

Interdisciplinary Studies -- Teacher Preparation Concentration B.S.

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose

Institutional Mission Reference

The Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies - Teacher Preparation Concentration, is the undergraduate part of five-year, dual degree programs offered jointly with the Darden College of Education; these dual degrees offer licensure for early childhood, elementary, and special education teachers. The B.S. in IDS Teacher Prep. provides prospective teachers a unique multidisciplinary curriculum, including upper-level coursework in sciences, arts, humanities, social sciences, and mathematics, to prepare them to pass the Praxis exams and matriculate into the appropriate graduate program. This very large undergraduate program (approximately 1,200 students, fall 2002) embodies the mission of the University as articulated in the Catalog (2-3) as part of a dual degree program, IDS supports goals for excellence in both undergraduate and graduate education. A department with large populations of returning and second-degree students, IDS Teacher Prep. also especially embraces goals of inclusiveness and valuing diversity. Most of the courses comprising the IDS Teacher Prep. curricula are housed in the College of Arts and Letters, and indeed the program embodies the College's mission to "introduce students to the full range of human experiences through the study of cultural heritage, forms of artistic and literary expression, patterns of social and political behavior, and methods of critical inquiry" (Catalog 65). Further, the curriculum includes 23-26 upper-level credit hours in curriculum and instruction offered by the Darden College of Education, and 28-31 hours of coursework from the College of Sciences; the program therefore embraces as well the unique missions of each college, respectively. These goals include fostering the "abilities to practice state-of-the-art instruction to students of various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and attitudes which reflect commitment to teaching and learning as well as lifelong professional growth and development" (117). In addition, the IDS Teacher Prep. Concentration – PK-6 Emphasis Track is offered through Teletechnet; therefore the department is committed to "ensuring the highest quality of educational experience, wherever education is delivered" (3).

Institutional Goal(s) Supported

The IDS - Teacher Prep. program supports a number of institutional goals as stated in both the University Catalog and the 2000 Strategic Plan; in particular, the program supports the following Strategic Goals [numbering reflects Strategic Goal number]: 1: To educate, retain, and graduate men and women who are prepared intellectually to become effective citizens and leaders of the Commonwealth, nation, and world in the 21st century (Strategic Plan 22). 2: To take steps to improve graduate education (35). 5: To improve the quality of Teletechnet (48). 6: To provide opportunities for students to gain international experience and to continue to diversify the student body (58). 8: To improve services provided to students, achieving the reputation of an accessible and responsive academic program (71). 9: To foster a supportive academic culture which promotes awareness and responsibility in an increasingly diverse environment (77). 10: To facilitate the development of greater cooperation and collaboration between with school systems in the region and the community at large (82).

Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes, Methods for Assessment, Criteria for Success, Assessment Results, and Use of Results

Intended Outcome 1

Increase course availability for students on campus as well as for those at Teletechnet sites, thereby reducing the need for course substitutions, ensuring curricular integrity, and facilitating logical course sequencing and timely graduation. This is a special challenge in collaboration due to the multidisciplinary nature of the curriculum, and the fact that five academic departments are responsible for scheduling upper-level course requirements, and many courses in the curriculum have never before been offered on Teletechnet or through other alternate deliveries. However, a recent report from the Office of Institutional Research shows that

IDS/ECHL majors generated 13,021 credit hours and 23 full-time faculty positions across the University, including 10.89 positions in the College of Arts and Letters, 6.66 in the College of Education, and 5.29 in the College of Sciences. The data from this report will facilitate a better understanding of scheduling needs for IDS Teacher Preparation students.

Method for Assessing Outcome 1 and Criterion for Success: Recent Exit Interview and Student Satisfaction Surveys reflect student frustration with low course availability and the pervasive system of course substitutions; success for this outcome will be measured by higher rates of student satisfaction in course availability (currently 43%), as well as by fewer complaints in the Exit Interviews regarding availability, substitutions, and curriculum.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 1: The spring Exit Surveys conducted by the department from graduating seniors each semester do not reflect difficulty with course availability; indeed, course availability in disciplines including art, English, and history improved dramatically during the 2000-01 year. However, graduating seniors have seniority for registration, and the low satisfaction in course availability was reflected chiefly by the 1999 Alumni Survey and by student complaints to department advisors. Although no new Alumni Survey is available yet, complaints regarding course availability or the need for substitutions were less frequent during the 2001-2002 academic year than in previous semesters. In fact, for the past two years, the IDS Teacher Prep. program has not printed a "substitution list" for students unable to take courses required in the curriculum. However, course availability particularly for students completing the 1996 or 1998 curricula or pursuing Teletechnet degrees is still problematic. While satisfaction of sophomores, juniors, and Teletechnet students has not been formally assessed, Teletechnet site directors report student frustration with the few choices offered each semester -- generally one or two courses per discipline -- and the resulting difficulty in logical course sequencing. Facilitating more distance and campus course offerings for IDS-Teacher Prep. continues to be a top priority for the 2002-03 year.

