

## **Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Special Education MS**

The 2024-2025 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Special Education MS program in the College of Education (EDU) concluded with a culmination meeting on October 24, 2025.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Lisa Kirtman (Dean), Kim Case (Associate Dean), Rohanna Ylagan-Nicanor (Director of Accreditation & Assessment), Adrian Jung (Chair), Sean Walker (Deputy Provost), Aimee Nelson (Executive Director for Graduate Studies, EDGS), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the program for completing the PPR process and thanked the department Chair for his leadership. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The program demonstrates a clear dedication to the JEIE framework, and its mission aligns with the institution's values, directly supporting the diverse student population by preparing them to be skilled and inclusive educators.
- Faculty engage with various professional development opportunities, such as Canvas training sessions, to adapt their teaching strategies and ensure all curriculum modalities result in meaningful learning experiences for students.
- The program recently revised its curriculum and changed its modality to better address the needs of the field and the growing demand for flexible learning options.
- The program offers multiple and flexible format (e.g. online, in-person) to allow multiple entry points for students.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Integration of program mission and values in the curriculum:
  - The external reviewers recommended the program to consider addressing the intersectional oppression individuals may face within special education in the program's mission, values, and curriculum.
    - The Chair responded that the department has practices in place, including assignments in "Multicultural Issues in Special Education", rubrics to address intersectional oppression, and support to faculty (e.g. grants) to develop modules or re-design assignments.
    - The Deputy Provost inquired about the topic of Ableism, and the Dean stated professional development on this matter is provided for the entire college including new graduate students.
  - The external reviewers also encouraged the program to identify ways to communicate values, student learning outcomes, and resources to faculty, staff, and students, such as through informational sessions or digital platforms.
    - The Dean reported that all new graduate students are required to participate in the JEIE graduate seminar, which discusses the mission, values, and associate

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learning outcomes. Annual retreats for all faculty and staff also address these issues, followed by once-a-semester sessions in department meetings.

- The Chair echoed that these issues are communicated to prospective students, in new student orientations, and in course syllabi.

#### **2. Program enrollment and recruitment:**

- All PPR documents raise the need to expand recruitment strategies and increase enrollment while considering the resources needed to support students throughout the program.
- The Dean expressed the struggle of lack of capacity and resources to do recruitment and the need to seek help from the university (e.g. Office of Graduate Studies). She also reported efforts to work with donors on marketing campaigns and work with Alumni Engagement to develop a credential database to identify prospective students.
- The Chair stated that 25-27 is the program capacity, and the current enrollment does not sustain both fall and spring cohorts. As such, the program sometimes has to deny applicants because the enrollment is more than 1 cohort but not enough for 2 cohorts. The program ideally would prefer both fall and spring starts if enrollment increases.
- The Chair acknowledged the pipeline for students to move from the credential program to the master's program. The Provost recommended exploring auto admission to streamline this pipeline, and the EDGS suggested the possibility of a 5-year Urban Learning (BS)-Credential-MS blended program model.
- The Provost recommended the program to focus marketing on its program flexibility, high graduation rate, and student success stories including salary gain after graduation.

#### **3. Career and post-graduation support for students:**

- The external reviewers recommended the program to enhance assessments used to identify career challenges faced by graduates, to address those challenges, and better support students' professional development while in the program.
  - The Chair reported that mini-workshops are provided to students, who are all in-service teachers, to support their continuing education needs.
  - The Dean shared that the SchoolsFirst Center for Creativity and Critical Thinking also provides professional development to all alumni.
- The Chair acknowledged the need to provide support career options beyond the traditional K-12 paths, such as a workshop series highlighting different paths, collaborating with alumni and professionals working outside K-12 education, and supporting students' pursuit of community college careers.

#### **4. Faculty support:**

- All PPR documents highlighted the importance of continuing to encourage and empower faculty to seek out and secure external funding for research purposes and to provide opportunities for student involvement in research.
  - The Chair shared that faculty frequently co-publish with graduate students through their projects/theses, and getting more grants would help support students present at national conferences.

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- The EDGS encouraged the program to share these success stories in marketing materials.
- The external reviewers recommended the program to identify ways to encourage faculty to participate in professional development opportunities and work with the Dean's office to identify and allocate funding for faculty development.
  - The Dean echoed the need, especially funding to send faculty for professional development outside of college, e.g. go to a conference without having to present; Currently, the college can only provide \$500 for lecturers and \$2000 for faculty to attend conferences and require them to present.
  - The Provost acknowledged the need and agreed to work with the Dean's office on it.
- Another form of support needed, as expressed by the Chair, is for students to engage more in community engagement opportunities.
  - The Dean echoed the significance for students to understand other communities around them and would like to see enhanced community engagement for all master programs.
  - One way to do so is to secure funding to pay for substitute teachers and thus allow students (who are teachers) to have these opportunities.
  - The Provost agreed to explore possible funding sources for this purpose.

The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the program faculty for their hard work and expressing appreciation for the leadership at both the department and the college level.