Final Internship Evaluation System
Developmental Activities Summary

Introduction

The College of Education at the University of South Florida evaluates students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions on a continual basis. In the spring of 2008, an interdisciplinary committee was established to review the current internship assessment process and guide the development of a more comprehensive system to tap the various dimensions of this important component of teacher preparation. The committee identified three critical components to target for revision: the existing Final Internship Evaluation Instrument, current practices designed to capture teacher candidates’ Impact on K-12 Student Learning, and the continuous monitoring of Professional Commitments and Scholarly Dispositions.

Three subcommittees were formed based on knowledge and expertise in each of the three aforementioned areas and a chairperson was selected to lead the charge of each of the smaller groups. Subcommittee members met individually to identify strategies and develop a timeline that would permit a pilot test of the new system components in the fall of 2008. Subcommittee chairpersons continued to meet during the summer of 2008 to monitor and discuss individual group efforts. A summary of the activities and strategies for each of the three subcommittees is provided below.

Final Internship Evaluation Instrument

One critical aspect of the existing process that deserved renewed attention and refinement was the Final Internship Evaluation Instrument currently completed by our University Supervisors and Cooperating Teachers. As a group, this subcommittee discussed the processes, policies, and procedures that would be adopted during the instrument development phase. Initially, three stages were identified: 1.) item review; 2.) item writing and revision, and 3.) cognitive interviewing.

The existing Final Internship Evaluation Instrument was examined to determine which items might be suitable for inclusion in the revised instrument. Additionally, a host of other instruments were inspected to glean additional insight into how our colleagues are measuring teacher candidate competency, and a list of potential indicators was compiled. Individual committee members were charged with drafting new questions to complement the existing set of items. Efforts were undertaken to ensure that the resultant items were closely articulated with the Florida Accomplished Practices. The items drafted by the subcommittee members were compiled and reviewed by members of the Department of Educational Measurement & Research for content and clarity, and modified accordingly.

The cognitive interviewing phase of development involved a close scrutiny of the questions on the draft instrument by experienced educators with specialized knowledge in the field. Information gleaned from the cognitive pretesting phase can contribute to the evidence of validity of the inferences drawn from the obtained scores from the instrument. From within the Departments of Secondary Education and Childhood Education and Literacy Studies, a small group of University Supervisors were solicited and invited to participate in this phase of instrument development. Our goal was to examine general comprehension, retrieval of information, decision processes, and response processes. Important questions were identified and an invitation was drafted (see Appendix A), and distributed to University Supervisors via email. Due to the astonishing amount of email that is promulgated, it was deemed important to
follow-up with personal telephone calls to engender additional support. The interviewers reviewed the current literature on cognitive interviewing in preparation to meet individually with the participants. In an attempt to avoid overtaxing or overwhelming our University Supervisors, the task was divided into manageable subsections of approximately 12 items. During the actual interview, each participant was asked to think of an intern that they were currently working with and provide a rating for each of the items using the scoring rubric. That is, 1 = poor: no demonstration of knowledge or skill; 2 = basic: emerging, but under-developed demonstration of knowledge or skill; 3 = proficient: satisfactory demonstration of knowledge or skill; 4 = highly developed demonstration of knowledge or skill; and 5 = exceptional: expert level demonstration of knowledge or skill. After providing a score for each item, participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:

1) What does this item mean to you? How would you put it in your own words?
2) On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel when you assign a score?
3) Please explain what strategy was used to respond to this question.

At the conclusion of the interview, the University Supervisors were asked if any of the questions were difficult to understand, hard to answer, or appeared ill-constructed. In this vein, participants were told to keep in mind that the interviewer did not write the items, that our ultimate goal was to ‘find out what works and what does not,’ and that candid responses were truly welcome. The transcripts of the cognitive interviews were examined and discussed and the results influenced a final round of item modification. A final draft of the instrument was assembled in both a scannable paper format and an electronic version for pilot testing.

**Impact on K-12 Student Learning**

In 2000, NCATE developed a set of performance-based standards for teacher candidates, and moved to a performance-based accreditation system a year later. NCATE has been a major force for improving the connection between what students learn and how they teach. Further, the belief that teacher-candidates need to demonstrate they can help their future students learn before they take control of their own classrooms has been gaining strength over the past decade.

