

Conceptual Framework: Summary and Changes

The development of the conceptual framework began in 1997 when a 10-person faculty committee formed and consulted with individuals in the unit, the university and with our school partners. After many discussions and revisions, it was formally accepted and published in 1999. In their report after the visitation in 2000, the Board of Examiners said of the conceptual framework and its knowledge base that it “undergirds the School of Education . . . is reflected throughout the School of Education’s curricula and assessments . . . (and) is well grounded in current research.”

During the current accreditation cycle, the framework was first reviewed by unit heads and faculty representatives in Leadership Team. Most changes that were suggested were minor except for the description of the newly designed unit-wide assessment system. Changes in the assessment system involved virtually all faculty and staff, either through direct participation in meetings over a period of three years or through participation in unit discussions with unit heads and program coordinators. The assessment system that resulted has been shared with and used by unit faculty, arts and sciences faculty, school faculty, building and district administrators, and candidates themselves. Major and minor changes since 1999 are outlined here.

Institutional and Unit Mission

The university's mission, vision and values were the subject of a two-year, university-wide, spirited conversation. These portions selected from the lengthier university vision, reaffirmed and also strengthened the university's earlier positions regarding the place of the liberal arts, growth of graduate and professional education, relationship of teaching to other expectations, and the university's commitment to diversity.

“Our highest priority is to offer outstanding teaching in all of our undergraduate and graduate programs . . . Grand Valley State University is committed to providing each student a broad educational experience that integrates liberal learning with preparation for career or profession . . . Excellence in teaching at the university depends upon active scholarship by faculty members. . . We seek and welcome a diverse group of students, faculty and staff. We value a multiplicity of opinions and backgrounds and seek ways to incorporate the voices and experiences of all into our university.”

The unit's mission mirrors that of the university in its commitment to graduate and undergraduate education and to teaching excellence reinforced by active scholarship. Our philosophical perspectives represent ideological diversity; our values promote candidate diversity and helping all students learn. The foundation of degree preparation is an understanding of the liberal arts; for professional preparation it is an understanding of the foundations of education, its philosophy and history. In the conceptual framework the unit's mission, vision and values were refocused and rephrased to be more direct.

- Unit Mission: We develop quality educators to teach, lead, and serve in local and world communities.
- Unit Vision: We envision our future as a community of educators who promote teaching excellence, active scholarship, and social responsibility.
- Unit Values and Dispositions: Inquiry, Ethics, Collaboration, Decision Making

Philosophy, Purpose and Goals

This revision clarified a section in the earlier document regarding the relationship between a wide variety of philosophical orientations and maintaining a balanced view of education.

“While philosophical variety can provide candidates with a balanced view of the educational realm, we acknowledge that it can also bring about considerable internal struggle regarding the purpose of education and our role in it. We believe, however, that this struggle is valuable and necessary if we are to realize our vision of teaching excellence, active scholarship, and social responsibility.”

Knowledge Base

The conceptual framework's knowledge base was reviewed for currency. References were made more explicit for technology and issues of equity and access, and several sets of professional standards were added to reflect the change in the unit assessment system.

Performance Expectations and Alignment with Standards

With the change in the Michigan-NCATE review process, all specialty programs are now reviewed by their NCATE-approved specialty organization once they receive Michigan approval or until the state adopts new standards. With the former process, state review was required and national review was optional. The tables in the conceptual framework reflect this change.

Assessment System

The most significant change in the 2006 conceptual framework was the result of the revised unit assessment system. The 1999 assessment system addressed common expectations but did so within an array of separate course assessments. The 2006 framework retains common expectations but does so within a system of unit-wide standards and common assessments. These concepts characterize the revised system.

