

Department of Special Education

Annual Report for 2010-2011

June 2011

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## Section 1 – Introduction

The faculty and staff of the department of special education continued to work toward its mission of developing effective special educators throughout the 2010-2011 academic year. The department goals for the year, as well as the UW College of Education and the UW academic planning documents, provided direction for the work in the department throughout the year. The department offers three special education programs: the K-12 Special Education Endorsement program, Master of Arts in Education with an option in Special Education, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an option in Special Education. This past year showed a continued effort in the revision of our Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) report and submission. This report provides a summary of the faculty and staff improvement efforts from June 2010 through May 2011.

Major department accomplishments for the 2010-11 academic year were the following.

1. Marketing and recruitment efforts led to an increase in the number of Master of Arts students in the program.
2. Faculty continued to provide a strong focus on issues facing Wyoming special educators by connecting with state organizations and being involved in professional development efforts.
3. Revisions to the admission process continued to be made so that the faculty could select the highest quality applicants, while simultaneously building the enrollments due to recruiting and marketing.
4. Admissions to the Ph.D. program were placed on hold for the year so that the program could be carefully scrutinized.
5. Special Education program faculty completed making major revisions to the Special Education General Curriculum program report for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Accomplishments in all of these areas were strong. We attract and admit applicants who bring high quality expertise to our programs. Department faculty are represented on Wyoming state and national organizations, serving as liaisons between the department and K-12 schools, and they provide professional development to staff in Wyoming schools. Accreditation is an important concern for our department; without an accredited program, our graduates would not be eligible for Wyoming Department of Education endorsement as Special Education teachers.

## Section 2 – Academic Planning Implementation

The progress during this past year that was made for each of the department's Academic Plan III action items is described below:

Action Item #1: Submit revised common assessments and rubrics, analyze data sets and revise courses as necessary, and align courses with any future modifications in CEC and NCATE standards. (2009-2010)

This action item was continued through 2010-11 because CEC's review of the Spring 09 revision required additional changes to our assessment system. During Summer, Fall, and Spring of 2010-11, faculty collected data using revised assessments and continued work on a major revision of the entire assessment system. The revised program report was submitted to CEC in Spring 2011 and included a number of new assessments in addition to a summary of data that were collected on others. In response to data that were collected thus far using the new assessments, faculty made program (courses and delivery) adjustments to begin in Fall 2011. The CEC review of our report is scheduled for delivery to us in Summer 2011.

Action Item #2: In collaboration with appropriate pre-service faculty, special education faculty will establish a task force and identify curricular changes; provide systematic support and instruction for pre-service candidates placed in Partner Schools that employ these models; facilitate and infuse special education content in general education classes; and facilitate UW faculty involvement through collaboration, team teaching, and shared partnerships. (2009-2010)

This action item was scheduled for completion in 2009-10 but was carried over to 2010-11. The primary focus of this action item was to assist College of Education faculty in infusing special education content into general education courses and into supporting pre-service teachers who are placed in Partner Schools. We have not created a task force nor have we worked with pre-service teachers in our Partner schools. However, special education faculty are making curricular changes to the stand-alone Introduction to Special Education course to ensure its continued relevancy for our pre-service teachers. Because Special Education is no longer infused in general education courses, the need to work with general education faculty to assist in this infusion is not necessary.

Action Item #3: Special education faculty will support and participate in the development of a college-wide professional development plan for in-service teachers in Wyoming to include RtI and PBIS. (2009-2010)

Action item #3 was also expected to be completed in 2009-10. Due to WDE's withdrawal of a grant intended for just this purpose, special education faculty no longer have specific responsibility for providing professional development to Wyoming's in-service teachers in the areas of RtI and PBIS. The grant was continued under the direction of another department, and one of our special education Ph.D. students provided professional development in RtI to in-service teachers. Also, students in both undergraduate and graduate level courses in Special Education study RtI and PBIS; we expect that as general education or special education teachers, they will make appropriate use of their knowledge of RtI and PBIS.

