

# **Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs**

## ***Undergraduate Program in Special Education***

**Unit: Special Education**

**Unit Head approval:**

**Date: April 9, 2008**

### **SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

**Brief description of changes or improvements made in your unit as the result of assessment results since 2000.**

Since 2000 faculty in the Department of Special Education have engaged in the evaluation and continuous improvement of the undergraduate teacher education program. The initial teacher certification program, Learning and Behavior Specialist I, (LBS I) underwent a major revision in response to legally mandated changes to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) special education teacher certification requirements. Information gathered from a department generated formative evaluation conducted in 2004 with LBS I undergraduate students and faculty has also influenced changes in program components (e.g., student portfolios, course sequences, assignment revisions). All LBS I program graduates are formally and informally assessed during each phase of their teacher education program. Using technology skills acquired through the program, each undergraduate student develops an electronic portfolio that includes their own multimedia philosophy of teaching as well as several integrated reflections about the knowledge and skills they have acquired to be an effective special education teacher. Students include documentation (e.g., demonstration videos they have developed for students with disabilities; instructional programs) to support their reflections.

In addition, Special Education Department faculty follow the UIUC Council on Teacher Education (CTE) guidelines to ensure that all students enrolled in special education teacher certification programs meet the requirements of the CTE Conceptual Framework Expectations and the CTE Common Assessment Plan. All undergraduate teacher education candidates must pass the Illinois State Certification Tests (ISCTs) designed to ensure that graduates of the special education teacher education programs are prepared to educate students across a wide variety of ages and disabilities. Feedback from multiple sources and stakeholders, a) Illinois State Certification Test (ISCT) results, b) cooperating professionals, c) practicum supervisors, d) faculty, and e) current and former students have resulted in ongoing improvements to the undergraduate program.

## **SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN**

### **(a) PROCESS: Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.**

The Department of Special Education Unit Assessment Plan was developed through discussions regarding student outcomes, assessment, and program improvement by the those faculty most involved with the undergraduate teacher education program.

### **(b) STUDENT OUTCOMES: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes).**

**Outcome 1.** Students enrolled in the undergraduate LBS I program will demonstrate the dispositions, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills as outlined in the UIUC Council on Teacher Education (CTE) Conceptual Framework Expectations and meet the requirements of the Council on Teacher Education (CTE) Common Assessment Plan. (<http://www.cote.uiuc.edu>)

**Outcome 2.** Students enrolled in the undergraduate LBS I program will demonstrate the dispositions, attitudes, knowledge and skills required to be a competent novice special education teacher by meeting the standards and indicators that serve as a foundation for this program. These indicators are met through course work, field based activities, and other related professional experiences.

### **(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:**

Several methods are used to measure these outcomes. The Department of Special Education receives student assessment data from the CTE. This data indicates which undergraduate students are passing the Illinois Certification Tests. All LBS I undergraduates are required to complete an electronic portfolio in which the student develops a multimedia teaching philosophy, integrated reflections that address the major standard areas required to be a special education teacher and results of assessments and or assignments they have completed in order to meet multiple indicators within the standards. The e-portfolio is developed across several semesters with guidance from Special Ed Department faculty and the student's advisor. A formal e-portfolio presentation attended by the advisor and e-portfolio coordinator occurs prior to the student's graduation from UIUC. Written and verbal feedback from cooperating professionals and university supervisors also provide data regarding each student's dispositions, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Information gathered each year from the UIUC Senior Survey, although more global in its assessment of undergraduate students' college experiences, has also provided information to the Special Education faculty about strengths and areas in need of improvement in the undergraduate program.

The Department of Special Education has not routinely gathered data from program graduates or their employers after graduation. Post graduation evaluation data of this nature would be helpful in assessing needs for areas of improvement in the undergraduate teacher preparation program.

### **SECTION 3: PLANS FOR USING RESULTS**

#### **(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.**

The Department of Special Education uses both formal and informal assessment results to revise course content, assignments, course sequences, and field experiences. Feedback from stakeholders (students, cooperating professionals, supervisors, and faculty) is used to continuously monitor and improve the LBS I undergraduate program.

#### **(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:**

During the next two years The Department of Special Education will work closely with the CTE and College of Education Office of Development and Alumni Relations to access contact information from alumni and employers of LBS I program graduates. It is our hope that in collaboration with these offices we can gather information from former students and their employers electronically (via computer-based surveys) and/or U.S. mail. The data gathered through these surveys will also be used to make program improvements.