



## Wyoming Education Stakeholder Perspectives 2017 Town Hall Meetings

### *Executive Summary*

The vision of the University of Wyoming (UW) Trustees Education Initiative (TEI) is to elevate the College of Education to the status of a preeminent college in professional educator preparation. In pursuing this vision, TEI seeks and places a high value on the perspectives of the state's education stakeholders. In seeking these perspectives, one methodology TEI has employed is a series of 10 Town Hall Meetings hosted throughout Wyoming in February and March 2017.

Town Hall Meeting participants included: Wyoming pre-school through grade 12 (P-12) teachers, principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors; community college faculty and administrators; UW alumni; community and business representatives; and elected officials. For those unable to attend one of the Town Hall Meetings, a slide presentation and set of guiding questions were made available to the public for response through an online survey instrument available February 14 through March 16, 2017.

To analyze the stakeholder responses, the TEI Executive Director, who served as the researcher for this analysis, used open coding, evaluating each response and assigning code(s) and classifying each statement with an opinion polarity position of: positive, negative, neutral, or informational (participant informational question or provision of contextual information).

Stakeholder responses at the TEI Town Hall Meetings and in the online survey revealed trends that will provide meaningful insights to the TEI Research Work Groups, Coordinating Council, and Governing Board as they conduct their work in support of the TEI Mission. Analysis of participant comments revealed both positive and negative trends regarding University of Wyoming College of Education (UWCOE) Candidate and Graduate Outcomes, UWCOE Policies and Practices, Stakeholder Knowledge of UWCOE Programs, and Policy Barriers. A brief synopsis of the trends identified in each of these areas is provided here. Full details, including examples of response statements within each identified trend are included in the detail analysis beginning on page 10.

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University of Wyoming • Trustees Education Initiative

1000 E. University Avenue • Education Building, #14 • Laramie, Wyoming 82071 • 307-766-5463

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## **Findings**

- ***Stakeholder Knowledge of UWCOE Programs***
  - The strongest trend in direct responses to the guiding questions was revealed in a high volume of questions participants asked regarding the College's programs and contextual comments they made regarding the culture in Wyoming schools. The researcher interpreted this trend as an indication that education stakeholders throughout Wyoming have limited knowledge and understanding of UWCOE program requirements, structures, assessments, and required outcomes for candidates. The results showed that the lack of knowledge was more prevalent in school districts and communities in which UWCOE does not place student teachers.
  
- ***UWCOE Candidate and Graduate Outcomes***
  - Strong trends of negative participant statements related to University of Wyoming-prepared novice educators' content knowledge; assessment literacy and data analysis skills; collaborative approach and skills; classroom management philosophy and skills; communication skills; and reading pedagogy knowledge and skills.
  
  - Strong trends of negative statements related to school and district leader preparation in the areas of human resource management and the ability to create and sustain a culture of collaboration.
  
  - Weak trends of positive comments emerged regarding the content/subject area knowledge of University of Wyoming-prepared student teachers and novice educators.
  
- ***UWCOE Policies and Practices***
  - Predominant trends of negative statements in this area related to required candidate clinical experiences; UWCOE partnership with Wyoming school districts; overall preparation of candidates; preparation for the realities of the profession; and program-specific concerns.
  
  - Weak trends of positive statements related to UWCOE for student teachers and mentors in the limited number of districts where these placements occur.
  
- ***Policy Barriers***
  - Negative responses trending in this area referenced: limitations in the array of educator credentials (licenses and endorsements) issued by the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board; the need for statewide consistency in background check protocols for educators; and the need for funding resources and structures providing school social workers to help mitigate behavior issues beyond the scope of classroom teacher classroom management skills.



## Recommendations

### *Stakeholder Knowledge of UWCOE Programs*

- **Recommendation 1:** *Develop, implement and measure the results of a targeted communication plan, inclusive of marketing and public relations strategies, that addresses this knowledge deficit throughout Wyoming. Only when key stakeholders are knowledgeable about an educator preparation program can they fully engage as partners with that program.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Research, design, implement, and measure new partnerships with a significantly expanded number of Wyoming school districts.*

### *Candidate and Graduate Outcomes*

- **Recommendation 1:** *Evaluate the assessment data and literacy courses in teacher and leader preparation programs to identify ways to strengthen candidate preparation in the full range of assessment and data literacy knowledge and skills to inform differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Evaluate the reading pedagogy courses in all UWCOE teacher preparation programs to assure that University of Wyoming-prepared novice educators across all grade bands (P-12) have the skills and knowledge needed to identify struggling readers and to provide support and interventions to meet the students' needs.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Evaluate the courses and field experiences candidates in all programs are required to complete to learn and apply classroom management theories and practices. Identify areas for improvement; design, implement, and monitor the results of amended preparation practices. This recommendation will require the strong partnership of school districts to provide candidates with meaningful experiences in establishing and fostering a strong classroom environment with clear expectations for students.*
- **Recommendation 4:** *Evaluate candidate preparation in all programs for professional communication and collaboration skills. Strengthen teacher and leader preparation related to: appropriate and effective use of electronic communication, including social media; knowledge of collaboration models employed in districts; strategies to collaborate with and receive support from veteran teachers; and leadership abilities to develop a culture of collaboration within a school or district.*

