Conceptual Framework

Part I: Beliefs and Commitments

The College of Education assumes leadership for the preparation and continuing development of educators and other professionals in collaboration with other colleges on campus, public schools, and relevant agencies and employers. Further, we believe in the inclusive nature of the term practitioner as it refers to candidates in all programs of the College of Education who work in schools or other settings. We understand our work affects both our candidates and the individuals (including students, clients, and colleagues) 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 relevant agencies and employers, provides a forum for coordinating these efforts.

"Reflective Practitioners for a Diverse World" 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, statewide, and national service. These College-level commitments are reflected in the four commitments we seek to instill in our candidates. Embedding the four commitments in our various programs’ 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.

Beliefs and Commitments

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 a deep understanding of the critical concepts and principles of the disciplines in which they plan to work, 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 the theories and methodologies of their profession, the application of emerging technologies, and the influence of human growth and development on the people they serve, coupled with a strong knowledge base grounded on a firm ethical foundation. Practitioners must have the ability and the knowledge to create and evaluate personal guidelines for decision making in a professional context. Candidates must understand the expectations of their profession, including codes of ethics, professional standards, and relevant laws and policies. 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 growth and goals of the people they serve. Campus, P-12 schools, agency, employer, and community-based collaborations and partnerships result in richer programs and enhance learning opportunities for all candidates, especially high-quality clinical practice. 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 practitioners must also recognize their responsibilities to, and the rights and needs of, all people particularly underserved or historically marginalized populations, including linguistic minorities, people with exceptionalities, people of color, gender and sexual minorities, and people living in poverty. We believe practitioners must be able to address the needs of the people they serve by accounting for their diverse abilities and learning preferences and taking into account each individual’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and cultural development. We believe that our candidates must understand the interconnectedness of individuals, small groups, and society, both locally and globally. To support the growth and goals of all people, practitioners must be active in working with issues of culture, diversity, and equity; understand the political and humanistic nature of their profession; and have the knowledge and skills to deliver curriculum, instruction, and/or services from multiple perspectives. Practitioners must be cognizant of the ideological, economic, and special interest pressures exerted, from all levels, on the institutions in which they work. We believe practitioners must be able to enhance communication among all stakeholders in their practice, including schools, agencies, employers, communities, homes, and industries. We believe that practitioners must understand how human emotions interact with professional practice, both for practitioners and the people they serve. Practitioners must understand how personal perceptions of self, work, and professional relationships affect the daily decision-making process. Practitioners must be sensitive to prejudice and the effect it has on professional environments. Toward that end, diversity is an integral component of the mission of Georgia Southern University. Our goal is to recruit and support completion of high-quality candidates from a broad range of backgrounds and diverse populations. Our candidates’ curriculum, field experiences, clinical practice, and key assessments have been designed to ensure that candidate experiences reflect both the diversity of South Georgia and the larger world.

C.3 Commitment to Technology

We believe candidates must recognize the critical role of technology in all facets of their profession; 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 address their responsibilities, and when their discipline demands, pass along their technological proficiency to the people they serve. 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 practitioners continually engage in data-based assessment; study the history of their profession on a local, state, and national level; and familiarize themselves with the culture of the people they serve by listening to their personal and familial stories. As part of this process, practitioners must continually monitor, assess, and analyze the progress of the people they serve, reflect upon and critique their observations, and make appropriate adjustments to their professional practices and environments based on research and evidence relevant to their profession. We believe that reflective practitioners use multiple sources of data to evaluate and improve their practice in an effort to ensure that the needs of all the people they serve 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 professionally appropriate measures.

*Reflective Practitioners for a Diverse World* considers all people 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 practitioners must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of their work and engage in practice that reflects a commitment to the knowledge and dispositions of their profession, diversity, technology, and the practice of continuous reflection and assessment.