

Report of the Accreditation Re-visit to Argosy University May 6, 2009

Overview:

This item is a follow-up of the accreditation visit to Argosy University that was conducted April 20-23, 2008. This item provides the report of the re-visit team and recommendations regarding four stipulations and the accreditation status.

Staff Recommendations

1. That the four stipulations from the 2008 accreditation visit be removed.

2. That the accreditation decision be changed from **Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations** to **Accreditation**

Background

A Committee on Accreditation (COA) team conducted a visit at Argosy University on April 20-23, 2008. On the basis of the accreditation team report, the COA made the following accreditation decision for Argosy University and all of its credential programs: **Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations**.

The institution was required to address the stipulations, submit a plan to meet all standards less than met, submit quarterly progress reports describing the institution's progress in addressing all stipulations and meeting all standards less than fully met and prepare for a full-team re-visit within one year of the original accreditation action.

The institution prepared a document describing how each of the stipulations had been addressed and what changes had been made in areas of the standards identified by the team as needing attention. The institution prepared an interview schedule for the constituencies identified by the team. The re-visit was originally to be conducted by the original team leader along with three team members. However, on the Friday just prior to the visit the team lost one member due to illness so the re-visit was conducted by the Team Lead and two team members.

After a full day of interviews on campus, the team made recommendations on each stipulation and findings on each of the four Multiple Subject and four Single Subject standards less than fully met. On Tuesday evening, the team prepared an accreditation report that was presented to the institution. It is now provided to the Committee on Accreditation for consideration and action.

Following are the stipulations from the original accreditation visit and the Re-visit team's recommendations:

Stipulations from the 2008 Visit	Re-visit Team's Recommendations
1. That the institution provide the COA with a written plan within 60 days describing how the institution will address the stipulations and abide by all Commission standards and regulations.	The Stipulation be removed

Stipulations from the 2008 Visit	Re-visit Team's Recommendations
2. That the institution provide the COA with quarterly progress reports noting the steps taken by the institution to address the stipulations.	The Stipulation be removed
3. That the institution provide evidence that all program and Common Standards less than fully met are met within one year of the date of this action.	The Stipulation be removed
4. That a full team Re-visit take place within one year to review evidence related to all standards not fully met.	The Stipulation be removed

**COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING
COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION
ACCREDITATION TEAM RE-VISIT REPORT**

Institution: Argosy University

Dates of Re-Visit: May 4-6, 2009

**Original
COA Accreditation
Decision:** Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations

Re-visit Team Recommendations

The team recommends that:

1. The four stipulations from the April 20-23, 2008 accreditation visit be removed.
2. The accreditation decision be changed from **Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations** to **Accreditation**.

Rationale

Based upon the Institutional Response to the Stipulations, information included in the Quarterly Progress Reports, review of supporting evidence and interviews with faculty members, institutional administration, candidates, graduates, and field supervisors, the team determined that the institution has addressed each of the stipulations. In addition, the institution has addressed the standards less than fully met which were identified during the accreditation visit one year ago and the standards were all found to be Met.

Team Leader: **Barbara Morton**
Concordia University

Jody Daughtry
California State University, Fresno

Charles “Buck” Weber
El Tejon Unified School District

Staff: **Marilynn Fairgood**, Consultant

Below are listed the stipulations approved by the COA after the site visit in 2008 followed by the 2009 institutional response. Next are listed the re-visit team findings and recommendations. After this section, the re-visit team findings on the Common Standards and program standards are presented.

Findings on Stipulations

Stipulation #1

That the institution provide the COA with a written plan within 60 days describing how the institution will address the stipulations and abide by all Commission Standards and regulations.

Institutional Response (2009)

The institution submitted a plan and evidence related to all standards – Common and Program – that were less than fully met. See the standards section for specifics.

Re-visit Team Finding

The eight Common Standards are now met. The four Single Subject and four Multiple Subject program standards are now met.

Re-visit Team Recommendation

Re-visit team recommends removal of the stipulation.

Stipulation #2

That the institution provide the COA with quarterly progress reports noting the steps taken by the institution to address the stipulations.

