

WSU Masters of Education
2018/2019 Program Review Evaluation Report
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Review Team

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Preface

WSU programs periodically undergo a formal review by an external team to aid in determining strategic goals by identifying current strengths, weaknesses and challenges. On March 19, 2019, the reviewers met with Program Director Louise Moulding, Department Chair Kristen Hadley, Dean Jack Rasmussen, and faculty, staff and students from the MED program. Our review is based on those conversations as well as the self-study.

The MED program made a significant curricular transformation during the review period. Fundamentally, the degree changed from a single, uniform program of study, to four separate programs of study with a shared core, but each with different emphases. In assembling our recommendations, there are standards where the current was evaluated. Simultaneously, there are evaluations looking toward the future of the program. We try to distinguish between the two as part of the analysis.

A. Mission Statement—Strong/Good

The MED program has a clear and articulated mission statement. It addresses the target audience for the program as well as the expected outcome for the program. The program appears to be using the mission statement as a guiding document for strategic planning.

The mission is functional for the current program but is now insufficient given the curricular changes that are occurring. Specifically, the mission refers to "...the Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction..." which is not the only program given the recent curriculum changes. We recommend that the program revisit the mission and vision statements in light of the revisions.

B. Curriculum—Strong/Good

The format of the program curricula is well thought out. The core courses of the program align with the national norms for MED programs and there are a breadth of electives. There is evidence of strong collaboration in the program to evaluate and revise the curriculum as needed. The program is reliant on external community input and student demand to make meaningful modifications to the program. Adequate resources exist to offer the required and elective courses on a regular basis to meet the needs of the student population.

One reviewer had a difficulty in locating the program of study via the links provided in the self-study document. The links available were either circular or broken at the time of the site visit. As the program revises the associated web sites, we recommend a double check of new resources as they are created.

Currently, the program schedules required courses, and many elective courses, each semester of the academic year (Fall, Spring and Summer). With the addition of many new courses associated with the curriculum change, resources do not exist to continue this practice. Program

leadership recognize the need to change this practice and are making adjustments to advising to assist students efficiently complete the degree.

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment—Good

Student learning is assessed on a regular basis through a project report (MED 6090) and a portfolio. Two rubrics are used to measure learning the 5 defined program learning outcomes. Learning objectives are directly related to the current curriculum.

Moving forward, the program has identified weaknesses in the current assessment protocol and tools. Specifically, summative assessments alone are not sufficiently informative to aid in decision-making. The program has a good plan for making the appropriate modifications. We are particularly pleased that the revised assessment plan presents the Program Learning Outcome rubric to students early in the program. With the implementation of a new curriculum schema, the program is taking the opportunity to collect both formative and summative assessment data.

It was apparent the assessment outcome data was being used, but not as effectively as possible. Faculty members note that data drove course level improvements. They also noted data was used to revise the assessment rubrics. The modifications to the project rubric are especially important as the program accommodates a wider variety of research methodologies. However, several faculty were not aware of the program assessment results or how the data were being used to improve the MED program, rather than just the assessment tool. We recommend increasing efforts to distribute aggregate program assessment data and engage more faculty in strategic planning based on those results.

D. Academic Advising—Good

There is a clearly defined strategy for advising. Through the MED program director, program administrative assistant and online resources, students receive information on program progress. Students noted that while opportunities for advising existed, some students elected to use self-advising. Self-advised students stated they successfully navigate the program.

Students noted a desire to start discussing the final project earlier in the program. Additionally they requested a guidance document for the project, such as a timeline. The program noted that there is a guidance document, but it is so large and unwieldy that it is not currently effective.

This review did not evaluate career advising for the program since the vast majority of students are currently employed teachers. The change to an expanded and diverse curriculum may attract additional non-teacher students. The program should consider career advising strategies should the non-teacher population increase.

