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Continuous Improvement Pilot Visit to:

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA-AIKEN
471 University Parkway
Aiken, SC 29801
February 5-7, 2012

Type of Visit:
Continuing visit - Initial Teacher Preparation
Continuing visit - Advanced Preparation
Board of Examiners Report for Continuous Improvement Pilot Visit

Summary for Professional Education Unit

Institution:
University of South Carolina Aiken

Team Recommendations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assessment System and Unit Evaluation</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Field Experiences and Clinical Practice</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Diversity</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Unit Governance and Resources</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>Standard Met</td>
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Not Applicable (Programs not offered at this level)

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Brief overview of the institution and the unit.

Located in Aiken, South Carolina, USCA is a public institution that has focused on building partnerships since its inception in 1961. It was at this time that the citizens of Aiken voiced the need for a local institution of higher education. The community rallied to show their support for a college to be founded and through legislation, a governing board was formed, the Aiken County Commission for Higher Education. This board continues to oversee the operations of the university.

The University of South Carolina, the state's flagship institution was founded in Columbia in 1801. They began offering courses in Aiken for students in completing degrees in Columbia. The university at Aiken is one of eight institutions that are part of the USC System. In September of 1961, the university in Aiken started with three full-time faculty members, a secretary, and 139 students.

Over the years, the student population and university have grown from a winter-colony in a downtown mansion to a campus of 20 buildings and numerous athletic facilities. As a natural step, USC Aiken began to seek autonomy in the USC System. In 1977, the university was fully accredited as a senior college by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and granted its first Baccalaureate degrees. Master's degree programs followed in 1994, and at the present time the university offers more than 30 degrees and programs to students.

Today, USCA ranks as the number one public baccalaureate college in the south by U.S. News & World Report's guide "America's Best Colleges." Today more than 3200 students attend USCA with approximately 500 graduating each year. The commitment to continuing partnerships is woven into the fabric of the campus' culture.
The professional education unit is responsible for managing and coordinating all programs offered at the initial and advanced levels. The unit is committed to the university's goals of active learning through excellence in teaching. Candidates in the School of Education participate in a rigorous curriculum with a strong emphasis in the liberal arts and sciences. The School of Education faculty model instruction based on research and best practice. The unit collaborates with its public school partners to provide numerous and varied experiences to its candidates.

I.2 Summary of state partnership that guided this visit (i.e., joint visit, concurrent visit, or an NCATE-only visit). Were there any deviations from the state protocol?

NCATE and state team members worked collectively, sharing equal roles and responsibilities in all functions of this current review. Team assignments were made systematically to ensure that conflicts of interests were avoided. The NCATE chairperson and state chair served as co-chairs and chairs were jointly responsible for planning and conducting the visit. The visit followed state protocol for South Carolina and there were no deviations from this protocol.

I.3 Indicate the programs offered at a branch campus, at an off-campus site, or via distance learning? Describe how the team collected information about those programs (e.g., visited selected sites, talked to faculty and candidates via two-way video, etc.).

The unit offers a BA in elementary education to students in the Salkehatchie area. Information collected about this program was from exhibits and the onsite committee communicated with faculty and students via two-way interactive video conferencing. In addition, onsite committee members personally visited the offsite campus to assist in gathering information regarding distance learning at the Salkehatchie.

I.4 Describe any unusual circumstances (e.g., weather conditions, readiness of the unit for the visit, other extenuating circumstances) that affected the visit.

There were no unusual circumstances that affected the visit.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The conceptual framework establishes the shared vision for a unit’s efforts in preparing educators to work effectively in P–12 schools. It provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability. The conceptual framework is knowledge based, articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the unit and institutional mission, and continuously evaluated.

II.1 Provide a brief overview of the unit's conceptual framework and how it is integrated across the unit.

The conceptual framework articulates program-specific goals that reflect the guidelines and expectations of the university and SOE. The SOE prepares Dynamic Educators (DE) who can plan, instruct, manage, communicate, and be professionals. Specific outcomes identified in the conceptual framework (CF) are:

- The DE as Planner:
  1. Understands national and state standards;
  2. Has a strong content knowledge;
3. Uses a variety of assessments to inform and plan instruction;
4. Is familiar with planning documentation necessary for working with students with special educational needs.

The DE as Manager:
1. Has knowledge of human growth and psychological theories, and management techniques to facilitate learning for all children;
2. Applies techniques and theories to create safe learning environments, manage instructional time and instructional materials.

The DE as Instructor:
1. Understands national, state, and local standards;
2. Has a strong content knowledge;
3. Uses various forms of assessments to inform instruction;
4. Has pedagogical content knowledge;
5. Understands various learning theories that enable them to facilitate the learning for all children;
6. Thinks critically and assesses the merits of various curricula and instructional approaches based on research.

The DE as Communicator:
1. Has excellent oral communication skills;
2. Has excellent written communication skills;
3. Facilitates the learning of all children;
4. Effectively communicates with children, parents, and colleagues.

The DE as Professional:
1. Is a reflective practitioner;
2. Fosters relationships with school colleagues and community agencies;
3. Displays positive dispositions with respect to attitude, cultural awareness, enthusiasm, personal appearance, professionalism, rapport, reliability, and sensitivity;
4. Is committed to facilitating the learning of all children;
5. Stays informed on current trends and legislation;
6. Seeks opportunities to grow professionally.