Institutional Response (2009)

Argosy University submitted Quarterly Progress reports on October 10, 2008, January 10, 2008 and April 1, 2009. Each report described continued progress in addressing all stipulations and meeting all standards. Staff presented information reports on the quarterly reports to the COA during the January and April COA meetings.

Re-visit Team Finding

The institution submitted the required quarterly progress reports and supporting evidence to Commission staff. Team members confirmed the progress that Argosy University described in its Quarterly Progress Reports during the May 4-6, 2009 re-visit. Please see the Common and Program sections for specifics.

Re-visit Team Recommendation

Re-visit team recommends removal of the stipulation.

Stipulation #3

That the institution provide evidence that all program and Common Standards less than fully met are met within one year of the date of this action.

Institutional Response (2009)

In preparation for the re-visit, the university submitted a revised self-study document that addressed all Common and Program standards that were less than fully met. See the standards section for specifics.

Re-visit Team Finding

The seven Common Standards are now met. The four Multiple Subject and four Single Subject program standards are also now met.

Re-visit Team Recommendation

The Re-visit team recommends removal of the stipulation.

Stipulation #4

That a full team Re-visit take place within one year to review evidence related to all standards not fully met.

Institutional Response

The institution prepared for and hosted a re-visit May 4-6, 2009.

Re-visit Team Finding

The team conducted the re-visit and found that all Common Standards are now met and that the four Multiple Subject and four Single Subject Program Standards are now met.

Re-visit Team Recommendation

Re-visit team recommends removal of the stipulation.

Common Standards

Findings on Common Standard 1: Educational Leadership (2008) Met with Concerns

As the visiting team was convening for the review, changes were either underway or had been recently made in some roles and responsibilities. This made it challenging to truly understand the effectiveness of the organizational hierarchy, as it was still evolving as the team was onsite. Some program personnel and students also reported that they were unaware of job responsibility changes as a consolidation of services occurred for the Southern California campuses.

Though the self-study document indicates that Program chairs seek widespread faculty consultation and approval regarding all matters pertaining to academic policy review or change, this was not clearly evident after multiple interviews and an analysis of documentation in the evidence room. The fact that a significantly large proportion of AU faculty are adjuncts may cause a greater challenge in achieving broader participation by those actually delivering the program. Purportedly, all program faculty are invited to attend quarterly faculty/staff meetings, but there was no clear evidence of consistent and wide participation by adjuncts in meetings at any of the California campuses.

Some of the practices of the California campuses regarding management of the teacher credentialing program requirements are sometimes fragmented or inconsistent. There are examples of specific practices going on at one campus that could clearly benefit the others. One best practice might show up at one campus, while another good practice might be demonstrated at a different site. If they worked more closely together or developed a more centralized management structure, these strategies could be shared with all and become more consistent across all the California locations.

Institutional Response (2009)

Argosy University reports that, system wide:

- One person now oversees credential programs. Notification of the administrative restructuring was mailed to faculty.
- Candidates are notified of changes as they occur. To ensure that a process exists and all students are informed, an email distribution list has been developed and communiqués are sent to all students notifying them of changes.
- One full-time faculty member at each site is dedicated to the coordination of credentials programs and working with the Program Chair to assure consistency and quality.
- To ensure consistency of practices, syllabi have undergone considerable revision. Meetings are held to review program policies and procedures to ensure candidates receive consistent direction, oversight and support.
- AU has consolidated and standardized procedures in data collection and retrieval that allows for more accurate, effective student advisement systemwide.
- The AU credentials analysts met and agreed upon common procedures that include an electronically-stored Petition to Register for Field Experience. The form requires the credential analysts to check off all necessary criteria for program advancement including proof of passing CBEST and CSET. Certification information about the clear credential is also now given to teacher preparation program candidates.

- Regular communication with all teaching credential stakeholders normally occurs through the use of e-mail; however, meetings are scheduled with core faculty on a frequent basis and with all faculty at least once a semester. The university reports that the fall 2008 faculty meeting included 11 adjunct faculty members who provided significant constructive feedback and those adjuncts who were unable to attend expressed an interest in the process.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team found that Argosy University has instituted a new teacher credential program organizational structure that has resulted in more effective program management and communication with candidates and faculty as well as greater cohesiveness and consistency across all site.

