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The College of Education’s first site visit from the Florida Department of Education concluded with a recommendation for full approval of the MA in Elementary Education/ESOL and its systems for program delivery and continuous improvement. The self-study and the program have been recommended as a model for the state of Florida. Final approval comes in May 2009 after the team recommendations are reviewed and acted upon by the Program Approval Board and the Commissioner of Education.

Dean Vivian Fueyo, PhD, cited as noteworthy three written commendations from the team: “dedicated faculty and staff, collegial environment, and respect gained from students and other community stakeholders.”

The program, which has 40 graduate students currently enrolled, is designed for students interested in becoming elementary teachers who have bachelor’s degrees in areas other than education. Students, who come with degrees in accounting, psychology, and engineering, report that the program gives them the opportunity to follow their dreams of making a difference in the lives of children.

The six-person site visit team used the Florida Department of Education’s Continuing Program Approval Standards to evaluate the program’s effectiveness in three areas of state standards: 1) the curriculum content delivered in the approved program includes the state of Florida’s Uniform Core Curriculum and all other state-mandated requirements; 2) each candidate in the approved program will demonstrate all competencies identified in Statute and Rule; and 3) the approved program implements processes to ensure continuous program improvement.

During the four-day site visit in September, the team observed classes, spoke with students, faculty, alumni, and university administrators, reviewed student work, met with the college’s community advisory board members, interviewed school district teachers and administrators, and evaluated the program’s system of continuous improvement.

Mark Howse, PhD, Assessment Coordinator at Bethune-Cookman University, served as team chair. The other team members were Lance Tomei, PhD, Director for Assessment, Accreditation, and Data Management at the University of Central Florida; and Adriana McEachern, PhD, Interim Dean of the College of Education at Florida International University. The site visit team was accompanied by three non-voting members, Genae Crump, PhD, Program Director of Educator Preparation for the Florida Department of Education; Tonya Brown, DOE Educator Preparation Program Specialist; and Eugenia Russell-Cole, PhD, Director of Advising for Education at Florida Memorial University.

The team will prepare a written report with the findings of its visit. The report with the team’s decision will be sent to the university within three months of the site visit. Continuing program approval by the team will result in a seven-year approval by the Florida Department of Education for the College of Education to continue to offer this popular degree program leading to teacher certification.

The visit by the Florida Department of Education will be followed in September of 2009 by a site visit from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The NCATE team will review evidence from the College of Education in relationship to six national standards: 1) candidates’ knowledge, skills and professional dispositions; 2) the college’s assessment system and unit evaluation; 3) field experiences and clinical practice; 4) diversity; 5) faculty qualifications, performance, and development; and 6) unit governance and resources.