

Meeting Notes

In attendance:

EPAC Members

Mike Mattingly, Jeanetta Smith, Angela Moore, Lizzy Asbury, Kevin Roden, Sara Flusche, Stephanie Wood, Colette Sallas, Elaine Zweig (Internet)

TWU Faculty/Staff

Gina Anderson, Karen Petty, Judi Moreillon, Barbara Lerner, Connie Briggs, Karen Dunlap, Jerry Whitworth, Laura Trujillo-Jenks (Internet)

An overview of the history of educator preparation at Texas Woman's University was given by Jerry Whitworth, Interim Dean. A thirteen minute video on that history, COPE Through the Years, can be accessed through the Resources link on the EPAC website. Dr. Whitworth also gave a brief summary of the organization of the College of Professional Education, particularly in regards to the educator preparation programs at TWU. That summary can also be found in the Resources section of the website.

Updates on current initiatives in educator preparation at TWU were given by Gina Anderson, Interim Associate Dean, and Karen Dunlap, Director of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program.

Dr. Anderson:

Mursion (formerly TeachLive™) Lab

Our Mursion™ Lab is a mixed-reality technology experience that simulates educator experiences such as teaching, practicing higher order questioning techniques, classroom management, parent conferences, and job interviews, through real-time interaction with digital avatars. This mixed-reality environment provides opportunities for our students to practice scaffolding and/or differentiated instruction in a variety of content areas. Our pre-service teacher education students can present or review lessons, use an array of instructional strategies, and assess their own ability to engage students in learning activities. Several recent research studies indicate that the mixed-reality simulator creates a safe, effective environment for pre-service teachers to practice a variety of skills and to identify areas of improvement. Each year our Educator Preparation Program (EPP) sends faculty to an annual conference where they receive training and to learn new ways to utilize the Mursion™ Lab within their teacher preparation courses.

Denton Advanced Technology Center (ATC) Education & Training Program Partnership Agreement

The district's ATC serves nine districts, in addition to Denton, and provides high school juniors and seniors with professional training and/or pre-college courses. Their Education & Training (E & T) program is offered to students who are considering teaching as a career. For the last two-three years, TWU's (EPP) has joined together with the ATC E & T program by providing presentations, campus tours, and advisory support. This relationship led to an official partnership agreement with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) stipulating that a student's successful completion of the E & T program results in a course waiver at TWU. This results in time and cost savings for these students. This partnership agreement also supports the district's grassroots efforts in establishing its Grow-Your-Own program known as *TeachDenton*. By identifying potential teacher candidates early and providing supportive structures throughout their high school and college preparation, they may return to Denton ISD as a highly qualified teacher well-suited for the demands in high-need areas.

Commit! Dallas (Commit2Dallas)

Commit 2 Dallas is a non-profit organization committed to serving Dallas County schools and students in order to enhance their academic success. Their “cradle to career” approach identifies and aligns resources needed to enhance early literacy and Kindergarten readiness all the way through post-secondary education. Commit 2 Dallas is committed to data-driven decision making, the sharing of best practices, and measuring success using a common language and clear goals. For the past year, our EPP has partnered with 12 other EPPs across north Texas to support Commit’s goals. These goals include uplifting the profession of teaching and supporting the cradle to career pipeline of Dallas County students through innovative and effective teacher preparation. An example of innovative teacher preparation includes a clinical or residency model for student teaching. This is an immersive approach where teacher candidates spend their last year of their program at a school site gaining more extensive hands-on, practical, and relevant experiences. We are currently in the process of exploring different models of a residency program that may be appropriate for our TWU pre-service teacher candidates.

Dr. Dunlap:

New Teacher Academy

Teachers who are just getting started in their careers will have the opportunity to receive advice and words of encouragement from master teachers in the field during the 3rd annual New Teacher Academy to be held July 19, 2016 on the Denton campus. Practicing educators will share their expertise on a variety of subjects during sessions addressing such topics as classroom management, strategies for differentiating instruction, innovative programs as the Genius Hour, as well as suggestions for dealing with certain legal matters.

A report issued earlier this year by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute for Education Sciences showed that teachers who were assigned first-year mentors stayed in the profession at a higher rate than those who did not have mentors. The TWU New Teacher Academy is focused on providing mentoring support and professional development for recent TWU graduates who are in the first three years of their teaching careers.

Approximately 60 teachers who will enter Texas classrooms this fall are currently scheduled to attend the day-long event. Door prizes, lunch, and a drawing for two \$500 scholarships to attend grad school are also part of the festivities.

SMARTTTEL Grant

Thanks to a \$1,642,630 grant from the U.S. Department of Education, teachers in a total of 15 rural Texas school districts will receive preparation in more effectively teaching English Language Learners. Science and Mathematics for ALL: Rural Teacher Training through Technology for English Learners (SMARTTTEL) is a collaborative professional development program between TWU’s Department of Teacher Education and 15 rural school districts in North Texas.

Dr. Holly Hansen-Thomas, a faculty member in the TWU Bilingual Education Programs is the Project Director of SMARTTTEL. Dr. Hansen- Thomas realized that teachers in smaller rural schools have the same level of student diversity in their classrooms as their counterparts in urban schools, but with fewer professional resources to support and assist them. She developed Project SMARTTTEL to address this growing need. The graduate classes are taught online by faculty from TWU’s College of Professional Education.

Teachers participating in the project receive tuition and fees for 4 graduate courses and a summer institute, as well as textbooks, a computer, mentoring supplies and a \$1,500 stipend. Courses taught included Second Language Acquisition, ESL Methods, Assessment, and a Mentoring component.

Student Accountability System; TK20; Chalk & Wire

In an effort to improve and monitor curriculum in a meaningful way, authentically assess student progress, better demonstrate accountability, communicate with constituencies and support student growth and professional development, COPE is investigating the possibility of utilizing a student database management system. Such a system contains a variety of assessment data management tools to track growth and progress over time. Such systems often have use beyond graduation as they provide opportunities to build and sustain professional portfolios to support career advancement.

Such systems would integrate with the campus learning management system and enable tracking of assignments as well as collaboration between clinical practice, student teachers, and collaborating teachers in addition to the university faculty/staff interface. Two top choices at the moment:

TK20

Tk20 is an assessment, accountability, and management system to help colleges and universities meet requirements for accreditation. Tk20 stands for “Technology in Kindergarten through Age 20” TK20 is Council for the Accreditation of Education (CAEP) compliant as an information system product to help students track their progress through the curriculum.

Chalk & Wire

Same as above. According to website offers: eportfolios, surveys and forms, system integration, assessment and feedback, experiential learning, accreditation management, reporting/validity and personalization.

Discussion

An extended discussion took place regarding the Issues for Input section of the agenda. Possible efforts to expand and enhance the field experience component of the teacher preparation program was discussed. Areas to explore included the possibility of a year-long residency for student teaching and the necessity to partner with ISD’s to embed methods classes within the context of the residency was explored, as was the possibility of giving prospective teachers some field experiences earlier in the preparation program.

In regard to curriculum, the need to develop more effective preparation and training for prospective teachers in ethics and professional relationships was discussed. It was decided that this was a very important issue and merited additional exploration regarding approaches, methods and resources for improving the way this is being done at TWU. Lizzy Asbury, EPAC member, noted that she is serving on a statewide committee chaired by Doug Phillips, Director of Investigations for TEA, which is charged by Governor Abbott to identify or help develop a statewide ethics training program for teachers in Texas. She volunteered to serve as a resource for the Council on this issue.