



# **Southern Connecticut State University**

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**CCSAR – Center for Community  
and School Action Research**

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**Academic Year 2004-2005**

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**SCSU Educator Preparation Program Evaluation**

*An Analysis of Student Survey Responses*

**Southern Connecticut State University  
Educator Preparation Program Evaluation**

**2004-2005 Student Responses to the  
CCSAR Student Survey**

The Center for Community and School Action Research (CCSAR) distributes CCSAR's Educator Preparation Program Evaluation (EPPE) survey to undergraduate, graduate, and sixth year students enrolled in an Educator Preparation Program at SCSU. The objective of this survey is to learn the thoughts and opinions of SCSU students regarding the quality of their program and field experiences. The specific goals of the EPPE study are:

- to determine the general capacity of SCSU to meet the professional needs of students graduating from a SCSU Educator Preparation Program;
- to gather ideas and suggestions for improving the quality of the educational and field experiences that SCSU provides its students;
- to determine how well SCSU Educator Preparation Programs meet the standards set by all of the accrediting bodies for SCSU's various programs, e.g., NCATE, CSDE, etc.;
- to learn how well students think their program has prepared them to become professional educators in their specialty area.

**Method**

***Participants***

The SCSU Student Teaching office identified and produced the mailing labels for 365 candidates poised to complete their certification requirements during the 2004-2005 academic year: 130 candidates in the fall (2004) semester and 235 candidates in the spring (2005) semester. School of education students enrolled in programs that did not lead to state certification, and/or students in programs that did not require student teaching, e.g., RSM, Educational Foundations, School Counseling, etc. were also identified for inclusion. Two hundred and forty-three completed student surveys were reviewed for this study. Of these, 27.4% expected to graduate in 2004; 59.9% expected to graduate in 2005; 6.8% expected to graduate in 2006; and 5.9% expected to graduate at some 'other' time. A little more than half of the participants were 20- 29 years old (52.6%) and the remaining students were between 30 – 55+ years old (47.4%). The ethnic makeup of the sample was predominately white (90%), with black or African American students accounting for 3.7%; 'other' for 3.7%; Hispanic/Latino students 1.7%; and the remaining 0.8% were Native American, Eskimo, Aleut and Asian American. This sample consisted of 71.5% female student and 28.5% male students. A more comprehensive description of the sample, i.e., program of study, etc. can be found in the results section of this report.

## ***Apparatus***

In November 2004-2005 the CCSAR Student Survey was changed to reflect the items and standards used on the *Evaluation of Student Teaching Performance* (ESTP) survey: the SOE assessment instrument completed by cooperating teachers to evaluate SCSU student teachers. The first three pages of the survey include demographic statements and questions regarding gender, age, ethnicity, employment, and year of graduation (items A1-A10) and the second section asks student to identify their current area of study. Part B is for undergraduate students to complete and Part C is for graduate students to complete. The remaining 73 items (divided into 10 subsections) are scored on a 3-point scale:

- 1 = *Met* - minimal preparation and support
- 2 = *Met* consistent preparation and support
- 3 = *Met+* exemplary preparation and support

These ten subsections reflect the ten Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTSAC) standards. The last page of the survey consists of four open-ended questions inviting candidates to write-in their responses in the spaces provided (see Appendix for a copy of the survey).

## ***Procedure***

Changes in the distribution and collection of the 2004/2005 surveys were made to reflect the recommendations set forth by NCATE to conduct a 'unit-wide' assessment of the SCSU Educator Preparation Program. As a result, CCSAR partnered with the Director of Student Teaching to identify students in both the School of Education (SOE) and across the university who would be completing their certification requirements during the 2004-2005 academic year (n=365). The School of Education also adopted and instituted the completion of a CCSAR student survey as a prerequisite for all students completing a certification program and seeking a recommendation for certification in the fall of 2004. However, requiring students to complete a CCSAR survey was deemed inappropriate by the IRB and thus was changed to 'strongly recommended' for the spring 2005 data collection.

