



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education



**COLORADO**

Department of Education

**REPORT BY SITE REVIEW TEAM OF  
EDUCATOR PREPARATION AT COLORADO MESA  
UNIVERSITY**

REPORT SUBMITTED TO COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY  
JUNE 27, 2017

**Part I. Summary**

This report summarizes the findings of the state reauthorization team for Colorado Mesa University’s(CMU) educator preparation programs by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE).

**Level of Proficiency**

The following table is a summary of each indicator the site review team uses to review educator preparation programs, pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121(2). Based on the site review findings outlined in the following report, each measure is given an overall rating of: proficient, partially proficient, or not proficient.

Educator Preparation Performance Measures	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Not Proficient
<p><b>a. Admissions Systems:</b> The unit maintains a comprehensive admissions system that includes screening of a candidate’s dispositions for the field in which he or she is seeking licensure, consideration of a candidate’s academic preparation for entry into his or her desired endorsement area or areas, and preadmission advising for students who are considering becoming candidates.</p>	X		
<p><b>b. Ongoing Advising &amp; Screening of Candidates:</b> The unit provides ongoing advising and screening of candidates by practicing educators or college and university faculty members.</p>		X	
<p><b>c. Coursework &amp; Field Based Training Integrate Theory and Practice:</b> Course work and field based training integrate theory and practice and educates candidates in methodologies, practices and procedures of teaching standards-based education, specifically in teaching the content and skills defined in the Colorado Academic Standards.</p>		X	
<p><b>d. Supervised Field Based Experience:</b> Each teacher candidate in an initial licensure program complete a minimum of 800 hours, each principal and administrator candidate complete a minimum of 300 hours, and each other advanced degree or add-on endorsement candidate complete appropriate supervised field-based experience that relates to predetermined learning standards and includes best practices and national norms related to the candidate’s endorsement.</p>	X		
<p>e. Demonstrate <b>content skills required for licensure</b>, as determined by the State Board of Education.</p>	X		
<p><b>f. Comprehensive, Ongoing Assessment:</b> Comprehensive and ongoing evaluation of each candidate’s subject matter and professional knowledge and ability to demonstrate skill in applying the professional knowledge base.</p>	X		

**Recommendation**

DHE policy permits three possible outcomes of a review: a) full approval, b) probation, or c) termination of the program.

The Reauthorization Team recommends full approval of the institution's educator preparation program for a period of no less than five calendar years. This recommendation applies to the following endorsement areas:

Principal (3.03)  
Elementary Education (8.02)  
Visual Arts (8.04)  
English Language Arts (8.09)  
World Languages (8.10)  
Mathematics (8.14)  
Music (8.15)  
Physical Education (8.16)  
Science (8.17)  
Social Studies (8.18)  
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (8.22)  
Special Education Generalist (9.07)  
Early Childhood Education Special Education (9.08)

## Part II. Report by Site Review Team

### **A. Introduction and Background**

The educator preparation unit and programs at CMU were reviewed for reauthorization on March 5-7, 2017. The previous reauthorization review at Colorado Mesa University took place in March, 2009. Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute §23-1-121, institutions of higher education with approved educator preparation programs must be evaluated not more frequently than once every five years. As CMU is not pursuing national accreditation at this time, this visit included only the members of the state review team.

### **Review Team Members**

The Review Team consisted of representatives from DHE, CDE and two external institutions of higher education (IHE). The members included:

Ms. Mary Bivens, Director of Educator Development, Colorado Department of Education  
Dr. Karla Esser, Professor and Chair, Regis University  
Ms. Chelsy Harris, Dean of High School Programs and Concurrent Enrollment, Pikes Peak Community College  
Dr. Robert Mitchell, Director of Educator Preparation, Colorado Department of Higher Education  
Dr. Colleen O'Neil, Executive Director of Licensing and Educator Effectiveness, Colorado Department of Education

### **Educator Preparation Program Reauthorization Process**

The following delineates the path of an educator preparation program submitted for reauthorization to the CDE Educator Talent Unit (ET) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education:

- Institutional reports are submitted to CDE and the DHE 60 days prior to the scheduled site visit. If the institution is pursuing national accreditation through a recognized accrediting agency, report submission for national accreditation may be substituted for state institutional reports.
- DHE reviews the submitted evidence prior to the site visit to identify the unit and programs' strengths and areas for improvement.
- DHE compiles a list of missing information needed to document the performance criteria listed

above and specific questions to clarify information submitted in the proposal.

