

**The Results Are In:
What Deans and NCATE Coordinators Think About the NCATE Unit
Standards**

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As part of its regular review cycle, NCATE conducted a survey of deans and NCATE coordinators at accredited institutions and institutions in the accreditation pipeline. The purpose of the survey was to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of the unit standards from the perspectives of institutional representatives.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section briefly summarizes the results of the survey. The second section describes the methodology used in conducting the survey. The third section describes the survey respondents in terms of the size of their professional education units and the types of universities/colleges represented. The fourth and longest section chronicles the findings of the survey in detail. This fourth section follows the format of the survey instrument (Attachment A).

The Results

Overall, 95 percent of the deans and NCATE coordinators who completed the survey indicated that their candidates benefit from attending an institution accredited based on the NCATE Unit Standards. Respondents reported that the accreditation process holds professional education units accountable for programs that 1.) are based on professional standards, 2.) focus on candidate learning, and 3.) are engaged in continuous improvement. Of the deans and NCATE coordinators who completed the survey:

- 93 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE standards, their institutions demonstrate better alignment among standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- 87 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE standards, faculty members demonstrate improved assessment techniques
- 83 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE standards, their units demonstrate more purposeful and directed field experiences and clinical practices.
- 83 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE standards, faculty members demonstrate increased focus on candidate learning

- 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE standards, faculty members demonstrate increased use of technology in the teaching and learning process.

The results indicated a high degree of overall satisfaction with the appropriateness and effectiveness of the NCATE Unit Standards, regardless of unit size (annual number of program completers), type of institution (land-grant, private, state/regional, and/or Historically Black College and University (HBCU)) or control (public vs. private).

Methodology

In September 2004, NCATE administered the anonymous on-line survey to deans and NCATE coordinators at NCATE institutions using a commercially-available software package. The instrument was developed by the Standards Committee of the Unit Accreditation Board, the body charged with making accreditation decisions at NCATE. The instrument included the following sections:

- the structure and organization of the unit standards,
- the appropriateness of the unit standards,
- the effectiveness of the unit standards and,
- the worth of the accreditation process

Most items were written as statements; respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement using a 4-point likert-type scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Most of the findings are reported in percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statements.

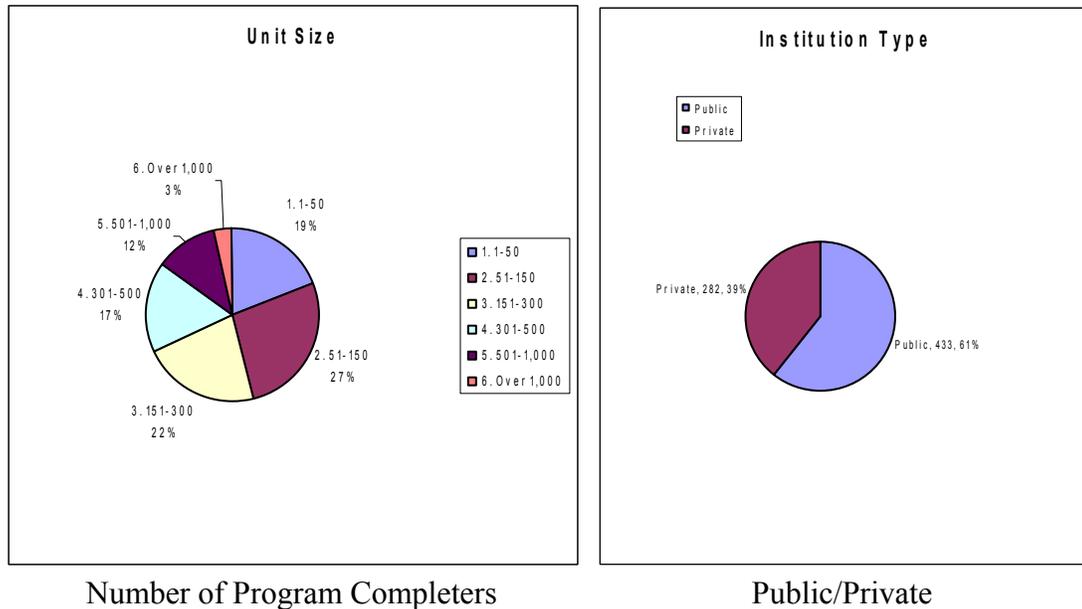
In addition to the scaled items, some open-ended questions were posed using text-boxes. The open-ended questions asked respondents to share their concerns, if any, about each standard, and to comment on the extent to which they believed the NCATE unit standards are appropriate, effective, and beneficial to candidates in institutions that adhere to them.

