Specialized Accreditation for the
School of Education at Utah Valley University:
Inquiry Brief, Audit Visit, and TEAC/CAEP Decisions

Introduction: The School of Education was formed on the main campus of Utah Valley State College in 2002 when the Department of Elementary Education (established by the Utah State Board of Regents in 1996) and the Department of Secondary Education (approved in 2001) left the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) to create a new school of education with over 800 students enrolled in the professional programs. It offers a BS degree in Elementary Education which also qualifies a student for K-6 Professional Teaching License; a BA Secondary Education degree in 15 different content areas and education courses leading to a 7-12 Professional Teaching License (art education, biology education, business/marketing education, chemistry/physics education, dance education, deaf studies education, earth science education, English education, history education, mathematics education, music education, physical education teacher education, school health education, Spanish education, and theatre arts education); and an M.Ed. degree which does not lead to licensure. The Elementary Education professional education program is also offered at the Wasatch Campus in Heber City, Utah, with a new cohort beginning every other year (2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011 to date). The Department of Secondary Education partners with the 15 content area departments named above.

There are 28 full-time faculty members in the School of Education, which also employs about 21 adjuncts each year to teach pre-program and program courses and to provide supervision for field and clinical experiences. Many additional cooperating teachers in our partner districts (Alpine, Nebo, Provo, Wasatch, Granite, Jordan, Park City, North Summit, South Summit) assist and support in the training of our teacher candidates.

Students are admitted to the Teacher Education Preparation program usually in their junior year, and take courses in the general areas of:
- Educational Psychology
- Foundations of American Education
- Classroom Management
- Methods of Teaching in Content Areas
- Planning to Serve Children with Diverse Needs
  (Multicultural/ESL, Exceptional Children, Differentiation)
- Curriculum Design and Assessment

Program claims: The School of Education at Utah Valley University claims that program graduates meet the 10 InTASC (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards by:
1. understanding how children learn and providing opportunities to support their intellectual, social, and personal growth;
2. understanding student differences and adapting their instruction to support diverse learners;
3. creating a learning environment that promotes social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation;
4. basing instruction on their knowledge of the subject matter, tools of inquiry, and curricular goals;
5. connecting concepts and engaging learners in critical thinking, creativity and problem solving
6. using assessment to monitor and support students’ intellectual, social, and physical development;
7. planning for instruction to support students’ learning by drawing on knowledge of content, curriculum, pedagogy, cross-disciplinary skills, & so forth;
8. using a variety of instructional strategies to develop learners’ deep understandings in content areas, and to make connections and apply knowledge in meaningful ways;
9. reviewing and evaluating the effects of their choices and actions on others and seeking opportunities to grow professionally; and
10. fostering relationships with others in the school, district, and community to support students’ learning and well-being.

Evidence supporting the claims is routinely gathered from program admissions data (test score data, GPA, interview), program completion requirements (GPA, key assignments, work samples, clinical experiences, dispositions), and from external sources (licensure tests, ratings from field observations and student teaching, and surveys).

Authorship and approval of An Inquiry Brief: An Inquiry Brief (IB) was written under the guidance of the Accreditation Executive Team, chaired by Susan Simmerman and including Stan V. Harward, Talitha Hudgins, Mary Sowder, Mike Patch, Sandy Jay and Linda Pierce (then Associate Dean), under the advice of Dean Briant Farnsworth (Dean Farnsworth and Associate Dean Pierce have since retired). Each appendix was developed by program faculty and chaired by a member of the executive team. The entire faculty worked in content area groups to check key assignments and compare them to InTASC (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards. The Utah Effective Teaching Standards align with these national standards and the UVU School of Education has taken care to map its program assessments and evaluations with both sets of standards. The Inquiry Brief was approved by the School of Education faculty on September 28, 2012.

Internal audit: An internal audit team audited 10% of the graduating classes from 2008-09, 2009-2010, 2010-11, and 2011-12, following the candidates from admission through graduation. It also audited all program courses, faculty, facilities, fiscal capacity, administration, and student feedback. This audit team also probed 20 targets in the following categories: curriculum; faculty; facilities, equipment, and supplies; fiscal and administrative capacity; admissions; and student feedback and found the quality control system to be working as designed.

