Chapter 2

A Case Study:
Closing the Assessment Loop with Program and Institutional Data

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We know that a nationwide shortage of highly qualified teachers exists, and not enough people are becoming teachers. We also know there are increasing demands for institutions to demonstrate a system of accountability through program assessment. As stated by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (2005), "The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education believes improved accountability for better results is imperative, but how to improve accountability in higher education is not so obvious" (p. 4). Also, many teacher preparation programs are not accredited, and of the 1,300 teacher preparation programs that existed in 1999, only 38 percent were accredited through the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (The CEO Forum on Education & Technology, 2000, p. 3). While examining the effectiveness of the Teacher Education program assessment at the case institution, three convergent themes emerged.

BACKGROUND

In 2005, both NCATE and the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) conducted an initial approval site visit to 2 of 14 external campuses of this Texas-based four-year private University. The purpose of their visit was to assess and approve the teacher education programs administered at this University's New Mexico campuses under the NCATE and NM PED standards. The only major deficiency identified during the visit was the lack of sufficient evidence in meeting the following standard:

The unit has an assessment system that collects and analyzes data on applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate performance, and unit operations to evaluate and improve the unit and its programs (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, n.d., p. 4; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2005, p. 19).

Although some forms of accountability were being maintained informally, the campus did not meet the NCATE standard on the existence of program accountability through assessment measures. With the team's imminent return in January 2008 to conduct a *Focus Visit* on assessment measures, the need to show evidence that an effective assessment plan and measures were in place was imperative. If documentation of meaningful accountability measures was not evident prior to the scheduled visit, the campus stood to lose program approval to continue administering its educator preparation programs.

SETTING THE STAGE

In addition to the requirement for the Teacher Education Program to meet NCATE standards, approval to operate a New Mexico-based program requires meeting the New Mexico Public Education Division standards, as well. Because only 2 of the 13 off-site campuses operate teacher education programs in New Mexico, and accreditation teams would be visiting these off-site campuses, the director and co-director at the case site decided it would be best to collect and store program data onsite. The software programs used for storing program data are Microsoft Word® and Excel®, and the program director forwards the data to the Education Division Chair at the main campus on a frequent and periodic basis.

Through the efforts of a visionary leader at the case institution, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) was established in 1994. The OIRE is housed at the main campus and continues to be tasked with providing precise,

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