The Respondents

Surveys were administered to 1154 deans and NCATE coordinators. After conducting follow-up activities, the response rate was 66 percent. All respondents, however, did not answer all of the questions posed. Of the respondents, 34 percent identified themselves as deans; 52 percent identified themselves as NCATE coordinators; and 14 percent identified themselves as serving both roles. Eleven percent of the respondents indicated that they also serve as NCATE Board of Examiners members.

The respondents represent institutions that are demographically mixed, as illustrated in the charts below. Their institutions represented wide ranges in size, control (public vs.

private) and type of institution (land grant, private, state/regional, HBCU). Of the respondents, nine percent represented HBCU’s, eleven percent represented Land Grant institutions; 36 percent represented private institutions, and 47 percent represented state or regional institutions.



The Findings

The findings are recorded based on the survey format. Both quantitative and qualitative responses are discussed. When provided the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions, many respondents made comments or noted concerns about particular aspects of the standards and their interpretations. While these concerns are prominently discussed in this report, it is important to note that the majority of the respondents had “no concerns” or skipped these questions. The concerns that were noted will be shared with NCATE’s Standards Committee as it deliberates during the standards revision process.

The conceptual framework

The survey posed three questions about the conceptual framework: are stakeholders familiar with it, is it being implemented, and does its development and implementation enhance coherence within the unit. Ninety-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the stakeholders in their institutions are familiar with their conceptual frameworks. Ninety-six percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the conceptual framework is being implemented in their units and ninety percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the development and implementation of the conceptual framework has enhanced coherence within their units.

Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed a similar percentages with no meaningful differences.

NCATE institutions, overall, believe that the conceptual framework is a positive aspect of the unit that increases unit coherence. Many commented that the conceptual framework was a unifying component of the unit that helped stakeholders focus on aligning goals, instruction, curriculum, and assessment. Others reported that they were pleased that the interpretation of the conceptual framework has moved beyond clever slogans and phrases to a more in-depth understanding of the goals of the unit and how it proposes to achieve them.

However, the respondents who answered this question reported mixed feelings about the development and implementation of the conceptual framework. Some reported difficulty developing and implementing the conceptual framework because of the number and scope of programs in larger units, especially at the advanced level. Others thought it unrealistic to expect all stakeholders and candidates at different points in programs to understand the conceptual framework with similar levels of sophistication. Some expressed concerns about the process for keeping the conceptual framework current, posing questions about the extent of revisions required and the frequency thereof.

The NCATE Unit Standards – Structure and Organization

The survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with the following statements for each standard:

The standard is clearly stated.

The rubrics clarify expectations at each level of proficiency.

The narrative that explains the standard is helpful.

Standard 1

Standard 1 requires performance data which suggest that candidates in a given unit have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective educators. Ninety-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Standard 1 is clearly stated; 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics for Standard 1 clarify expectations; and 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative that explains Standard 1 is helpful. Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences.

When asked what concerns they had about Standard 1, several common themes emerged. First, some deans and NCATE coordinators indicated that there is overlap between several of the elements in Standard 1. This is particularly the case for *content knowledge for other school personnel* and *professional and professional knowledge and skills for*

other school personnel. Another area of overlap was identified in relation to *pedagogical content knowledge for teacher candidates* and *professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills for teacher candidates.* Most of the comments asked NCATE to clarify the types of knowledge and skills in each of these categories and to remove any duplication.