Mailing labels and mailing packets were prepared for the 365 students deemed eligible for certification during the 2004-2005 academic. Each mailing packet contained a letter from the Dean, a CCSAR student survey, and a return envelope. The Dean's introductory letter explained the nature and purpose of the student survey and the completion of the CCSAR survey as a requirement (changed to 'strongly recommended' for spring) for completing a certification program and seeking a recommendation for certification. Students were then instructed to complete and return their anonymous student survey (December 17, 2004 fall semester and May 21, 2005 spring semester) to the Director of Student Teaching/Certification Officer in the enclosed envelope. For tracking purposes, each

student was asked to write his/her name on the outside of the envelope. Once each envelope was received and recorded as received by the Certification Officer, it was given to the department secretary to be processed. The department secretary then opened and discarded each envelope and placed the completed student survey in a designated collection box. This dual process was instituted to maintain the anonymity of each completed student survey. By the end of the data collection period, (May 2005) 243 completed student surveys were received. SOE students who were not in a certification program and/or who were not student teaching were also identified by their respective department chairs and/or program coordinators and asked to complete a CCSAR student survey. For example, CSP students graduating from a Sixth Year Program in 2004-2005 were asked to complete a CCSAR student. The course instructor asked students to complete the survey anonymously and to return the completed survey in the sealed envelope provided. These envelopes were then forward to CCSAR via the department secretary.

A coding frame was then developed and each survey given a unique identification number. Two hundred and forty-three student surveys were sent to Saztec International, Inc. for data entry. Once the vendor entered the data, an electronic copy was sent to CCSAR in ASCII file format. CCSAR then converted the file into SPSS and conducted a frequency analysis to determine the frequency of responses to each question and to calculate a mean and standard deviation score for each item. A mean score was also calculated for each of the ten INTASC standards by calculating an average of the item responses that collectively defined each standard.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Results**

#### **Part I: Area of Certification and Program of Study**

The following results were obtained by extracting a frequency distribution from student responses in the areas related to certification and program of study. Charts and tables were also developed and can be viewed in the Appendix.

*(Percents are valid percents)*

- **Program:**
  - Undergraduate with Certification: n= 104 (43.2%)
  - Graduate with Certification: n=110 (45.6%)
  - Graduate without Certification: n=6 (2.5%)
  - Sixth Year Diploma: n=21 (8.7%)
  
- **Program of Study – Undergraduate**
  - Art Education: n=8 (7.1%)
  - Biology: n=2 (1.8%)
  - Early Childhood Education: n=7 (6.2%)
  - Earth Science Education: n=1 (0.9%)
  - Elementary Education: n=28 (24.8%)
  - Exercise Science: n=9 (8.0%)

English Education: n=16 (14.2%)  
History/Social Studies Education: n=20 (17.7%)  
Mathematics Education: n=14 (12.4%)  
Physics Education: n=2 (1.8%)  
Special Education: n=2 (1.8%)  
Spec. Educ./Elem. Education: n=4 (3.5%)

- **Program of Study – Graduate/Sixth Year**

Art Education: n=15 (11.3%)  
Biology: n=5 (3.8%)  
Communication Disorders: n=3 (2.3%)  
School Counseling: n=2 (1.5%)  
Elementary Education: n=39 (29.3%)  
English: n=6 (4.5%)  
Environmental Education: n=1 (0.8%)  
Exercise Science: n=2 (1.5%)  
Foreign Language: n=1 (0.8%)  
History/Social Studies: n=14 (10.5%)  
Library Media Specialist: n=4 (3.0%)  
Mathematics: n=3 (2.3%)  
Reading: n=1 (0.8%)  
School Health Education: n=1 (0.8%)  
School Psychology: n=1 (0.8%)  
Science Education: n=3 (2.3%)  
Special Education: n=6 (4.5%)  
Educational Leadership: n=18 (13.5%)  
Sixth Year Science Education: n=1 (.8%)  
Sixth Year School Psychology: n=6 (4.5%)  
Sixth Year Special Education: n=1 (.8%)

- **Applied for Certification:**

Yes: n=169 (70.1%)  
No: n=72 (29.9%)

- **Currently Employed:**

Not Employed: n=131 (54.4%)  
Part-time: n=55 (22.8%)  
Full-time: n=55 (22.8%)

- **Employed in Area of Certification:**

Yes: n=38 (15.9%)  
No: n=201 (84.1%)

- **Current Employment Setting:**

Urban: n=40 (27.4%)  
Rural: n=10 (6.8%)  
Suburban: n=69 (47.3%)  
Other: n=27 (18.5%)

**Note: in its calculations, SPSS may round numbers up. Thus, some of the above tallies do not equal 100%.**

## **Part II: Analysis of Survey Items**

The survey items with the highest mean scores were items *D7-Ability to formulate meaningful questions about the subject matter* and *D6- Understanding of the purpose and value of the materials I will teach*: both items received a mean score of  $M=2.56$ , and the lowest scoring item was *H-9-Conducting effective parent/teacher conferences* with a mean score of  $M=1.79$ (\*the only item with a mean score of less than 2.00). Additional items that received a mean of 2.17 or lower included items: *M3- Using community resources in instruction*  $M=2.02$ ; *M2- Providing opportunities for parent and community involvement*,  $M=2.04$ ; *M7-Engaging parents in the learning process*,  $M=2.09$ ; *G4- Engaging students in selecting their own learning objectives and activities*,  $M=2.15$ ; *L3- Identifying students who require the assistance of a specialist*,  $M=2.17$ ;and *M1- Encouraging and maintaining the cooperative involvement and support of parents and community*,  $M=2.17$ .