- Common Transition Points
- Common Standards
- Common Courses for Each Standard
- Common Assessments for Each Course
- Common Rubrics for Each Assessment
- Common Evaluation Forms and Evaluators

Evidence of the Conceptual Framework throughout the Standards
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The mission, vision and values articulated in the conceptual framework provide guidance for the preparation and assessment of candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Additionally, it provides guidance for the faculty in carrying out its responsibilities and for the entire unit as it considers resources and priorities.

These six themes also occur in each of the three areas: curriculum and candidate preparation, faculty and professional community, and unit resources and priorities. When discussing unit operations we will do so by focusing on five unit-wide initiatives that were taken on by groups of faculty and staff over the past three years and which have contributed immensely to the success of the unit.

Shared Vision

The unit and the university share a common vision as described in each of their goals: the university’s mission of “excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service” and unit’s vision of “teaching excellence, active scholarship, and social responsibility.” Furthermore, the unit’s statement of purpose and goals acknowledges the vision it shares with its own candidates and alumni:

“The national debates on educational goals and methods have often divided the nation and educational community, but they have also served to underscore the importance of educators acting together as colleagues who comprise a professional community of experts In fulfilling our mission to prepare quality educators, then, we are also mindful that we are preparing our own colleagues.”

College of Education course syllabi and syllabi of record reiterate the unit’s mission, vision, and values. Instructors typically discuss with candidates how the course of study that they are beginning will foster the goals expressed in the conceptual framework. Furthermore, these syllabi identify the specific performance standards with which each course is aligned and the key assessments through which candidates demonstrate those outcomes. Through these discussions and assessments, candidates and faculty begin to share common understandings.

The professional community also shares in understanding the College of Education’s common standards and outcomes as it uses them to regularly assess the unit’s programs. The performance standards for all programs are regularly disseminated to the professional community for their response to candidate preparation: unit faculty, arts and sciences faculty, school faculty, school and district administrators, and program graduates working in the field.

Coherence

The conceptual framework provides coherence and consistency for all unit programs. Through unit-wide standards and assessments, all candidates are expected to demonstrate the values and professional dispositions of inquiry, ethics, collaboration, and decision making. The level of expectation is the same for classroom teachers, principals, curriculum consultants, district administrators, reading consultants, media center directors, school counselors, and all candidates from our wide range of programs.

All candidates are expected to have proficiency in common standards. For Initial candidates these are entry level proficiencies in preparation and planning, creating classroom environments, instructional competence, and professional responsibilities. For Advanced candidates the standards include subject knowledge and pedagogy, commitment to students, student learning, systematic inquiry, and participation as members of a learning community.

These common understandings inform programs for candidates and also for faculty. The elements that embody the unit's vision for candidate preparation embody the framework of the newly revised document for faculty promotion and tenure:

- Effective Teaching: Modeling best practice and improving one's own practice
- Professional Achievement: Conducting research and providing leadership to learned societies
- Community Service: Contributing one's professional abilities to the good of the larger community

In unit operations, internal coherence was deemed so important that it became the focus of the Quality Initiative Team, one of the five faculty/staff groups mentioned as contributing so much to the success of the unit over the last three years. The Quality Team took as its charge to review the mission of the unit as it relates to quality and quality indicators, then to see that the mission aligns with the organizational structure, curriculum, and expectations and experiences for faculty, staff and students. The Quality Team coordinated revision of the unit's mission, vision and values and provided the impetus for formation of a Faculty Council Task Force that will continue a review of curriculum and organizational structure during winter semester of 2006.

Professional Commitments and Dispositions

Professional commitments and dispositions are woven throughout the unit's programs, curriculum and unit operations. In the 1999 conceptual framework, the unit articulated four values and candidate dispositions, and in the seven years since then has neither changed nor added to them. They remain Inquiry, Ethics, Collaboration and Decision Making. If anything, concepts from the recently added unit standards and assessments have underscored and expanded the application of the four dispositions.

