Part I: Beliefs and Commitments

The College of Education assumes leadership for the preparation and continuing development of teacher candidates and other professional school personnel in collaboration with other colleges on campus, public schools, and related educational agencies. Further, we believe in the inclusive nature of the term educator as it refers to candidates in all programs of the College of Education who work in schools or other educational agencies. We understand our work affects both our candidates and the individuals (including students) with whom they work. Toward that end, our conceptual framework extends beyond the traditional boundaries of the College to form a professional community. The Educator Preparation Committee (EPC), which includes representatives from the College of Education, other colleges on campus, public schools, and related agencies, provides a forum for coordinating these efforts.

“Reflective Educators for Diverse Learners” is the theme of the College of Education’s conceptual framework. This theme, as articulated in the Four Commitments, clearly reflects the mission of the College and University. The University’s focus is on providing a culture of engagement that bridges theory with practice. This focus is reflected in the COE vision “We envision a College of Education that continues to grow in its national recognition for excellence and innovation in teaching, scholarship, and outreach; and becomes the choice for novice and experienced professionals desiring a high quality, flexible education to help them meet their individual intellectual and career goals.” To achieve its mission, the College is committed to academic distinction in undergraduate and graduate education, collaboration, diversity, professional development, and regional service. These College-level commitments are reflected in the four commitments we seek to instill in our candidates. Embedding the four commitments in the Teacher Education Program (TEP) Standards and aligning them with competencies required by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and Specialized Professional Associations in all initial and advanced programs ensures coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, and assessment across a candidate’s program.

C.1 Commitment to the Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions of the Profession – We believe that it is of primary importance for our candidates to possess in-depth knowledge of their disciplines and/or subject matter they plan to teach, including a thorough understanding of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of their fields as delineated in professional, state and institutional standards. These standards provide the framework for the College of Education unit assessment system and for each program’s ongoing assessment and revision efforts. We believe that candidates must be knowledgeable about learning theories and related methodologies, the application of emerging technologies, and the influence of human growth and development on the educational process, coupled with a strong subject-matter knowledge base grounded on a firm ethical foundation. Educators must have the ability and the knowledge to create and evaluate personal guidelines for decision making in a professional context. We believe that by presenting a strong research base and linking it with practice we will facilitate the growth of our candidates as informed and reflective practitioners who support the learning of their students. Campus, P-12 schools, and community-based collaborations and partnerships result in richer programs and enhance learning opportunities for all candidates. This represents the wide spectrum of educational activities in the College of Education and recognizes the dynamic nature of the work environments in which our candidates are or will be engaged.

C.2 Commitment to Diversity - We believe in the necessity of a strong historical understanding of one’s profession and the willingness to view knowledge as a personal construction affected by one’s cultural beliefs. We believe that educators must also recognize their responsibilities to, and the rights and needs of all students, particularly underserved populations including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, students of color, and those living in poverty. We believe educators must familiarize themselves with the culture of their students’ learning by addressing diverse learning styles and abilities and taking into account each individual’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and cultural development. We believe that our candidates must understand the interrelatedness of individuals, small groups, and society, both locally and globally. To support the learning of all students, educators must be active in working with issues of culture, diversity, and equity; understand the political and humanistic nature of education; and have the knowledge and skills to deliver curriculum, instruction and services from multiple perspectives. Educators must be cognizant of the ideological, economic, and special interest pressures exerted on the institution of education at all levels. We believe educators must be able to enhance communication among all users of education in the school, community, home, and industry. We believe that educators must understand how human emotions interact with the education process, both in terms of the student and the educator. Educators must understand how personal perceptions of self, work, and professional relationships affect the daily decision-making process. Educators must be sensitive to prejudice and the effect it has on educational environments. Toward that end, diversity is an integral component of the mission of Georgia Southern University. Our candidates’ curriculum, field experiences, clinical practice, and key assessments have been designed to ensure that candidate experiences reflect the diversity of south Georgia.

C.3 Commitment to Technology - We believe that candidates must recognize the critical role of technology in all facets of the educational process; thus, we provide all candidates with experiences that allow exploration of a broad range of technologies. To that end, all candidates in initial and advanced programs integrate technology and other multimedia resources. Candidates will use technology-based best practices to engage all students and maximize their learning as well as enabling them to become proficient in the use of technologies. The College of Education uses a technology-based assessment system that continuously gathers data at the unit and program levels for formative and summative assessment purposes. Through data analysis, the College of Education’s professional community ensures that candidates meet technology-related professional and state standards.

C.4 Commitment to the Practice of Continuous Reflection and Assessment - We believe that reflective educators continually engage in data-based assessment, familiarize themselves with the culture of the students they serve, study the history of education on a local, state and national level, and listen to the personal and familial stories of the students in front of them. As part of this process, candidates who work directly with students must monitor, assess and analyze student learning, and make appropriate adjustments to instruction and the learning environment. Other professional school personnel candidates critique and are able to reflect on their work within the context of student learning. We believe that reflective educators use multiple sources of data to evaluate and improve their practice in an effort to ensure that the educational needs of all learners are met. They have the ability to define and frame a problem from multiple perspectives, to consider reasoned courses of action, to act, and, finally, to reflect on the effectiveness of their actions, as demonstrated by a variety of student assessment measures.

Reflective Educators for Diverse Learners considers all learners and represents a vision of professional practice for the entire College of Education professional community. To that end, our conceptual framework demonstrates that we believe all educators must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of their work and engage in practice that reflects a commitment to the knowledge and dispositions of the profession, diversity, technology, and the practice of continuous reflection and assessment.

The purpose of our conceptual framework document is to capture and clearly convey to our candidates, school partners, and other stakeholders what we believe to be the purpose and content of educator preparation.
We want to emphasize that these beliefs are also commitments we desire to instill in our candidates. With this as a goal, our conceptual framework document is presented in two sections. Part I contains our belief statements expressed as *Four Commitments* and Part II contains the bibliographic support for each commitment. It includes a mixture of foundational literature and literature that is currently used by faculty in course bibliographies or as required textbooks. This literature underpins our beliefs and the *Four Commitments* across all programs in the College of Education. The Conceptual Framework Bibliography is a dynamic document that is maintained on our COE Web site.