



IHE

Interim Case Study Report





This interim case study report is based in part on interviews we conducted with key participants in the teacher preparation reform work undertaken by IHE during the first year of their involvement in CEEDAR. In all, six interviews were conducted, three in the fall of 2014 and three in the summer of 2015, and six different stakeholders participated. In preparing this report, we also reviewed the blueprint that IHE developed to guide its CEEDAR work and notes from follow-up meetings that our colleague, CEEDAR Staff, conducted with the IHE CEEDAR team. These discussions focused on reviewing progress on blueprint goals.

We thank our colleagues at IHE for their thoughtful collaboration in this process.

UF CEEDAR Team

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The two blueprint goals that IHE developed for its work with CEEDAR are presented in the box below. The goals focus on preparation reform for teachers and school administrators. Whereas Goal 1 focused on the development of a new undergraduate, dual certification teacher preparation program, Goal 2 focused on reforming an existing Master of Arts (MA) program in educational administration.

IHE CEEDAR Blueprint Goals

Goal 1: Development and implementation of a new undergraduate Program Program (NEW PROGRAM) that will result in students earning their multiple subjects and education specialist credentials.

Goal 2: Revise the MA in Education option in Educational Administration program to ensure content coverage to serve historically underserved groups, especially students with disabilities and English learners.

Goal 1 comprised four objectives focused on curriculum development, student recruitment, faculty professional development, and field placements. Goal 2 comprised three objectives: examine current course syllabi; develop student learning objectives, content, and signature assignments; and evaluate clinical placements. To this point (December, 2015), IHE's work has focused on Goal 1 objectives, three of which have been fully achieved.

The IHE faculty and administrators we talked with seemed to be well aware of these blueprint goals and that teacher preparation reform held priority. When asked to describe the goal of the CEEDAR

initiative at IHE, one stakeholder responded, "to assist in developing the dual certification program at the undergraduate level," and another said, "to develop a high quality, inclusive teacher education program." Another stakeholder alluded to the "transformative" nature of the work.

The faculty's interest in and commitment to developing an inclusive teacher preparation program has been a goal of the college for some time. In fact, one stakeholder mentioned her 12-year tenure at IHE and noted that she "was there at the beginning" of conversations about reform. Another commented, "For years we have had many initiatives with the focus being English learners and students with disabilities." One stakeholder noted that the impetus for these conversations was feedback from system-wide surveys conducted with program graduates and their employers that highlighted areas of need in the program, among them graduates' ability to work effectively with English learners, students with disabilities, and other at-risk students. CEEDAR, several agreed, came along at an opportune time and helped to convert talk into action. In one colleague's words, IHE's participation in CEEDAR "legitimized the conversations that had been started before."

IHE began planning what became known as the Program in December 2013. The planning team met every 2 weeks throughout the Spring 2014 semester,

completed the program design, and submitted the proposed program to the College Curriculum Committee in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. Full approval took a year, but the NEW PROGRAM was launched in August 2015, with an inaugural cohort of ten students. The College is still working on Goal 2, which calls for a revision in the educational administrator preparation program. In the remainder of this brief, we try to identify the factors that led to this successful and expeditious reform process.

The Process of Achieving Goals

In Spring 2014, fueled with motivation to achieve these ambitious goals and the “philosophical whole hearted backing of the dean,” the faculty got to work developing the new curriculum. A carefully selected core team comprised of two general education faculty, two special education faculty, a department chair, and an associate dean of the College of Education was established to initiate the efforts. These individuals were strategically selected by college leaders for their expertise and because they were well respected by their colleagues. The team used CEEDAR’s Innovation Configurations as a tool to support them in curriculum development. In addition, the dean’s persistent vision and sustained support throughout the development of the dual certification program helped move the committee forward in their efforts.