Initially, the subgroup charged with examining impact on K-12 student learning convened to develop a brief survey (see Appendix B) to gather information from faculty members engaged in supervising final internship experiences. The one page survey administered via email, prompted faculty members to respond to a set of ten open-ended items. The items inquired about specific components of the final internship experience such as: unit/lesson plans; the connection of concepts/pedagogical approaches to the appropriate professional & state standards; assessment of student learning, analysis of assessment data; modifications/adjustments to instruction; follow-up procedures; and reflections. Lastly, respondents were asked for feedback regarding the assessment of teacher candidate work; the timing of this assessment, and the role these collective tasks played in determining a passing final internship grade.

Responses from faculty members helped to identify promising assignments and current assessment procedures. Further, high-quality examples of student work were provided for review. Student work samples afforded a comprehensive view of the current attention to impact of K-12 student learning, while demonstrating the breadth and depth of the application of knowledge and skill in practice in the classroom. From the more lengthy and detailed student narratives, a set of succinct examples were developed to serve as a spring board for the development of discipline specific tasks. The examples were created to be complementary, advancing different approaches while containing a similar set of criteria. For example, a set of
six criteria using a 5-point rubric was advanced in an example based on a Special Education narrative elucidating the Continuous Teaching Cycle (CTC). Attention was given to each criterion providing either an excerpt of an actual student’s work or a more detailed description of what evidence would be expected. The other example drawn from the Physical Education Assessment Project, included five more detailed criteria and a graphical representation of pre and post test results. Both examples included sample templates for consideration.

Subcommittee members met individually with Departmental Chairpersons and their respective program coordinators to share their findings and examples, and to discuss and develop policies and strategies for the implementation of a refined set of evaluations, and the continuous monitoring of our teacher candidates’ impact on K-12 student learning.

**Scholarly Dispositions**

“Dispositions” are defined as the habits of mind and commitments that lead to intentional, conscious, and voluntary patterns of behavior toward students, families, colleagues, and communities. These are the habitual actions or behaviors across outcomes to which our graduates should be regularly disposed in order to be effective educators.

The COEDU currently uses a 31-item instrument to measure the Professional Commitments and Scholarly Dispositions of our teacher candidates and students in our professional education programs. The major domains measured by this instrument cohere around the central tenets of Collaboration, Academic excellence, Research, and Ethical practices (CARE). The six main constructs represented in this assessment are reflective of the CARE theme of the conceptual framework: Commitment to Collaboration; Continuous professional development; Reflective thinking; Respect for diversity; Ethical responsibility; and Care and advocacy for students.

Students provide self-assessment at predetermined times during their program (e.g., during orientation, at the midpoint of their course work, and at exit). Faculty members have identified specific courses to provide parallel assessments of student dispositions. A review of the current system revealed the final internship as an additional opportunity to examine teacher candidates’ dispositions.

To gain additional insight into current practices at peer institutions, subcommittee members queried colleagues regarding their current dispositional assessment systems. Not surprisingly, the examination of practices at several Florida institutions revealed home grown, imbedded procedures and practices. Similar to our approach, the assessment of dispositions was typically integrated into a variety of courses and assignments, transition points, and student self-reported evaluations. Confident of the confluence of professional commitments and student experiences, the last task was to realign the aforementioned dispositions with the items on the newly created Final Internship Evaluation Instrument. Inter-rater reliability was estimated to be approximately 95% when independent reviewers matched a subset of the items on the Final Internship Evaluation Instrument with the core dispositions.

**Summary**

The individual subcommittees created to reform and restructure the final internship evaluation system have established a cohesive set of policies and procedures to monitor and document the critical elements and dimensions of this important component of our teacher preparation programs. The newly revised Final Internship Evaluation Instrument is ready for large scale pilot testing via both the more traditional scannable paper and pencil mode, and a user-friendly
online administration. The items on this instrument have been scrutinized, reviewed for clarity and content, and are closely articulated with regional, state and organizational standards. A collection of assignments designed to capture Impact on K-12 Student Learning have been examine and refined in anticipation of a small scale pilot test. Collectively, the efforts of the committee members have served to refine and reinvent the current system in favor of a more comprehensive and sustainable evaluation model.