

Interdisciplinary Studies Dept. - Teacher Preparation Program Baccalaureate

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose

Institutional Mission Reference

The Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies - Teacher Preparation Concentration (IDS-TP) offered through the College of Arts and Letters is the undergraduate part of five-year teacher licensure programs offered jointly with the Darden College of Education (B.S. +M.S. Ed.). These five-year programs offer teacher licensure in three areas: (1) Early Childhood Education (PK-3), (2) Elementary Education (PK-6), and Special Education (K-12). The baccalaureate program provides prospective teachers a unique multidisciplinary curriculum which includes content-area coursework in natural sciences, mathematics, arts, humanities, and social sciences in addition to education coursework, in order to prepare them to meet state and national standards for teacher licensure and to matriculate into the appropriate graduate program for completion of licensure requirements. This large undergraduate program (over 900 students, spring 2003) embodies the mission of the University as articulated in the Catalog (pp2-4); as part of a five-year program comprised of undergraduate and graduate degrees, IDSTP supports goals for excellence in both undergraduate and graduate education. A department with large populations of returning and second-degree students among the total population whose goal is to teach the diverse students of the future, IDSTP embraces goals of inclusiveness and diversity. IDSTP majors take 24-30 credit hours of arts, humanities, and social sciences courses in their major, and indeed the program embodies the College of Arts and Letters' 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 75). Further, the curriculum includes 23-26 credit hours of human growth and development, educational foundations, and curriculum and instruction coursework in the Darden College of Education, and 27-31 credit hours of mathematics, statistics, and natural sciences 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 socio-economic backgrounds, and attitudes which reflect commitment to teaching and learning as well as lifelong professional growth and development" (p 134). In addition, the Elementary Ed. (PK-6) Emphasis Track of the IDSTP program is offered via Teletechnet; therefore the department is committed to "ensuring the highest quality of educational experience, where education is delivered" (p 3).

Institutional Goal(s) Supported

The IDSTP program supports a number of institutional goals as stated in both the University Catalog and the 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, since 2000, the Office of Institutional Research has provided reports showing the FTEs, credit hours, and tuition dollars generated for each college and department by the IDS-TP majors; data from these reports is shared annually with deans, department chairs, and faculty in order to facilitate a better understanding of scheduling needs for IDS Teacher Preparation students and to make clear the importance of the IDS-TP majors to the College of Arts and Letters, Education, and Sciences, as well as to specific departments within each college.

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 as well as by a fewer complaints in the Exit Interviews regarding availability, substitutions, and curriculum.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 1: Students "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with course availability increased to 50% in the 2001-02 Senior Satisfaction Survey from 43% in the 2000-01 Senior Satisfaction Survey, indicating that some improvement has already registered in the experience of graduating seniors. The program discontinued its semesterly production of a "Course Substitution List" in spring 2001, which took many students by surprise but also enforced the coherence of the curriculum. Finally, that course availability has improved is apparent in daily advising interactions and the dramatic reduction in student complaints during the 2002-03 academic year. While important areas in need of improvement remain, particularly in the availability on Teletechnet of ECI (Educational Curriculum And Instruction) courses and English linguistics courses, in the content areas of math, history, English literature and advanced composition, sciences, and social sciences, site directors no longer report significant problems with availability.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 1 to Improve Academic Program: The slight but statistically significant improvement in student satisfaction with course availability indicates that progress has been made; however, the program must continuously communicate with department chairs and faculty to facilitate increased course offerings particularly for TTN students. In addition, the program director has worked with the dean's offices in several colleges to facilitate an understanding of the importance of IDSTP enrollments to departments and colleges in order to ensure faculty hires reflect the needs of the IDSTP program in departments where significant FTEs are generated by IDSTP enrollments.

Intended Outcome

Lower the advisor/student ratio and improve academic advising to foster a culture in which students understand the rationales for and appreciate their multi-disciplinary curriculum and the five-year nature of the program; in addition, improved advising should help students to plan courses in logical sequence and progress to program completion in a timely fashion.

Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success: Departmental Exit Surveys and the University Senior Satisfaction Surveys conducted annually reflect levels of student satisfaction with advising. However, providing additional staff and training for existing staff for advising will be the ultimate measure of success, as the current advisor-student ratio for campus students in the program is about 1:400.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 2: While the 2002 Senior Exit Survey (including 118 IDS respondents, of whom the majority are IDSTP majors) reports only 30% "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with advising (down from 43% in the previous survey), overall student satisfaction for the program was reported at 72%, satisfaction with "clarity of goals" was reported at 50%, and satisfaction with "goals met" was reported at 59%. Additionally, on the program's Exit Surveys which are voluntary on the part of graduating seniors included 46 respondents, 89% of respondents indicated they "were able to make convenient appointments" with advisors and 69% of respondents reported that they found the assistance of the department's "peer advisors" helpful.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success: All students complete a "55-Second Check-Up" evaluating their advising sessions at the end of each advising appointment.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 2: The fall 2002 "55-Second Check-Up" Tabulations show that 95% of respondents (N=223) felt that "The advisor made every reasonable effort to assist me" and that "The advisor seemed well informed about policies, procedures, and requirements"; 92% of respondents indicated that "The advisor was willing to spend sufficient time with me." In fact, the checklists students complete at the end of their advising sessions suggest a very high level of satisfaction with advising during the 2002-03 academic year.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 2 to Improve Academic Program: While no resources for additional staffing were made available during the last three academic years, significant lapses and/or errors in advising and student complaints to other offices resulted in a personnel change during the 2001-02 academic year, bringing a new professional advisor to the department at the beginning of the 2002-03 academic year. This itself is a significant improvement in advising, and it is anticipated that future data will reflect the many improvements the new advisor has implemented. The new advisor has updated and improved a number of advising protocols. In addition, the program director and advisor conducted several "Monarch Moments" for site directors in an effort to strengthen the advising for Teletechnet students. The campus advisor has developed a student database to track GPAs and other data as students progress through the program; among the effects this has generated are (a) "undeclaring" students who have not meet program requirements for two semesters or more as stated in the Catalog, which has reduced the number of declared majors; (b) warning "probationary" students -- those who have fallen below program requirements but not for more than two semesters -- and providing them with intensive academic counseling for failing students in cooperation with the graduate program in Human Services Counseling; (c) sending regular email "updates" to all declared majors regarding important program news and opportunities. Finally, the previous advisor had allowed many students who did not meet program declaration requirements to declare the major anyway, thus setting students up for failure and violating policy stated in the Catalog; this practice has been stopped.

Intended Outcome 3

Improve student awareness of and success with PRAXIS I, so that pre-majors and newly declared majors take it by 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: The primary method for assessing Outcome 3 is that hoardes of students will no longer be delayed in their academic progress due to failure of the PRAXIS I test (a prerequisite for their capstone course). The 2000 and 2002 catalogs state that passing PRAXIS I is a prerequisite for the practicum, and beginning fall 2002, PRAXIS I scores were loaded into student records via the BANNER system, and the system also enforced blocks on registration for practica courses for students without passing scores posted. Increased enrollments in practicum courses and reduced complaints regarding the PRAXIS I requirement will indicate success.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 3: During the 2001-02 academic year, many students graduated who had been delayed in completing degree requirements due to difficulty passing PRAXIS I; this "bubble" of students had matriculated prior to the PRAXIS I requirement being included in the program and many were extremely unhappy about it; students who have matriculated beginning 2002 have a much clearer program description in the catalog and have experienced a changed program "culture" in which PRAXIS I is discussed in EVERY advising appointment and is written into articulation agreements with a number of community colleges. Indeed, increasingly, transfer students enter the program with PRAXIS I already passed. The program director, who regularly fielded student and parent complaints about the PRAXIS I requirement during the 2000-01 and 2001-02 academic years did not field a single complaint about the requirement during the 2002-03 academic year.

Alternate Method for Assessing Outcome 3 and Criterion for Success: The department Senior Exit Surveys asks questions about PRAXIS I; students voluntarily self-report on this instrument.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected, Alternate Method for Outcome 3: On the 2002 Senior Exit Surveys, only 20% of the 46 respondents indicated that they had already passed PRAXIS I; although of these seniors will not graduate until they have passed the test as a prerequisite to their capstone course, some students took the practicum capstone prior to the enforcement of the prerequisite, so they will take PRAXIS I before licensure, but not as a baccalaureate program requirement. Of these respondents, 43% indicated they had taken the test more than once; as a costly test, this is problematic for majors in the program.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 3 to Improve Academic Program: The PRAXIS I requirement has been fully integrated into all program literature, including clear explanations in the Catalog, on the website, and in all handouts and curriculum checklists in an effort to broadcast the requirement. In addition, advising protocols have been improved, including the development of a new checklist for advising sessions which ensures that every student discusses PRAXIS I during every advising appointment until s/he has passing scores posted to her student records in BANNER. Finally, during the 2002-03 academic year, the director participated in the development of articulation agreements with several community colleges that will effect passage of PRAXIS I prior to student matriculation into the program. Whereas students who graduated from the program during the 2001-2003 period entered a program in which PRAXIS I was discussed as an "exit" or "end-of-the-program" requirement they could put off, new students entering the program today are introduced to PRAXIS I and given test registration materials in their initial advising. Indeed, a slow but dramatic change in the program culture is underway.

Intended Outcome 4

Improve IDSTP graduates' rates of regular admission into the appropriate graduate programs in the Darden College of Education, so that students complete the entire state-approved 5-year program rather than completing licensure through an alternate route.

Method for Assessing Outcome 4 and Criterion for Success: Departmental Exit Surveys ask students whether they plan to matriculate into the graduate programs and, if not, what their plans are.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 4: The 2002 Departmental Exit Surveys indicate that 74% of respondents (N=46) plan to complete licensure requirement via a graduate program in the Darden College of Education; however, the number of respondents is less than half of the students graduating in the academic year. In addition, only 60% of the respondents who DO plan to enter a graduate program reported that they currently met the regular admission GPA requirement; those who do not may be provisionally admitted.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 4 to Improve Academic Program: During the 2002-03 academic year, the IDSTP program director met with graduate program directors for the three programs into which the IDSTP graduates should matriculate for completion of the 5-year licensure program; after reviewing the numbers -- for instance, that there are nearly 1,000 IDSTP undergraduates and fewer than 100 graduate students in the Elementary Education graduate program -- a "Fast Track Admission" strategy was developed to attract a larger number of strong students to complete the graduate programs. As a result, students who pass all three sections of PRAXIS I and achieve a 3.2 GPA can be admitted to the graduate programs without taking the GRE, a daunting and costly requirement for students who have other standardized exams built into their programs. This has already created excitement among the IDSTP program's strong students; over half a dozen students have now been admitted to one of the graduate programs through this "Fast Track," and it is anticipated that the numbers will grow.

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 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: Questions have been added to the Departmental Exit Survey; the Senior Satisfaction Survey also polls students about their satisfaction with the program -- increased levels of satisfaction, increased participation in the campus chapter of the SVEA (Student Virginia Education Association), and pride in the program will indicate success.

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 5: Overall student satisfaction for the program as reported on the 2001-02 Senior Satisfaction Survey was 72%, satisfaction with "clarity of goals" was reported at 50%, and satisfaction with "goals met" was reported at 59%. Clearly, students who graduated in 2001-02 were less satisfied than is desirable; however, these students represent a population for whom a number of program requirements changed mid-stream, and they also experienced significant personnel turnover within the department -- both the curriculum and department personnel has stabilized, and it is anticipated that greater levels of satisfaction will be reported on future surveys. In addition, IDSTP majors' participation in the SVEA increased greatly during the 2002-2003 academic year as a result of the organizations' leadership participating in the "Preview" orientations for incoming transfer students; one effect of increased IDSTP student participation was the group's honoring the IDSTP program director with their annual "Apple of Our Eye" award during spring 2003, indicating both pride and satisfaction in their major program. Finally, the Departmental Exit Survey asks students for recommendations for strengthening the program; while a few respondents to this question (n=35) made comments such as, "I though it was great and very helpful," "I felt this program was excellent," and "Plenty strong," other qualitative remarks on the survey suggest a range of student frustration, from curriculum and personnel changes to resentment that the program is five years.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 5 to Improve Academic Program: The program has made a number of improvements as a result of student remarks, among them (a) systematizing advising protocols & documentation; (b) clarifying catalog text; (c) expanding the program website; (d) taking photos of all majors when they declare for their files, so that advisors can readily recall students when they call or email inquiries or when students arrive for subsequent appointments; (e) communicating regularly with faculty and chairs across disciplines and colleges to strengthen their understanding of program and IDSTP student needs and concerns; (f) communicating regularly with program directors in the Darden College of Education to facilitate smoother transitions from the undergraduate into the graduate programs; (g) making SVEA materials available within the department and promoting participation; (f) using the student email mailing list to communicate regularly with students about open courses, scholarship and volunteer opportunities, and major student achievements.