### *UWCOE Policies and Practices*

- **Recommendation 1:** *Research and evaluate models to strengthen the depth and breadth of candidate clinical experiences with effective sequencing and scaffolding, including early fieldwork, student teaching, and leader internships. After identifying models that result in strong clinical experiences for candidates, develop, implement, and measure the outcomes of a new Wyoming clinical model.*



- **Recommendation 2:** *Research and evaluate models for strong clinical partnerships in a large land mass with widely dispersed population centers. Modify the model to meet the needs of all Wyoming school districts, developing the goals, parameters, and expectations of the Wyoming Clinical Model. Identify and garner the short-term and long-term resources needed for implementation. Implement, monitor, and measure the outcomes of the new Wyoming Clinical Model, making adjustments to assure optimal outcomes for candidates, school districts, and UWCOE programs.*

### ***Policy Barriers***

Additional emerging trends of negative responses related to: federal, state, local, and university policy barriers to success; and the depth of stakeholder knowledge of UWCOE programs.

- **Recommendation 1:** *Further investigate statewide needs related to policy barriers to determine the scale of the concerns. Include in the investigation the need for: a Wyoming Early Childhood Educator License; a credential for mediators; and the supply and demand for School Social Workers. While UWCOE does not have the ability to address all of the identified policy barriers, it will be important to assure that TEI informs the entities that do have that ability of the concerns that arose through the TEI Town Hall Meeting Series.*



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## ***Introduction***

### **Vision**

The vision of the University of Wyoming Trustees Education Initiative (TEI) is to elevate the College of Education to the status of a preeminent college in professional educator preparation. The TEI Governing Board will receive recommendations from research work groups comprised of Wyoming students, parents, educators, school leaders, state officials, and university faculty.

### **Mission**

The TEI mission is that through extensive evaluation and adaptation of national best practices, TEI will recommend, and the College of Education will implement practices through which the College will prepare and graduate preeminent P-12 professional educators. These highly skilled K-12 teachers will spread throughout Wyoming's P-12 system, ultimately resulting in high school graduates who are among the most skilled and best educated in the nation. These high school graduates will drive Wyoming's cultural and economic engine into the future.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

The vision, mission, and goals of the Trustees Education Initiative can only be reached through meaningful engagement with education stakeholders throughout Wyoming. One of the engagement strategies TEI has employed is a series of Town Hall Meetings throughout the state to gather perspectives and insights from Wyomingites. In February and March 2017, TEI hosted a series of 10 Town Hall Meetings open to the public. Details of the structure and facilitation of the meetings is detailed in the Methodology section of this report.

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## ***Methodology***

The University of Wyoming (UW) Trustees Education Initiative (TEI) hosted a series of Town Hall Meetings in February and March 2017 to gather stakeholder perspectives regarding the University of Wyoming College of Education (UWCOE) programs, candidates, and graduates. The Town Hall Meetings took place either at 3 p.m. or at 7 p.m. in public settings including community colleges, a UW Outreach Centers, and a community center. TEI Town Hall Meetings were held in Casper, Cheyenne, Evanston, Gillette, Jackson, Powell, Riverton, Rock Springs, and Sheridan. For those unable to attend, a slide presentation and guiding questions were made available to the public to prompt response through an online survey instrument.



TEI Town Hall Meeting participants included: pre-school through grade 12 (P-12) teachers, principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors; community college faculty and administrators; UWCOE alumni; community and business representatives; and elected officials.

Each Town Hall Meeting began with an overview of the TEI origin, history and structure. Following the overview, the COE Dean or Associate Dean facilitated an open discussion guided by a set of questions, as follows:

**Question 1 – Please share your perspectives on the content knowledge of University of Wyoming College of Education:**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 2 – Please share your perspectives on the pedagogical (teaching) knowledge and skills of University of Wyoming College of Education**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or other beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 3 – Please share your perspectives on the assessment and data analysis knowledge and skills of University of Wyoming College of Education**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or other beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 4 – Please share your perspectives on the classroom management skills of University of Wyoming College of Education**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or other beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 5 – Please share your perspectives on the communication skills of University of Wyoming College of Education**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or other beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 6 – Please share your perspectives on the collaboration skills of University of Wyoming College of Education**

- *Student teachers or other interns in your community's schools*
- *Novice teachers or other beginning school personnel employed in your community's schools*

**Question 7 – Please share your perspectives on the of University of Wyoming College of Education's partnership with your school district.**

**Question 8 – Please provide additional feedback to inform the work of the University of Wyoming Trustees Education Initiative.**



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## ***Unit of Analysis and Sampling Strategies***

The unit of analysis for this study includes all education stakeholders in Wyoming, including: pre-school through grade 12 (P-12) teachers, principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors; community college faculty and administrators; UW COE alumni; community and business representatives; and elected officials.

