

MISSOURI STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AGENDA ITEM:**June 2014**

CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM FOR WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

Sections 161.092, 161.097, and 161.009 RSMo

Consent
ItemAction
ItemReport
Item**DEPARTMENT GOAL NO. 3:**

Missouri will prepare, develop, and support effective educators.

SUMMARY:

Western Governors University of Salt Lake City, Utah submitted a proposal to the Office of Educator Quality to offer seventeen (17) programs for teacher certification:

- Early Childhood Education – Birth-Grade 3
- Elementary Education – Grades 1-6
- Elementary Mathematics Specialist – Grades 1-6
- Middle School Mathematics – Grades 5-9
- Middle School Science – Grades 5-9
- Middle School Social Studies – Grades 5-9
- Biology – Grades 9-12
- Chemistry – Grades 9-12
- Earth Science – Grades 9-12
- General Science – Grades 9-12
- Mathematics – Grades 9-12
- Physics – Grades 9-12
- Social Science – Grades 9-12
- English for Speakers of Other Languages – Grades K-12
- Mild-Moderate Cross-Categorical Special Education – Grades K-12
- Principal – Elementary – Grades K-8
- Principal – Secondary – Grades 7-12.

Department staff reviewed their proposal and convened multiple conference calls to interview students, the faculty, and administrative staff to determine whether the proposed programs are credible for state approval.

It was determined from a review of the conceptual framework, curriculum matrices, and instructional resources that the professional education unit and the proposed program are in compliance with the Missouri Standards for the Preparation of Educators (MoSPE). The proposal for their initial approval included:

- Plans to meet and/or exceed the six (6) MoSPE standards;
- Alignment of assessments to the Annual Performance Report for Educator Preparation Programs (APR-EPP);
- Identification of the area(s) of certification in which they are seeking approval;

- Alignment of coursework and/or experiences to prepare educators in the certification area;
- Conference calls to visit with faculty, advisors, administration, and partners;
- Review of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Board of Examiners Report – Continuous Improvement from their review in April 2012.
- A timeline for the approval by the board; steps to recruit students; and the anticipated date of their first program completers.

Initial approval would allow teacher candidates from Western Governors University to be recommended for certification upon their successful completion of the program and appropriate assessments required by State Board rule. Continuing approval for this program is contingent upon the Annual Performance Report for Educator Preparation Programs.

PRESENTER(S):

Paul Katnik, Assistant Commissioner, and Gale "Hap" Hairston, Director, Educator Preparation, Office of Educator Quality will assist with the presentation and discussion of this agenda item.

RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend that the State Board of Education grant initial approval to Western Governors University to offer seventeen (17) professional education programs effective August 1, 2014, as presented herein.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
Western Governors University
Salt Lake City, Utah
June 16-17, 2014

Missouri Standards for the Preparation of Educators	Findings	
	Initial	Advanced
Standard 1: Academics – Candidates demonstrate knowledge and application of general education, content knowledge, and pedagogy.	Met	Met
Standard 2: Design & Assessment – The data from fair, valid, and reliable assessments will be used to measure the performance of candidates and educator preparation programs by program and certification areas.	Met	Met
Standard 3: Field & Clinical Experiences – Field and clinical experiences, offered in collaboration with PK-12 schools, support the development of educators.	Met	Met
Standard 4: Candidates – A diverse pool of candidates, who demonstrate potential for effectiveness as educators are recruited, admitted, developed and retained by educator preparation programs.	Met	Met
Standard 5: Faculty – Educator preparation faculty are qualified for their assignments, recruited from diverse populations, and model effective professional practices in teaching, learning, scholarship, and service.	Met	Met
Standard 6: Operations and Resources – Operations and resources are necessary to govern, develop, support, and maintain the educator preparation program.	Met	Met