The mean scores awarded each of the 10 INTASC Standards (Table 1) ranged from  $M=2.46$ , *Knowledge of Subject Matter* to  $M=2.17$ , *Partnerships with Schools and Community*.

**Table 1 - Mean Scores for each INTASC standard/competency area**

Scale Range: Met+ = 3, Met = 2, Met- = 1

<b>INTASC STANDARDS (Aligned with Cooperating Teacher Survey)</b>	<b>MEAN SCORES</b>
1. Knowledge of Subject Matter, D1-D8	<b>2.46</b>
2. Knowledge of Human Development and Learning, E1-E7	2.37
3. Instruction is Adapted to Meet Diverse Learners, F1-F4	2.36
4. Use of Multiple Instructional Strategies and Resources, G1-G10	2.36
5. An Effective Learning Environment is Created, H1-H11	2.28
6. Effective Communication to Foster Inquiry and Collaboration, I1-I6	2.36
7. Lesson Planning, J1-J11	2.45
8. Assessment of Student Learning to Improve Teaching, K1-K4	2.35
9. Reflection and Professional Development, L1-L5	2.27
10. Partnerships with School and Community, M1-M7	<b>2.17</b>

### **Part III: Qualitative Findings**

Students were asked to respond to four questions at the end of CCSAR survey. The four questions and student responses to these questions are summarized below. Similar responses were grouped together to capture the main thoughts and opinions of students and are presented collectively under each question. Student quotes are incorporated throughout the summary and support the conclusions stated under each question. Questions 1 and 2 were combined because of the frequency of overlap in student responses.

1. What would you do to improve the Educator Preparation Program at SCSU?
2. What courses would you add to the program?
3. What courses would you delete from the program?
4. Additional comments.

#### **Questions 1&2-**

***What would you do to improve the educator preparation program at SCSU/ & What course would you add to the program?***

#### Classroom management

An overwhelming number of students felt that there should be more training in classroom management. *“It is crucial for students to be trained in this area in order to be successful in the classroom... because if you can’t get the students attention, then what and how you teach means nothing.”* Students find that *“it is hard to know what techniques to use and those that may work.”* The students also believed that the Educator Preparation Program *“would benefit from a 3 credit course that deals specifically with classroom management and discipline.”*

#### Mock Classrooms/Hands on Activities

Students also expressed that they needed more hands on experience before starting their teaching careers. Students’ felt that they were not *“prepared [in] how to run a class.”* If *“professors presented material in a way that students could do more demonstrations and hands-on activities,”* then students may feel more confident when they begin to teach. A suggestion was made to create a ‘mock classroom’. The department could *“conduct classes where students play the role of participants in a classroom”* [while another student carries out the teaching role]. In this way, students would better understand what it is like to be a teacher, and what it is like to be the student.

### Increased Special Education Training

Students' also articulated concern with the limited amount of special education training that they received. The opinion expressed by students was that they did not feel prepared to face special education issues, e.g. IEP, PPT, inclusion, etc. Students stated, "*special education needs to be part of regular education preparation*" and suggested that adding a special education course would help address these issues. A warranted concern considering the implementation of the No Child Left Behind act.

### Cooperating Teachers Selection Process

Several students stated that they had an unsatisfying student teaching experience because of the cooperating teacher that they worked with. One student stated that her cooperating teacher was a "*first year high school teacher (with middle school experience)... that could not manage her classroom.*" Some students felt that they were placed in a nonproductive environment and if they had been able to meet and interview the cooperating teacher prior to the placement, the experience might have been more worthwhile. Students suggested that they should be involved in the selection process and given the opportunity to "*interview the cooperating teacher to ensure that there are no conflicts of interests or personalities.*"). Nevertheless, some students had cooperating teachers who were "*positive, productive, and involved,*" This suggests that there was disparity in the relationships cultivated and the experience and personalities of the cooperating teachers. The cooperating teacher plays a critical role in the quality of the student teaching experience.