This new organizational structure has provided increased opportunities for participation in the decision-making process for all constituencies. Significant numbers of adjunct faculty made special note of their opportunities to provide input regarding programmatic development.

In addition to a new organizational structure, the administrators, faculty and staff worked together to develop a more centralized management structure which has led to more efficient practices. The new shared data management system has facilitated this process. This standard is now **Met**.

Findings on Standard 2: Resources (2008)

Met with Concerns

After careful review of the self-study document, interview information, and supporting documents, the visiting team had concerns regarding the small number of full-time faculty at the larger California AU campuses and the ability to attain the consistency, appropriate evaluation and support needed for program delivery.

AU campuses attempt to provide resources and support for faculty development university-wide, but it appears that very little is focused on the specific needs of those working in teacher preparation and the unique aspects of California and federal requirements.

A budget and planning Advisory Committee is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the College annual budget, but no evidence was found to indicate the frequency of these meetings, the specific topics, the meeting participants or actions and outcomes. Requests are reportedly made for supplemental funding based upon department priority.

Institutional Response (2009)

In response to the accreditation team's findings, Argosy University has appointed one individual as Chair for the credential programs. There is one coordinator at each of the other three AU sites. The Chair has supervisory responsibility of the program and oversees the program coordinators. The institution has hired two new administrative faculty members: one who will coordinate the San Francisco credentials program and the other will be responsible for system-wide TPA administration and programs evaluation.

In addition, the university hired an analyst who also brings a strong information technology background that has enabled the credentials program to implement technology solutions designed to enhance the consistency of the program across the state. A new position has been created which is referred to as the State Chair, Credentials Program. The individual serving in this position will strengthen relationships with the State and other external stakeholders, among other responsibilities. It is anticipated that the position will be filled before the fall semester of 2009.

The University recognizes that its instructors must be familiar with California and federal requirements pertinent to teacher preparation. Accordingly, all adjunct instructors were invited to participate in a needs assessment process in April of 2008. A newer needs assessment instrument has been developed and will serve as the basis for further professional development for the faculty. Furthermore, the Program Chair invites faculty to participate in important training. It is anticipated that adjunct faculty will need to update their Teacher Performance Assessment knowledge, as well as how to teach in the Class Live Pro format, a synchronous instructional delivery modality that will link the various learning sites.

Argosy reports that there was a misunderstanding about some of the information in the 2008 self-study and that there is no Advisory Committee responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the annual budget. The Argosy credential programs participate in the annual academic program review process, along with all other programs within Argosy University. It is that process that drives budget development for the next fiscal cycle.

Two changes that took place as a result of the program review process is, at the San Francisco campus, the identification of the need for further tutoring support of students, regardless of academic program, led to the submission and approval of a budget that included funding for this academic assistance service. Creation of the Student Success Center at the Orange County location was funded on the basis of consistent feedback from all programs (inclusive of the Teaching Credential program) that Argosy needed to invest in further support services to enhance student academic performance. AU anticipates that additional faculty will be allocated to the program as student enrollment increases.

Re-visit Team Finding

Through improved communication and opportunities for participation the adjunct faculty has been integrated into the mainstream of the Argosy University program. This includes providing more focused professional development for the teacher credential faculty – full-time and adjunct.

AU has hired two new administrative faculty members: one will coordinate the San Francisco credentials program and the other will be responsible for system-wide TPA administration and programs evaluation.

The team found that the teacher preparation program is appropriately supported through the annual budget process. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**.

Findings on Standard 3: Faculty (2008)

Met with Concerns

According to the self study, program leaders regularly evaluate the performance of course instructors and field supervisors through a process that incorporates end-of-course evaluations responded to by candidates. Evidence of these evaluations was provided to the visiting team, but interviews seemed to indicate that faculty (the adjuncts) did not see these evaluation results, nor were they discussed with them. It appears that faculty who do not perform well are not given additional courses, nor asked back.