Deans and NCATE coordinators also identified dispositions and student learning as elements that are very difficult to assess; they requested more information and examples of credible assessments in these areas. Some respondents voiced concerns about whether the organization of the standard adequately addresses advanced programs for candidates who are already teachers. Finally there were a few comments on ensuring that the rubrics have more consistency across proficiency levels; exploring the possibility of numbering the elements; and switching the order of Standards 1 and 2.

Standard 2

Standard 2 is the standard that requires units to demonstrate that they have developed and are regularly maintaining an assessment system that tracks candidate learning and unit operations, and that produces data that are used to improve programs. Of the respondents, 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the standard is clearly stated; 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics for Standard 2 clarify expectations at each level of proficiency, and 92 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative for Standard 2 is helpful. Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences.

The comments on Standard 2 from the open-ended questions ranged from “I love it and have no concerns” to “The scope of a true assessment system is beyond the resources of individual institutions.” Many of the respondents had positive comments about the standard. One reported:

Developing an assessment system has presented a positive for our institution. It has encouraged conversation about what is important, why we collect data, and more importantly, how we use it.

However, deans and NCATE coordinators also expressed concerns about the standard. Amid cautions of too much assessment being a “bad thing,” the primary concerns with Standard 2 were the costs (in personnel, time, and technical resources) of implementing and maintaining an assessment system, particularly at small institutions, and the desire to see examples of well functioning assessment systems from other institutions. Respondents highlighted the need for NCATE to define unit operations. The technology requirement in the standard was questioned in relation to its placement in the second and not the first element and in terms of the level of sophistication expected to meet the standard. The respondents, with less frequency, indicated that they have concerns about:

- how much data are enough,
- the differences between program assessment and unit assessment,
- how to make assessment systems work at the advanced level,

- whether NCATE should juxtapose Standards 1 and 2, and
- the similarities between the acceptable and target proficiency levels.

Standard 3

Standard 3 is the standard on field experiences and clinical practices. For this standard, 97 percent of the deans and NCATE coordinators agreed or strongly agreed that the standard is clearly stated; 93 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics for Standard 3 clarify expectations at each level of proficiency; and 94 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative that explains the standard is helpful. Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences.

When asked to express concerns about Standard 3, most of the respondents either did not respond to this question or reported having no concerns about this standard. One person wrote:

As a result of this standard, we have drastically improved our field work expectations, site and cooperating teacher selection, and evaluation of candidates. We make explicit what was implicit and have standardized our expectations across multiple sections, programs, and instructors. It was very helpful.

Some respondents did have concerns about the standard. Respondents reported difficulty involving school partners in the design and evaluation of the field experiences and clinical practices. Several of the respondents indicated that they believed that this component of the first element of the standard is unrealistic given the time constraints and lack of remuneration faced by the school partners. They also reported difficulty making field placements in a collaborative way, particularly at large institutions or at institutions where placement agreements are made between administrators, and do not involve individual professors or P-12 cooperating teachers or supervisors. One respondent wrote, “These requirements for mutual influence on design and implementation and assessment take on the onus of being an unfunded mandate!”

Another common area of concern for those who voiced concerns was the degree to which the standard addresses field experiences and clinical practice for advanced programs, including advanced programs for teachers. Some commented that the standard is not clear about field work for MAT programs. Are candidates expected to complete field experiences and clinical practice? If so, if a candidate is already teaching, how much field work can be done in her own classroom? And are the units responsible for supervising and observing a teacher in her own classroom? Concerns were also raised regarding field experiences and clinical practice for other school personnel. Apparently, it is not clear which parts of the standard apply to initial programs and which parts apply to advanced programs. One respondent recommended writing and/or separating language for advanced-level programs from the language for initial programs.

Another concern was related to perceived redundancy with Standard 1. Respondents wrote that the technology requirements for candidates and parts of the third element related to student learning and meaningful experiences require data that are or should be presented in Standard 1. Finally, the respondents suggested that NCATE develop a list of the evidence needed to meet this standard or provide examples that will guide institutions in the right direction.

Standard 4

Standard 4 is the NCATE Unit Standard that requires institutions to ensure that future educators have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work successfully with students from diverse backgrounds. Ninety-two percent of the deans and NCATE coordinators agreed or strongly agreed that this standard is clearly stated; 85 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics for Standard 4 clarify expectations at each level of proficiency; and 88 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative that explains the standard is helpful.

Though the importance of diversity was affirmed, respondents were concerned about how NCATE approaches diversity in the standards. Respondents commented on the difficulty of meeting the standard; the different interpretations of the definition of diversity; the lack of consistency in the rubric; the need to emphasize the knowledge and skills of candidates over counting the number of diverse faculty members; the idea that the elements could be integrated with other standards to limit redundancy; and the need that institutions have to learn about what other institutions are doing¹.

Many respondents indicated that they have difficulty meeting the latter three elements of Standard 4, related to units having diverse faculty and candidates, and ensuring field placements in settings with diverse P-12 students. Because of their institutions' geographic isolation in relatively homogeneous settings and their inability to attract and keep diverse faculty members and candidates, many deans and NCATE coordinators indicated that the latter three elements of Standard 4 are impossible to meet. Some suggested that these elements are unrealistic and should be eliminated. Others indicated that they would like to learn about how other institutions are addressing this standard.

Several respondents were concerned with redundancy in Standard 4. They indicated that the assessment data component of the first element of the standard should be reported in Standard 1, that the proficiencies related to diversity should be identified in the conceptual framework/standard 2, that the experiences working with P-12 practitioners is already in Standard 3, and that faculty diversity could be placed in Standard 5. Some respondents expressed concern that diversity is such an important component of preparation programs that it should not be a standard but should be integrated throughout

¹ While institutional representatives indicate difficulty in meeting Standard 4, the Standard was met by all of the institutions reviewed in the fall 03 and spring 04 semesters and by all but two of the institutions reviewed in spring 03.

the standards. A few respondents indicated that the rubrics do not reflect progressively more in-depth approaches to a common set of competencies. Others indicated that the language of the standard should be more content-driven, clearly stating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected.

Standard 5

Standard 5 is NCATE's standard on faculty qualifications, performance, and development. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the standard is clearly stated. Ninety-four percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics clarify expectations at each level of proficiency and 96 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative that explains the standard is helpful. Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences.

When asked to cite concerns about Standard 5, issues around NCATE's definition of scholarship were the most common. Some respondents reported that NCATE's broad definition of scholarship is often misinterpreted.

Respondents reported that they would like clarification of several words and phrases in the standard. The requests included better definitions of the different types of faculty members (professional education, part-time, clinical, school-based) and clearer statements about which faculty members given elements are referring to. A few respondents asked for clarification regarding how much information and data on part-time and adjunct faculty members are required. They also asked for definitions of:

- Exceptional expertise
- Contemporary professional experiences
- Service

Some reported that the collaboration element is redundant with other elements in the standard, especially the service element. Some reported that the requirement that faculty engage in self-assessment relative to candidate learning is too vague and should perhaps include a reference to candidate assessment data. Other respondents reported that gathering data for the element on modeling best practices in teaching is very difficult so examples of evidence for this element would be helpful. Respondents also reported that some of the rubrics do not measure the same items across the proficiency levels.

Standard 6

Standard 6 is the standard on unit governance and resources. For this standard, 98 percent of the deans and NCATE coordinators agreed or strongly agreed that the standard is clearly stated; 93 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the rubrics for Standard 3 clarify expectations at each level of proficiency; and 95 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the narrative that explains the standard is

helpful. Examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences.