The sampling strategies included an open public invitation for all Wyoming education stakeholders to attend and participate in the TEI Town Hall Meetings or the aligned online survey seeking open-ended responses. Communication and promotion of the Town Hall Meetings included:

1. University Institutional Communications distributed a news release to all Wyoming media outlets and [posting of the release on the University News Page](#).
  - a. TEI emailed invitations with detailed information and request to forward to respective constituencies to:
  - b. University of Wyoming Alumni Association;
  - c. University of Wyoming College of Education Advocacy Board;
  - d. University of Wyoming College of Education Literacy Research Center and Clinic Advisory Board;
  - e. Trustees Education Initiative Governing Board Members;
  - f. State Superintendent of Education Jillian Balow;
  - g. Professional Teaching Standards Board;
  - h. University of Wyoming Governmental and Community Affairs;
  - i. Wyoming School Boards Association;
  - j. Wyoming Association of School Administrators;
  - k. Wyoming Business Alliance;
2. TEI created and published a dedicated web page for all Town Hall Meeting information, with customized, downloadable promotional flyers for each event.
3. TEI emailed the UW Board of Trustees with information on each Town Hall Meeting.
4. The TEI Facebook page provided multiple posts with information regarding all Town Hall Meetings and provided a link to the online survey. The Facebook posts were augmented through paid advertising on the social media site, targeting Wyomingites of all ages.



## *Coding System*

The researcher used open coding to conduct an analysis of the responses from TEI Town Hall Meeting attendees and respondents to the aligned online survey. Each response was evaluated and assigned one or more a priori/deductive codes (responses aligned to one of the guiding questions) and/or emergent/inductive codes (responses regarding issues beyond those addressed in the guiding questions).

**Table 1. Codes**

Code	Theme
Ac	Access to UW Programs
Ad	Assessment, Data Analysis, Differentiated Instruction Skills
An	Ancillary Educational Professionals
Ci	Philosophy of Teaching, Continuous Improvement, Persistence and Commitment to the Profession; Professional Dispositions, Professional Growth, Contributions to the Profession, Complexity and Uncertainty of the Profession
Cl	Cultural Awareness and Skills
Cm	Communication Skills, Including Writing Ability and Social Media Usage
Cn	Content Knowledge
Co	Collaboration Skills and Leadership; Conflict Management; Personnel Management; Community Resources
Ct	Career and Technical Education
Ec	Early Childhood
El	Educational Leadership
Em	Elementary Education
Fa	UWCOE faculty members
Im	Induction and Mentoring
In	Informational Statement or Inquiry (Neutral)
Io	Innovation in Educator Preparation and Partnerships
Ma	Math Knowledge
Mg	Classroom Management Skills
Mk	Marketability of UW Graduates
Mu	Music Educators
Op	Overall Preparation; Program Milestones
Ot	Other Programs: UW Competitors
Pb	Policy Barrier, State, Federal, Local
Pd	Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills, Curriculum Design Knowledge and Skills, Educational Technology Knowledge and Skills
Pf	Parents and Families
Ph	Physical Education and Health
Pt	UW COE Partnerships
Pv	Professional Development Offerings Provided by UWCOE
Rd	Reading; Literacy
Re	Recruitment into the Profession and Program Selectivity Criteria
Rl	Relevance to 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Educational Theories, Practices and Realities
Sd	Knowledge of learning standards and aligned instruction



Code	Theme
Se	Secondary Education
So	Social Studies
Sp	Special Education
Sr	School Counselor
St	Student Teaching, Fieldwork, Practical Experience
Stm	STEM Knowledge: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
Tr	Transfer of Credits, Support for Transfer, Time to Completion
Uc	Understanding the Unique Culture and Needs of Each School, District, Community, including Hiring Practices, Rural Education Needs

In addition to being assigned a code(s), each response statement was classified with an opinion polarity position of: positive, negative, neutral, or informational (participant informational question or provision of contextual information).

### ***Analysis: Stakeholder Knowledge of UWCOE Programs***

The strongest trend was in key emergent theme related to statewide knowledge of UWCOE programs. Items in this trend were informational in nature, either in the form of questions, or respondent statements to help UWCOE understand the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom in Wyoming. These informational responses were frequently questions regarding the UWCOE programs and structure. Also of note were information requests regarding the relationship between educator credentials and the licensure policies of the Wyoming Professional asking questions of COE facilitators regarding the UW programs or Wyoming educator licensure policy.

This trend in responses highlights a critical underlying factor impacting statewide perceptions of the University of Wyoming College of Education and its programs. Absent a fundamental understanding of UWCOE program requirements, structures, assessments, and required outcomes for candidates, stakeholder perceptions are based on personal experience, historical knowledge, and most dangerously, assumptions.

### ***Analysis: Candidate and Graduate Outcomes***

#### **Content Knowledge**

When providing perspectives on the content knowledge of UWCOE candidates and graduates, participant responses highlighted candidate and graduate strengths along with needed areas for improvement. Two themes emerged regarding content knowledge. The most prevalent theme was an expressed need for strengthened content preparation for teachers and leaders. Examples of the participant statements of concern related to candidate content preparation were:



*As an elementary teacher, I have worked with student teachers and novice teachers in my building over the last four years. Most of them are enthusiastic and eager to teach. However, their content knowledge is not great. I know that elementary teachers have to have knowledge of vast amounts of subject matter, but they should be able to teach reading. Most student teachers and novice teachers have no idea how to teach reading, and that is all parts of it - phonics, phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary. They are able to follow a curriculum but they would not be able to design one on their own. I think all teachers should be trained in all five components of reading as part of their teacher preparatory program.*