The following are the expectations of candidates in diversity and technology.
Diversity - Candidates in the SOE are expected to facilitate the learning of all students. Therefore candidates in the SOE are expected to:
1. Understand other cultures and their impact on student learning;
2. Understand and use various strategies to accommodate diverse populations of students;
3. Be respectful, compassionate, considerate, friendly, just, and free of bias when working with students from diverse backgrounds.

Technology - Candidates will demonstrate acquisition of technology knowledge, skills and dispositions as defined by the International Society for Technology in Education National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Candidates will:
1. Facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity;
2. Design and develop digital-age learning experiences and assessments;
3. Model digital-age work and learning;
4. Promote and model digital citizenship and responsibility; and
5. Engage in professional growth and leadership.

The basic tenets of the conceptual framework haven't changed since the last visit. Some outcomes have been modified to better reflect state and national standards. The unit's conceptual framework is shared with the greater professional community, which includes mentor teachers, advisory board members, candidates, graduates, and local school administrators. Candidates in the unit are introduced to the conceptual framework in their course work and can articulate the conceptual framework and its relationship to their teaching. Full-time and adjunct faculty, mentor teachers, and candidates were able to
articulate the conceptual framework and the theme of the teacher education programs. All courses, assignments, and field experiences, as well as the assessment of candidate performance are grounded in the conceptual framework.

### Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions

Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals know and demonstrate the content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

#### 1.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

Candidates in initial preparation programs continue to demonstrate competence in content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. All initial certification programs are accredited by their respective accrediting agencies. Biology, chemistry, comprehensive science, early childhood, English, mathematics, music K-12, and educational technology (M.Ed.) programs are nationally recognized. The elementary education program is recognized with conditions through February 1, 2013. The special education program is recognized through August 2013. Middle school and social studies programs are recognized with conditions through February 1, 2014. The unit has met all state requirements, including program accreditation by SPAs (NSTA, NAEYC, NCTE, NCTM, AECT, ACEI, CEC, AMLE, and NCSS) or an approved accrediting agency (NASM).

Team members reviewed information during the onsite visit that was not available for the off site review. Team members interviewed full and part-time faculty members, partner school administrators, partner school teachers, alumni, current candidates, and School of Education staff members to confirm answers to follow up questions raised by the off site visit. Information provided in the Institutional Report, the Institutional Addendum, the Exhibits, the state report, the state addendum, and information gleaned from visits to two partner school sites during the onsite visit were also considered when seeking answers to questions posed during the off site review.

The unit's initial certification programs provide ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate content knowledge. State licensing test data (PRAXIS I, PRAXIS II, and Principles of Teaching and Learning [PLT]) indicate a 100 percent pass rate. Undergraduate students must complete a general education component of 50-54 hours of coursework prior to admission to the program, earning grades of "C" or better in English 101 and 102 and maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.75. Middle school and secondary education majors must also complete 40-45 additional hours in their content areas. Content knowledge for initial program candidates is assessed through coursework, passing PRAXIS II scores, and ADEPT data gathered via (a) observation and (b) products completed prior to and during the internship (e.g., long range plans, TWS). The unit's graduate program provides students with ample opportunity to demonstrate content knowledge relative to educational technology. Graduate student content knowledge is assessed primarily through two products: the Instructional Media Project and the Program Portfolio. Graduate students' must also maintain a GPA of 3.0 throughout their program of study.

Pedagogical content knowledge is formally assessed at least three times during the initial candidates' program of study: upon application for admission to program via an Internship Application Portfolio,
during the internship experience via a Teacher Work Sample, and via observations of teaching. Rubrics have been designed and are implemented by instructors and university supervisors. Candidates are well versed with the unit's rubrics and speak to the quality of the rubrics and assignments in helping them develop pedagogical content knowledge (e.g., when to use direct instruction, when to use inquiry). Graduate students in the M.Ed. in Educational Technology program (this unit's only graduate program) demonstrate pedagogical knowledge through the completion of the Internship Project, an activity which requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of both content and pedagogy. Again, graduate candidates are conversant in the rubric used to determine their effectiveness relative to content, pedagogy, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Undergraduates' dispositions are assessed against two instruments: the unit's clinical observation form and the SAFE-T form. The clinical observation form measures candidates' dispositions against nine characteristics: attitude, diversity, enthusiasm, personal appearance, professionalism, punctuality, rapport, reliability, and sensitivity and is conducted during each field experience. The SAFE-T observation form measures candidates against seven professional dispositions criteria. The SAFE-T evaluation is completed during the internship (student teaching) experience. Graduate faculty in the Educational Technology program review each candidate's dispositions at the mid-point and end of the program, assigning a performance level based on the disposition evaluation rubric at both of these points in the candidates' program of study.