Respondents reported three concerns about Standard 6. First they indicated that this standard seems less focused than the other standards. The items in the rubrics are less connected and the standard includes terms such as “adequate” and “sufficient” rather than more specific language. Second, the budget element caused concern because it is not clear what information is needed as evidence. A few of the respondents wish to use the budget element as a bargaining tool for greater allocations of university or college resources, but complain that the language is too vague to be effective. Other respondents reported that the budget element in particular and the standard in general include requirements (such as budget, facilities, and authority) that are beyond the control of the unit head. Finally, a few respondents were concerned that Standard 6 is very input-oriented. They suggested that it be eliminated.

Appropriateness of the Standards

In addition to items about the clarity and organization of the standards, the survey also included items about the appropriateness of the content of the standards and the evidence required. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the NCATE Unit Standards cover appropriate areas related to the initial preparation of teachers. Seventy-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the standards cover appropriate areas related to the continuing education of teachers. This statistic climbs to 81 percent if one factors out the unusually high percentage of respondents (10%) who indicated that they were unable to evaluate this question. Sixty-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the standards cover appropriate areas related to the preparation of school personnel other than teachers. This statistic climbs to 80 percent if one factors out the unusually high percentage of respondents (22%) who indicated that they were unable to evaluate this question. Ninety-one percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the standards adequately cover areas related to institutional capacity (i.e., faculty, governance, resources, etc.).

Because examining the responses by unit size, public/private control, and type of institution revealed no meaningful differences, the data indicate that the majority of deans and NCATE coordinators believe that the NCATE Unit Standards include appropriate content for initial and advanced teacher education programs and for programs designed for other professional school personnel. The data also indicate that the NCATE Unit Standards include measures that adequately evaluate areas related to institutional capacity.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to share their concerns about the content of the standards and the evidence required. Most of the concerns about content indicated that the standards do not adequately address programs for continuing teachers and programs for other school personnel. The comments indicated that NCATE should be much clearer about expectations for such programs. Some commented that advanced

programs have their own standards and their inclusion in the NCATE review in some ways denigrates the importance of these programs.

Clear and reasonable evidence

This section of the survey included two questions about the types of evidence required to meet the standards and the extent to which having the evidence enables institutions to improve its programs. Sixty-five percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the evidence required for meeting the standards is reasonable and clear. Because of the manner in which the question is posed, it is not evident whether the deans and NCATE coordinators were responding to the clarity of expectations, the reasonableness of expectations, or both. However, respondents indicated that the evidence collected is a helpful tool for evaluating program quality. Eighty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that the evidence used to show that the standards are being met enables the unit to improve its programs.

Finally, respondents were concerned that NCATE's expectations for evidence may be too great, requiring too much time and resources. Several respondents advised NCATE to be clearer about essential evidence and to eliminate BOE expectations for non-essential evidence. (A list of suggested exhibits is posted on the NCATE website.)

The Effectiveness of the Standards

The survey posed two types of questions related to the effectiveness of the standards, one type at the unit level and one type at the faculty level. The first set of questions related to overall functioning of the unit. As indicated earlier in this report:

- 93 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the standards, their institutions demonstrate better alignment between standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- 83 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the standards, their units demonstrate more purposeful and directed field experiences and clinical practices.
- 84 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the NCATE unit standards, their units demonstrate more attention to candidate knowledge and skills related to helping all students learn.

Furthermore, 77 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their units demonstrate a greater commitment to diversity as reflected in curriculum and field experiences and 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the standards, the commitment to diversity resulted in increased numbers of candidates and faculty members from diverse backgrounds. Comments indicated that some respondents

felt that their institutions' commitment to diversity was strong already, and only reinforced by the standards.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with the standards, their units have improved access to needed resources and 59 percent indicated a stronger governance structure as a result of working with the standards.

The survey included a series of questions related to the changing practices of faculty members as a result of working with the standards. Many respondents were reluctant to attribute certain changes to working with the standards, indicating that "our faculty members were already demonstrating these things." Nonetheless, the results of the survey questions were revealing. The data suggest that faculty members at many institutions are improving their practice *as a result of working with the NCATE Unit Standards*. Of the respondents;

- 83 percent agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members demonstrate increased focus on candidate learning as a result of working with the NCATE standards.
- 87 percent agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members demonstrate improved assessment techniques as a result of working with the NCATE standards.
- 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members demonstrate increased use of technology in the teaching and learning process as a result of working with the NCATE standards.
- 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members demonstrate better tracking of candidate knowledge and skills as a result of working with the NCATE standards.
- 78 percent agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members demonstrate improved ability to identify and assess candidates' dispositions for the profession as a result of working with the NCATE standards.