Program improvement: Based on the results of the evaluations and changes in licensing requirements, the program has made a number of changes since the last accreditation visit (2008): It added an additional math methods course for elementary candidates, increased classroom management instruction in both specific courses and in methods courses, added a course to prepare elementary candidates to work with children in Kindergarten, developed online formats for the Introduction to Education and Foundations of Education courses, increased field placements in schools where a high percentage of children are ethnically or racially diverse, lengthened the number of student teaching days, expanded access to an intern alternative to student teaching, and strengthened the use of the teacher work sample in the program. The program has also strengthened its collaborations with content area departments across the university.

Statement regarding commitment and capacity: The faculty concluded that Utah Valley University is committed to the initial licensure program in elementary and secondary education and that there is sufficient capacity to offer a quality program.
**Ongoing and Future Plans:** The faculty conducts ongoing research inquiring into various aspects of the professional programs. Areas of interest for this research include student interviews for program acceptance, the use of iPads for instructional purposes; the amount and nature of time spent on instruction in writing, math, and science in partnership school districts; and teacher candidate dispositions. Additionally, the Student Teaching Evaluation form was recently refined, reflecting our ongoing desire for continuous improvement of our program evaluation instruments. As described previously, the M.Ed. degree does not lead to licensure, but is aimed more at current practitioners who wish to add to their skill and knowledge. However, because of the areas that a student could emphasize, their graduate studies may lead to an endorsement. This possibility is still in development. The Master’s degree leads directly from our bachelor’s degree, accentuating a growing understanding of the power of using models of instruction and transformational leadership. The data collected from the summative assessment for the masters, the final project, supports our assertion that the thesis/project demonstrates an ability to learn at an advanced lever, to engage in research, to understand research, and to participate and contribute to the broader educational community. The degree is in Curriculum and Instruction with three options, Models of Instruction, English as a Second Language, or Elementary Mathematics.

**External Audit logistics:** On January 21 to 24, 2013, auditors from the TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council) and the Utah State Office of Education met with the Inquiry Brief authors. They met with part-time faculty, full-time faculty, students, graduates, and university supervisors and interns, as well as with President Matthew Holland, Vice President of Academic Affairs Ian Wilson, and Interim Education Dean Stan Harward, and attended classes in the McKay Education Building. In addition, the auditors conducted telephone interviews with candidates in the current cohort at the Wasatch campus. Additionally, they probed our records with just under 50 specific targets to verify claims made in the inquiry brief.

**Audit opinion:** The Inquiry Brief overall received a clean audit opinion indicating that 100% of the targets were verified. The Brief was found to be accurate and trustworthy.

**Accreditation Panel Review:** On March 28, 2013, the TEAC Accreditation Panel met in Philadelphia, PA to consider the Inquiry Brief submitted by Utah Valley University for accreditation of its Teacher Education Program. The Accreditation Panel reviewed the Inquiry Brief, the Audit Report, and the Case Analysis, and confirmed by a vote of five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed, with zero (0) abstaining, to forward the following recommendation to the TEAC Accreditation Committee: Utah Valley University should be granted Accreditation (7 Years) for its Teacher Education Program.

**Accreditation Committee of the TEAC Board of Directors Decision:** At its meeting on May 2, 2013, the Accreditation Committee of the Board of Directors of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) concluded that the evidence presented in the Inquiry Brief, as verified by the audit and evaluated by the Accreditation Panel, merits Accreditation status. The Accreditation Committee unanimously passed the following motion: The Initial Licensure Program for Elementary and Secondary Education submitted by Utah Valley University is granted TEAC Accreditation for seven (7) years. The Teacher Education Program’s accreditation status is effective between May 3, 2013 and May 3, 2020.

**CAEP Accreditation Council Decision:** Based on the timing of this audit, the UVU McKay School of Education was asked to simultaneously apply for both TEAC and CAEP accreditation. CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Education Programs) will be the new “umbrella” organization that will house all the accreditation options in the future. UVU’s program was asked to serve as an example of the “Inquiry
Brief” type. Thus, on Thursday, April 25, 2013 the CAEP Accreditation Council voted for Utah Valley University to receive CAEP Accreditation for 7 years, becoming the first institution in the Inquiry Brief pathway to be CAEP-accredited.