric Scoring Guides
The signature assessments within the program have been in existence in some form for many years. The scoring rubrics have been in an on-going refinement process of standardization. Faculty within the program have more clearly aligned the sub-elements of the assignments and rubrics to CEC standards. Their efforts have resulted in the data provided in assessments 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 from fall 2007 to present. Our focus is now on continuously improving the inter-rater reliability using the standardized assessment rubrics.

Revision of Program Offerings
We added an additional required course, EDU 451 Assessment of Learning, for candidates entering the program in fall 2006. The first group of candidates has just progressed to this course level and completed the Measurement Project with its standardized rubric in fall 2008.

Field Experience Evaluation Changes
The final student teaching report has been expanded upon such that specific indicators have been sub divided to provide more detailed results. This is especially important as it relates to identifying candidate content knowledge in special education. The aggregated results of the student teaching reports have been broken down to a grade specific level rather than an annual report for all special education undergraduate students.

Conclusions
All program completers have met or exceeded the CEC program standards. We are very satisfied with our candidate performance on the identified program assessments and the evidence of program quality the assessments provide related to CEC standards. We are focused on continuous improvement and will annually examine the assessments themselves, and the information they offer to us regarding our programs and candidates.