Candidates demonstrate a strong understanding of the five identified aspects of a "Dynamic Educator" (i.e., planning, managing, instructing, communicating, and demonstrating professionalism). Teachers and administrators from partner school sites speak to the strong level of preparation and performance they observe in undergraduate candidates from this program. Undergraduate candidates complete a variety of activities in addition to full time teaching. These include interviewing parents/guardians from a different race/ethnicity, producing a Teacher Work Sample, and demonstrating "acceptable" levels of competence in all facets of a professional portfolio. These assessments are designed to confirm candidates' competence relative to content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and professional dispositions. University supervisors and faculty members working with candidates at the junior and senior level meet to discuss candidate progress in the program. Faculty members make recommendations to the dean if they feel there is a significant issue or some area of concern that needs to be addressed relative to the candidate's performance or dispositions. Faculty members then meet with the candidate and, with input from the candidate, develop an action plan that clearly specifies the criteria that must be met before the candidate will be allowed to proceed to the next field experience or level of coursework.

Graduate students pursue a program of study that is aligned with the conceptual framework and that ensures that all candidates meet unit dispositional requirements. Current candidates and alumni from both the undergraduate programs and the graduate program articulate their appreciation for a rigorous program that demands that they learn to plan and teach in a way that meets the needs of each student, use technology effectively, and create an optimal learning environment for each member of the classroom/learning environment. Alumni and employer survey data also indicate that the strong majority of the unit's graduates either felt they were well prepared relative to (alumni) or demonstrated "outstanding" or "above average" competence in (employers) the five characteristics of "Dynamic Educators" on a five point scale (i.e., outstanding, above average, average, below average, and poor).

1.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

The unit has engaged in continuous improvement in a variety of ways since the last visit. Most notable among these efforts has been the establishment of four elementary Professional Development School
(PDS) sites. All early childhood and elementary education majors have the opportunity to take methods courses at PDSs. These four schools have provided dedicated classroom spaces so that candidates can spend several days each week on site observing and teaching elementary-aged students, planning future lessons with classroom teachers, reviewing student MAPP score data collected by the districts during fall, winter, and spring assessments, and receiving method course instruction. Faculty members have an opportunity to regularly observe candidates working with students. Discussions between faculty members and classroom teachers have led to changes, not only in methods course activities and content, but in classroom practice. The unit is in the midst of establishing PDSs with an area middle school and an area high school. The PDS placements provide candidates with rich opportunities to practice the pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students learn.

The unit has developed several opportunities for all candidates to work with students who qualify for special education services. All candidates take a course, Introduction to Exceptional Learners, which includes a 10 hour practicum experience in a special education classroom. Middle level and secondary majors in particular cite this as an example of strength in their program of study and are grateful for this experience early in the sequence of coursework.

In an effort to increase the response rate of alumni and employer surveys, the unit has begun to work more closely with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Alumni Affairs to cross reference lists of employers and graduates (respectively). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness uploads an online survey on behalf of the unit so that respondents might more easily provide feedback on the quality of the unit's programs and the effectiveness of the unit's graduates. It is hoped that these efforts will yield a stronger response rate and, thus, provide more usable data for program revisions relative to candidates’ content and pedagogical preparation.

Finally, candidates must defend the ways in which they effect change in their students. When planning lessons, undergraduate candidates must describe the ways in which they use student data to determine appropriate lesson content, teaching strategies, and student products. Candidates are expected to know and use individual student's MAPP scores, IEPs, and 504 plans when planning instruction and must clearly describe the ways in which they will address each of these in each lesson. Candidates readily discuss the ways in which they do this, the challenges involved in addressing each student's needs, and the satisfaction of knowing that each student has learned as a result of their work with students.

1.3 Movement to the Target Level. What steps has the unit taken to move to the target level (if appropriate to this standard)? What plans does the unit have to continue to move to the target level?

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1.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?

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1.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

1.5.1 What AFIIs have been removed?
1.5.2 What AFIs remain and why?

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1.5.3 What new AFIs does the unit need to address for continued improvement? (These new AFIs may be an area of concern cited in the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report if evidence in the IR Addendum, new exhibits, observations, or interviews indicates that an area of concern has not been adequately addressed.)

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1.6 Recommendation for Standard 1

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Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation

The unit has an assessment system that collects and analyzes data on applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate performance, and unit operations to evaluate and improve the performance of candidates, the unit, and its programs.

2.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

The unit's assessment system reflects its conceptual framework (The Dynamic Educator), professional standards, and state standards at the initial level for each of its programs. The unit currently has one advanced program, the M.Ed. in Educational Technology, that is offered jointly by the University of South Carolina Aiken (USCA) and the University of South Carolina Columbia College of Education. Program faculty have developed a clear relationship between the two schools' conceptual frameworks, while addressing the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) standards. Programs at the initial and advanced levels have received national recognition from specialized professional associations and data are aggregated by program based on key assessments.

Campus discussions confirmed that the unit is monitoring candidate performance at the initial and advanced levels. Candidate performance at the initial level is monitored through the progression of five benchmarks that include Benchmark I: Acceptance to the USCA, Benchmark II: Acceptance to the School of Education (SOE), Benchmark III: Junior/Senior Block Reviews, Benchmark IV: Acceptance into Internship, and Benchmark IV: Exit from Internship. Benchmark I includes general admission criteria as defined by USCA. Benchmarks II-V multiple types of specific education- and program-specific data such as: specific GPA (at least 2.75), hour completion, Praxis I and II scores, SAT/ACT scores, dispositions statements, completion of coursework, scores for internship portfolios, and internship completion (includes specific hours and ratings on State-mandated system called ADEPT). Assessments and progression requirements within these benchmarks meet South Carolina standards, as well.

