Professional Dispositions: Strategies and Use of Data

DEBRA A. COLLEY, PH.D.
DEAN, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, NY
WHY?

- Integrity of the profession
- Program standards and expectations
- Mission of institution
- Legal responsibility
- Career retention and opportunity
Professional Dispositions

Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development.

NCATE’s Glossary of Terms
Professional dispositions are . . .

- Based on mission
- Articulated as part of conceptual framework.
- Determined by the unit* and minimally include the ideal of fairness and the belief that all students can learn.
- Assessed based on observable behavior in educational settings.
- Systematically assessed – data used for continuous improvement (candidate, program, unit).

*based on professional dispositions expected of educators
Integration of Dispositions in Unit Standards

- **Standard 1:** Candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions (1g: professional dispositions for all candidates).

- **Standard 2:** Assessment system and unit evaluation (2a: Assessment system; 2b: data collection, analysis, and evaluation; 2c: use of data for program improvement).

- **Standard 3:** Field experiences and clinical practice (3a: Collaboration between unit and school partners; 3c: candidates’ development and demonstration of ... professional dispositions).

- **Standard 4:** Diversity (4a: Design, implementation, evaluation; 4d: experiences working with diverse students in P-12 schools).

- **Standard 5:** Faculty qualifications, performance, and development (5b: modeling best professional practices in teaching).
The key questions

- Has the unit clearly identified the professional dispositions that are expected of educators and that candidates must develop and demonstrate?

- Does the unit regularly and systematically assess professional dispositions of program candidates?

- Are candidates familiar with and demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with the professional dispositions identified by the unit?

- Do candidates demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with the ideal of fairness and the belief that all students can learn?

- Does the unit provide sufficient evidence that candidates develop and demonstrate the professional dispositions identified by the unit?
Continuous Improvement: Dispositions

"WHew! That was close! We almost decided something!"
Reflection and analysis (mission-driven)
Structure and process
Core dispositions
Observable indicators (program-specific)
Methodology and assessment
Integration across assessments
Implications for candidates (policy/practice)
Analysis and continuous improvement
NU’s core dispositions from the conceptual framework: An example

1. Professional commitment and responsibility (includes fairness).

2. Professional relationships (includes belief that all children can learn).

3. Critical thinking and reflective practice.
Professional commitment and responsibility:

The candidate demonstrates a commitment to the profession and adheres to the legal and ethical standards set forth by it.

- The Candidate:
  - Maintains confidentiality as appropriate
  - Is enthusiastic toward teaching and learning
  - Understands and complies with laws and policies at the local, state and national level
  - Exhibits professional standards in appearance
  - Is prepared and punctual
  - Is enthusiastic about instructional content
  - Demonstrates academic honesty
Professional relationships:

The candidate develops, maintains, and models appropriate relationships within the workplace, community, and larger diverse society.

- The Candidate:
  - Maintains high expectations for self and others
  - Considers diverse opinions and perspectives
  - Exemplifies respect for self and others
  - Recognizes and promotes diversity of individuals and groups
  - Acts compassionately towards others
  - Is patient and flexible
  - Collaborates with peers and supports their development
Critical thinking and reflective practice:

The candidate demonstrates a commitment to continuous development within the profession.

- The Candidate:
  - Is able to think critically and effectively solve problems
  - Addresses issues and concerns in a professional manner
  - Accepts critical feedback in a professional manner
  - Seeks and accepts help when needed
  - Reflects upon his/her professional practice
  - Sets goals for continuous improvement
  - Evaluates attainment of professional goals
Candidates are provided with a copy of the dispositions of good teaching.

Candidates sign a copy (one placed in the advisement file and one for their own records).

Undergraduate students:
- Orientation (unit or program)
- Annual “checks”
- Candidate disposition inventory
- Field experiences and student teaching

• Graduate students:
  - Referral letters (or other intake assessments)
  - Orientation (unit or program)
  - Candidate disposition inventory
  - Clinical practice and culminating experience
Instrumentation: An example from NU

- Candidate Disposition Inventory
  - $r = 98.7, p < .001$

- Candidates rated (by faculty) on all indicators (each course, each term)
  - Strongly Disagree 1
  - Somewhat Disagree 2
  - Agree 3
  - Strongly Agree 4
  - Exceptional/Outstanding 5

- A score of three signifies that “There have been no observations of behaviors that would suggest a disposition that is not acceptable.”


Systematic Process

- **Review of dispositions**
  - Individual and cumulative assessment (roles of faculty, academic chairs).
  - Determination of individual issues (or needs for improvement).

- **Notification of candidates**
  - Letters to candidates, supervisors – plan may be required.
  - Meeting convened (student, member of faculty, Chair, Director of Field Experience) – continuing concerns

- **Decisions**
  - Departmental or University-level
  - Range from warnings (plan of action) to dismissal.
NU’s Academic Integrity Policy

- Includes *academic misconduct* –
  
  - any action that deliberately undermines the free exchange of ideas in the learning environment, threatens the impartial evaluation of the students by the instructor or advisory, or violates standards for ethical or professional behavior established by a course or program.
Use of Dispositional Data

- **Unit-level assessment**
  - Key performance indicator
  - Policy discussion

- **Program and individual candidate-level assessment**
  - Faculty discussion and analysis
  - Candidate warning and counseling
  - Academic integrity policy
An example of the use of data at unit-level
Assessment of Candidate Dispositions (2008-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispositions</th>
<th>Professional Commitment</th>
<th>Professional Relationships</th>
<th>Critical Thinking and Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced Teacher Education</strong></td>
<td>2008-09 N=723</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-10 N=642</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11 N=407</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Leadership</strong></td>
<td>2008-09 N=211</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-10 N=200</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11 N=190</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling &amp; School Psychology</strong></td>
<td>2008-09 N=463</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-10 N=388</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11 N=296</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Teacher Education</strong></td>
<td>2008-09 N=2896</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-10 N=2198</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11 N=2413</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuous Improvement

- Assessed **conceptual framework**
- Improved **assessment system**
- Improved **teaching effectiveness, curriculum, and field experiences**
- Shaped **planning and policy development**
- Changed **structures** and **day-to-day processes**
- Expanded and improved **partnerships**
- Supported **candidates** in admission, orientation, first-year experience, advisement
Discussion

CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS