



# **Southern Connecticut State University**

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**SCSU Educator Preparation Program Evaluation**  
*An Analysis of Principal Responses*  
*2004-2005 Academic Year*

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**Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU)**  
**Educator Preparation Program Evaluation**  
*An Evaluation of Principal Responses*  
**2004-2005**

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine how well SCSU Educator Preparation Programs have prepared educators to work in their specialty areas. A survey consisting of 21 items was developed for this purpose. Surveys were then distributed to area principals who were asked to evaluate recent SCSU graduates currently employed in their school. The Principal survey was designed to reflect the indicators and attributes outlined in the State of Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCCT) and to align with the standards set forth by the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INSTASC).

The specific goals of this study were:

- to determine principals' assessment of the level of performance competencies displayed by SCSU students and SCSU prepared teachers relative to NCATE and State of Connecticut standards;
- to gather ideas and suggestions for improving the quality of the educational and field experiences that SCSU provides its students; and
- to meet the needs of Connecticut schools for highly trained and well-prepared professional educators.

### **Methods**

#### ***Participants***

Two hundred and thirty principals were invited to participate in this year's evaluation study. Principals were identified in two different ways: (1) CCSAR's in-house alumni database that contains the names and addresses of schools identified by recent graduates as places of employment, and (2) the names and addresses of schools that employed SCSU graduates when they completed their BEST teaching portfolio in the spring of 2003. This database was provided to CCSAR from the CSDE.

A total of 43 surveys were returned but only thirty-six used for data analysis. Seven were not used because one was received too late and it appeared that the other 6 had been filled out incorrectly. A few teachers rated themselves, and some of the principals rated teachers who had not graduated from SCSU.

Principals who completed and returned surveys represented a diverse cross-section of Connecticut's population. They represented all grades (pre-K to high school); urban, suburban, and rural communities; and public, parochial, and transitional schools.

## ***Apparatus***

A new, double-sided Principal Survey (Appendix A) was created by CCSAR for the School of Education (SOE) to reflect the state of Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCCT) attributes and indicators. These CCCT attributes and indicators also align with the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. Moreover, this survey reflects the School of Education's conceptual framework known as S.A.I.L.S.: Scholarship, Attitudes and Dispositions, Integrity, Leadership, and Service. S.A.I.L.S. "*represents the SOE's principled approach to teacher preparation, informing practice and connecting coursework, field experiences, and faculty-student-teacher interactions*".

The survey consists of 21 items, each with three possible responses: 'Met+', 'Met', or 'Met-'. Met+ is defined as "professional educator has met and exceeded the standard", Met as "professional educator has met the standard", and Met- as "professional educator has failed to meet the standard". A three point scale was used to code responses for entry into SPSS analytical software, with a score of 3 = 'Met+', 2 = 'Met', and a score of 1 = 'Met-'. Space is also provided at the end of the questionnaire for additional comments.

## ***Procedures***

In October 2004, 230 survey packets were distributed to principals at schools that had been identified as employing recent SCSU Educator Preparation Program graduates. These principals had been identified through the database maintained by CCSAR and the CSDE BEST database. Survey packets contained a cover letter, a survey questionnaire, a confidential information sheet, a report request form, and a stamped self-addressed envelope. Principals were asked to return their completed survey questionnaire by November 8, 2004.

On the due date of November 8, 2004, only seven completed Principal Surveys had been received. As a courtesy and in an attempt to increase the number of respondents, a CCSAR staff member called all principals who had not returned a survey. These phone calls resulted in an additional 16 completed surveys.

In lieu of the small response, CCSAR decided to launch a second mailing to principals. This new mailing included a revised letter written by the interim dean, James Granfield and a mailing label highlighting the word 'principal' and noting the contents of the envelope as 'SCSU survey'. This second mailing resulted in 20 additional completed surveys, bringing the total to 43 by the end of March 2005.

## ***Data Analysis***

Data were entered into SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences) and frequency analyses conducted. The responses to each item are presented in tabular and bar chart format. The tables list the mean score, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and percents for each item. The bar chart format presents an illustration of the calculated valid percent for each item (Appendix B). Qualitative comments are summarized into overall programmatic strengths and areas of concern, and are listed in the Results section.

## **Results**

Survey item responses indicate that the majority of principals agreed that SCSU Educator Preparation Programs were preparing graduates to work in their specialty area. All of the survey items had a mean score above 2.00, which indicates that the “*professional educator has met the standards*” in ***all*** areas. The highest mean score received was a 2.69 on survey item #16 - “*Generally speaking, the educators prepared at Southern Connecticut State University conduct themselves as professionals in accordance with the code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers*” and the lowest mean score for an item was 2.03, #20-*Generally speaking, the educators prepared at Southern Connecticut State University serve as a leader in the school community*”. In general, the higher mean scores were received in the areas related to teacher attitudes and integrity (S.A.I.L.S.) and the lower mean scores were received in the areas defined as leadership and service (S.A.I.L.S.)

## **Qualitative Findings**

Principals were asked to “*Please provide any additional comments*” at the end of the survey.

### ***Programmatic Strengths***

The consensus among responding principals was that SCSU graduates were well trained and well prepared to teach in Connecticut schools. Principals stated:

- “*SCSU provides an unmatched teacher preparation experience*”
- “*I feel SCSU graduates are well prepared to enter the teaching profession*”
- “*My experience with Southern graduates has been positive*”
- “*The SCSU graduates are well-prepared and are an asset to our school district*”
- “*SCSU graduates continue to be well prepared to meet daily challenges in the classroom*”

### ***Comments and Concerns about the Program***

Survey respondents expressed some concern regarding the disparity between what teachers were taught and their subsequent ability to implement the information. All respondents felt that new teachers were well prepared academically, but noted that many new teachers had difficulty putting into action what they had learned. Classroom management skills (particularly in urban settings) continue to be a concern. Respondents also commented on the need for additional training in BEST, state, and national requirements and standards.

- *“Teachers are unprepared to differentiate instruction and design integrated units (i.e. Understanding by Design or backward unit design.)”*
- *“Beginning teachers are overwhelmed by curriculum policies, procedures, BEST program, and district’s evaluation procedures... Differentiating their strategies and classroom management are always challenges.”*
- *“None, or very few new teachers have any concept on classroom management. Courses instructing teachers on teaching inner-city students are badly needed.”*
- *“Many education graduates are not prepared for the urban setting. They spend more time attempting to control their students...”*
- *“... Universities need to make sure that they teach state and national standards and know the latest BEST practices in all areas.”*

### **Discussion**

Most of the principals’ felt that SCSU graduates are well prepared to function in an educational setting, and that SCSU is giving educators the tools necessary to be effective teachers. In addition, questions that explored student attitudes and dispositions (the clear evidence of values and professional ethics), and integrity (the clear evidence of a soundness of, and adherence, to moral principles and character) all scored high.

Although graduates are well prepared academically, they struggle to apply this knowledge in the classroom. Many of the concerns mentioned, and weaknesses noted, could be improved by increasing the amount of time students spend in actual classrooms. Classroom management strategies, the ability to work in diverse (e.g. inner city) environments, and leadership and service to the school community are skills that require, and can be attained with experience and practice. Students would benefit with a longer field placement, placements in communities that are more diverse and with additional support and feedback during their field placements. Increased collaboration between SCSU and principals and staff who work in inner-city schools (e.g. as guest speakers, to provide “case studies” and successful management strategies) could also improve student classroom management strategies in diverse environments. Further instruction to meet the need for additional exposure to state and national standards could be incorporated into existing, required courses.

Survey collection continues to be a challenge. Approximately 19% of the principals returned surveys, even though they received duplicate mailings and personal phone calls. Suggestions have been made to provide principals with the name(s) of the recent graduate at the top of each survey. This would help principals identify who is a SCSU graduate, and to provide specific feedback on individual students rather than a general summary. This is especially beneficial when there is a large discrepancy in teachers' skill levels.