Candidate performance at the advanced level is identified by assessments at three points:
Admission/Preparatory, Mid-point, and Program Completion. Admission/Preparatory data include entering test scores, undergraduate GPAs, and admission application statements/letters. Midpoint data include course grades, project completions in specific coursework (all aligned to standards), presentations, and faculty ratings. Program completion data include portfolio completion ratings/scores that are defined by specific standards-based rubrics.

In addition to these defined benchmarks and advanced level points, employer and alumni surveys are administered every four years and those data are used for assessment within the unit. The SOE Policy Manual outlines timelines as to when each assessment is collected within a program, how often, who reviews the data, and how often all data are compiled and shared with SOE faculty, the SOE Advisory Board, and the Academic Council. Program faculty, part-time faculty, candidates, and SOE administration confirmed that benchmark assessments, advanced level transition points, and various surveys are part of the assessment system and are administered and reviewed regularly.

Unit operations data are reviewed regularly with unit constituents and stakeholders including program the SOE Advisory Board and the USCA Academic Council, and at SOE retreats at least once a year. Program coordinators, university deans and department chairs, and SOE administration report consistent attendance and involvement at these regular meetings where they discuss changes based on operations data.

Regular opportunities to meet and consistent communication among these stakeholders allow the unit to continue to take steps in establishing fairness, accuracy, and consistency in assessment procedures and unit operations. Additionally, SOE faculty (full- and part-time) and SOE administration confirmed that these regular meetings and open communication among and between programs help in eliminating bias and support issues of fairness, accuracy, and consistency.

Data collection, analysis, and evaluation are guided by written procedures and timelines in the SOE Policy Manual, as mentioned above, but also supported on a regular basis through unit efforts. In the fall of each year, the dean shares an Annual Program Review with the USCA Advisory Board and the Academic Council. The Advisory Board is comprised of USCA faculty from each initial program area, university supervisors, adjunct faculty, district administrators, P-12 principals and teachers, and business/industry representatives. The Academic Council is comprised of USCA's academic deans and department chairs. Members from these two groups confirmed that they regularly discuss and review assessment and unit data and provide feedback, when necessary.

Multiple assessments from internal and external sources are an integral part of the unit's assessment system. These are outlined in the five Benchmarks in the initial level programs; the three transition points at the advanced level; and graduate, alumni, and employer surveys. The unit maintains these data and reports them in aggregate form by program and at the unit level, making these reports available to faculty, administration, and P-12 personnel on a regular basis.

Processes for formal candidate complaints are outlined in the USCA Student Handbook and the unit refers candidates to these policies during general orientations to the university, specific education orientations, and internship manuals. In addition, the dean maintains an open-door policy for students and advertises his contact information and location for candidates. Unit faculty verified that candidates are reminded of these processes on a regular basis through email communication and candidates confirmed that they are well aware of and comfortable with expressing concerns or registering complaints during their program and clinical experiences. Although there have been none in the past several years, candidate complaints are maintained in the dean's office.

The unit has developed its own data collection system in a relational software program that tracks data at
the candidate level and allows unit personnel to enter, store, view, and extract data easily. Faculty submit program assessment data to the SOE administrative assistant at the end of each semester and those data are entered into the system. The dean and the Research/Statistical Analyst summarize the data and share the results with faculty each May. Additional university-wide systems provide access to demographic or general program or admission information, but are not related to the data collection system for the unit. These systems (IMS, DARS, Homer) are accessible to institutional personnel when needed. Additional systems, FACDACT and TRACDAT, are university-based reporting systems and are used for external university accreditors.

The unit uses aggregated data at the program and unit levels in regular and systematic ways for program improvement. Discussions on campus with the dean, program faculty, and university administrators confirmed that data are shared and discussed at least on an annual basis with unit and university stakeholders through SOE Advisory Board meetings, the USCA Academic Council, and at SOE Retreats. Specific changes based on data reviews at the program level have included revisions to the SAFE-T/ADEPT ratings form, a revision to the Internship Portfolio rubric, modification to the lesson plan rubric, and implementation of the State-required EEDA quiz. Changes at the unit level have included the implementation of an education majors meeting in order to share general program, assessment and State information, revisions to the practicum and internship handbooks, reliability analysis for the Teacher Work Sample, change to the SAFE-T/ADEPT rating scale, and updates to the Internship portfolios. Additionally, school-based faculty and administrators verified that the SOE sees their input on curricular, placement, and program development issues when appropriate and on a regular basis.

Faculty have access to candidate data systems and assessment data via requests through the research/statistics analyst, who fulfills the request and tailors the data output in ways that are most meaningful to the faculty. Additional electronic and record-keeping systems at the university provide faculty with course grade data, candidate schedules, and demographic data on candidates and programs and are fully accessible by university employees.

2.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

The unit continues to make modifications to stay abreast of changes in assessment technology. SOE administration is exploring ways to make the data management system more user-friendly, easier to access from remote locations, and more easily used in clinical experiences. The dean and Research/Statistical Analyst are involved in a pilot project using iPads to collect data during candidates' student teaching observations as part of the SAFE-T system. They are currently working with five unit faculty members in various programs. The data are being collected during regular observations, but reported in electronic format to the unit rather than in hard copy. The dean hopes the pilot will eliminate more human error in entering data, facilitate an easier data reporting process, and eventually allow faculty to review data for candidates and programs in a more timely fashion. Next steps include moving the data management system to a web-based version. Unit administration anticipate this becoming a reality in the coming years.