Action Item #4: Special education faculty will submit a proposal to appropriate college and state committees to approve a Director of Special Education graduate program. The program will be advertised and implemented. In addition, it will be evaluated and revised as needed. (2010-2011)

This spring we began conversations with Educational Leadership to allow students who have completed a Master's degree in Special Education and the Educational Leadership Principal Endorsement program to be eligible for an Institutional Endorsement through PTSB as a Special Education Director. We are in the beginning stages of proposing an Ed.D. program in Special Education that will also lead to the opportunity for an endorsement as a Director of Special Education.

Action Item 5: Faculty will increase manuscript submissions to referred journals; submit grant applications for external funding; and manage and direct editorship of the journal of *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*. (ongoing)

Faculty in the department continue to publish in refereed journals and to present at conferences. The three faculty members who have research as an expectation on their job description published a total of 5 refereed articles (1 additional article in press), 2 book chapters (3 additional chapters in press, made 10 conference presentations (one was international), and submitted 1 proposal for a book. In addition, Martin Agran continued as the editor-in-chief of *Research and Practice for Persons of Severed Disabilities*.

Action Item 6: Faculty will conduct aggressive marketing and advertisement of the Master's program; secure input from current students and alumni about quality and efficiency of the program; and revise the program as necessary. (ongoing)

Marketing and advertising efforts were excellent this past year. We again revised our brochures and distributed them by mail and email throughout Wyoming to all school administrators for distribution to school faculty. The brochures were also distributed by the Outreach school's academic area coordinators. Links to the brochures are available on our website and we continued our practice of visiting schools (via our practicum supervision responsibilities) and extending personal invitations to potential applicants. We also substituted a pre-requisite requirement for beginning students without a special education background, changing from a foundations course that we delivered as an independent study to asking them to take EDEX 2484 either on-campus or through one of our community college partners. Finally, we proposed a UW Graduate Certificate Program in K-12 Special Education; the program is equal to our current endorsement program but when it is approved, students who complete it will also receive a UW certificate and documentation on their transcripts.

### Section 3 - Teaching Activities

During the three semesters of Summer 2010 through Spring 2011, 18 courses (54 credit hours) were taught by the following four faculty members in the department: Martin Agran, Kay

Cowie, Dorothy Jean Yocom, and John Stellern. Student evaluations of the instructors and courses were very positive overall

The department has a strong relationship with the Outreach School. All of the master's and endorsement courses as well as department-sponsored enrichment courses (professional development for Wyoming teachers) are delivered by the department through the Outreach School.

### *The Programs and Courses*

The Endorsement Program in K-12 Special Education is a 31 credit hour program. Courses are delivered either online or via video-conferencing. The program is designed for those whose goals include completing a program that leads to a K-12 Special Education endorsement from PTSB. The endorsement from PTSB is available only for those who have Wyoming teaching certification.

The Special Education Master of Arts program requires completion of either 34 credit hours (with a plan B project) or 41 credit hours (with a thesis). The program is designed for those who desire a Master of Arts degree in education. The program also leads to a K-12 Special Education endorsement from PTSB, for those who have Wyoming teaching certification.

The number of graduate students in our Endorsement and Master of Arts programs is healthy and growing. The certificate program has not been an attractive option for students but with the approval of the UW certificate starting in Fall 2011, we expect to see increased enrollments. The Ph.D. program enrollments are low; one student graduated in May 2011 and a second student is expected to graduate in December 2011. No new students have been admitted.

### Section 4 - Research and/or Creative Activities

The research and scholarly work of the three research-active faculty in 2010-11 represents the respective interests and disciplines of the faculty. Overall, Drs. Agran, Yocom, and Stellern generated a total of 21 publications and international, national, state/regional, and local conference presentations.

In terms of research agendas, Dr. Agran's primary focus of research is self-determination, although he publishes and presents in other areas related to special education. Dr. Stellern focuses his research in the counseling arena: bullying, counseling with adolescents, and building caring communities. Dr. Yocom is interested in the Wyoming Writing Project.

### Section 5 - Service, Extension, and Outreach Activities

Department faculty and staff are well represented on college, university, state, and national committees and boards, as well as providing professional assistance to Wyoming school districts, the state, and the special education profession.