*As a high school teacher who has supervised novice teachers from several different universities and colleges I have to say that UW students are the weakest in their content knowledge. Many struggled with my upper level classes. They would have a very difficult time teaching them on their own. I fear that the content would be weakened.*

*As superintendent of Natrona County Schools until July of 2013 and as a District Coach for WDE until present, I had the opportunity to work with principal and supt.[sic] interns from UW and practicing educational leaders in Wyoming. Many of these interns and novice principals/superintendents had natural leadership talent and were quick learners. However, the content knowledge they displayed was many times dated and shallow. Current best practices in educational leadership were not part of the background they brought with them after coming through the UW program.*

Examples of positive participant statements related to candidate content knowledge include:

*Student teachers and graduates, specifically one department jumps out as high content knowledge—Physical Education<sup>1</sup>. They are fantastic! I recently hired a math teacher who was very good on content knowledge.*

*They seem to have a solid foundation - especially PE/ Health teachers. I'm impressed by their well-roundedness.*

*In terms of novice teachers, anyone I have recently hired from the University of Wyoming has been very well-qualified and quite successful in the classroom. Their subject area knowledge has proven to be very strong.*

*I feel the content knowledge of University of Wyoming student teachers has been exemplary! They are well prepared for the classroom. The three-week fall observation period is a great program for gradual release of responsibility for the student teachers to be successful in the classroom. The University professors that I have worked with are*

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<sup>1</sup> Physical Education majors are primarily prepared in the UW College of Health Sciences, although they do complete a limited number of courses in the UW College of Education.



*very knowledgeable on how to prepare their teachers to be successful in today's ever-changing education world. They communicate effectively, provide proper and adequate feedback, and offer suggestions for improvement. I have been very impressed with the University of Wyoming teacher preparedness program.*

## **Assessment Literacy and Data Analysis to Inform Differentiated Instruction**

There was a very strong trend of negative statements related to candidates' and graduates' knowledge and skills in designing and delivering formative assessments, analyzing data from formative and summative assessments, and utilizing that analysis to inform instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Special concerns were raised regarding data analysis.

*I see student teachers and novice teachers asking good questions related to assessment. Assessment is valued and it is apparent to me they understand that. Data analysis is something I don't feel they have in place. Opportunities must be presented for real world data analysis.*

*It's one thing to be able to collect data, but another to be able to make sense of it. This is a critical element for teachers and administrators. It is important to be able to analyze your own data and make a direction but also to be able to work side-by-side in PLCs with other educators. This is not something I'm hearing the administrative interns ask about. Certainly it is something that novice teachers need additional support with.*

*The majority of the student teachers I have worked with have a basic understanding of the difference between formative and summative assessments. They aren't clear on when and how to utilize formative assessments. Analyzing data with their supervising teacher, if they do that, is a great learning experience! The more ideas they can come with the better. Some of our teachers are struggling with this as well.*

*Using assessment to inform and drive school/district improvement is not a strength in novice principals/supts [sic]. Any efforts to help beginning leaders understand processes needed to facilitate the use of common formative assessment to inform the instruction of collaborative teacher teams would be helpful.*

*Novice teachers have moderately prepared in terms of formative and summative assessment, particularly in terms of student self-assessment and goal setting (as per Hattie, Marzano, etc.). Standards-based grading concepts are critical and fairly unknown to novice teachers (as per O'Connor, Guskey, etc.).*

The few participants who cited positive perceptions about preparedness in assessment literacy and data analysis cited the needed for district support for University of Wyoming-prepared novice educators in this area of preparation, with one participant stating, "The teachers have a general knowledge of this information."



Like anyone new to our district we must teach them how we want them to work with the data.” Another response focused on the need for continued development in this area, “UW student teachers and novice teachers have basic knowledge of assessment (both formative and summative) and the ability to analyze data. I would say they are stronger on data analysis than assessment, particularly how to use formative assessment to guide teaching.

## Collaboration

There was a high volume of comments in this area, emphasizing the importance that education stakeholders assign to the collaborative skills of teachers and leaders. The statements trended to the negative end of the opinion polarity, with an underlying prevalence of statements related to the collaboration skills of Educational Leadership interns and graduates. These examples are indicative of participant responses related to school leader preparation for collaboration:

*The school administrator interns we have worked with, are always surprised at the challenges principals and other administrators face on a daily basis. I feel that they could use a better understanding of employee law. Such things as plans of assistance, dealing with difficult employees, and an understanding of facilities would be beneficial. Current educational topics such as implementing PLC's, assessment and grading would be good topics for them to learn more about.*

*Novice administration needs to be prepared to question an experienced teacher's actions and how they truly implement programs. Just because the teachers don't agree with it doesn't mean that [sic] can manipulate so it will fail or not teach it even though they have taught for 40 years and have two master's degrees.*

*Specifically, they had little knowledge of the processes used to build and grow a healthy culture of high expectations and collaboration. They lacked the practical steps to building high performing teacher teams. Proficiency in processes for strategic planning, school improvement, setting mission and vision, and using data to inform improvement efforts were all substandard.*

