

The Mesa State College Center for Teacher Education has produced an institutional document, a self-study report, in support of its application for accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The final report can be found in the President's Office, Office of Academic Affairs, College Library, the Center for Teacher Education, and offices of the deans across campus. The report is summarized in this much briefer document.

## **Preface**

The primary readers of the NCATE Institutional Report are the consultant-evaluators from the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers of Education, but it will be made available to a much wider audience, including the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Teacher Education review team. MSC employees, students, parents, and the general public are welcome to read and comment on the report.

Team members from the Center for Teacher Education (CTE) and faculty members from across campus who work with teacher candidates helped to generate the report. Several others read drafts of the report and made suggestions; many others provided important information.

## **About NCATE**

Teaching children is one of the most important jobs in America. The nation's future depends, in large part, on teaching excellence. NCATE is the profession's mechanism to help establish high quality teacher preparation. Through the process of professional accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education, NCATE works to make a difference in the quality of teaching and teacher preparation today, tomorrow, and for the next century. NCATE's performance-based system of accreditation fosters competent classroom teachers and other educators who work to improve the education of P-12 students. NCATE believes every student deserves a caring, competent, and highly qualified teacher.

NCATE is a coalition of 33 specialty professional associations of teachers, teacher educators, content specialists, and local and state policy makers. The U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognizes NCATE as a professional accrediting body for teacher preparation.

NCATE's dual mission is accountability and improvement in teacher preparation. The NCATE accreditation process establishes rigorous standards for teacher education programs, holds accredited institutions accountable for meeting these standards, and encourages unaccredited schools to demonstrate the quality of their programs by working for and achieving professional accreditation. In NCATE's performance-based accreditation system, institutions must provide evidence of competent teacher candidate performance.

NCATE works with states to integrate national professional standards and state standards in order to upgrade the quality of teacher preparation in the United States. There are currently 48 state/NCATE partnerships in which the states and NCATE conduct joint or concurrent review.

## **Part I: Overview of the Institution**

The role and mission of Mesa State College, as of spring 2003, is legislatively defined as follows:

There is hereby established a College at Grand Junction, to be known as Mesa State College, which shall be a general baccalaureate and specialized graduate institution with moderately selective admissions. Mesa State College shall offer undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, teacher preparation, and business degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs. Mesa State College shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including vocational and technical programs. Mesa State College shall receive resident credit for two-year programs. Mesa State shall also serve as a regional education provider (House Bill 03-1093).

The Center for Teacher Education (CTE) at Mesa State College is a relatively new program. In 1983, in conjunction with Metropolitan State College (Denver), Mesa State College began delivering courses leading to teacher licensure. In 1991, Mesa State College was granted permission to offer a program independent of Metro State College. Students may pursue a Colorado teaching license in the following areas: Elementary education (Liberal Arts); Secondary education (history, biology, physical sciences/geology/environmental science, English, mathematics); K-12 (art, music, human performance & wellness). The program has continued to grow and had a record high number of graduates in 2002-2003, with 91 students receiving their Colorado teaching licenses.

## **Part II: Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework establishes the shared vision for a unit's efforts in preparing educators to work in P-12 schools. It provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability. The conceptual framework is knowledge-based, articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the unit and institutional mission, and continuously evaluated.

The Center for Teacher Education educates students to be successful teachers on the Western Slope and in the teaching profession at large. The mission of the unit is to create competent, innovative teachers who possess a mastery of content and pedagogy. This philosophy of teachers who are "competent, have expertise in teaching, and who are passionate about innovation" is illustrated by an equilateral triangle. Competence and expertise are the foundations for the teacher education program.

## **Part III: Evidence for Meeting Each Standard**

NCATE is dedicated to improving student learning by improving the quality of teacher education. High and rigorous standards are established for teacher education programs. NCATE's performance-based accreditation system involves a review based on the NCATE Unit Standards, a set of research-based national standards developed by all

sectors of the teaching profession. Accreditation is based on evidence that demonstrates that teacher candidates know the subject matter and can teach it effectively so that students learn. Units must provide evidence that candidates can connect theory to practice and be effective in an actual P-12 classroom. The accreditation process requires reviews of the individual programs within a unit and an on-site review of the unit as a whole.

