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
Although the results of our assessment data are generally positive across each of our program assessment measures, we recognize a few challenges that we have faced in using assessment results to improve candidate performance and program quality. Our central focus has been on refining the assessment measures and scoring guides. In the interest of continuous improvement, the following changes have been made.

Content Knowledge (Assessments 1 and 2)
We have 2 core assessments of candidate content knowledge. The New York State Teacher Certification Examination Content Specialty Tests in Social Studies provides external validation of our program. The GPA in Social Studies and Social Studies/Pedagogy Coursework evaluated prior to student teaching provides additional validation of each candidate’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to NCSS standards.

We are pleased that more than 84% of our candidates have passed the Content Specialty Test. In addition, candidate GPA in social studies coursework appears to be relatively high and this finding is consistent with the GPA in pedagogical coursework aligned to NCSS standards. We have always been concerned with relying on GPA for content knowledge because the courses in the social studies concentration are managed departments outside of our direct Unit structure, largely the History Department. The consistency across these two measures of content knowledge provides an indication of reliability and validity that eases this concern. It appears that our mutual partnership efforts with colleagues outside our Unit have resulted in strong content knowledge on the part of our candidates. These partnership initiatives have included discussing assessment results, evaluating candidate transcripts at intake, and scheduling courses to meet mutual needs.

Planning (Assessment 3)
We assess each candidate’s ability to plan instruction using the Consecutive Lesson Planning Project. Candidates are required to plan 2 lessons for a secondary classroom that integrate standards 1.8 and 1.9. We believe the results of this assessment indicate that our candidates are skilled at planning based on knowledge of the content and knowledge of interdisciplinary connections. They plan instructional strategies that encourage problem-solving and critical thinking.

The assessment itself has been in existence for a number of years. In the fall of 2007 a more structured rubric was developed. This enabled us to gather information on specific
sub-elements of the assessment and further detail candidate pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Based on feedback from reviewers and ongoing reflection by the faculty we have restricted this assessment to analyzing 2 NCSS standards 1.8 and 1.9. Previously it was open to any standard depending on the Teaching Assistantship field experience placement of the candidate.

**Student Teaching (Assessment 4)**
Candidates have continuously 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 content knowledge within the specific discipline of second language instruction. We therefore consulted the NCSS standards and subdivided the previous indicator of content knowledge. We feel that this revision provided additional detail from which we could determine candidate and program strength and weakness as it relates to content knowledge. The other indicators were also subdivided to reveal additional detail. Furthermore, we have worked closely with our Office of Field Experiences to ensure that our annual reports are broken out by content area and not simply presented as a comprehensive report of candidates in secondary education. The Office of Field Experience has also directly assigned one full time student teaching supervisor to the data collection and review of student teaching experiences in secondary social studies instruction.

**Impact on Student Learning (Assessment 5)**
Assessment of impact on student learning is integrated throughout the program. Assessments 3-6 and 8 include evaluations of student learning. 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 initiated 3 years ago and the first cohort of candidates progressed to the course in fall 2008. The data gathered prior to this semester in the Teaching Assistantship Evaluation generally indicate that our candidates are effective in “using informal/formal assessment strategies to monitor student learning and adjust instructional strategies.” We are hopeful that as more candidates progress to and complete EDU 451, they will take a more cognizant and reflective look at their impact on student learning, further demonstrating their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

As indicated in the “planning” discussion above, faculty are concerned that this assignment is limited in its ability to address a specific NCSS standard or standards because of the requirement that the assessment be conducted with students in the field experience. We have elected to continue the requirement as it currently stands because we feel that the authenticity of the project is of greatest importance once we have determined that candidates have the knowledge of the content area as depicted in assessments 1, 2, 6, and 8.

**Additional Assessments that Address NCSS Standards (Assessments 6-8)**
The **Content Area Resource Packet** completed by candidates in EDU 465 Special Methods of Social Studies requires candidates to identify instructional resources as well as plan and assess instructional activities in each of the strands of the discipline. This is a very comprehensive assessment integrating content knowledge, planning, and assessment. The standardized rubric aligned to NCSS standards implemented in fall 2007 enables us to more specifically assess candidate competencies on this assignment and therefore improve candidate practice and the program.

The **Cultural Foundations Research Project** completed by candidates in EDU 214 Cultural and Multicultural Foundations of Education requires candidates to implement research skills as they relate to NCSS standards 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.8. This assignment has been in place for a number of years as part of the general portfolio review process. The standardized rubric, aligned to NCSS standards, and implemented in fall 2007 enables us to more specifically assess candidate competencies as they relate to the standards early in the program.

The **Assessment of Teaching Skills – Written and Liberal Arts and Sciences Test** are additional external assessments of pedagogical skill and content knowledge required of candidates applying for New York State Certification. Our candidates have been 100% successful on these exams. 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, to gain insight into potential needs for program improvement.

**Summary of Program Changes**

**Review of Content Knowledge**
We have continued our partnership with the departments outside our unit structure to improve candidate content knowledge. These initiatives have included discussing assessment results, evaluating candidate transcripts, and scheduling courses.

**Standardization of Rubric Scoring Guides**
The signature course-based assessments within the program have been existence in some form for many years. Prior to the fall of 2007 the assignments were reviewed using a portfolio model with a more general rubric assessing program expectations assigned to the course. 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 NCSS standards. Their efforts have resulted in the data provided in assessments 3, 5, 6, and 7 from fall 2007 to present. Our focus is now on continuously improving inter-rater reliability using the standardized assessment rubrics.

**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. The aggregated results of the student teaching reports have been broken down to a discipline specific level rather than an annual report for all secondary education undergraduate students.
Conclusions
We are satisfied with the assessments we are currently implementing as a measure of candidate and program quality. Our program completers generally meet or exceeded the NCSS 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.