2.3 Movement to the Target Level. What steps has the unit taken to move to the target level (if appropriate to this standard)? What plans does the unit have to continue to move to the target level?

Not applicable to this standard

2.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?
2.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

2.5.1 What AFIs have been removed?

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2.5.2 What AFIs remain and why?

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2.5.3 What new AFIs does the unit need to address for continued improvement? (These new AFIs may be an area of concern cited in the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report if evidence in the IR Addendum, new exhibits, observations, or interviews indicates that an area of concern has not been adequately addressed.)

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2.6 Recommendation for Standard 2

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Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school professionals develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn.

3.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

Interviews with school-based faculty and administrators confirm the collaboration between the unit and the school to determine candidate placement in classrooms. Additionally, school-based representatives serve on the SOE Advisory Board to consider annual discussions of SOE data, processes, and curricular changes. The unit works collaboratively with the local district to identify cooperating teachers who meet the criteria and to provide training in SAFE-T and an orientation program. Candidate placement is coordinated by the director of field placement and the Superintendent or other district representatives. The criteria for serving as clinical faculty, or cooperating teachers, is detailed in the Field Experience Terms of Agreement between the unit and local school districts. Interns are placed with a mentor teacher who are certified in the relevant content area and grade level, have taught for at least three years, and have been trained in SAFE-T. Interns are supervised by university faculty who have teaching experience in the content level and grade level of the intern's placement, have a Master's degree, and have been trained in SAFE-T.
Candidates in the SOE have opportunities to complete practicum work in a variety of school settings. In 2003, the SOE began a formal relationship with its first professional development school (PDS) at Allendale Elementary School, which allowed its off campus program to begin offering classes in science methods, math methods, social studies methods, classroom management, and assessment at the school. Candidates in the offsite program take methods courses at the off campus site and are then placed in internship programs in one of more than twenty schools in the area. In the past three years, the SOE has added four more elementary PDSs in the area and moved all early childhood and elementary methods classes into a public school. The SOE is working toward moving its middle and secondary programs to a PDS model at Akin High School and aligning its methods and content courses to coordinate with a school schedule.

The unit works with PDS schools and other partner schools where candidates are placed for clinical and internship experiences involves work among SOE faculty, SOE administrators, school district representatives, and school principals. The SOE requires that the PDS must have a dedicated classroom to offer methods classes in, teachers who were willing to work with candidates and allow access to the students. Discussions work toward the common goal of finding the best placement for each candidate, cooperating teacher, and school.

Since 2008, methods classes and clinical experience in the professional program for the early childhood and elementary programs have been taught at the PDS to allow SOE faculty and candidates, to work together in systematic ways. The SOE is currently developing PDS relationships for secondary programs by continuing to work to establish PDS relationships at local schools, redesigning course sequencing to allow for methods classes to be taught in the same semester and eliminate conflicts in scheduling content area courses with school hours. This also allows a closer working relationship among SOE faculty and school-based faculty. In addition, clinical experience and internship assessments like the Teacher Work Sample, Internship Portfolio, and ADEPT evaluations allow SOE faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers to monitor, comment, and provide feedback to candidates during their field and clinical experiences.

During internship and clinical experiences, candidates move through the last three benchmarks where their mastery of content areas and pedagogical and professional knowledge is monitored in various ways. Additionally, the state-required ADEPT evaluation system allows for multiple observation, feedback, and response opportunities among candidates, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors during the internship experience. All assessments at each benchmark are aligned with state standards and the conceptual framework.

Candidates have access to technology and use instructional technology throughout the program. The unit is equipped with two computer labs for candidate use. A curriculum center on campus houses instruction resources for a variety of technology tools. Classrooms in the PDS schools are equipped with Smartboards and have internet access. In the school based classrooms, candidates have the ability to utilize technology in delivering lessons and observing classroom teachers who use technology in their lessons.

Through their clinical and internship experiences, candidates are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, professional and state standards, and their impact on student learning. Common experiences among all initial level programs encourage this. Candidates reflect on their work as Dynamic Educators in the Internship Portfolio. They assess their own strengths, weaknesses, short term, and long term plans for growth in professional learning. The Teacher Work Sample (TWS) requires candidates to provide teaching processes that are guided by research and best practice in order to improve student learning. ADEPT observations and subsequent data, as summarized by the unit, also inform candidates, SOE
faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers on candidate progress.

At the initial program level, the unit identifies five benchmarks at which candidate success is monitored and data are collected for entry, transition, and exit requirements at the initial and advanced levels. The SOE data collection system monitors a candidate's successful completion of these requirements. Candidates meet regularly with school faculty and SOE faculty to discuss their performance on tasks throughout the practicum and internship experience. The candidate's performance is recorded on Blackboard and the candidate's receive copies of rubrics and assessments throughout the courses. For the only advanced program, candidates in the M.Ed. in Educational Technology complete experiences that allow them to apply theories, concepts, and principles of educational technology in an authentic education or corporate setting. The advanced program enrolls candidates from an array of professional backgrounds such as business, industry, higher education, and P12 education. Candidates in the advanced program complete approximately 140 hours of clinical experience. Not all advanced candidates are placed in school settings, as the program's scope extends beyond the traditional school setting. All advanced program clinical experiences require candidates to use the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that incorporate the use of technology to help the student/client learn.