In unit operations, the unit's commitment to these dispositions—especially the dispositions of collaborative and ethical behavior—is evident in the Building Community Initiative undertaken by faculty and staff three years ago. The team identified its charge as “fostering a community of respect and trust,” with the goal of “improving communication, listening and awareness among all members of the unit.” The work of the Building Community Team has significantly affected professional and personal interaction and support in the unit through community potlucks, outreach efforts, and service projects. The team's efforts within the unit bring home the message that social responsibility is personal, not just societal. One of the team's most valuable contributions has been with projects that have faculty, professional staff and office staff all working together, a situation which is too often prevented by seemingly separate obligations.

Commitment to Diversity

The unit demonstrates its commitment to diversity through aspects of its mission statement (developing educators for service to local and world communities); its vision statement (promoting social responsibility), and its values and dispositions (ethical and collaborative behaviors). Furthermore, the knowledge base that anchors the conceptual framework emphasizes throughout the ethical values of respect, social justice, equality, and professional responsibilities to children and the community. Through the curriculum and through field and clinical practice, candidates experience the range of diverse populations, diverse learners, and the need for instructional adaptation to help all students learn. Social and political issues affecting school environments are assured more emphasis through the unit's newly adopted social foundations standards in all programs.

A third faculty and staff group, the Diversity Initiative Team, took as its charge "to improve the cultural and institutional climate of the College and ameliorate existing institutional barriers to success for minority faculty, staff and students." The Diversity Team expanded unit relationships with minority students, initiated and is continuing discussions on diversity in the curriculum, provided the AAC&U publication *Diversifying the Faculty* to unit search committees, coordinated mentoring and service learning projects with the Minority Teacher Education Cohort, and created service partnerships with urban agencies for faculty and candidates.

As subsequent parts of this report will show, the unit has also been successful in expanding diversities of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, and ideological perspectives among its candidate and faculty population. Several areas in the document that follows will recommend further improvement and renewed effort throughout the unit.

Commitment to Technology

The unit's commitment to technology is evident in the efforts of technology-specific courses to incorporate ISTE and NETS-T standards and to align with the Michigan "Seventh (Technology) Standard." Other courses also infuse technology through research projects using electronic databases, instructional plans requiring technology components, educational materials requiring software evaluation, and course activities using web-enhancement, electronic discussion boards, and online journaling.

Unit faculty who specialize in technology and library media were early and active participants in Michigan's Consortium for Outstanding Achievement in Teaching with Technology (COATT). Faculty interest in increasing instructional technology use is evident in their wide participation in technology training. The university provides trained technology consultants whose training also grounds them in sound principles of pedagogy.

The university leads in providing and supporting technology at every campus, in all its forms, and throughout its services, especially in the area of library and research activities.

As will be apparent in later sections of this report, technology support also comprises a major part of the unit's budget in order to ensure that all faculty and staff have individual access to updated hardware and software, ample training, and fully equipped classrooms.

The fourth faculty and staff initiative was the Technology Initiative, a three-year project to recommend specific technology proficiencies that all unit faculty and staff should have and to provide training for obtaining them. The Technology Team conducted a baseline needs assessment, invited faculty and staff to identify which proficiencies they wished to develop, worked with Information Technology staff to provide trainings, infused these trainings into monthly unit meetings, and arranged further trainings as requested by individuals and groups. Follow-up assessment responses revealed that 80% of faculty and staff said that they had increased their proficiency in the use of technology and technology for instruction.

Alignment of Proficiencies with Standards

The unit's conceptual framework provides the context for developing and assessing candidate proficiencies based on professional, state, and institutional standards. The standards are present in all syllabi of record and in individual course syllabi. They are formally linked with required courses and with each of the key assessments in every course. They form the basis of unit-wide assessments at each of the common transition points in all programs.

- Initial programs are aligned with Danielson's Four Domains and the Standards for Social Foundations. In addition, Initial programs are aligned with INTASC, SPA Standards, NCATE Standards, and the Michigan Department of Education's standards.