In addition to the responses related to the collaboration skills of interns and graduates from the UWCOE Educational Leadership programs, participants statewide expressed concerns about student teacher and University of Wyoming-prepared novice educator preparation for the depth and breadth of collaboration required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

*If they knew ahead of time they could be more open with each other. I think a lot of miscommunication is fear of ideas not being accepted or understood. People who are very, very passive have a difficult time communicating. We have a generation now with*



*young people who don't know how to take constructive criticism. I don't know what the solution is there.*

*Some candidates don't understand the vocabulary and acronyms, e.g., PLC, RTI, MAP. Candidates/novice educators who aren't familiar with the language can shut down to avoid looking inadequate.*

While not a strong trend, participants noted some recent progress in this area of educator preparation, stating, "They are coming to us with more and more understanding of learning communities every year. It is greatly appreciated since that is how we operate. Keep working on this!"

Notably, a moderate trend emerged in the responses related to school culture and the willingness of veteran teachers to collaborate with University of Wyoming-prepared candidates and novice educators. Related examples of participant statements include:

*In high school, we still go to our little room and that is not beneficial to the students that are coming out. We need some of the younger teachers coming in to say, 'come on' and work together.*

*Student teachers in Fremont County participate in PLCs at the school and district level. For some it takes a couple months before they will speak up. This is likely a sign of humility of listening and learning from veteran teachers before weigh in with their own perspectives as pre-professionals or novice educators.*

## **Classroom Management Knowledge and Skills**

The participants consistently voiced concerns about the classroom management skills and knowledge of UWCOE interns and graduates. In many instances, these concerns cited a relationship to the depth and breadth of the field fieldwork and student teaching experiences candidates complete.

*Most new teachers struggle with this. It is difficult to teach and when student teaching you generally use a system all ready [sic] being used by your mentor teacher. Classroom management is guided by school expectations and greatly influenced by the makeup of the class. What worked one year, may not work the next. Finding what works for you takes time and experience.*

*This seems to be a big area of weakness. Although I have seen student teachers with effective classroom management, this seems to be an innate ability to build relationships with students rather than a working knowledge of effective management strategies. The solution could be two-fold. First, specific classroom management strategies should be*



*taught. Second, it seems that student teachers do not have enough time in classrooms doing more than just observing before student teaching.*

*Neither of the two student teachers that I've worked with in the past four years, have been well prepared in classroom management skills/strategies. This left them frustrated when they did not have the knowledge readily at hand to handle difficult situations. More time needs to be spent in handling special needs students in inclusion settings, defusing emotional situations, etc.*

## **Communication**

Responses regarding the communication acumen of UWCOE interns and graduates spanned the opinion polarity, weighted more toward the negative end of the continuum. Many concerns cited related to the effective and appropriate use of social media to support communication, with one participant stating, “New graduates are relying on new media extensively. Sometimes this is problematic in working with peers and families from older generations.” Another response cited a concern regarding student teachers stating, “Student teachers are posting photos with inappropriate content, including inappropriate email addresses.” Additional responses raised concerns regarding the use of electronic media as an effective mode of communications.

*Today's students need to get their head out of their electronic devices. While those devices are certainly important tools to be used in society, they are a horrible way to communicate with students, peers, parents and members of the community.*

The more positive statements regarding the communication skills and knowledge of candidates and graduates included references to the need to continue to develop skills and knowledge in the most effective use of social media to facilitate communication, stating, “One UW graduate is using social media in a highly effective way to lift up student successes and engage with parents and families. This represents a highly effective and appropriate use of social media.”

The need for strong overall communication skills was a point of emphasis among respondents, as illustrated in this participant’s response, “I don’t think you can do enough to prepare people for the amount of communication that will be necessary as a student teacher, early career teacher. Maybe one area might be some coaching on how to communicate with parents both in the positive and in the more hostile communication settings.”

## **Reading Pedagogy**

Notably, the guiding questions at the Town Hall Meetings did not seek responses on specific areas of pedagogy, but were general in nature. Therefore, special attention should be given to the strong trend of



negative responses related to candidate and graduate preparation in Reading Pedagogy. Responses on this topic were markedly negative. Stakeholder statements detailed specific concerns, as noted in these examples:

*When I received my degree in elementary education I had no idea how to teach reading. I felt more prepared to teach other areas, however. I have worked with teachers who received degrees from colleges in other states and they seemed more prepared to teach reading but preparedness in other academic areas seem comparable.*

*I have heard from graduates and current students that the education department does not adequately prepare them to teach reading. They are always afraid of teaching reading, both in large groups and small groups. I think that fear comes from a lack of knowledge. Again, a strong reading preparation program is essential for new elementary teachers.*

*There should be more literacy classes required as literacy is a big component in classes, how to teach writing, what to do with reading groups, and how to pick the best books for your students.*

*The student teachers I have had the pleasure of working with seem generally qualified in terms of content knowledge. However, there are two areas where I feel that student teachers could be more prepared. These areas are teaching primary reading and reading intervention.*

## **Preparation for Realities of the Profession**

Another element of preparation that emerged in the facilitated discussions and online survey was the concept of preparation for the realities of the profession. Included in this concept are: individual philosophy of teaching, commitment to continuous improvement, persistence and commitment to the profession, professional dispositions, professional growth, contributions to the profession, and understanding and embracing the complexity and uncertainty of the profession.