The Accreditation Process

The survey included two sets of questions related to the overall accreditation process: 1.) were the costs associated with developing and maintaining an assessment system worthwhile, and 2.) do your candidates benefit from attending an institution accredited based on the NCATE standards. Not including those unable to evaluate these questions, 70 percent of the respondents indicated that the cost associated with building an assessment system was worthwhile; 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the cost associated with maintaining an assessment system is worthwhile; and 67 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the expenditure of time and energy used to build and maintain the system is worthwhile. On the scale of 1-4, this set of questions was the only set in which the mean rating was less than 3.0.

Comments indicated that some respondents felt that the resources required to build and maintain assessment systems were excessive and could have been better used. Some of these respondents commented that, particularly in a time when budgets are being cut and resources thinly stretched, the mounting costs of developing an assessment system require budgetary consideration. Others commented that the process of building and maintaining the systems improved the quality of the unit and was well worth the time and money.

When asked if their candidates benefit from attending an institution accredited based on the NCATE standards, 95 percent of respondents reported “yes.” The comments indicated that candidates benefit because the process ensures the quality of the programs offered, holds institutions accountable for that quality, and forces institutions to engage in continuous improvement that includes reflection on the work of the unit, comparisons to national standards, and data-driven decision making. Some of the respondents’ comments about how NCATE standards and the accreditation process benefit candidates are listed below:

- Candidates are better prepared to meet the challenges in schools. They are prepared to meet the needs of diverse populations and can use technology in their classrooms. They also realize that ongoing assessment is critical in developing an effective teaching environment.
- It [NCATE accreditation] has made us more accountable. We no longer do what we want to do but what we should do.
- We are committed to excellent preparation of teachers regardless of whether we are NCATE accredited. However, accreditation provides the impetus for evaluating our effectiveness and assuring that we are doing what we say we are doing.
- Our work with the NCATE Standards as well as state standards and specialized professional association guidelines helps to provide a more coherent program for our candidates. Assessment of candidates and the unit helps us to make improvements at the program and unit level that lead to better preparation of candidates.
- The new standards have driven unit and university-wide improvements that benefit candidates immensely.
- Programs are better coordinated and more focused as a result of accreditation requirements. All faculty are required to be knowledgeable of current standards and best practices in teacher education (e.g., performance based assessment, collaboration with school-based colleagues, and the use of data to drive decision making). The Professional Education Unit receives increased visibility and greater attention and resources because of the need to meet accreditation

requirements.

- As a result of our association with NCATE, the unit is much more attuned to using assessment data for program improvement. Our program is better aligned with state, national, and professional standards than ever before. We more effectively monitor student progress or lack thereof throughout the program, and the program now systematically develops teaching skills of candidates. The diversity of our field experiences is the strongest it has ever been.
- If it were not for NCATE, we would have no coordinated assessment or standards.

The survey is very informative. It revealed that overall the NCATE standards are clear and include relevant and appropriate content, from the perspectives of the deans and NCATE coordinators who responded. The survey respondents indicated that working with the standards improves the cohesion and quality of programs offered; helps and supports units as they focus on candidate learning; supports and/or improves faculty teaching; and establishes shared expectations for unit accountability.

As indicated earlier, the respondents were also given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions which were designed to provide information to be used in NCATE's standards revision process. This report will be used by the Standards Committee of the Unit Accreditation Board (UAB) as it revises the Unit Standards. The Committee hopes to present proposed revised standards to the UAB in October 2006. After an additional call for comment, the revised standards will be forwarded to the Executive Board for ratification in spring 2007.