E. Faculty—Good

The program maintains a sufficient faculty size and composition to deliver the program effectively. There is also reliance on adjunct faculty to deliver courses. There are strong relationships with faculty in other campus programs to support the subject diversity found in K-12 teaching. CHF, Music, FL and HPER faculty spoke highly of the opportunities they have had to work with MED students. Standards exist for the hiring of tenure-stream and adjunct faculty. One positive note is that the program identifies and recruits adjunct faculty based on the program's needs and the instructor's specialty. This demonstrates a connectedness to the educational community and alumni.

The program uses the institution's periodic review process for evaluating and promoting faculty. Tenure-stream faculty have a defined onboarding and mentoring process designed to guide faculty to professional success. Students spoke highly of the faculty, their expertise, and the educational experiences provided in the program. In the few cases where students had faculty issues, it appears that the program's evaluation process corrected the issues.

There were two issues identified with the faculty. First, faculty composition lacks the diversity desired by the program. The program recognizes that the potential faculty pool of teachers in Utah lacks diversity is a core element of the problem. By taking steps to increase diversity at the undergraduate level, the program hopes there will be a trickle up effect on faculty diversity. The reviewers recommend that steps, such as these, be included a written guidance plan for addressing long-term diversity concerns.

Second, there is exists an uneven workload distribution with respect to Master's project students. It appears that the cause is a combination of student familiarity with faculty, and the intersection of student project topic and faculty expertise. Project committee composition is student driven, then faculty supported. While faculty noted they have the ability to turn down requests to serve on project committees, there still exists an unbalance. The reviewers recommend the program aggressively investigate methods for evenly distributing project committee workload.

F. Program Support—Concern

The number of support staff appears inadequate to meet the mission and objectives of the program. The program's administrative assistant performs admission, advising and progress tracking work and is stretched thin at times of the year. The reviewers recommend bringing in more staff to support the duties of that position, possibly in the form of a work study student. The college information technology expert, who serves all college programs and building personnel, is also in need of assistance. There may be a benefit to bringing the building under the institution's classroom technical support umbrella.

The facilities are another concern. The reviewers noted some excellent elements of the facilities, such as classrooms designed for active learning, materials lab with 3D printing capability, computer lab space, and adequate library resources. However, the building infrastructure is aged. The elevator and bathrooms have ADA compliance issues. There are few collaborative spaces to support student-student or student-faculty interaction outside of class. Students and

faculty noted wireless dead zones and are resigned to “that’s the way it is”, even though there are active plans to remedy the problem, albeit at the cost of precious space.

Faculty noted a desire for more general support from the institution for graduate studies. One particular request was for a thesis editor. The current writing center staff is focused on undergraduate writing and currently inadequate to support graduate-level thesis or project writing and editing. Another request was for a formal school of graduate studies, though the rationale for having that was less clear.

G. Relationships with External Communities—Good

The reviewers commend the program for the strength of its relationships with the external community. It was clear that the program maintains strong relationships with the school districts, state education organizations, other higher education institution, professional organizations, and other departments and colleges within WSU. However, it is time to formalize those relationships. The program noted it is in the process of creating an external advisory board, an excellent step toward formalizing external relationships, clearly defining roles, and “closing the loop” on community-supported recommendations.

H. Results of Previous Program Review

The reviewers found the program successfully addressed program concerns from the April 2014 review with the creation of the Graduate Certificates in Teaching. However, the split track has created a differentiation issue when teachers and non-teachers are in the same program core courses. Professional teacher students felt that some of the material presented was overly remedial to their undergraduate education when MED and GCT students were co-enrolled. The program director noted the faculty were aware of the issue and working to alleviate those student concerns.

Summary

The MED program is in an excellent position to move forward with its new format. There is strength in the program design, faculty and leadership. The reason for a majority of “Good” ratings, as opposed to “Strength” ratings is simply the significant curricular transition the program is currently undertaking and the unknowns that lie ahead. While there are, and will be some challenges, they are not unknowns to the leadership. The reviewers agree with the five action plans identified by the program in the self-study. We recommend a positive rating be granted the MED program.