While statements in this area were more balanced across the opinion polarity than other response areas, they were still heavily weighted on the negative end of the continuum. Examples of participant statements on this aspect of educator preparation include:

*Teachers need to know that teaching is complex and flat out hard work. Skills and knowledge needed include: the ability to communicate effectively with a variety of stakeholders: students, parents, building administrators, colleagues, central office administrators and staff, etc., and an understanding that this isn't an 8 to 5 job. Teachers will have evening meetings, new teacher meetings, curriculum meetings and they will spend a lot of time on lesson plans for the first year or two.*



*I have seen a decline in the work ethic of the student teachers. I also have seen a lack of initiative and wanting to do more. I feel that we are not preparing these young students for the real world. They seem to come in expecting things to be handed to them and perfect teaching conditions. They do not handle adversity or feedback very well. It seems more of a "me" environment rather than an "us" environment.*

*I have had to counsel student teachers and novice teachers out of the profession due to a lack of work ethic. Our school requires the student teachers to be present any time the mentor teacher is present, including evening school functions.*

### **Program-Specific: Elementary Education**

Respondent statements related to specific licensure preparation programs emerged in the Town Hall Meetings. A small number of specific concerns related to the content and pedagogical preparation of Elementary Education candidates. Statements of concern included, "There is a great need for STEM preparation for elementary teachers," and "There is no class for elementary majors regarding social studies."

An additional respondent stated:

*Elementary teachers in general are prepared to develop lessons in multiple content areas. However, they do not have a deep understanding of how kids learn to read or do math so lessons, while creative and fun, may not be aligned with what kids need to know and be able to do. If kids struggle with a presented skill this lack of knowledge in how kids learn to read, develop language and do math keeps them from knowing what do to support the struggling student.*

### **Program-Specific: Educational Leadership**

Emerging from the Town Hall Meetings and online survey were specific concerns related to the preparation of school leaders. Example statements include:

*The school administrator interns we have worked with, are always surprised at the challenges principals and other administrators face on a daily basis. I feel that they could use a better understanding of employee law. Such things as plans of assistance, dealing with difficult employees, and an understanding of facilities would be beneficial. Current educational topics such as implementing PLC's, assessment and grading would be good topics for them to learn more about.*

*I will comment strictly on my perspectives on your administrative training. I'm [sic] been involved in the support side of education for thirty-five years. I have a BS in accounting and MBA both from University of Wyoming. What UW lacks in the preparation program*



*from principals, superintendents and other administrative programs is the complete lack of any management training. The most important part of their jobs is the recruitment, hiring and supervision of instructional staff. The only training educators have in dealing with these issue is on-the-job training and this training comes from people who are equally lacking in any management training.*

*New administrators seem to be adepts [sic] and building management and student management pieces, but need more education around working with teacher...not just supervising and evaluating but growing and improving. They need to know how to develop structures in their buildings that support the needs of their students, i.e., communication plans, staffing plans, schedule building, use of support staff, use of instructional technology, grading procedures, etc. They need a much deeper understanding of data including: what data to gather, how to involve staff in analysis and collaboration of that data, how to build meaningful and actionable school improvement plans and how to monitor progress towards the goals in their plan...summative vs formative vs interim vs progress monitoring etc.*

## **Overall Educator Preparation**

While not a prompted question, a number of responses focused on the overall preparation of UWCOE candidates and graduates. While the comments did not represent a strong trend, the statements were markedly positive, with comments about noted improvements in UWCOE programs in recent years. One respondent stated, “I have witnessed improvement in the UW students over the last 8 years. I recruit around the region and find the UW students to be much better prepared than they were 8 years ago.”

## **UW Preparation Programs Outside the College of Education**

A small number of participants referenced UW preparation programs primarily provided outside the College of Education. Respondents made positive statements regarding Physical Education, and Music Education, which are delivered by the UW College of Health Sciences and UW College of Arts and Sciences, respectively.

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## ***Analysis: UWCOE Policies and Practices***

### **UWCOE Partnership with Wyoming School Districts**

Participant statements regarding the University’s partnership with Wyoming School districts revealed trends that varied widely in opinion polarity, depending on the site of the Town Hall Meeting. A strong trend of negative statements regarding the UWCOE partnership with Wyoming school districts emerged from the online survey instrument and from the Town Hall Meetings hosted in Evanston, Jackson, and Powell. There



was a strong trend of positive statements on this subject in the Town Hall Meetings in Cheyenne, Riverton, and Rock Springs. Notably, UWCOE places student teachers in the latter communities.