Within several short months, the committee had successfully designed the program. For the faculty involved in the process, the experience resulted in a tremendous amount of professional growth. For example, one faculty member shared, “Before I don’t know if I knew what MTSS was? But here I am, with strong knowledge and language for how to prepare teachers to teach within these frameworks...for me it was **professional development through curriculum redesign.**” She discussed how the program planning meetings often served as a launch pad for critical discussion that forced the committee to develop a common language. She shared how at one point she and her colleagues sat together and discussed what they meant by the language used to define their instruction. “For example,” she shared, “What do you mean when you use the word *intervention*? What do you mean when you say *evidence based*?” “These were not conversations that we had ever participated in before,” reflected the faculty member, “we learned we were conceptualizing the meaning of those words in different ways.” Engaging colleagues in conversation defining effective instruction was challenging, especially as many of the faculty were approaching these conceptualizations from different epistemological paradigms. “These were difficult discussions,” she reflected, “but we were all working on a tangible goal that we

Timeline of Events

July 2013 – *Apply for the CEEDAR grant*

September 2013 – *Visioning and goal setting*

December 2013 -- *Begin planning new program*

May 2015 – *Full approval from the College Curriculum Committee*

August 2015 – *First cohort of new program*

cared about. We really needed to come to an understanding ourselves because we needed to make sense.” Ultimately, participating in these conversations enabled faculty from differing worldviews to establish a common language and to cultivate a culture of collaboration that facilitated their work.

IHE employed a team-based approach to assist them in completing their blueprint goals. By beginning with a small group of respected and interested faculty selected by administrators based on their experience and expertise, IHE made certain to get the right people on board at the very beginning. Moreover, throughout the process, the team communicated effectively with their College of Education faculty colleagues, so that even faculty members with limited involvement of the initiative held a “fundamental understanding of the vision.” Stakeholders interviewed “believe that the right people” were involved and saw the initiative as having the critical mass of the faculty on board. Another faculty member concurred: “my first impression of the college was very collaborative, professional, spirited, student-centered, organized, and I still feel that way.”

Factors Related to Progress

IHE ranks among CA/CEEDAR’s most successful participants, and its success was fostered by important elements put in place before the project began. Among these elements are focused and committed leaders—who established a vision and fostered a culture of respect, participation, and support of key faculty members, and access to resources. In this section, we discuss each of these elements in addition to issues the IHE team encountered and how they were overcome. Among these issues are faculty professional development, the need to develop a common language, and challenges related to field placements.

Focused and Committed Leaders

The reform process at IHE was supported by an experienced Dean, X, who had a background in special education and was committed to the concept of preparing all teachers to work effectively with students with disabilities. A conversation about this vision had been underway for some time before IHE became involved in CA/CEEDAR. These preliminary efforts found little traction, however, and the reform process suffered a major setback when, according to one stakeholder, departments “talked *at* each other, not *with* each other.” Although this kind of setback can undermine reform, the Dean—in addition to having a clear and coherent vision and being committed to its realization—also proved resilient and persistent. Associate Dean, Y, a special education professor, provided ongoing leadership to the faculty team that conceptualized and designed the NEW PROGRAM program. She led the biweekly planning meetings and the curriculum review process. She also guided the new program and its newly developed courses through the College of Education curriculum approval process, resulting in the College’s ability to offer the program to its first cohort of qualified candidates 3 semesters after design of the NEW PROGRAM program first began.

Culture of Respect and Collaboration

One of the institution's greatest challenges lay in overcoming the differing world views and epistemologies that separated departments at IHE, just as it does in many colleges of education, and frustrated the Dean's previous efforts to develop an inclusive teacher preparation program. With the onset of CA/CEEDAR, the Dean appointed a working group comprising faculty members in the Departments of Teacher Education and Advanced Studies in Education and Counseling, which housed the special education faculty. Ultimately, the NEW PROGRAM program was housed in the Department of Liberal Studies, as part of the undergraduate integrated teacher education pathway.

Department chairs from Liberal Studies and Teacher Education participated along with the faculty leaders—A (gen ed), B (gen ed), C (gen ed), and D (sp ed). Through creative thinking, and open and honest dialog and discussion at biweekly meetings through Spring and Fall 2014, the NEW PROGRAM team drove the curriculum development process and saw it through to completion. This workgroup redesigned the curriculum from the ground up, and its members were the first to teach the courses in the program implemented Fall 2015. Now that the groundwork has been laid, more faculty members have begun to express interest in participating in the effort.

Resources and Strategies to Support Faculty in their Work

In addition to strong faculty leadership and a culture of collaboration, IHE's success was bolstered by the resources the dean made available to support faculty members in their work. For one, the Dean provided release time for the faculty members participating in the process using funds from an endowment at her disposal.

Clear and frequent communication was a strategy IHE employed from the beginning of their reform effort. "We have communicated all along and made sure that we have kept people in the loop," expressed the associate dean. These communications occurred through frequent workgroup meetings, email correspondence, department, and faculty meetings. As described by one faculty member, these efforts began before the CEEDAR reform was undertaken when inter-disciplinary faculty members met to share their research within the college and continued as faculty engaged in the reform worked to "clarify the jargon that is unique to special ed and general ed."

Developing a common language to talk about effective instruction was a second strategy IHE employed to support them in their efforts. Having faculty with differing worldviews and epistemologies was an "initial challenge between faculty, as departments were talking at each other and not to each other," reflected one faculty member. "This initially caused a rift," she stated. Through dialogue, the team came to recognize that key terms like *intervention* or *accommodations* have various

and sometimes controversial meanings in different disciplines. Through dialogue, the team developed a common, neutralized language that facilitated communication. They also discussed one another's literature, a conversation that arose organically during discussions of course content, key topics, and readings. One participant noted that they "quickly learned that [they] needed...professional development within [the] planning team." That professional development took the form of presentations and shared readings that brought the group together and allowed them to develop a common understanding about a variety of relevant topics.

Concluding Thoughts

The rapid progress that IHE achieved should come as no surprise, given the groundwork that had been laid long before CA/CEEDAR arrived. Clearly, strong and resilient leadership—both formal and informal—promoted the success of the reform effort there. The Dean had articulated a vision for preparation reform in which the needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and other struggling learners were addressed. Dialogue was initiated long before IHE committed to working with CEEDAR that focused on preparing teachers to work effectively in inclusive contexts. In addition, a group of faculty leaders emerged during the process, most through participation on the planning team. This group was diverse in roles, department affiliations, and theoretical perspectives. Its members were well-respected college leaders. It overcame one of the most challenging obstacles for any teacher preparation reform initiative: the power of differing world views and epistemologies to separate people and undermine collaboration. The planning team accomplished this by developing a common language that neutralized emotionally laden terminology and, through faculty-led discussions of presentations and readings, an appreciation for one another's disciplinary traditions and literatures. Both of these activities arose organically within the planning team, providing additional evidence of the high caliber of faculty leadership available there. Clearly, within the group, a collaborative culture had been established that substantially facilitated its work.

IHE enjoyed two important advantages unavailable to many. For one thing, the Dean used resources from an endowment to provide faculty time to commit to the reform effort. This investment paid off handsomely in the efficiency with which the planning team was able to complete its work. Second, because the NEW PROGRAM was a new program, it may have met with less resistance than an initiative that involved reforming an existing one. It may be a wise idea for other institutions undertaking preparation reform to begin by supplementing existing offerings rather than supplanting them.

As successful as the reform effort at IHE has been, some issues have yet to be resolved, and they, too, are instructive for others undertaking similar reforms. The issue of finding an adequate number of appropriate placements was one with which the planning team grappled. For one thing, finding schools whose practice aligned with the inclusive focus of reform at IHE proved to be an issue. About the

importance of inclusive placements, one stakeholder noted that, without them, “it [would be] difficult for faculty and teacher candidates to imagine and understand what this is supposed to look like.” Even at schools with inclusive practices, the quality of those practices remained an issue. One stakeholder lamented the fact that there were “relatively few classrooms within the district for teacher candidates to observe... effective inclusive practices.”

IHE continues to work on its second goal for the CEEDAR work, revising the educational administration MA program, which has not been achieved to the same degree as Goal 1. There are additional questions about the process at IHE that remain unanswered that may contribute to our understanding of not only the process there but also of the process of program reform generally. We are unsure about—and plan to ask about—the extent to which collegiality extends beyond the planning team to include the full faculty. In fact, to this point, we know little about the awareness of the faculty and their understanding of NEW PROGRAM and how it fits into existing programs. Also, with regard to the NEW PROGRAM being a new program, we need to know how it was to be staffed and what resources were available to the Dean that she might reassign to the new program.

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