Faculty represented the department at the university level during 2010-11 by serving on the following:

WIND Advisory Committee  
WIND Director Search Committee  
WIND "Think College" project  
WIND Disability Studies Advisory Committee  
Faculty Senate  
Faculty Dispute Resolution Panel  
Faculty Academic Standards, Rights, and Responsibilities Committee

Faculty represented the department at the college level during 2010-11 by serving on the following:

Advisory Council on Graduate Education  
Search Committee for Endowed Chair of Literacy  
College of Education Diversity Council  
College of Education Technology Committee  
Advisory Council on Teacher Education

Faculty represented the department at the state and national level during 2010-11 by serving on the following:

Association for the Advancement of Meridian Energy Techniques  
TASH (formerly The Association for Persons with Severe Disabilities) National Board of Directors  
TASH, Research Committee  
Center for Human Development, University of Alaska, Anchorage  
National Writing Project (State)  
Wyoming Transition Council for Students with Disabilities (State)  
Council for Exceptional Children (National)  
Parents Helping Parents (State)  
Special Education Monitoring Program (State)

These committee memberships and professional connections are very important for the department and college. They assist our work in the college, on campus, around the state, and in the profession. The professional relationships that are developed because of these connections create the potential for the faculty to serve our constituents in Wyoming's schools and beyond. Because of these service efforts, relationships and connections with special educators and others have been strengthened.

The arrangement with the Outreach School for delivery of our Master of Arts program and our Endorsement program has been very successful. The Outreach School has provided support for marketing our programs and this has resulted in increased enrollment during this past academic year. See the next section for details.

Section 6 – Student Recruitment, Retention Activities, & Enrollment Trends

As indicated in previously submitted Annual Reports, despite the marketability of special education certification and the high burnout and attrition rate of special educators, the shortage of special educators continues as a critical teacher shortage problem both in Wyoming and in the nation. Further, the requirement that special education teachers need to be both certified in special education and highly qualified has exacerbated the situation. The revised Master of Arts program and the endorsement program were designed in part to address this need.

According to the University’s Office of Institutional Analysis, our enrollments for the Master of Arts program and the Ph.D. program from 2006 through 2010 are as follows:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Master of Arts	50	77	54	58	75
Ph.D.	NA	1	2	2	2

Note: NA indicates that we did not have the program in place.

Graduation figures (total for the year) from the Office of Institutional Analysis for 2006 through 2010 are as follows:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Master of Arts	3	5	22	15	5
Ph.D.	NA	NA	NA	0	1

Note: NA indicates that we did not have the program in place in time for possible graduates.

We do not have enrollment or graduation data for the Endorsement program since OIA does not track this type of data. However, when the UW Certificate program is approved, starting Fall 2011, OIA will begin tracking numbers of students. Enrollment trends in the Master of Arts program are healthy and applications have remained strong. We will not be admitting any students into a doctoral program (either Ph.D. or Ed.D.) until Fall 2012, at the earliest.

The following activities were used to recruit students:

- The department website has been revised and updated to describe changes in the program and information related to the admissions process.
- Information about the program has been disseminated to Directors of Special Education and other administrators across the state.
- Scholarship programs and loan programs to attract students were promoted. These scholarships include: the Ace Cossairt Scholarship, Donald and Dorothy Bird Scholarship, Eleanor “Rusty” Rowland Scholarship, and the Wyoming Teacher Shortage Loan Program.

Student retention activities included the following:

- Email addresses, phone numbers, and office hours are on all course syllabi so that special education faculty members can be contacted when needed.

- Our office associate, Maureena Walker, works with students to immediately answer questions.
- The department has a consistent departmental procedure for addressing any and all concerns raised by students.
- Time was devoted once per semester during department meetings to discuss students who were at academic risk so that appropriate remedial or corrective plans could be developed.
- Scholarships through several funds were awarded.
- Students were advised throughout the semester for course selection and career opportunities.
- Each department member remains in close contact with assigned advisees throughout the students' college careers.