AU states that faculty development is essential for effective teaching and professional development, though it does not appear that much occurs for the specific needs of teacher preparation, especially in the California contexts. Throughout the AU system, full-time faculty contracts include paid time away from the school for professional development. Additionally, they receive funding to participate in professional development activities, including attendance or presentations at regional or national professional meetings, workshops, or conferences in the field of education (these resources do not appear to be available to the adjuncts who are the bulk of the overall faculty in California).

Institutional Response (2009):

Argosy University reports that it has been a practice of the university to seek course and instructor evaluation from students through the use of an end-of-course evaluation. Interviews conducted by the visiting team demonstrated that the loop between this assessment process and feeding the information back to faculty did not function properly. Accordingly, the program is now committed to ensuring that instructors receive this feedback from Program Coordinators in a timely manner. Often this feedback is provided orally, but occasionally it comes as written feedback.

See the Institutional Response to Common Standard 2, Resources, second paragraph, addressing faculty development. AU reports that it has implemented a staff development policy that now includes adjunct faculty.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team finds that faculty are consistently informed about the results of their teaching evaluations. The team also finds that all faculty have numerous opportunities for professional development related to teacher preparation.

AU now has program coordinators dedicated to the credential programs and anticipates that additional faculty will be allocated to the program as student enrollment increases. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**.

Findings on Standard 4: Evaluation

Met with Concerns

At the end of each semester (or two time per year in December and May, the Program Chairs initiate the collection of evaluation data, then review and analyze the results. In the future, it is anticipated that advisory committees will have a role in the evaluation of teacher prep programs for the California campuses. The program does not regularly involve program employers and local practitioners (mentor teachers, etc.) in the evaluation of the quality of credential programs. The evidence found was not systematically collected across all programs with any regularity or consistency.

Institutional Response

Argosy University reports that adjunct faculty and employers of graduates are invited to meetings that will focus on program and programmatic improvement once a trimester. University leadership meets with site administrators at the beginning of each field experience session and follows up with a similar meeting at the end of the experience. Site administrators are asked to provide written evaluation of the program at this last meeting.

Each of the learning sites includes program mentor teachers in the evaluation of student teachers. The documents associated with this evaluation are reviewed by program personnel and serve as a checkpoint before students may move beyond the first student teaching session. The assessment occurs again prior to recommendation on behalf of the student for the credential. Mentor teachers are also invited to attend program meetings to provide feedback on the trends they see with respect to the quality of preparation of student teachers.

Input is more broadly sought by program stakeholders with respect to the quality and currency of the teaching credential program. Program administration has found that mentor teachers are more apt to provide feedback on a specific student than participate in a robust discussion about programmatic quality. For this reason, the Program Chair will ensure that advisory board (the membership of which includes several employers of Argosy graduates) discussions more fully address the overarching programmatic strengths and weaknesses in addition to the kind of student-specific feedback that mentor teachers provide.

Re-visit Team Finding

The university seeks input from program employers regarding program quality through their participation on the Teacher Credential Programs Advisory Board. There is continuous two-way communication between district field experience supervisors, university supervisors and coordinators; therefore, there is a strong sense among district field experience supervisors that they also have input regarding program evaluation. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**

Findings on Standard 6: Advice and Assistance

Met with Concerns

Students frequently commented they received consistent information in regard to questions about the credential program. However, documents and interviews pointed to some discrepancies between the levels of awareness for candidates regarding the process for clearing SB 2042 Credentials in Multiple or Single Subjects and the need for the credentials to be cleared through one of the state prescribed Induction options. Additionally, faculty and student knowledge of the Teacher Performance Assessment implementation and its specific requirements was generally weak or nonexistent. Also, there was some confusion as to when CSET or other subject matter requirements must be met.

Institutional Response (2009)

Argosy University reports that attention is now given to the BTSA induction process and that a document explaining BTSA is provided to credential candidates. Additionally, the Foundations of Education course includes a module during which candidates are introduced to the Commission's website and the overall concepts found within the BTSA process.

As of July 1, 2008 candidates entering the Multiple and Single Subject programs are informed of the TPA requirement. Information about the TPA is also included in the candidate Field Experience Handbook. Course syllabi have been revised to include all TPEs. The TPA experience will be finalized through the capstone course.