### **Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Disposition**

Teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate competency in both content knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary for teaching. The program design for all teacher education candidates at Mesa State College is a carefully sequenced structure of classes that are developmental in nature and complementary as co-requisites during the program. The Post-Baccalaureate Intensive program also has a carefully sequenced set of coursework but the timeline is more compressed than the traditional program. Elementary candidates typically make application to the program during the second semester of the sophomore year; secondary and K-12 candidates make application during the first semester of the junior year. Candidates will have a solid base of content knowledge before they enter the program to work on the skills and dispositions for teaching. Candidates are not admitted to the program until they demonstrate their proficiencies as evidenced by the PRAXIS I basic skills tests in reading, writing, and mathematics, and minimum 2.75 grade point average. Phase I provides an introduction to education and formal application procedures; Phase II provides the core curriculum of pedagogy and assessment, and teaching to diversity. Phase III has a focus on methods of teaching content, and Phase IV is the student teaching semester. Disposition expectations from CTE faculty and teachers in the schools are also evaluated throughout each phase of the program.

We strongly believe that candidates graduating from our program know their content and subject matter, have developed skills to teach that content effectively, and have developed experiences in the performance-based program that allow them to develop their own innovations in education. Guiding principles are correlated to state and professional standards so this link will guarantee that graduating candidates will meet state licensing requirements and the standards of national professional organizations.

### **Standard 2: Assessment Systems and Unit Evaluation**

The CTE provides performance data that reflect State licensing exams, admissions assessments and requirements, clinical practice assessments and graduate surveys. The CTE faculty have an assessment plan in place for each of the transition points in the program. A timeline is in place for the use of an electronic database and the information gleaned from the data. Faculty members continue to update information for students relative to their requirements, assessments, and portfolio requirements. With two cohort groups in addition to the main campus, faculty work to ensure that continuity and consistency of programs is maintained.

Data from Phase I candidates provides information about the competency of teacher candidates. Further data is provided in Phase III when the grade point averages are reviewed prior to internship and candidates take the PRAXIS II or PLACE content exams. Data from Phase II and III is provided through student field experiences and specially designed assignments within the field hours. During Phase IV, student teaching, candidates demonstrate competence, expertise, and innovations as they complete the program.

### **Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical practices**

Collaboration between local districts and the CTE provide optimal placements for clinical experiences and student teaching. Students move into the profession of teaching

through a carefully designed and sequenced four phase field-based model. Candidates receive expert supervision as a result of the collaboration and ongoing communication between the local school districts and the CTE. Cooperating teachers and college supervisors receive training in mentoring and supervisory strategies to better support the professional development of CTE candidates. Field-based programs link teacher education coursework with field experiences to enable the candidates to make the connections between theory and practice. Field-based experiences are also linked to the Colorado Performance-Based Standards for Teachers and reflect the underlying theme of the CTE.

#### **Standard 4: Diversity**

The educational preparation programs in the CTE recognize the changing local and national demographics. As schools in the United States become increasingly diverse, teachers must be prepared to provide opportunities that allow full and equal participation by all types of students. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to work in changing educational contexts involve the incorporation of learning experiences that will enhance a candidate's understanding of the diverse elements that impact school climates and student learning. The different experiences students bring to the classroom include those based on culture, community, ethnicity, gender, economics, language, sexual orientation, and innate learning abilities. Coursework in the CTE is designed to facilitate the values of diversity in educational settings and the richness the diversity brings to the environment. A required course in Phase II, EDUC 343 *Teaching to Diversity*, is designed to integrate social theories and educational theories with field based practices. This course is taken early in the program so that candidates may continue to define their own personal definitions of diversity and use the concepts as a framework for examining diversity in their field experiences.

#### **Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development**

Faculty of the CTE have a shared vision for what teacher candidates should know and be able to do. They are committed to quality teaching, productive scholarship, and responsible service. All full time faculty have earned doctoral degrees in the areas where faculty have primary responsibilities. Part-time, temporary, and clinical faculty are experts in their individual areas and bring a rich background of field based experiences to the program. Field experience and supervisory faculty for the programs have at least a master's degree.

#### **Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources**

The CTE is the center for academic and administrative functions related to professional education, and it provides the leadership for all programs at the college designed to prepare teachers to work in P-12 schools. The CTE is organized as a center separate from the four schools in the college. Administrative functions are handled through a director and administrative assistant. The director reports directly to the Vice President for Academic Affairs who serves as the head of the school educational unit. The Director also works closely with the directors of the Colorado Mountain College 2+2 program and Montrose campus.

CTE is confident that it will continue to meet the needs of its students if forthcoming financial support is reasonable. Additionally, the financial challenges have come at the same time the State of Colorado is asking Mesa State College to increase its sphere of influence as a regional educational provider. The CTE will need to carefully prioritize its decisions about programs and their cost effectiveness to ensure that needs of students will continue to be met during this time of financial constraints at the college.