Candidates work with the unit and partner organizations to develop proposals that state the goals, activities and outcomes for clinical experiences and internships. With the approval of the program director, candidates in the M.Ed. program may develop and collaborate on their own proposal to complete work in a school based settings or in a business settings. These experiences allow candidates to work individually and in groups and receive feedback from other candidates in their program, clients, and instructors.

All candidates in the SOE participate in a variety of field experiences prior to the clinical experience that gives candidates the opportunity to work with students from diverse ethnic, racial, gender and socioeconomic groups. Candidates participate in practicum courses at a variety of school based settings. All candidates are at least one course that requires ten practicum hours of direct observation of students in special education programs. The variety of school placements ensures that candidates have experiences with student from diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic groups.

### 3.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

The unit has continued to develop relationships with additional schools to expand two PDS relationships in secondary education programs. An additional 10 hours of practicum experiences has been added to the ADEX 200 – Introduction to Students with Exceptionalities. This will allow candidates to directly observed students with special education issues in the classroom setting. Alumni of the SOE expressed a desire to have more work with classroom management and the unit now requires Candidates at all levels to take a course in classroom management at their grade level.

The unit works directly with the local school districts to establish agreements for developing Professional Development Schools (PDS). The establishment of four elementary PDS programs and the ongoing development of two secondary PDS programs allow the unit and the school to share resources and expertise. Candidates spend the day studying methods in the school and have the opportunity to observe, reflect and participate in student instruction during field experiences and the clinical practice.
Unit faculty, public school teachers and administrators speak highly of the ability to collaborate with school based faculty in designing and collecting feedback on field experiences and clinical practice internships.

Annual meetings are held with all faculty members where feedback is gathered and information on assessment, programs and procedures is disseminated to all faculty members. School based faculty also participate in annual meetings prior to the placement of clinical practice interns. All courses use the Dynamic Educator (DE) framework that is outlined in the unit's conceptual framework.

The unit houses the Ruth Patrick Science Center, which houses a variety of programs for children. The center also makes available science kits and the ability to "check out" a university scientist to collaborate on projects to both candidates and teachers in the area. Professional development is available to the partner schools through the science center. Unit faculty have also collaborated with the partner schools to provide professional development courses to teachers. All teachers who supervise clinical practice interns receive training in the SAFE-T assessment model and on unit policies for assessing candidates practice and professional dispositions.

The placement of student teachers and interns in clinical experience programs is determined jointly by the unit and the local district. The Field Experience manual details the placements, qualifications and compensation agreements for schools and cooperating teachers. In Aiken schools, the director of field placements works with the director of human resources to assign candidates. In other districts, the unit works directly with school principals and cooperating teachers to identify and determine placements for clinical experiences.

### 3.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?

### 3.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

#### 3.5.1 What AFIs have been removed?

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#### 3.5.3 What new AFIs does the unit need to address for continued improvement? (These new AFIs may be an area of concern cited in the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report if evidence in the IR Addendum, new exhibits, observations, or interviews indicates that an area of concern has not been adequately addressed.)

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### 3.6 Recommendation for Standard 3
Standard 4: Diversity

The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates can demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity. Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations, including higher education and P–12 school faculty, candidates, and students in P–12 schools.

4.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

The unit has devoted meaningful efforts to ensure that its conceptual framework and course offerings help candidates develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to facilitate learning of students from diverse backgrounds. This emphasis is embedded within the conceptual framework and focuses on candidates' understanding and awareness of other cultures, knowledge and implementation of teaching strategies to accommodate diverse populations of students, and respect for students from diverse backgrounds. The conceptual framework specifically emphasizes the unit's preparation of dynamic educators as planners, managers, instructors, communicators, and professionals who facilitate the learning of all children.

The concept of diversity appears across the unit's curricula with special emphasis in all methods courses where research-based instructional strategies support the learning for all children. The unit promotes a common lesson plan format used by all programs wherein candidates are required to incorporate multiple instructional strategies addressing how they will accommodate for different learning styles, language impairment, learning disabilities, visual impairment, etc. During student teaching (referred to as the internship by the unit), candidates are required to interview the parent/guardian of a student whose ethnicity differs from themselves. Candidates are required to prepare a written reflection of the interview. Another assignment required of all candidates during the internship is a written description and reflection of action taken to meet the learning needs of a struggling student in their class.

Assessment by unit faculty of candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions with respect to working with diverse student populations occurs in all clinical observations and during the internship (student teaching). These assessments take place using the unit's clinical disposition form and the SAFE-T Observation form. Student lesson plans are aligned with the SAFE-T form with components that address student accommodations and differentiation of instruction. Data collected attests that candidates are properly prepared to meet the learning needs of a broad range of students with respect to various forms of diversity (e.g., culture, ethnicity, learning disabilities, special needs, etc.). It should be noted that teacher work samples also require candidates to address matters related to student accommodation and differentiation.