Please see Institutional Response to Common Standard 1, final bullet, and Program Standard 1(b) related to the CSET requirement.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team found that candidates are currently given very clear advice about program content and requirements including the Teacher Performance Assessment. Information about the TPA is also included in the candidate Field Experience Handbook. Course syllabi have been revised to include all TPEs. Candidates also receive information about induction program requirements. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**.

Findings on Standard 7: School Collaboration

Met with Concerns

The self-study indicates that AU seeks to place candidates in specific classrooms where the need is greatest, and where it is a good fit for the individual candidates. The visiting team interviews seemed to indicate that the candidates often selected where they wanted to go and the university attempted to honor that request. There was no evidence to be found that these requested sites were carefully scrutinized for suitability and state compliance to assure quality. They seemed to be more a matter of convenience for the candidate. Also, many students indicated they remained at the same school-site for both parts of their AU student teaching.

Argosy participates with several school districts to place students for student teaching. These collaborations also include using local district personnel as adjunct faculty to provide practical, real life experiences for credential candidates. However, the university does not seem to consistently coordinate or support early fieldwork experiences in K-12 classrooms prior to student teaching. Several students interviewed had not observed or worked in classrooms until

their student teaching portion of the program, although syllabi indicated that field experiences were required in some courses.

AU does not seem to recognize the need required by SB 2042 for specific types of collaboration with BTSA-Induction programs as a part of the California “learning to teach continuum.” They cited one specific collaboration to provide university credit for Induction events or training, but did not have any AU program faculty or administrators participating on BTSA-Induction Advisory Boards. Additionally, AU candidates seemed to generally be unaware of the requirements for clearing their credentials after receiving the Preliminary Credential and Induction options.

Institutional Response (2009)

Argosy University reports that it strives to place candidates in appropriate field assignments and supports placements that are a good fit.

In response to the team’s findings, Argosy University reports that syllabi have been revised and, with the exception of one, now contain a Field Observation requirement and that the observations are tied to specific TPEs within the courses.

The university has actively sought participation in local BTSA advisory Boards by enlisting the help of an Administrator in the Professional Development Unit of the Department of Education to advise local BTSA Induction programs that AU is interested in serving as a member of their Advisory Boards. AU now serves on nine Northern and Southern California school district BTSA Advisory Boards. AU also reports that BTSA representatives from two school districts now serve on the university’s K-12 Education Advisory Board.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team finds that the teacher credential program currently collaborates with school districts on quality placements for student teachers. While student input is accepted, it is the university and district that make the assignment.

The team found that in its course redesign, Argosy incorporated field observations in all courses with the exception of ED 6900, Cultural Diversity.

The re-visit team found that in the interest of increased school collaboration Argosy has sought membership on BTSA advisory boards throughout their service region. AU now serves on nine BTSA Advisory Boards. AU also has BTSA representatives from school districts who now serve on the university’s K-12 Education Advisory Board. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**.

Findings on Standard 8: District Field Supervisors

Met with Concerns

AU appears to primarily rely on University Field Supervisors to communicate with their District Field Supervisors (Mentor Teachers) for informing them of changes in fieldwork requirements, to clarify supervision procedures, and/or to assess and discuss progress or concerns regarding

student teachers. There is no evidence of assurance that District Field Supervisors are either oriented or trained by the AU program beyond a one-on-one orientation provided by the University Field Supervisors. Professional development seems to be random, if occurring at all for the teacher preparation areas. There is also a lack of evidence for support of District Field Supervisors (Mentor Teachers) and recognition for outstanding service.

Institutional Response (2009)

Argosy reports that, recognizing the need to orient the district field supervisors (or mentor teachers, as they are referred to by Argosy University) about the expectations of the University, the Field Experience Handbook has been revised to provide a significant amount of information and a compilation of forms that district supervisors must be cognizant of and utilize. The University supervisor meets at the beginning of the student teaching session with the mentor teacher to review the Field Experience Handbook. The Field Experience Handbook is reviewed in detail to ensure that the mentor teacher understands Argosy University's expectations and practices.