The department awards annual scholarships to special education students. In 2010-11, \$6000 from Ace Cossairt Scholarship, Donald and Dorothy Bird Scholarship, and Eleanor "Rusty" Rowland Scholarship was awarded to six studentx.

#### Section 7 – Development Activities and Public Relations

As mentioned previously, information about the department's graduate programs was disseminated to school districts throughout Wyoming. Materials were distributed both electronically and by hard copy, containing descriptive information about the programs, admission applications, and financial assistance. Also, the Outreach School has been actively involved in promoting and supporting our program.

Additional development activities include:

- Faculty members attend conferences (local, state, national, and international) and disseminate information about the programs.
- Faculty members participate in the University of Wyoming's approved student organization activities, including the Career Fair, Discovery Days, and Alumni Days.
- Website updates are made regularly by our office associate addressing relevant department information such as department contact information, programs, and current departmental activities.
- Recruiting of prospective students is encouraged through the website and personal contact by the department faculty.
- Retention information for current students is structured through the many personal contacts made by the faculty.

Our website is the primary way we communicate with our constituents. In Spring 2011, our website transitioned to the new UW marketing template and also was incorporated into the website for the Department of Professional Studies. We will continue to maintain the look and feel of the UW site as changes are recommended from IT. We work continuously to keep the website up-to-date with program changes. Also, we will continue to market our programs around the state with face-to-face visits, mailings, and other connections.

## Section 8 - Classified and Professional Staffing

Martin Agran, Kay Cowie, Elizabeth Simpson, John Stellern, and Dorothy Yocom were the department faculty members this past year, with Maureena Walker serving as the department Office Associate. Martin Agran is a Professor who has a teaching load of 9 credit hours. Kay Cowie is an Academic Professional Senior Lecturer with an extended term; Kay teaches 18 credit hours per year. Elizabeth Simpson, an Associate Professor, left the department in Fall 2010 to take another position. Dorothy Yocom is an Associate Professor, teaching 15 credit hours per year. John Stellern is a Professor and teaches 18 credit hours per year.

Maureena Walker assists the work of the faculty members and coordinates the overall operation of the department including the annual calendar, special events, budget, scheduling of courses, student application and admission, student records, and student (both current and prospective) communications. Having been with the department for several years, she has provided a high level of organization and continuity with the programs, students, and faculty. In July 2011, the Department of Special Education will merge with the Department of Professional Studies, and Maureena has already been assisting with that transition, working with the Office Associates in Professional Studies and with our current students.

## Section 9 – Diversity

The department has participated in all College of Education activities to promote diversity. Kay Cowie serves on the College of Education Diversity Council. The department acknowledges that individuals with disabilities represent by definition a diverse population and thus our department is predisposed and sensitive to issues relating to diversity. Every course in our program is designed to promote diversity, equity, due process, and the acceptance and celebration of differences relating to ability, gender, sexual lifestyle, economic status, and cultural background. In particular, students from traditionally underrepresented groups are always invited and encouraged to enroll in our program. The department did not conduct a search or hire a new faculty member this past year; however, if the opportunity to conduct a search for new faculty is presented, the department will take appropriate steps to encourage diverse candidates to apply.

## Section 10 – Assessment of Student Learning

The Master of Arts program in the Department of Special Education is a Tier 2 program.

1. Types of Assessments:
  - a. Student learning portfolios
  - b. Examination of student work samples
  - c. Internship reviews
  - d. Capstone projects

2. Strengths and Challenges:

The primary strengths of these four assessments are that they are aligned with accreditation standards and that they have been used and revised multiple times.

Weaknesses include that we have not yet collected data from alumni or employees as indirect measures of the program success.

3. Assessment Project to be reported:

A summary of the capstone project will be reported at the end of 2011-12. It will include data from student work as well as recommendations for changes in the assessment and the rubric.

A significantly revised report was submitted to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in March 2011 that described and documented the complete assessment system for the Master of Arts program. We are anticipating a positive review and expect that the program will be categorized as Nationally Recognized by CEC, NCATE, and PTSB.