Intended Outcome 2

Lower the advisor/student ratio and improve academic advising to foster a culture in which that students understand and appreciate their dual-degree, multi-disciplinary curriculum, plan courses in logical sequence, take and pass the national Praxis I exam in a timely manner, increase participation in study abroad, and achieve academic success with at least the minimum 2.75 required for admission to the graduate programs in education.

Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success: Exit Interview and Senior Satisfaction Surveys conducted semiannually and annually, respectively, show large percentages of students dissatisfied with the curriculum, advising, and course planning aspects of the program. Therefore, success in this outcome will be reflected by an increased rate of student satisfaction in advising (currently 43-45%), and by student remarks during exit interviews, which reflect understanding and appreciation for the curriculum and a sense of preparedness for the graduate program and profession of teaching.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success: (A) The department has not currently collected Praxis I pass rate information, but it will coordinate with the Darden College of Education to do so beginning fall 2002. Because the 2000 & 2002 catalogs require that students pass Praxis I prior to registration for their practica, practica faculty will enforce this requirement. The ultimate measure of success will be that Praxis I is a non-issue for our students, rather than a delay to their enrollment in practica. See Outcome #3. (B) The Darden College and the IDS Dept. can work together to collect data regarding IDS graduates' admissions and provisional admissions to graduate programs. Currently, too many students are provisionally admitted; success would be reflected by a lower rate of provisional admittance. See Outcome 4.

(C) Study Abroad participation information has not been collected for IDS students, but the rates have heretofore been low; the department can collect this information in exit interviews, and the International Programs may also be able to provide information. An annual increase in the baseline number for 2000-01 would be an appropriate criterion for success.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 2: The Banner system has been programmed to accommodate posting PRAXIS I scores to student records, and the Office of Teacher Education Services will begin to share aggregate reports of pass rates with departments beginning Fall 2002. While data regarding the graduate admission rates for IDS-Teacher Prep. students has not been collected, department directors and graduate program chairs have been working together to facilitate smoother admissions processing, with the support of the College dean. The Exit Surveys indicate that most respondents intend to complete their licensure requirements through the Darden College of Education, but many pursue the licensure-only program rather than the M.S. degree; at least a third of graduates from the B.S. program do not pursue licensure through the Darden College of Education. Finally, one student in the program studied abroad during the 2000-01 year and two studied abroad during 2001-02; the department regularly distributes & posts information regarding study abroad and student teaching abroad in an effort to generate interest; two more students are scheduled to study abroad during 2002-03.

Intended Outcome 3

Improve student awareness of and success with Praxis I, so that pre-majors and newly declared majors take it at the end of the fourth semester, or prior to completion of 60 credit hours, and so that students pass Praxis I, enroll in practica, and graduate in a timely fashion.

Method for Assessing Outcome 3 and Criterion for Success: : In 1999-2000, pass rates among students who took Praxis I were very low. However, the 2000 & 2002 catalogs make passing Praxis I a prerequisite for the practica courses which most students take in their senior year. Because both the Banner system and the faculty in the Darden College of Education will now enforce the new prerequisite, many students have been frustrated by delays in their practica. Success for this outcome will therefore be measured by practica enrollments, which dipped during 2000-01 and fall 2001, but rebounded in spring and summer 2002. That Praxis I scores will now be entered and viewed along with other test scores on the Banner system is an advance.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 3: The University is in the process of collecting PRAXIS I pass data; in addition, the College of Education integrated PRAXIS I preparation and testing into the educational foundations course, ECI 301, so students will be exposed to the test through their coursework. In addition, PRAXIS I preparation, scoring and registration information is now available in the IDS-Teacher Prep. Offices and website, and every student is asked about PRAXIS in every advising session. These developments have contributed to a much-heightened awareness among students; with this familiarity, resistance to and resentment of the test have abated significantly. Students admitted since spring 2001 have been informed of PRAXIS I requirements at the time of first advisement.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 3 and Criterion for Success: Beginning spring 2001, the Exit Interview Survey will collect data regarding students' experience with Praxis I.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 3: The respondents to the 2001 Exit Survey were graduating seniors for whom the PRAXIS I requirement did not apply; however, these students were encouraged for several semesters to take PRAXIS I as it is required for admission into their 5-year graduate programs. The 2002 Exit Survey shows that half of the respondents had not passed PRAXIS I at the time of applying for graduation; three students had retaken the test 3 times. Although the voluntary Exit Survey sample is small, representing about a third of graduating seniors, it appears to proportionately reflect the students population in the opinion of the program advisors who work daily with the students. As the program continues to graduate students in the 1996 and 1998 catalogs, for whom the PRAXIS I requirement was

imposed after their catalog years, we anticipate that the pass rates will rise.