Negative responses on this topic included the following examples:

*I've asked forever for student teachers from UW. We get a music student teacher next semester and had a music student teacher a year ago. We hire most of our student teachers. We'd like the opportunity to have UW student teachers in our school. We are happy to provide the cooperating teacher and have individuals trained in supervision. WGU uses the district for the supervising coordinator. The district wouldn't require funding, and would see it as an investment in the employment pipeline.*

*There is no real partnership. Districts pay a fee to belong to the School/University Partnership and I have never seen anything useful come from it. District pay [sic] UW a great deal of money to belong to this partnership and there is nothing to show for it.*

*Our school district hasn't had a student teacher from the University of Wyoming for a very long time. The way the student teaching is organized in our state doesn't allow student teachers to be placed in our district.*

Positive statements from participants in Wyoming communities where UWCOE places student teachers emphasized the importance of constant communication and collaboration to support the partnership:

*We have worked well with UW in the placement and supervision of student teacher and feel like when placed with strong mentor teachers the students are very committed to growing and becoming high quality educators during their student teaching experience. A year of student teaching rather than a semester would make a world of difference in their readiness to step in and take on their own classroom.*

*The UW district facilitator has been helpful in supporting candidates, mentor teachers, principals, and district leaders in assuring that candidates are on pace to be ready for the profession by the end of the student teaching term.*

*Student teachers can be energizing for existing professionals. Having someone new with fresh ideas and the latest research is beneficial. Student teachers also spur veteran teachers to reflect on their practice.*

### **Access**

Access to a full array of educator preparation programs across the state was a prominent concern in the responses across all sites and on the online survey. Notably, a number of responses cited the ease of access a number of out-of-state universities are providing to Wyomingites. Examples of statements include:



*Over the past ten years, I have seen the University of Wyoming's partnership with schools and my community improve somewhat but is still very limited. As Wyoming only has one state university, it is somewhat discouraging to students applying to programs who aren't accepted or who cannot move to Laramie to attend classes. Having one university means there is only one option for in-state tuition. As Wyoming's economy has declined in the last four years, moving is not always an option for our residents who often reside in hometowns their entire lives holding the same job. This also means that applying to another college out-of-state is not always an option because paying out-of-state tuition is not financially affordable to a lot of residents. Being one of the largest states in the nation, in terms of land size, the University of Wyoming should provide more degrees and classes online simply because of our states geography and culture. As a state, the more educated our residents are the better our culture and way of life will be. Studies have proven educated individuals are less violent and prove to be better parents. Offering a wider variety of online programs and classes will allow our state residents to have more options and more chances to complete a higher educational degree. As we have only one school offering a four-year degree or higher online classes and degrees should be provided online unquestionably.*

*When I went to school they were talking about pulling outreach programs for education, which is really hard for people with families. Before, during, and since my college experience there has been a lot of talk of shutting down easy access to 4-year programs in community colleges. I've been told it's because of enrolment [sic]. Enrolment [sic] might be more constant in community colleges if people didn't fear that they'd have to pick up and move part way through a degree because they couldn't finish the degree locally.*

*One thing that could be...we have a number of people who student teaches with us from other universities, e.g., Western Governors. Is there something available through the College of Education for something like that? I think I have three student teachers in my building all doing a Western Governors type of program. That might be an opportunity for UW that is being missed. I have one who is a first year teacher for me now who did his master's through Western Governors last year. He had a content baccalaureate degree and he got his master's in teaching.*

*Valley City State does not offer scholarships to online students at all. If UW provided an online program and made scholarships available, it would be very helpful to students who have other bills to pay, kids, jobs, and just can't leave. It would help a lot of students in the TRiO program.*



*UW needs to reinstate its distance elementary certification program!! I live in the northwestern-most county in Wyoming (Park County)—far from the UW Laramie and Casper campuses. As a school district professional, I know of MANY Park County non-traditional students who have pursued K-12 education degrees/teaching certificates through distance programs provided by out-of-state schools such as Valley City and Grand Canyon University. These students ended up paying much higher tuition rates than University of Wyoming's because they are unable or unwilling to relocate to Laramie or Casper. Why are we letting these dollars flow out of state, when we could meet these students' needs (and increase UW enrollment and revenue) by providing a distance K-12 program through our own state university?*

### ***Clinical Experiences: Fieldwork, Student Teaching, Administrative Internships***

Participants frequently referenced the fieldwork, student teaching, internship, residency, and other clinical experiences candidates complete in their preparation programs at the University of Wyoming. While somewhat dispersed across the opinion polarity, the majority of statements cited concerns with the clinical experiences candidates are required to complete.

*Nobody knows much of anything about teaching until they are in the field. Anyone will tell you that's where the real learning happens. I think college builds background to an extent but I feel like classroom management skills are lacking. School doesn't prepare you for that. I also don't think that college prepares teachers to differentiate instruction. It touches on it but that's about it.*

*The University of Wyoming covers a lot of different pedagogy in the last two years. However, a lot of it isn't retained by students because they don't have much teaching experience to relate it to. Pedagogy would be better taught while student teaching to make more meaningful connections.*

*I am concerned that the early observations are only in the active classroom, not during the teacher's planning time. Having an opportunity to engage with a mentor teacher during planning would strengthen candidate understanding of assessment, analysis, and informed differentiated instruction.*

*I think the UW college of education does a great job producing well-rounded teachers, however there is a gap in some major parts of the program and teaching. I think the future educations would benefit from more hand-on experience prior to student teaching. With student teaching, it would be beneficial to go all year instead of just 16 weeks. This would allow student teachers to see the progression of the year, how routines and management is developed, and ultimately get the best experience possible. Science isn't a focus in most districts so 3 classes in science wouldn't be necessary. There should be more literacy classes required as literacy is a big component in classes, how to teach*



*writing, what to do with reading groups, and how to pick the best books for your students. UW has done a great job with their graduating students (5th in the nation!) but they can do better.*

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### ***Analysis: Policy Barriers***

A final theme in the responses, trending strongly negative, were concerns related to perceived policy barriers impeding the work to support Wyoming's P-12 learners with education professionals prepared to meet the individual and collective needs of learners. Concerns included a desire for new educator licenses or endorsements in Wyoming for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3 educators and a certificate or endorsement for trained mediators.