- Reauthorization site visits are jointly conducted by CDE and DHE. The site visit consists of an entrance interview, unit and program review, and an exit interview.
- CDE and DHE jointly compile information from the institutional report and site-visit reviews, including content review information from the quality teacher and principal standards. CDE and DHE submit the draft report to the IHE within 60 days of the site visit.
- The IHE shall respond to the draft report in a rejoinder and provide additional information or address any concerns within 30 days of receiving the draft report.
- DHE and CDE finalize the reauthorization report.
- CDE and the State Board of Education forwards their recommendation on program content to the DHE, which then forwards the recommendation to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) for their final determination of reauthorization. (\*Note: Pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121, if the state board of education recommends that a program not be approved, the commission shall follow said recommendation by refusing initial approval of said program or placing said program on probation.)
- The CCHE determines reauthorization of educator preparation programs.

### **Site Visit Meetings and Protocol**

The reauthorization review team received the institutional report in advance, prepared and submitted by Colorado Mesa University. The site review occurred March 5 - 7, 2017 during which time the team members met with:

- Dr. Blake Bickham – Department Head and Associate Professor; Dr. Jennifer LaBombard Daniels - K12 Program Coordinator & Assistant Professor of Teacher Education; Dr. Jean Gauley - Education Leadership Coordinator & Instructor of Teacher Education; Dr. Nancy Alex - Secondary Program Coordinator & Assistant Professor of Teacher Education; Tim Foster – President; Dr. Cynthia Pemberton – Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Center for Teacher Education faculty, adjunct/affiliate faculty, and field supervisors
- Current education students and pre-service teachers
- Regional coordinators, mentor teachers and members of the local k-12 community throughout the Western Slope

The team reviewed course syllabi, student records, student work and portfolios, field placement locations and operations, and a wide range of other data over the course of, and subsequent to, the site visit. During the on-site visit, current students and alumni/ae were contacted and interviewed regarding their experience within the educator preparation program at CMU. Their individual comments and feedback have been incorporated into this report.

### **Historical Context: Colorado Mesa University Educator Preparation Program**

The following description is taken from CMU's Institutional Report to DHE and CDE:

*Located on Colorado's Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado Mesa University (CMU) is in a largely rural and rather sparsely populated region of the state. Lying midway between Denver and Salt Lake City, the University is located in Grand Junction, surrounded by the Grand Valley, 120,000 residents in an area otherwise made up of small communities scattered across vast, open spaces. The region's economy is based on a mix of traditional ranching and smaller farms that produce fruits and vegetables as well as mineral extraction that experienced boom and bust cycles over the past few decades.*

*The University supports a second regional presence sixty miles southeast of Grand Junction, in Montrose, Colorado. The Montrose site focuses primarily on lower division coursework in general education,*

*Nursing, Business, and Teacher Education, along with selected offerings at the upper division. Because it has both a two- and four-year role and mission, CMU also offers career and technical education programs, as well as developmental education, through its open admissions division, Western Colorado Community College (WCCC). This division is located on the Bishop Campus in Grand Junction, approximately three miles from the main campus, and Grand Valley Transit offers service five days a week between the two campuses. Academic programming at both sites, as well as online delivery, is under the responsibility of faculty on the Grand Junction main campus, while technical offerings are delivered through WCCC. All awards or degrees, however, are conferred by CMU's main campus.*

*The University takes seriously its mission to be a regional education provider for Western Coloradans and, as a result, has moved aggressively to expand distance learning opportunities and support for traditional and non-traditional students alike. At the same time, CMU also recognizes the need to provide for a more diverse group of students. Over the past decade, CMU has invested heavily in the delivery of courses via distance technologies to make education more accessible to Western Coloradans, with approximately eight percent of the University's credit hour generation delivered in an online format in fall 2012.*

*In general, two-thirds of CMU students are from the 14-county region, CMU is attracting an increasingly larger share of students from the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, along the I-25 corridor and centering on Denver. Additionally, more than 10 percent come from outside Colorado, with notable numbers coming from western states including Hawaii. Recently, the CTE program has admitted two international students into K-12, Music, and the graduate ITL program also has two international candidates. Student profiles for students enrolled on the main campus, in Montrose, at Western Colorado Community College, and in online coursework vary by venue and format. New programs on campus reflect attention to the needs of employers in the region, and student services are being expanded to support the increasingly diverse learners on the campus.*

## **B. Statutory Performance Measures**

### **Introduction**

The review team was impressed, overall, with:

- Colorado Mesa University's commitment to supporting students throughout their programs at the institution. It is clear that all faculty and staff are personally invested in student achievement and success.
- The positive relationships developed between CMU and local K-12 school districts throughout the Western Slope. Local district leaders and educators are fully supportive of the CMU program.

Graduates and current students told the Reauthorization Team they appreciated:

- The structure and operations of the educator preparation program at Colorado Mesa University. Several recent graduates commented about their satisfaction with the program and that they had developed a solid foundation for work in the K-12 classroom through their CMU experience.
- The one-to-one support provided to students (particularly graduate students) from university faculty. The connectivity between faculty and this student population was seen as a program strength.

Faculty appreciated CMU's:

- Clear expectations for faculty and staff within the Center of Teacher Education. Faculty generally felt supported in their work and interactions with students.
- The congenial environment within the Center that allows for effective collaboration and ongoing programmatic improvement.

**Statutory Performance Measure A: Admissions Systems:** The unit maintains a comprehensive admissions system that includes screening of a candidate's dispositions for the field in which he or she is seeking licensure, consideration of a candidate's academic preparation for entry into his or her desired endorsement area or areas, and preadmission advising for students who are considering becoming candidates.

**Summary finding:** The review team found CMU's educator preparation programs to be proficient on Performance Measure A.

*Performance indicators: A1, A2, A3; C.R.S. 23-1-121(a)*

The educator preparation program at Colorado Mesa University has an established admissions policy for all students interested in educator preparation. There are multiple entry points available for interested students – including avenues for transfer students. The Center for Teacher Education (CTE) has developed a provisional entry program with additional supports in the form of mentoring and enhanced advising for those students who are provisionally admitted students.

There is evidence that other departments, especially math and various divisions within the social sciences, do actively encourage students to consider careers in education. These efforts should continue to be expanded to ensure that current CMU students are aware of opportunities in the education profession.

And while the department is proficient on Performance Measure A, the following items were noted by the review team as potential areas of improvement:

- Faculty within the CTE did recognize that there is a concern about the diversity of candidates recruited into the program – but there is not a specific initiative developed to address this concern.
- While transfer students are permitted to enter the program, there is a lack of clarity for these students regarding acceptable transfer credits and the various requirements they fulfill.
- There is little active and external recruitment for high-need academic areas or for specific rural districts throughout western Colorado.

These areas for improvement should be reviewed annually among institutional faculty to ensure the unit is supporting the needs of local K-12 partners in the western region of the state.

### **Recommendations and Areas for Improvement for A: Admissions Systems:**

Areas for improvement: The Reauthorization Team found the institution to be proficient in Domain A (Admissions Systems), but did note the following recommendations:

- An enhanced and targeted effort to identify and recruit diverse educator candidates should be ongoing to support an increasingly diverse k-12 student population in western Colorado.
- While the program does screen for professional dispositions, it does so primarily as an intervention for struggling students. This process should be expanded to all students entering the educator preparation program.
- Local districts would benefit from the addition of Colorado Mesa University as an alternative licensure provider. This would allow local districts to benefit from CMU's faculty expertise and outreach.

**Statutory Performance Measure B: Ongoing Advising & Screening of Candidates:** The unit provides ongoing advising and screening of candidates by practicing educators or college and university faculty members.

**Summary finding:** The review team found the CMU educator preparation program to be partially proficient on Performance Measure B.

*Performance indicators: B1; C.R.S. 23-1-121(b)*

The advising components within the Center for Teacher Education at Colorado Mesa University were noted as an area for improvement by the on-site review team. While the faculty and staff have developed positive relationships with students, it was unclear to the review team how students were able to locate and utilize effective advising to support their progress in the education programs.

While specific findings and recommendations are outlined below, the review team continues to advocate for a greater proactive approach in regards to student advising. The review team found that, at this time, advising within CTE is largely reactive and has limited effectiveness. Specifically, the review team found:

- An ongoing disconnection between the content area advisors (e.g. math advisors, advisors within the social sciences) and the advisors within the Center for Teacher Education. These two advising components do require increased alignment to avoid miscommunications to students.
- While some faculty members have a limited number of advisees, other faculty members have a high advising load with more than 200 individual students assigned to one faculty member. Students commented that they were frustrated with the lack of accessibility in advising (particularly within the elementary education program) and dissatisfied with the program's administration.
- It is unclear if there is a mechanism in place to help identify potential advising problems and student issues. While several university supervisors discussed an existing plan, it was unclear if this was communicated to advisors within their academic content areas.
- Students within the remote cohort groups commented that it was difficult to obtain effective advising from faculty and staff based in Grand Junction and that any advising services must be initiated by the individual student.

And while this domain was not seen as fully proficient, the review team believes that modifications to the program's advising system could result in significant benefits to CMU students in a short time-frame.

**Recommendations and Areas for Improvement for B: Advising, Ongoing Screening & Counseling:**

Areas for improvement: The Reauthorization Team found the institution to be partially proficient in Domain B (Advising) and did note the following recommendations:

- A review of the advising process for students in remote cohorts should be undertaken. The lack of geographic proximity to the main CMU campus may require additional program modifications.
- There continues to be a question as to if CTE students are aware of the core content requirements and how to complete these courses. Enhanced advising may be beneficial to ensure core content class enrollment and completion.

- A review of effective advising numbers for faculty should be undertaken to ensure that students are receiving adequate advising services. Advising practices for elementary education candidates, in particular, should be reviewed.

**Statutory Performance Measure C: Coursework & Field Based Training Integrate Theory and Practice:** Course work and field based training integrate theory and practice and educates candidates in methodologies, practices and procedures of teaching standards-based education, specifically in teaching the content and skills defined in the Colorado Academic Standards.

**Summary finding:** The review team found Colorado Mesa University to be partially proficient on Performance Measure C.

*Performance indicators: C1, C2, C.R.S. 23-1-121(c),*

The CTE at CMU utilizes field-based experiences to both augment educator preparation coursework. The duration and quality of the practicum components of the program do vary, but all candidates do finish a field-based component prior to program completion. As this domain focuses on the integration of theory and practice, the review team identified the following areas of improvement:

- Most students within the program only completed one course focused on teaching diverse populations and alumni of the program commented that they did not feel adequately prepared to work with diverse students in local schools. This was confirmed by local school district personnel as many principals in the local schools commented that CMU students did struggle in working with diverse populations.
- Candidates were not aware of concepts such as culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, PWR, RTI, MTSS or other Colorado-specific initiatives such as post-secondary workforce readiness. This would place CMU students at a considerable disadvantage upon entry into school placements.
- Current students did recognize that there is some misalignment exists within their methods class and their experiences in the field. Accordingly, it may be beneficial to review the timing of the coursework and the fieldwork experiences to ensure student success.

Within the principal preparation program, students and alumni expressed a higher degree of satisfaction regarding program structure and outcomes. Alumni, in particular, stated that they were generally satisfied with the program and their specific experiences. This was further confirmed by the review team as there is a series of highly-relevant comprehensive questions for summative assessments within the principal preparation program. Additional findings that apply specifically to the principal preparation program include:

- Some candidates suggested a review of the personnel utilized in the statistics course to ensure that the most effective instructors were available for this important course.
- The inclusion of a coaching component within the principal preparation program would be highly beneficial, as would the embedding of faculty and students within the Montrose RE-1J School District – which was identified as a key partner for principal development.

As a future area of development, several current students recommended that CMU develop instruction related to the leveraging and utilization of administrative support staff – as this was an identified area of interest for many students.

### **Recommendations and Areas for Improvement for C: Coursework & Field Based Training Integrate Theory and Practice:**

Areas for improvement: As the Reauthorization Team found the institution to be partially proficient in Domain C (Integration of Theory and Practice), the following recommendations were noted:

- The development and implementation of a dual endorsement program (e.g. special education and culturally and linguistically diverse education) is highly recommended as it aligns to the needs of the local school districts throughout the Western Slope.
- An early fieldwork experience that supports candidate exposure to diverse populations and low-achieving students should be included within the program.
- The incorporation of a faculty member with expertise and experience in anti-bias education, culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant teaching would be highly beneficial for the program and the CTE.

**Statutory Performance Measure D: Supervised Field Based Experience:** Each teacher candidate in an initial licensure program complete a minimum of 800 hours, each principal and administrator candidate complete a minimum of 300 hours, and each other advanced degree or add-on endorsement candidate complete appropriate supervised field-based experience that relates to predetermined learning standards and includes best practices and national norms related to the candidate's endorsement.

**Summary finding:** CMU was found to be proficient on Performance Measure D. *Performance Indicators: D1, C.R.S. 23-1-121(d).*

The educator preparation program at CMU is highlighted by the effective relationship between the Arts and Sciences and the Center for Teacher Education. There is evidence that a cohesive working arrangement between the faculties of these two departments is highly beneficial for the students within the educator preparation program.

At the various field placement locations, the review team found a collaborative and supportive relationship in place between the university supervisors and the mentor teacher population. The placement location for students is acceptable and generally provides students opportunities to complete the required field placement hours. At the school sites, mentor teachers routinely ask for feedback from university supervisors regarding their own performance in supporting teacher candidates. Further, it is clear that there is concurrence from both school-based personnel and program leadership regarding the removal of candidates when needed.

Additional findings regarding the fieldwork components of the educator preparation program at CMU include:

- It was unclear as to if all programs engage in candidate interviews prior to placement in specific schools. While it did seem to be apparent in the elementary program, it was not identified as a standardized practice with secondary candidates.
- Two programs (Art and Kinesiology) were identified as programs that have struggled with effective and timely placements for candidates. While these may be isolated incidents, it

would be worthy of further review to ensure program quality and effectiveness for all candidates.

CMU has developed effective working relationships with local school districts throughout the Western Slope – including District 51 and Garfield 16. It is recommended that CTE can expand on these relationships to support effective educator preparation.

### **Recommendations and Areas for Improvement for D:**

In addition to the suggested modifications listed above, the review team also recommends the following:

- It would be beneficial to have faculty within the Arts and Sciences aware of the ongoing concerns regarding student PRAXIS test scores. This would enable them to review their own content-specific instruction to support educator development.
- An annual gathering of faculty, university supervisors and mentor teachers should be schedule to ensure consistent communications and expectations as well develop a standardized inter-rater agreement for mentors, university supervisors and faculty regarding teacher candidates.

**Statutory Performance Measure E: Content and Skills Required for Licensure:** Each candidate, prior to graduation, must demonstrate the skills required for licensure, as determined by the State Board of Education.

**Summary finding:** Evidence presented by all stakeholders during the reauthorization site-visit indicated that programs within CMU meet current Colorado Academic Standards as well as Teacher Quality Standards. It must be noted that the CMU standards alignment was incorrectly aligned to the old Colorado Department of Education performance based standards. The crosswalk should have been aligned to the 2016 education of the Educator Preparation and Licensing Educator Quality Standards. CDE conducted the Content and Skills review and the Colorado Department of Education Board of Education at its May 2017 Board of Education meeting fully approved the CMU requirements for educator licensure.

**Statutory Performance Measure F: Comprehensive, Ongoing Assessment:** Comprehensive and ongoing evaluation of each candidates' subject matter and professional knowledge and ability to demonstrate skill in applying the professional knowledge base.

**Summary finding:** The review team found the educator preparation program at CMU as proficient on Performance Measure F.

*Performance Indicators: F1, F2, F3, C.R.S. 23-1-121(f),*

The institution and the CTE does track candidate pass rates on the PRAXIS exam and recommends curriculum changes needed to support student achievement on an ongoing basis. In addition, the unit does track student placement/employment following the completion of the program and did develop a change plan based on the most recent institutional review in 2009. It may be beneficial for additional research to be developed to understand the scope of graduate student placement/employment as well.

While current students in the program did feel confident about their ability to develop lesson plans, assess student learning and facilitate instruction, they recognized their limited exposure to educational technology. The review team did note that candidates were generally strong in the implementation of engagement strategies, but were lacking essential knowledge regarding differentiation and culturally

responsive teaching. This lack of understanding of differentiation among candidates was also identified by local district partners as a developmental area.

Lastly, students did express a desire to have additional instruction provided regarding education law, the impact of social media within education and advocacy for education. There also remain questions from the review team regarding the housing of methods courses outside of CTE and the qualifications of non-education instructors in facilitating those methods courses.

**Recommendations and Areas for Improvement for F:** In addition to the suggestions outlined above, the following regards to Domain F, the following recommendation is also noted:

- Candidates, faculty and district partners all recommended that the CTE undertake a review of the requirements for content-specific courses. There is some concern, particularly by district partners, that pedagogy courses should supplant some content courses within the secondary licensing area. This was of particular note for the math courses and may apply to others.

### **Rejoinder and Next Steps**

Colorado Mesa University shall note any errors of fact in this report and respond in a rejoinder with any supplemental information requested within 30 days pursuant to Colorado Department of Higher Education Policy I-P: Educator Preparation, subsection 6.01.05.01.

Please send all correspondence regarding areas A, B, C, D & F to:

Dr. Robert Mitchell, Director of Educator Preparation, DHE, robert.mitchell@dhe.state.co.us,  
303-862-3006

Materials and questions related to the CDE content review (area E) should be sent to:

Ms. Mary Bivens, Director of Educator Development, CDE,  
bivens\_m@cde.state.co.us, 303-866-5194

### **Conclusion:**

The review team thanks CMU, the administration, faculty, staff and students for participating in the on-site visit. We look forward to working with the university to address the needs of the educator preparation programs now and in the future.