The unit makes efforts to assure all candidates have opportunities to interact and work with diverse student populations. Professional development school partnerships have been established with four schools enrolling students from a broad mix of socio-economic and racial backgrounds. At the onsite visit information was shared that formation of two additional professional development school
partnerships is underway. Whereas the four current professional development schools are all elementary, the new professional development schools will include one middle school and one high school (Aiken Middle School and Aiken High School). All professional development schools – including those under development – are Title I with large minority populations as well as a sizeable number of ESOL students.

The AEDX 200 course, "Introduction to People with Exceptionalities" is required of all candidates in initial teacher preparation programs. In addition to an emphasis on strategies for working with students with disabilities, the course requires candidates to spend a 10 hour practicum in Special Education classrooms in area schools directly interacting with students who have disabilities.

In terms of candidate-to-candidate diversity in the higher education setting, at least 20 percent of candidates in the unit's programs are minorities with an overall candidate minority population of 28 percent. In the unit's advanced program (MEd in Educational Technology), 22 percent of candidates are minorities. The advanced program enrolls candidates from an array of professional backgrounds such as business, industry, higher education, and P-12 education. The curriculum for candidates in the MEd in Educational Technology program requires the application of instructional technologies to address the learning needs of a diverse audience. A capstone activity in the program (aligned with AECT Standard 1) requires candidates to prepare an electronic portfolio that includes a component that emphasizes the ability to meet the needs of all learners. Furthermore, a required three semester hour course for all MEd candidates is AECT 735, "Technology Applications for Diverse Populations."

Candidate interface with diverse faculty is noted in the fact that 22.5 percent of faculty members teaching on the University of South Carolina Aiken campus are classified as non-white minority. For fall semester 2011, the school of education reported that 18.75 percent of the unit's faculty are minorities. Minority faculty members in the school of education teach candidates in every program except for courses in middle level and secondary education wherein candidates are taught by other faculty in different disciplines. Almost one-fourth of all faculty members on the University of South Carolina Aiken campus are minority.

4.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

1) Effective Fall 2010, the unit added AEDX 200, "Introduction to People with Exceptionalities" to the curriculum. This course is required of all undergraduate candidates. The course requires candidates to spend a minimum of 10 hours in Special Education classrooms in area schools.

2) The unit has formed Professional Development School partnerships with four Title I elementary schools which have large minority student populations, students from varying socio-economic backgrounds, and a significant number of ESOL students. Plans are underway to add two more professional development schools (a middle school and a high school) to the unit's interface with area schools. The two new schools are also Title I.

3) Minority faculty members in the School of Education comprise 18.75 percent of the total faculty in the unit. These minority faculty members teach across the curriculum except for courses in middle level and secondary education wherein candidates are taught by other faculty in different disciplines. Almost one-fourth of all faculty members on the University of South Carolina Aiken campus are minority.
4) Good faith efforts have been made by unit administrators to hire minority faculty. Since the last NCATE review five years ago, employment offers have been extended to minority applicants for position vacancies in mathematics education, literacy, and early childhood education. Except for the literacy position, the minority applicants declined the offers in mathematics education and early childhood education.

4.3 Movement to the Target Level. What steps has the unit taken to move to the target level (if appropriate to this standard)? What plans does the unit have to continue to move to the target level?

Not Applicable

4.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?

4.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

4.5.1 What AFIs have been removed?

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4.5.3 What new AFIs does the unit need to address for continued improvement? (These new AFIs may be an area of concern cited in the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report if evidence in the IR Addendum, new exhibits, observations, or interviews indicates that an area of concern has not been adequately addressed.)

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4.6 Recommendation for Standard 4

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Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development

Faculty are qualified and model best professional practices in scholarship, service, and teaching, including the assessment of their own effectiveness as related to candidate performance; they also collaborate with colleagues in the disciplines and schools. The unit systematically evaluates faculty performance and facilitates professional development.
5.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

The unit identifies 14 full-time faculty and two part-time, 11 of whom possess terminal degrees, while the remaining five hold master's or specialist's degrees. In addition, the unit also utilizes 28 adjunct faculty who support the mission of the unit. Vitae and the Teacher Verification Form verify that faculty are licensed teachers and are experts in their respective fields. Higher education clinical faculty have or have had relative contemporary experience in the areas in which they supervise interns. Unit faculty know the content they teach, and demonstrate and model best practice. Examples of best practice used by faculty are co-teaching and peer observations. The unit also models best practice in its professional developmental schools by teaching methods classes in public school settings that emphasize theory in the classroom and then allows teacher candidates to demonstrate what they have learned in a school setting under the supervision of a university professor and public school teacher. The unit's professional development schools also allow faculty to collaborate with school-based faculty on a regular basis. This collaboration allows university and school based faculty to review and discuss learning activities for both students and candidates.

Another example of best practice is the use of peer observations. This gives faculty ample opportunity to assess their effectiveness as teachers and to communicate on what they have observed and to collaborate on assignments given to teacher candidates. Faculty integrate technology in the classroom such as SMART Boards, podcasts, and graphing calculators.