Further policy concerns related to the need for School Social Workers to help mitigate behavioral issues beyond the scope of classroom teachers; and concern with a wide variation between and among school district background check protocols.

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### ***Summary and Recommendations***

#### **Stakeholder Knowledge of UWCOE Programs**

The strongest trend in stakeholder responses related to participant questions regarding UWCOE programs. This finding aligns with the limited placement of student teachers throughout the state. For school districts and communities in which there is not an active partnership with UWCOE, knowledge of the College's programs is extremely limited.

- ***Recommendation 1:*** *Develop, implement and measure the results of a targeted communication plan, inclusive of public relations and marketing strategies, that addresses this knowledge deficit throughout Wyoming. Only when key stakeholders are knowledgeable about an educator preparation program can they fully engage as partners with that program.*
- ***Recommendation 2:*** *Research, design, implement, and measure new partnerships with a significantly expanded number of Wyoming school districts.*

#### **Candidate and Graduate Outcomes**

Stakeholder perspectives on *University of Wyoming College of Education (UWCOE) Candidate and Graduate Outcomes* revealed strong themes around: content knowledge; assessment literacy and data analysis skills; collaborative approach and skills; classroom management philosophy and skills; communication skills; and reading pedagogy knowledge and skills, specifically the ability to help struggling readers. In each of these aspects of educator preparation, the trend was in negative statements.



- **Recommendation 1:** Evaluate the assessment data and literacy courses in teacher and leader preparation programs to identify ways to strengthen candidate preparation in the full range of assessment and data literacy knowledge and skills to inform differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
- **Recommendation 2:** Evaluate the reading pedagogy courses in all UWCOE teacher preparation programs to assure that novice educators across all grade bands (P-12) have the skills and knowledge needed to identify struggling readers and to provide support and interventions to meet the students' needs.
- **Recommendation 3:** Evaluate the courses and field experiences candidates in all programs are required to complete to learn and apply classroom management theories and practices. Identify areas for improvement; design, implement, and monitor the results of amended preparation practices. This recommendation will require the strong partnership of school districts to provide candidates with meaningful experiences in establishing and fostering a strong classroom environment with clear expectations for students.
- **Recommendation 4:** Evaluate candidate preparation in all programs to develop their professional communication and collaboration skills. Strengthen teacher and leader preparation related to: appropriate and effective use of electronic communication, including social media; knowledge of collaboration models employed in districts; strategies to collaborate with and receive support from veteran teachers; and leadership abilities to develop a culture of collaboration within a school or district.

## UWCOE Policies and Practices

Response themes related to *UWCOE Policies and Practices* included: required candidate clinical experiences; partnership with Wyoming school districts; overall preparation of candidates; preparation for the realities of the profession; and program-specific concerns. The themes in this category also revealed stronger trends in negative statements than in positive statements. Notably, the negative statements in this category primarily emerged from communities in which UWCOE does not place student teachers.

- **Recommendation 1:** Research and evaluate models to strengthen the depth and breadth of candidate clinical experiences with effective sequencing and scaffolding, including early fieldwork, student teaching, and leader internships. After identifying models that result in strong clinical experiences for candidates, develop, implement, and measure the outcomes of a new Wyoming clinical model.
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- **Recommendation 2:** Research and evaluate models for strong clinical partnerships in a large land mass with widely dispersed population centers. Modify the model to meet the needs of all Wyoming school districts, developing the goals, parameters, and expectations of the Wyoming Clinical Model. Identify and garner the short-term and long-term resources needed for implementation. Implement,



*monitor, and measure the outcomes of the new Wyoming Clinical Model, making adjustments to assure optimal outcomes for candidates, school districts, and UWCOE programs.*

## **Policy Barriers**

Additional emerging negative trends in the responses related to: federal, state, local, and university policy barriers to success; and the depth of stakeholder knowledge of UWCOE programs.

- ***Recommendation 1:*** *Further investigate statewide needs related to policy barriers to determine the scale of the concerns. Include in the investigation the need for: a Wyoming Early Childhood Educator License; a credential for mediators; and the supply and demand for School Social Workers. While UWCOE does not have the ability to address all of the identified policy barriers, it will be important to assure that TEI informs the entities that do have that ability of the concerns that arose through the TEI Town Hall Meeting Series.*

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## ***Disposition of Analysis and Recommendations***

This analysis of the Wyoming Education Stakeholder Perspectives shared through the TEI Town Hall Meetings and aligned online survey will be provided to the TEI Research Work Groups, TEI Coordinating Council, and the TEI Governing Board to inform their work toward the TEI Vision and Mission.