Intended Outcome 4

Improve IDS-BS Teacher Prep. graduates' rates of admission into the appropriate graduate programs Darden College of Education, and their successful entry into professional teaching and leadership positions in the local region, throughout the state, and beyond.

Method for Assessing Outcome 4 and Criterion for Success: Assessment data from 2000 reflects that some students have not understood that their undergraduate coursework is the larger part of a dual-degree program, and that they will not be licensed to teach until completion of the graduate program; further, many students reported that they did not feel that their undergraduate program clearly prepared them for their chosen profession. Success for this outcome will therefore be measured by an absence of such remarks on future Exit Interview Surveys, and by increased rates of student satisfaction in clarity of program goals (currently 67-78%).

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 4: As previously mentioned, the majority of Exit Survey respondents did plan to complete the 5-year graduate program; however, these surveys represented a small population of program graduates. In addition, some students remarked on the surveys that the teacher preparation program should be simply a baccalaureate program, rather than dual-degree, reflecting a lack of appreciation for the stronger credentials the program offers. New department brochures, updated curriculum sheets, and the improved website all clarify and promote the dual-degree nature of the program. Advisors have been well-trained to articulate for students the rationale for their interdisciplinary degree and dual-degree licensure program.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 4 and Criterion for Success: The IDS Dept. has not previously collected data from the Darden College of Education regarding admittance and graduate rates for IDS BS-Teacher Prep. graduates; this data would be easy to gather annual from graduate program directors.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 4: During the 2001-2002 academic year, the department greatly improved its articulation of its mission and structure for incoming and continuing students – in print, in advisement, and on the internet. When it is conducted, the Alumni Exit Interview Survey will provide more data regarding this outcome. In addition, through an array of qualitative remarks, the Senior Exit Surveys for the 2001-02 academic year reflect a much greater student understanding and appreciation for the array of content courses across disciplines than did the previous year's surveys.

Intended Outcome 5

Achieve widespread Interdisciplinary Studies - Teacher Preparation program awareness and identity among on-campus and Teletechnet students through increased communication and greater accessibility to advising, career management, and other support services, in an effort to strengthen the undergraduate experience and foster pride among current students as well as alumni.

Method for Assessing Outcome 5 and Criterion for Success: Success may be measured by increased levels of satisfaction for many items on the Senior Satisfaction Survey, by increased student participation in the SVEA (Student Virginia Education Association), and by qualitative remarks on the Senior Exit Survey.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 5: The Exit Interview surveys conducted by the department do reflect increased satisfaction during the students' final year; however, this is not the most relevant data. That the department required all students to be advised beginning with the 2000-01 academic year (rather than simply unblocking all students and accommodating the third of them who sought to be advised) provided an opportunity to update all students on a number of program requirements and concerns. Many students initially reacted with frustration at the requirement that they come in for advising, but have come to understand its value. In addition, during the past two academic years, the program director has visited

faculty meetings of those disciplines comprising the IDS-Teacher Prep. curricula, and also made many individual visits to faculty whose courses were fully or mostly enrolled with IDS-Teacher Prep. students; these meetings gave faculty an opportunity to review the curricula and discuss a range of concerns; faculty appreciated these meetings, and the practice will continue. In addition, a number of faculty across disciplines have sought the program director's help in gearing courses to the IDS majors, or in understanding curricula or finding support. Finally, faculty also invited the program director to visit in mathematics, art, anthropology and English fully-enrolled with IDS students; these visits resulted in better understanding -- among students and faculty -- of a range of program requirements. IDS students subsequently reported to advisors that their faculty reflected an increased awareness of teacher prep. concerns. In the 2002-03 year, promoting the mission and interests of the program to students, faculty, and administration will continue to be a top priority. Finally, IDS majors currently serve as the leadership officers for the SVEA, and these students have been attending Transfer Preview Advising Sessions to meet new majors and encourage them to participate in this paraprofessional organization; indeed, membership and attendance at SVEA meetings have grown, and the students ensure that the SVEA literature is readily available in our offices.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 5 and Criterion for Success: Work with the Alumnae Office to collect data regarding current positions and satisfaction of graduates.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 5: This has not been attempted. At this time, the department has too many other priorities; however, informal comments made by faculty and students across campus suggest that the department and its mission have gained greater understanding in the larger University community.