Principal Preparation Program Improvement Review History and Process

Introduction

Starting in Spring 2022 WSU began a program improvement review for the principalship certification program. Prior to this process, and in keeping with WSU's land grant mission to serve the needs of each regional campus location community, the program was offered as stand-alone programs at each campus location. The campus-based programs were aligned with NELP, SEL, CCDEI standards and the Since Time Immemorial curriculum requirements but courses were offered at each campus location. However, how a student experienced the content and field experience components of the program differed from campus to campus. A good example of this was the internship. Tri-Cities and Spokane/Pullman all offered the internship course and experiences in tandem with classes and students could complete the program in two years. Because local district leadership in Southwest Washington preferred candidates' complete coursework prior to completing the internship, at WSUV the internship was offered as a one-year stand-alone experience in the third year of a student's program.

Campus location differences aside, program faculty still functioned as one faculty unit. Program faculty met monthly to discuss student progress toward completion, challenges students were facing in classes or in the field, and share instructional materials/readings, and class activities. It was not uncommon for faculty, from across the system and in monthly program meetings, to discuss how they were addressing new, required state initiatives or to discuss national trends in principal preparation programs. A full-faculty retreat was held twice a year for faculty to meet face-to-face to discuss these and other educational leadership program components (e.g., scoring rubrics for doctoral and masters' exams, recruitment, alignment of EdD and superintendent program coursework).

2021-2022

During the 2021-2022 academic year several challenges surfaced. As has been well documented, a result of COVID-19 was a significant reduction in college and university enrollment. Educational leadership programs were not immune to these reductions or the concurrent impact on university system-wide and campus-based budgets. As enrollment shrunk across the system and offering well enrolled classes became an administrative focus, program faculty began to look to a cross-campus approach to offering our courses.

Because we already offered both our EdD and superintendent credential programs in a collaborative, cross-campus fashion, we were well poised to develop mechanisms that would allow us to offer a principal preparation program that could be delivered from a distance and be paired with on-site internship supervision and advising[1].

To accomplish this shift, we decided to undertake a comprehensive program review. The review required faculty, no matter their home campus, to work in small teams to review courses they had taught in the three years prior. Therefore, each of the six courses and the internship experience course were reviewed by program faculty closest to the content and experience. The principal program coordinator attended each of the small group meetings as a support for the work and to serve as a liaison between the work groups.

The process required faculty to examine and identify the ways courses addressed NELP, SEL, CCDEI standards and the Since Time Immemorial curriculum and how assessments and rubrics in courses and field experiences demonstrated that students learned the content and we able to demonstrate their leadership skill set as aligned to those standards and curriculum. The process also required that faculty undertake a full review of course content, readings, activities in and out of the classroom, and how students were both challenged and supported during the program.

A common course template was designed that identified:

- The standards a course addressed.
- Common course readings.
- Common course assessments.
- Common course scoring rubrics.
- Related and required field experiences/components.

The review was designed not to create uniformity but rather to foster consistency, coherence, and alignment so that a student, no matter where they enrolled and who was their instructor, would receive an instructional and field experience core that met requirements and reflected the outcomes of the program review. The focus was squarely on program improvement and review of our instructional and field experience core.

Because the course templates were designed to include core learnings and experiences but not to stifle individual instructors' academic freedom or creativity, the templates did not include things like a class calendar, additional readings and/or other instructional materials, grading scales, and the like. The templates were designed to create a foundation on which future courses could be built. They were also designed to ensure that all students

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[1] It is important to stress that none of the WSU educational leadership programs are asynchronous on-line programs. WSU uses distance technology to deliver synchronous classes and seminars.

were well prepared to lead schools in effective ways. Spring 2022 ended with a plan for a program improvement review process.

In spring 2022 the process and its goals were shared with our PEAB and feedback from the PEAB was included in our planning decisions. For example, our PEAB members stressed the importance of field-based work throughout the program for all students and the need for students to become involved in leadership activities early in their programs. We took this feedback seriously when we planned course/program activities, assignments, and assessments.

2022-2023

In the academic year of 2022-2023 faculty began the work of program review and improvement. The first of our first meetings were designed around openly sharing, without coming to any judgements, what was included in each course. These discussions were designed so that program faculty were able to see the scope of options and identify regional differences and similarities. Reading lists, class activities, assessments, related field components were shared and discussed, as were perceptions of student experiences with the courses and coursework. From these early discussions faculty began work on the templates, reviewing standards and discussing how they could be best addressed in courses. Multiple drafts were bounced back and forth, and changes were made, assessments and rubrics refined, and common core elements agreed to. Spring 2023 ended with solid, but not complete, templates.

In 2022-2023, Field supervisors met regularly as well. Because all campuses had already adopted the WCEAP performance tasks, and had already shared a common field experience handbook, they had a bit of a head start on the other teams. However, their meetings quickly turned to discussions about how students were supported throughout their internships and how they provided feedback to both students and their mentors. Here too, the focus was on program review and refinement.

The WSU PEAB was kept up to date on the program review process. Although we had not fully completed the process some of the work had already begun to filter into courses and internship experiences. In spring 2022, current interns shared their experiences with our PEAB, and faculty noted how program review had changed/impacted the program.

2023-2024

In the Fall of 2023, the faculty teams reviewed the draft WCEAP indicators and rubrics and materials in relation to them. Teams looked for instances where they could confidently

provide evidence of support, indicators where evidence could be better collected, and indicators that suggested areas of growth. We used the findings to make additional changes to the templates and faculty continued to incorporate program improvements into their current classes.

Teams completed the template process in spring 2023.

A curriculum map was created to demonstrate standards alignment. Finally, templates were formalized and edited for continuity and format consistency.