Certification Programs	Rating	Approval
Early Childhood Education – Birth-Grade 3	Met	Pending
Elementary Education – Grades 1-6	Met	Pending
Elementary Mathematics Specialist – Grades 1-6	Met	Pending
Middle School Mathematics – Grades 5-9	Met	Pending
Middle School Science – Grades 5-9	Met	Pending
Middle School Social Science – Grades 5-9	Met	Pending
Biology – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
Chemistry – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
Earth Science – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
General Science – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
Mathematics – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
Physics – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
Social Science – Grades 9-12	Met	Pending
English for Speakers of Other Languages – Grades K-12	Met	Pending
Mild-Moderate Cross Categorical Special Education – Grades K-12	Met	Pending
Principal – Elementary – Grades K-6	Met	Pending
Principal – Secondary – Grades 7-12	Met	Pending

WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY
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Introduction

Western Governors University (WGU) is a private, non-profit institution that was established in 1997 to deliver competency-based educational programs through an online environment. WGU was founded by 11 state governors, now grown to 20, to serve the growing higher education needs of those without access to traditional programs. The university was initially accredited in 2003 by an interregional accrediting committee made up of four commissioning bodies; it is now accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, which reaffirmed its accreditation in 2010. The headquarters is located in Salt Lake City, Utah with branch offices in Indiana, Texas, and Washington. Candidates are located in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and three U.S. territories (Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands). Per recent U.S. Department of Education requirements, WGU has exemption, authorization, or pending authorization to operate in all U.S. areas.

WGU's mission focuses on providing access to higher education through competency-based programs in an online, independent study format. To meet this mission, WGU offers programs in four high demand curricular areas—business, health professions, information technology, and teacher education. An alternative to traditional universities, WGU is a year-round operation with students enrolling each month. Competencies are drawn from state and national standards, and programs of study are based on these competencies. Courses, assessments, and resources are online, and faculty mentors regularly assist students electronically and by phone in progressing through their programs. Across the university, there are over 32,000 students (about 60% female, 70% White) and over 1,200 faculty (about 73% female, 75% White). The student retention rate over a 12-month period was 83 percent across the university.

WGU's Teachers College serves as the professional education unit. It began in 2003 by offering licensure programs at both the initial and advanced levels with a focus on high-need teaching areas. The unit currently offers 22 initial programs at the bachelors (10), post-baccalaureate (6), and masters (6) levels, and 16 advanced programs at the masters (14) and endorsement (2) levels. Most licensure programs have Specialized Professional Association (SPA) approval where available or are in the process of obtaining approval. In terms of licensure, programs have been approved by, have been accepted by, or have reciprocity with all 50 states, Washington D.C., and four U.S. territories (Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands).

Unit programs are competency-based with comprehensive assessment systems to ensure relevant standards are met. Competencies for each program are based on an extensive analysis of over 50,000 state and professional standards, and assessments are designed and implemented to track candidates' development of these competencies. To complete a program, a candidate must pass 100 percent of all required assessments for that program. Successful completion of any program means that a candidate has demonstrated competence in each element of knowledge, skills, and dispositions defined for that program, and has met the underlying professional, state, and institutional standards to which all programs are aligned.

Candidates generally include paraprofessionals, teachers seeking credentials to become highly qualified (NCLB, 2001), licensed teachers committed to professional development, and career changers seeking the field of education. The flexibility of online learning provides these candidates access to programs at

the times and places they choose, and, in many cases, allows them to complete their clinical practice in a school or district where they are already employed. Currently, there are over 10,000 candidates in the unit, including over 8,000 in initial programs (about 82% female, 75% White) and over 2,600 in advanced programs (about 75% female, 75% White). The retention rate over a 12-month period was 84 percent across the unit.

Full-time faculty in the unit include (1) course mentor who is responsible for supporting candidates in specific curriculum areas and for facilitating their learning on individual, group, and community levels, and (2) student mentors who are responsible for advising, coaching, and supporting individual candidates on making timely progress throughout their programs. There are 541 faculty in the unit (about 78% female, 80% White). There also are two categories of part-time contract employees: evaluators who score candidate assessments and clinical supervisors who are hired in proximity to the candidate and who support the candidate through clinical practice. In addition, host teachers in P-12 schools provide guidance, support, and coaching in field experiences and clinical practice.

Conceptual Framework

Western Governors University (WGU) was created to expand access to higher education, and its mission statement reflects this purpose: "The mission of Western Governors University is to improve quality and expand access to post-secondary educational opportunities by providing a means for individuals to learn independent of time and place and to earn competency-based degrees and other credentials that are credible to both academic institutions and employers."

Teachers College, the professional education unit at WGU, supports this intent. Its vision/mission is "to prepare teachers who are competent and caring, affirming of diversity and cross-culturally competent, reflective practitioners, equitable and fair, committed to the belief that all students can learn, collaborative professionals, technologically proficient, and professional leaders and change agents; and as a result, to both develop a cohort of highly qualified educators and to be recognized as the premier competency-based, online, and truly national teachers college."

The unit's basic tenet is that "we believe all children can learn and deserve the highest quality education; and that our mission and vision will ensure that our candidates share and act upon this belief, thus meeting the needs of their students and the school systems they serve." The unit's goals include preparing high quality educators who demonstrate the dispositions articulated in the vision/mission statement. The unit's eight dispositions are described below, extracted from a comprehensive listing in the conceptual framework.

- (1) Caring and Considerate: Graduates are competent in all areas of educational practice, including content and pedagogy, and demonstrate an appropriate degree of care and consideration for their students.
- (2) Affirming of Diversity and Cross-Culturally Competent: Graduates are able to work effectively across cultures. It is beyond knowledge, awareness and sensitivity in that it is the incorporation, integration and transformation of all the skills and information acquired through them, applied to create cultural structure within the workplace.
- (3) Reflective Practitioners: Graduates recognize the professional and personal value of ongoing reflection as a tool for continuous performance improvement, and implement reflection as a means of ongoing professional development.

- (4) **Equitable and Fair:** Graduates understand language acquisition; cultural influences on learning; exceptionalities; diversity of student populations, families, and communities; and inclusion and equity, with the ideal of fairness, in various positions, classrooms and schools.
- (5) **Committed to the Belief that All Students Can Learn:** Graduates have developed and are able to model expected professional dispositions with the ideal of fairness and the belief that all students can learn.
- (6) **Collaborative Professionals:** Graduates recognize the value of working in close collaboration with the many stakeholders in education, including working with, but not limited to, colleagues in P-12 classrooms, support staff, administration, parents, community members, and students themselves.
- (7) **Technologically Proficient:** Graduates are highly proficient in the use of technology as both a pedagogical tool and management tool.
- (8) **Professional Leaders and Change Agents:** Graduates serve as leaders in their respective classrooms, schools, communities, and in the profession as a whole, in the pursuit of high educational achievement for all children.

The belief that all children can learn and the eight supporting dispositions are embedded throughout the unit in courses, assessments, field experiences, and clinical practice. The dispositions, together with academic measures, are used by faculty mentors, clinical supervisors, and host teachers to determine candidates' performance as they progress through and complete the program.

The original conceptual framework was developed by a team of unit faculty and WGU academic leaders in 2002 to guide initial program planning and implementation. In 2004, a committee of unit faculty members representing each academic area met to review and revise the framework, given rapid growth of programs and enrollments. The new framework was completed in 2005 and incorporated a broader and deeper knowledge base developed from current research, alignment with national and state standards, and the accumulated knowledge and experience of unit faculty and stakeholders. The framework underwent significant edits in 2009 and 2011 as part of an ongoing process to accommodate unit changes and to encompass more current research.

NCATE Team Findings		
NCATE Standards	Initial	Advanced
Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions	Standard Met	Standard Met
Assessment System & Unit Evaluation	Standard Met	Standard Met
Field Experiences & Clinical Practice	Standard Met	Standard Met
Diversity	Standard Met	Standard Met
Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development	Standard Met	Standard Met
Unit Governance and Resources	Standard Met	Standard Met