

Evaluation Team Report: Physical Education Professional (PEP) Program

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Dr. C. Ryan Dunn, Weber State University

Dr. Brian McGladrey, Central Washington University

Overview

On March 20, 2023, the above individuals (hereafter, "Review Team") conducted a review of the Physical Education Professional (PEP) program, housed in the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at Weber State University. This review included visiting with the Dean of The Moyes College of Education, PEP faculty, students, advising and support staff, members of the professional community, and a tour of the facilities. The following narrative reflects the strengths and challenges of the PEP program as determined by the Review Team. Additionally, recommendations for program improvement are provided.

Program Strengths

The PEP program provides a robust offering of courses and practical experiences (Standard B) that prepare future professionals and educators, as well as inter-disciplinary opportunities. The Review Team heard this from both current and past students, as well as community professionals who work directly with program graduates.

Student learning outcomes and objectives (Standard C) are very well-articulated and described. They follow national standards and are representative of work that will help students grow and prepare for graduate school, their professional careers, etc. These outcomes and their assessments are helping current learners to thrive in their coursework. When interviewed, graduates from the program looked back on their "take-aways" fondly, knowing that many of their WSU experiences directly supported their current successes. To punctuate some of the benefits, the review Team heard from community professionals that are excited to work with PEP program graduates because they are prepared and ready to go (teach) right out of the gate.

The review team was impressed with the PEP faculty, who collectively offer a variety of specializations and skills, as well as supportive personalities (Standard E). To quote Dr. James Zagrodnik, he, and other faculty members are in the business of "changing lives." Each faculty member demonstrates a passion for growth and enhancement of student experiences, as well as individual scholarship and service specific to the physical education field.

The academic advisor assigned to assist PEP students was responsive to all prompts for work and service they provide as well as support they receive (Standard C). Comments provided by both the academic advisor and faculty suggest that they work together to ensure students understand program requirements and stay on track to graduate on schedule. This seems to be one of the strongest aspects of the PEP program.

The support staff was responsive to all prompts for work and the service they provide, as well as support they receive (Standard F). This is also a wonderful component of the program.

A wonderful example of a great collaboration and connection with the community is CAPES! (Children's Adaptive Physical Education Society) is (Standard G). This community service-oriented program connects PEP students with children with disabilities from the greater Ogden community, allowing students to practice physical education pedagogy, and children to benefit by participating in a structured physical education environment.

Program Challenges

In a 2018 program review, three recommendations were made: (1) Demonstrate consistency with the mission statement; (2) Develop connections with career services; and (3) Engage in conversations with faculty in Teacher Education. The first two recommendations were well addressed and have been updated to meet or exceed the 2018 concerns (Standard H). Among the many laudatory aspects of the program, there were a few areas that require further attention.

During interviews, and when prompted, the mission statement was not clear for all faculty members (Standard A). It is unlikely, then, that students would be able to recite and reflect on the mission statement.

There was a lack of understanding and/or negative sentiments toward the Secondary Teacher Education Core Block (Procore) segment of the grad path, which has reportedly been a deterrent for some students to stick with the program option (Standard B). It is known to faculty and advisors that students have opted to change degree paths solely for the purpose of avoiding the Procore curriculum. Results of previous program reviews have included this concern, which continues to be an issue.

Although faculty members are connecting with students using face-to-face opportunities (e.g. their offices for “drop ins” as well as formal office hours), the Review Team received comments that suggested not enough time was devoted to this by all faculty (Standard C). One faculty member expressed feeling “exhausted” as a result of performing a disproportionate amount of this work.

Recommendations for Change

In connection with the strengths and challenges highlighted in this review, the following recommendations are made. Faculty should make the Mission Statement (Standard A) a central focus of what they’re trying to accomplish by regularly incorporating it into faculty meetings, then following-up to see what others are doing to support the mission. Although the basis for the Mission Statement is concise, the fact that it also includes wording for the two different PEP tracks (Track I and Track II) creates one that is overly lengthy. The Mission Statement should be concise enough for faculty and students alike to recite, implement, and more importantly, reflect on it when necessary.

The lingering issue with Procore needs be addressed to ensure that students clearly understand the whole path to graduation and “why” they are taking those courses and engaging in practical experiences in addition to their work in the PEP courses (Standard B). Faculty members can

create a clarity surrounding the entire program including positive language (with the students) describing the Procore process. Further collaboration with the Procore Teacher Education faculty is not only recommended but warranted. Faculty could consider team-teaching between TED and PEP in the Procore courses (Standard H).

Program faculty should continue to update and refine learning outcomes and assessments to meet the dynamic needs of PEP students and the needs of the community/programs they work with (Standard C). A post-graduate survey (3-4 years) would allow former students to reflect on how their learning outcomes prepared them for their professional roles as physical educators.

Continue to build relationships with community members and foster relationships with regional and national organizations that support the PEP program's mission. Consistent with this, constructing an "advisory board" of professionals in the field would allow for feedback critical to ensuring that the PEP curriculum remains up to date. An advisory board would not only help to guide curricular changes, but also assist in developing and maintaining relationships within the professional field (Standard G).

Additional Recommendations

Beware of untapped resources. The librarian expressed an interest in providing greater assistance to faculty and students, and that there are financial resources going unused.

Finally, the Review Team heard from former students (now practicing professionals) that they believe courses in behavior management and safety care (de-escalation) would have better prepared them for situations they have experienced in their professional roles. Additionally, they expressed that did not like that they were forced to student teach in their minor subject matter, and instead believe they would have benefited more by being allowed to complete additional student teaching in their major subject matter.

Although the PEP program is healthy and remains stable with respect to student enrollment numbers, additional growth would serve to provide security for the program in the event of any periods of enrollment declines. Administration and leadership should continue to support the growth and development of PEP faculty members, and look for diverse representation of professional attributes, scholarship, and specialty, as well as ethnic and cultural background in both future faculty and students.

Conclusion

The PEP program is a long-standing program and continues to enjoy success, as evidenced by the quality of its faculty, the steady student enrollment numbers, and feedback from both current and past students. Addressing the few issues identified by the Review Team should help to solidify the PEP program as the leader for preparing future physical educators in the State of Utah.