### Teaching Diverse Populations

Some students felt that they should have had more exposure to and more training in how to teach students from culturally diverse populations. Several of the comments referred specifically to urban populations. One student suggested "*a course on the unique problems of inner-city children and the growing immigrant population,*" such as a "*diversity/urban course.*" There were also comments geared toward the student teaching experience in which students should "*be required to student teach in a district which is culturally diverse.*" "*Student teaching experiences could be provided in both urban and suburban settings.*"

### Parent – Teacher Interaction

Students also felt that the program could be enhanced with the addition of a course or additional coursework in 'parent interactions'. Comments did not follow any specific pattern but the overarching theme appeared to be that SCSU students do not know "*what is socially acceptable within a parent/teacher interaction.*" Thus, it may be beneficial to place more emphasis on "*how to approach parents as a teacher.*"

### Communication with Professors and Education Department

Students commented on the quality of the communication between students and professors and the lack of respect towards students. For example, students felt that they were not able to receive clear answers to general questions. *“No one in the education department can ever seem to answer a question. We are always told to ask the people in charge.”* Other students suggested that there needs to be *“more consistency among faculty and staff regarding the program,”* and *“communication between the department and its enrollees was poor.”* Another student’s experience was that she was *“brushed off by people in the Education Departments.”* One suggestion to alleviate the communication problem was design a *“web-page where professors/education department and [staff] would be able to post important information.”*

### Lesson Planning

Lesson planning was an area where some students felt that they needed more training: This was especially true for students who identified themselves as enrolled in the Art Education or the History/Social Studies programs, where the majority of these comments surfaced. For example, one History student felt *“unprepared when trying to create lesson plan...most lessons created in SCSU classes are simply unrealistic in a real school setting.”* An Art Education student added that she *“wishes [she] knew more about lessons and appropriate material to teach in the secondary schools.”*

### ***What courses would you delete from the program?***

#### School Health

This class was cited most often as a course to delete from the program. Most students know that *“it is a class that is required by the state. However, [they] do not feel like [they] got very much out of the class.”*

#### EDU 414 vs. the Psychology Required Course (Child Development)

Students suggested that these two classes be combined or that one be deleted as a program requirement. *“EDU 414 is too similar to the Psychology requirement. They should be combined.”* Additionally, students believe that the two classes *“explain and teach the same information.”*

### ***Additional Comments:***

#### **Questionnaire not Relevant**

Several students stated that the survey items were not relevant for students enrolled in administration or school psychology. For example, one student said, *“as a school psychology student, the majority of these questions are not applicable.”* This same comment was made for educational leadership students, *“The survey did not seem to apply directly to ed. leadership courses,”* and *“a more specific survey in regard to [non-teacher programs] would benefit the school and program.”*

#### **Positive Comments**

The majority of students provided positive feedback in this section. These comments included *“I felt very confident, prepared, and enthusiastic for the job ahead and “I look forward to the opportunity to take what I have learned in this program and apply it in our Connecticut schools.”*

## Discussion

SCSU students overall satisfaction with the level of support and preparation provided by the educator preparation program is positive. The mean score on 72/73 survey items is a 2.00 or higher, except for item H9, M=1.79. Moreover, the range of mean scores for the ten INTASC standards is good: 2.17 – 2.46. The INTASC standards set the bar for quality teaching practice and are positively viewed by SCSU's various accrediting bodies, e.g., NCATE, CSDE, etc. The favorable comments provided in the open –ended portion of the survey further suggest that SCSU students feel satisfied with the nature and quality of the program and the support and preparation provided to meet the required competencies and standards.

There are also sections of the program that students feel are in need of improvement. For example, students do not feel prepared to deal with parents. This includes areas related to conducting parent/teacher conferences, providing opportunities for parent involvement, engaging parents in the learning process, and encouraging and maintaining the involvement and support of parents. Students also feel that they need additional training in and/or additional coursework in these areas: classroom management skills; how to address special education issues, e.g., I.E.P.s, inclusive classrooms, etc.; exposure to and training in how to teach children from diverse populations( in particular, urban schools); how to develop appropriate lesson plans for students at the secondary level(in particular, art & social studies/history); add courses or provide enhanced coursework to address parent/teacher interactions; and provide more opportunities for hands-on training/practical experience.

Students also feel that the quality of the internal communication between faculty and students, and between the various programs, schools and administration at SCSU is not good. A second area of frustration for some students is the cooperating teacher selected to teach and guide them during their student teaching experience. Finally, students feel that there is redundancy between EDU 414 and the required Psychology course, the required class in School Health needs improvement, and the survey is not applicable for students who do not student teach.