**Report on Feedback from the Candidate Advisory Committee**

**Focus Group Discussions**

**Fall, 2016**

The following report presents the commendations and recommendations of a representative group of outstanding EPP candidates who were nominated by faculty to serve on a EPP candidate advisory committee and to meet with a visiting NCATE accreditation team.

**Method:** Faculty in all certification programs of the EPP nominated students whom they considered to be competent and articulate. Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith met with the group in two separate dinner meetings, on October 26 and November 8, 2026. Candidates were asked questions to guide their feedback on their programs. Although questions were open-ended, most focused on areas related to the new Candidate Learning Outcomes (CLOs) adopted by all EPP programs. Candidates were asked to provide recommendations and commendations on: clinical experiences, cultural competence, intentional teaching, assessment and data literacy, and professionalism. In addition, they were asked to share additional feedback of any kind about their programs. Dr. Trawick-Smith recorded ideas and ask probing or clarification questions as candidates talked.

**The Candidates:** Seventeen candidates participated in one of these sessions or shared individual feedback via email. The following was the distribution of candidates across programs and core semesters:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program:** | **Core I** | **Core II** | **Core III** | **Core IV (Student Teaching)** |
| Early Childhood Education | 2 |  | 1 | 2 |
| Elementary Education | 1 |  | 2 | 2 |
| Secondary Education | 1 |  | 2 | 1 |
| Kinesiology and Physical Education |  |  | 1 | 2 |

**Candidate Responses:** Candidate responses were written by Dr. Trawick-Smith and later examined for trends. Ideas that were shared by candidates across all or most programs are summarized, below:

**Commendations**

* Professors are outstanding educators who model highly effective teaching methods.
* Professors are very knowledgeable in their fields.
* Professors are caring, supportive, and approachable.
* Professors respect candidates and are attuned to their needs and challenges as education candidates.
* For some programs, cooperating teachers and university supervisors in student teaching are very supportive and give helpful feedback.
* For some programs, cooperating teachers and university supervisors in student teaching encourage self-reflection.
* Some university supervisors invite written self-reflection, using a set of helpful guiding questions.
* Courses are engaging, rigorous, and impart broad and practical knowledge about teaching and learning.
* Courses often include “hands-on” activities and real life experiences.
* Courses provide deep knowledge about teaching students of diverse cultural backgrounds
* Clinical experiences are numerous and meaningful.
* Clinical experiences provide opportunities for candidates to work with students of diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups.
* For some programs, clinical experiences provide opportunities to work with children with special needs.
* For some programs, there are opportunities to conduct and present research with faculty.

**Recommendations**

* Improve communication about placements in all clinical experiences, including student teaching.
* Place candidates in clinical experiences and student teaching in a timelier, more organized, and more predictable manner.
* Redesign the education website and use other social media (Outlook groups, twitter, text messages, email, and newer apps) to better communicate about applying and preparing for clinical experiences and student teaching.
* Provide cooperating teachers (for both clinical experiences and student teaching) with clearer guidelines on what candidates are to do in classrooms and the expectations of candidates in terms of planning and teaching.
* Provide clinical experiences before student teaching (Cores I, II, and III) that allow candidates to plan and teach and become more involved in classrooms (not just observe)
* Provide clinical experiences and student teaching in classrooms where candidates can practice using newer technology that they learn about in courses.
* Require that student teachers be allowed to read and plan from IEPs, attend PPTs, engage in SRBI, and be involved in assessments and data team meetings for students with disabilities.
* Train clinical experiences cooperating teachers before student teaching (Cores I, II, and III) to provide more helpful supervision and give more feedback
* Revise the student teaching evaluation rubric to a 5-point scale, so there is not such a big “jump” in ratings between a 2 and a 3.
* Provide coursework earlier in the program about working with children with special needs.
* Help candidates learn more about enrichment activities for children who “advanced students” or those who are gifted and talented.
* For some programs, provide greater knowledge about working with families--conducting parent conferences, communicating and resolving conflicts with families, and planning parent involvement activities.
* For some programs, provide more information on legal requirements of teachers as mandated reporters.
* Some courses and textbooks address old, out-of-date ideas and approaches; these should be updated to address current, “real world” classroom trends.
* Provide candidates with practice at planning as real teachers do; revise the student teaching lesson plan format to reflect the practical, current planning practices of teachers in the classroom.
* For some programs, develop a course or courses on teaching strategies (e.g., question-asking, classroom management, teacher talk, inquiry-based and problem solving methods); place less emphasis on curriculum areas, more on teaching behaviors.
* For some programs, provide practice in assessment that goes beyond just collecting data, but focuses on how assessment data is to be used to improve teaching and learning (including more on the purposes of data teams and assessment-based planning.)