

**TEACHER PREPARATION FORUM:
SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

JOHN HOOVER
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TEACHER PREPARATION INITIATIVE

TEACHER PREPARATION FORUM: SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Context and Method

A teacher education forum was held on Thursday, February 19th, from 9:00 to 4:00 in Room A-119 of the Education Building. Planners intended the forum as model for ways that information collected from constituency groups could be examined with an eye toward planning in the Education Unit.

In this first forum, two sets of data were examined in depth. First, via small- and large-group activities faculty- and staff-members inspected data from the *Exit Survey*, an instrument dealing with candidate perceptions of the effectiveness of programming in terms of both process (e.g., advising) and outcome measures. The outcome items are phrased in terms of candidates' perceptions of their preparation to work with P-12 students in critical domains.

Planners provided participants an open-ended evaluation form with six items related to the quality of the session (Appendix A). Participants returned twenty-eight evaluation forms. I examined these forms by reading each survey sequentially by item in search of emergent themes. I then examined these themes across items to look for strands of responses that could be employed in planning such events in the future—or even the advisability of so doing. Significantly, participants almost ignored the thrust of items in developing their ideas—the themes ran across items.

The remainder of this brief report is divided into two sections. First, I list and explain results; second, I offer a few recommendations based on the data.

Results

1. The overall approach received considerable praise and was seen in a very positive light. A theme that emerged in this regard, was that such an event was sorely needed. Another example of this finding was that, of the 28 responses, 27 responded yes to holding these events at least annually (96% generally positive).
2. While nearly all respondents approved of meeting at least annually, several (N = 4, 14%) reported that the data analysis meetings ought to occur more often, at least once per semester.
3. Clearly, the strongest (at least numerically) theme emerging from the meeting was a positive response to collaboration and the felt need to communicate. While respondents employed a variety of words and phrases (interact, breaking down silos, communicate, collaborate, interdisciplinary collaboration, share, shared vision) the meaning seemed clear—that the foremost benefit of the meaning and the way that it was structured was a chance to interact across all of the teaching disciplines. When asked what they learned, by far the most common response (N = 5) was a form of the following content: We have common interests [across programs] revolving around the needs of students.
4. A strong plurality of respondents argued that, to build on the day's momentum, publicly visible actions (plans, "real products") must emerge (N = 8, nearly 30%). As one person put it, "We need to come up with concrete solutions." Another asked that we plan for, "One or two action items [on which] the whole group or subgroups should follow through."

5. Several respondents expressed appreciation for (a) the provision of specific data and (b) for holding down the sheer amount of information considered at any one time.
6. A strong minority of participants (N = 7 ~ 25%) noted that their colleagues across the unit clearly voiced a goal of benefiting students. In this same vein, it was noted that programs appear more similar than different in terms of what they experience and the challenges that folks face.
7. Several logistical suggestions were offered by participants; these are considered below in the “suggestions” section.

Suggestions

1. The forums ought to continue. Nearly 100% agreement.
2. Participants expressed the need for action—steps that would reflect that the consideration of data resulted in unit and program changes benefitting students. Perhaps a method can be found for setting action steps and then reporting on these during the next retreat. Small, but significant (and publicly celebrated) plans will best “sustain the energy.” Perhaps sessions could be initiated with a discussion of solutions found and data supporting the solutions.
3. A strong preference was penned by a few candidates for more frequent but shorter meetings. However, time for the cross-area sessions must be retained (See Item 3 above)
4. More advanced notice appeared frequently as a recommendation. This may support the notion of planning program and unit improvement sessions either permanently or at least into the future.
5. Several respondents otherwise satisfied with the sessions, suggested the involvement of others, specifically students (N = 2) & the dean (N = 1).

Appendix A
The Evaluation Instrument

EVALUATION

Teacher Preparation Forum

February 19, 2015

1. Would you recommend teacher preparation forums like this be held on a regular (annual) basis?
 - a. Why or why not?

If yes...
 - b. What would you keep doing that we did today?
 - c. What would you stop doing that we did today?
 - d. What would you start doing that we did today?
2. Please share one significant thing that you learned or experienced today?