- Advanced programs for teaching candidates are aligned with NBPTS, Standards for Social Foundations, and Standards for Research. They are also aligned with SPA Standards and NCATE Standards.

- Advanced programs for other professional school personnel are aligned with the Standards for Social Foundations and Standards for Research. They are also aligned with NCATE Standards, CEC, ELCC, ALA, and the Michigan Department of Education's Standards for School Counselors.

Alignment of Proficiencies with Professional, State, and Institutional Standards

	Programs Preparing Teacher Candidates	Programs Preparing Other Professional School Personnel			
Alignment with Standards and Dispositions	Initial Standards: Danielson Domains, CLSE Advanced Standards: NBPTS, CLSE, COE Research	Educational Leadership Standards: (ELCC)	Special Ed Administration Standards: (CEC)	School Counseling Standards: (MDE)	School Library Media Standards (ALA/AASL)
Disposition: Inquiry INTASC 1-5, 7, 8, 10 MDE 1, 3 NCATE 1.1, 1.3 SPA 1, 2, 3	Domain 1- Planning and Preparation NBPTS 2-Know Subjects and How to Teach Them	1-Leadership Vision	1-Foundations	1-Guidance Services 4-Counseling Theory and Education	1-Use of Information and Ideas
Disposition: Ethics INTASC 3, 5, 6 MDE 2, 4 NCATE 1.7 SPA 5	Domain 2- Classroom Environment NBPTS 1-Commitment to Students and Their Learning	2-Positive Learning Environment 5-Integrity	2-Learners 3-Learner Differences 8-Assessment 9-Professional/ Ethical Practice	2-Human Characteristics 3-Vocational Education 5-Professional, Ethical, Legal Issues	2-Teaching and Learning
Disposition: Decision Making INTASC 1-8 MDE 5, 7 NCATE 1.4, 1.7 SPA 4, 5	Domain 3- Instruction NBPTS 3- Managing Student Learning	2-Positive Learning Environment	2-Learners 3-Learner Differences 8-Assessment	2-Human Characteristics 3-Vocational Education	2-Teaching and Learning
Disposition: Collaboration INTASC 8-10 MDE 6 NCATE 1.4	Domain 4- Professional Responsibility NBPTS 4- Think Systematically About Practice, Learn from Experience NBPTS 5- Members of Learning Communities	3- Management 6-Leadership Contexts	7- Instructional Planning 10-Collaboration	6-Evaluation/ Measurement 1-Guidance Services	4-Program Administration 3- Collaboration and Leadership
All Dispositions All Standards	Domains 1-4: Field, Clinical NBPTS 1-5: Graduate Practicum CLSE 1-3 Foundational Perspectives COE 1-4 Research Competence	SPA Standards Internship Foundational Perspectives Research Competence	SPA Standards: Practicum Foundational Perspectives Research Competence	SPA Standards Practicum Foundational Perspectives Research Competence	SPA Standards Practicum Foundational Perspectives Research Competence

The fifth and final faculty and staff initiative must be noted before concluding this section of the report, for it is the one that allows the unit to continue the ideals of the conceptual framework beyond what normal resources allow. The Resources Initiative Team took as its one of its main charges to establish a grants culture in the unit in order to expand the unit's contributions to area school districts and the unit's vision of social responsibility. With the leadership of the dean, the team assisted in establishing a Grants Office with a director and administrative coordinator, kept faculty informed of grant opportunities, provided mentoring and office assistance in grants management, incorporated grant activity in the unit personnel document, conducted grant workshops for all faculty and staff, and in less than three years attained a funding total of over 1.5 million dollars, exceeding funding from all of the previous 15 years by 28%.

This section outlined characteristics that distinguish Grand Valley and the College of Education from other universities and units. It highlighted ways in which the unit's conceptual framework is evident throughout the standards. The six standards that follow will address the College of Education's candidates, assessment system, field and clinical experiences, diversity, faculty, and unit resources.