Argosy University reports that District Field Supervisors (Mentor Teachers) are now offered the professional development opportunity to select graduate-level courses in the School of Education which they may take free of charge. Recognition of outstanding service is provided in the form of a letter of appreciation sent from the campus Vice President for Academic Affairs. These letters are generated upon recommendation of the Program Chair in consultation with the University supervisors. The letter also reminds the mentor teacher of the offer for a graduate level course, at no charge, which is available to any mentor teacher who assists Argosy candidates in becoming excellent classroom teachers. In this manner, Argosy both recognizes the commitment and contributions made as well as provides a developmental opportunity to mentor teachers.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team confirms that the Field Experience Handbook has been revised in an effort to better orient District Field Experience Supervisors (Mentor Teachers) to their role. The University Field Experience Supervisor has the responsibility for orientation of the District Field Experience Supervisors to the Argosy program. District Field Experience Supervisors are also given letters of appreciation for outstanding service, stipends and a graduate level course at no charge. The re-visit team finds that this standard is now **Met**.

Multiple Subject Credential Program Single Subject Credential Program

One year ago, the team determined that four of the Multiple Subject program standards and four of the Single Subject program standards were **Not Met**.

Findings on the Standards (2008)

Standard 1: Program Design – Not Met

1(b) Sequence of Program: A list of courses was found in the self study indicating which courses were the foundation courses, concentration courses, field experience and capstone. There was no mention in any documents of a specific sequence in which the courses were to be taken. Interviews with students and data in student files indicated that the sequence in which students took classes varied greatly and in some cases students were taking foundation and concentration courses during or after their student teaching experience.

Standard 2: Collaboration in Governing the Program – Not Met

2(f) Partnerships with Professional Induction Programs: There was no evidence that students were given any information or advisement regarding induction programs or that an effort was made to help candidates make the transition to professional induction programs.

Standard 14: Preparation to Teach Special Populations in the General Education Classroom – Not Met

14(a) Major Categories of Disabilities: The self study indicated that class instruction focuses on disability categories and the impact of disabilities on learning and behavior. An assignment called the “Characteristics Matrix” is mentioned as a way to synthesize what students learned about disabilities and how to provide accommodations. There was no evidence in any course syllabi of the matrix assignment or that disability categories or accommodations for students with specific disabilities are discussed in courses. Although student interviews indicated that students learned about making accommodations for students with special needs there was no evidence that they were informed of specific disability categories.

Standard 17: Candidate Qualifications for Teaching Responsibilities in the Fieldwork Sequence – Not Met

17(a) Verification of Completion of Subject Matter Competence: Based on student records and interviews with candidates it was evident that students were not required to verify completion of subject matter competence before student teaching. In some cases students completed all of student teaching prior to passing the appropriate subject matter examination.

Institutional Response (2009)

- 1 (b) Argosy University has examined the program courses and their proper sequence and re-designed and sequenced courses so that they align with the university’s philosophy, vision and mission. Candidates in each program begin with courses that provide a sound foundation in education. Each subsequent course builds upon knowledge gained from previous courses. This new course sequence and the common practices that are now in place ensures that no candidate is permitted to student teach prior to verification of subject matter knowledge.

- 2 (f) Please see response to Common Standard 6 and Common Standard 7.
- 14 (a) The visit team reviewed revised syllabi for E6901 and E6910. Both syllabi, as a result of faculty input, now include modules in which the major categories of disabilities are the primary focus. Assignments specifically involved with the major categories of disabilities are found on page 14 of the E6901 syllabus and on pages 9-10 of the E6910 syllabus.
- 17 (a) Please see response to Common Standard 1 and Program Standard 1(b). Argosy University discovered that their program erroneously allowed candidates to enter student teaching prior to completion of CSET prior to the initial accreditation visit and moved to correct the deficiency. Procedures currently in place ensure that no candidate is allowed to student teach until they have satisfied the subject matter requirement.

Re-visit Team Finding

The re-visit team finds that Argosy University now has a well-defined course sequence that all students follow. It is now clear that Argosy candidates are well informed on induction programs. Argosy has strengthened its coursework so that candidates are knowledgeable about categories of disabilities and their impact on learning and behavior. Candidates are also well prepared to use inclusive teaching strategies. All candidates are now required to verify subject matter competence prior to student teaching. The re-visit team finds that these standards are now **Met**.