Faculty demonstrate scholarly work in their fields by presenting at state, regional, and national conferences. At the same time, they are involved in scholarly writing. Since the 2008 academic year, faculty have also had 15 publications and nearly $600,000 in grant activity. Faculty evaluations are conducted on an annual basis. This consists of students' evaluations of teaching and occurs at the end of each semester. The results of these evaluations are sent to each instructor and are used by the dean as part of the overall annual evaluation of faculty. These evaluations are used as tools to improve instruction, scholarship, and service.

Professional developmental opportunities are available to faculty through the USC Aiken Center for Teaching Excellence. The center promotes and supports the enhancement of teaching and learning. It also provides faculty development on the use of technology that supports best practice in the classroom.

5.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

The unit has successfully developed professional development sites that have enabled faculty and candidates to work closely with public school teachers in modifying, developing, and implementing curriculum. Faculty spend considerable time in schools interacting with classroom teachers, teacher candidates, and students. These sessions have enabled unit faculty to spend more time in the school setting with teacher candidates in a live and active learning environment. PDS sites have also given faculty ample opportunity to engage in research with teacher candidates that fosters best practice.

5.3 Movement to the Target Level. What steps has the unit taken to move to the target level (if appropriate to this standard)? What plans does the unit have to continue to move to the target level?

Not applicable for this standard.

5.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?
The units PDS represents an excellent model for teacher candidates, faculty, and public school teachers to collaborate with each other, from co-teaching opportunities to collaborations on research, to collaboration on what is being taught in classes.

5.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

5.5.1 What AFIs have been removed?

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5.6 Recommendation for Standard 5

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Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources

The unit has the leadership, authority, budget, personnel, facilities, and resources, including information technology resources, for the preparation of candidates to meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

6.1 Overall Findings. What did the evidence reveal about the unit continuing to meet this standard?

The School of Education serves as the unit for the preparation of teachers and other school personnel. The dean of the School of Education is the unit head. The director of field experiences reports directly to the dean, as does the coordinator of the M.Ed. program in Educational Technology. The School of Education provides for undergraduate professional preparation leading to teacher certification and one graduate degree in educational technology for certified teachers and for others not in teacher education.

According to university policy the dean is the chief academic administrator of the school In general, the dean, in accordance with the institutional mission, is responsible for the implementation of university
policies as they apply to the affairs of the school, recruiting and evaluating faculty, encouraging faculty development, reviewing curricula, arranging school meetings, administering the school budget, advising majors, scheduling classes, administering the summer program for the school, conduction assessment, and planning for the future of the school. In addition, the dean has responsibility for external accreditation of the professional program. Specifically, the dean is the university-wide coordinator of teacher education and of all cooperative relations established with the public school districts, which support the mission. The graduate program is also the responsibility of the dean of the School of Education in coordination with the university-wide Graduate Advisory Council.

Unit admission and degree requirements are clearly and consistently described in university catalogs, departmental materials, and online resources. In addition, information regarding the application process and key transition points within programs are clearly articulated in unit materials.

Although there have been significant budget cuts, the unit's budget is comparable to other budgets of units on campus. Evidence indicates that funding is adequate to support curricular programs and support the preparation of candidates to meet standards. The unit also has been able to increase budget support for faculty travel and for professional development.

The unit follows campus-wide policies concerning faculty workload, tenure and promotion, and other faculty-related matters as described in the Faculty and Unit Handbooks. Faculty members maintain a 12 credit-hour workload per semester at the undergraduate level for an annual load equivalent of 24 semester credits. Faculty members who teach one or more graduate courses during a semester maintain a nine hour teaching load for an equivalent of 18 semester hours. Workload policies encourage faculty to engage in a wide range of professional activities which include teaching, service, research, and other creative activities. Scholarship, service, and teaching quality are critical in reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions.

The unit is housed in the Business and Education Building. Seven classrooms have been assigned to the unit and all are equipped with appropriate technology, such as SMARTBoards and LCD projectors. Furthermore, evidence indicates that classrooms, faculty offices, library, and other university facilities adequately support the various research, teaching, and learning activities of the candidates and faculty members.

6.2 Continuous Improvement. How has the unit been engaged in continuous improvement since the previous visit?

Adding professional development schools has increased the collaboration between the unit and its school partners. In addition, in the fall of 2010 the unit added a Face-book page that has increased its ability to reach both current and former students. Candidates and graduates seem to speak freely about the unit and how they perceive the programs. Excellent relationships exist with other units across campus as faculty from across campus work together to make necessary changes that enhance programs. The unit has made great strides in improving its technology that is used by faculty and candidates. They have purchased Smartboards that are used in both classrooms and in professional development schools. Sixteen iPads were purchased to use for data collection in the field as well as they are used to integrate instruction in the classroom.

6.3 Movement to the Target Level. What steps has the unit taken to move to the target level (if appropriate to this standard)? What plans does the unit have to continue to move to the target level?

Not applicable for this standard.
6.4 Strengths. What areas of the standard are being addressed at the target level?

6.5 Areas for Improvement and Rationales

6.5.1 What AFI s have been removed?

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IV. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Documents Reviewed

See Attachment.

Persons Interviewed

See Attachment.

Please upload sources of evidence and the list of persons interviewed.

ExhibitChecklist(1).xlsx

See Attachments panel below.

(Optional) State Addendum:
See Attachments panel below.