Evidence and Analysis of the Quality Assurance System of the EPP for Continuous Improvement:

Our EPP’s online quality assurance system or *Learning Assessment Reporting System* (*LARS*) is comprised of multiple measures that provides and monitors regular and comprehensive data on candidate qualifications, progress, and performance; completer achievements; program quality; and EPP operational efficacy. As an additive measure, Texas requires all candidate data from admissions through recommendation for state certification to be included in individual candidate folders housed in the Office of Teacher Preparation and Advising. This two-pronged approach to quality assurance provides formative, ongoing feedback, and summative decision points to candidates and to programs.

In 2012-2013, the EPP purchased an external online provider as a transparent and accessible system to monitor candidate progress and performance. Insurmountable obstacles arose among our university’s institutional technology security system and the external provider’s their inflexible requirements of unlimited access to our servers. The EPP continued negotiations with the provider until 2015 and the EPP finally withdrew from the contract. The EPP has used the *LARS* system for quality control, quality assurance, and as a timeline mechanism since 2013. Currently, the EPP is in the process of creating our own additional proprietary system for the EPP with an expected implementation in Fall 2016.

Through our current comprehensive system, the EPP maintains a quality assurance system comprised of *valid data from multiple measures*, including evidence of the positive impacts of candidates and completers. The EPP’s *LARS Quality Assurance System* supports continuous improvement that is sustained, evidence-based, and evaluates the effectiveness of our completers. The EPP uses the results of all inquiry and data collection to establish the unit’s priorities, enhance our program elements and capacity, and to test innovations to improve our completers’ impact on P-12 student learning and development.

*LARS Quality Assurance System of the EPP:*
*Multiple Measures for Operational Effectiveness.*

In our *LARS Quality Assurance System*, the EPP uses multiple measures in all programs at all levels as coherent data sets to balance both the strengths and weaknesses of individual measures that are applied across all programs to support targeted changes at program and/or candidate levels. Having established an ongoing assessment cycle for course(s) and programmatic changes and improvements, the EPP gathers data, analyses, and action steps for improvement from each program’s submitted *LARS* reports. The collected data, course and program reviews, and program effectiveness evaluations were analyzed and completed by committees comprised of program chairs, program faculty, and EPP administrators. Aligned the with EPP’s shared vision/conceptual framework and mission, the assessment cycle assesses two of the EPP’s Program Educational Outcomes.
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(PEOs) per year in all programs. All six of the PEOs will be evaluated across a three-year cycle. The Ethical and Professional Dispositions of Candidates are also assessed. Programs identify at least three meaningful and manageable instructional and three non-instructional outcomes that:

- are visible and measurable;
- describe what candidates can do or demonstrate as a result of the program; and
- align with and support the Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs).

Programs include links to supplemental documents that support their data analyses and provide examples of candidate coursework, assessment rubrics, and additional program-specific standards that may apply.

Programs explain the methods and criteria (at least three) that were used for each outcome that:

- draw from at least two direct data sources, ideally part of coursework;
- describe data source: course name and number, assignment, or activity; and
- describe the instrument used for scoring or measuring the assignment or activity.

Methods describe how candidates are evaluated. Each method identifies a target or minimum performance standard and the percentage of candidates to achieve it.

Programs answer questions such as: What specifically will we measure? How do we want to use, collect, analyze, interpret, and report the data? What level is acceptable as evidence of improvement or success?

Corresponding outcomes are also included (such as PEO 1 and PEO 6).

Assessment results and findings are reported in LARS each year. Each method provides results and analysis, that includes:

- qualitative or quantitative data in a narrative summary or table; and
- a well-reasoned description of conclusions, significance, and impact.

Results describe findings, including strengths and weaknesses, and whether programs are achieving the intended results. Programs answer questions, such as: What are the results? Are we meeting the desired level of performance?

Program analyses include designated Areas for Growth based upon the data collected to address the sentence stem: From the data gathered, the program can improve in the following ways; and to answer the question, Were these expectations met?

Two additional sections on the LARS reports that are vital information for the EPP about each program include “Actions,” and “Closing the Loop.” Each action describes the relationship among results, decisions, and next steps and explains how results are used to
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inform program, unit, or curricular changes. Programs answer the questions, “How can we improve the candidate learning experience or program? What changes can we test for the next cycle?

Programs evaluate the “Effectiveness of Action” in LARS reporting that have “Result Categories” of Curricular Change, Course Revision, Development Training, and Other categories.

One of the most important aspects of the LARS Quality Assurance System for the EPP is the “Closing the Loop Analysis.”

Closing the Loop Analysis.

The EPP informs our unit that in 21st century American higher education, it is no longer sufficient for programs to conduct assessments that simply generate data. Universities must “provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results” (SACSCOC, Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1). These results should stem from the effective collection of data within a system-wide assessment process. The act of using results to improve candidate-learning outcomes has widely been characterized as “closing the loop.”

While similar in nature to the “Actions” section, the closing the loop section differs in several important ways. This section is designed to prompt programs to reflect on changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and programming across multiple years. As assessment processes mature, this section will serve as a multi-year narrative that captures not only what changes were made based on evidence, but the impact those changes have had over time.

Additionally, this section can be used to communicate non-instructional actions that have been implemented based on an analysis of results across assessment cycles. For example, if a program deems that candidate learning has been inhibited by a lack of available, appropriate technology, that program may implement a strategic initiative to upgrade/update technology for candidate use. Once that initiative has been implemented, program faculty can report changes in candidate learning outcomes that could be attributed, in part, to this initiative. Used in this manner, the “Closing the Loop Analysis” section strengthens the link between assessment of candidate learning and the strategic planning/budgeting processes that comprise the broader domain of program effectiveness. One of the most important questions in this section that programs will address is: In analyzing assessment actions taken during previous years, how did those actions impact candidate learning?

Our LARS Quality Assurance System demonstrates the EPP’s operational effectiveness in all of our teacher preparation programs in ongoing, systematic, and comprehensive ways. Programs gather, collect, analyze, monitor, and report evidence in annual LARS reports on regular assessment cycles established by the EPP. The EPP’s quality assurance system monitors candidate progress, completer achievements, and operational effectiveness. Each academic year’s LARS reports, analyses, and supplemental documents that each
program uploads provides documentation of a range of different measures that, taken together, comprise a coherent set to inform our programs’ performance against CAEP standards. EPP documentation ensures that our quality assurance system supports changes and continual improvements through the disaggregation of data by programs and/or candidate levels in response to inquiries regarding common assessments, program outcomes, instruction/curriculum, and programmatic evaluations.

**Candidate Progress.**

The EPP has addressed and demonstrated candidate progress with evidence for CAEP Standards 1 and 3. This evidence has been cross-tagged to Standard 5 [See also 1.1.16. Decision Points of the EPP].

**Completer Achievements.**

The EPP has demonstrated our completer achievements in evidence provided for CAEP Standard 4. This evidence has been cross-tagged in CAEP Standard 5.

**Schedule for Continuous Review.**

The annual learning assessment cycle occurs on a continuum of three phases: *Planning Phase* (Sept 30. assessment plans are due each year) to (1) articulate our mission; (2) identify objectives and learning outcomes; (3) determine methods to gather evidence; and to (4) set criteria; the *Gathering Evidence Phase* (fall and spring semesters; June 30 assessment reports/data dissemination profiles are due) to (5) gather evidence; and (6) review and analyze results; and the *Action Phase* (August 31 each year; Plans of Action are due) to (7) recommend actions; and (8) make changes (documented per program committee).

Program faculty, administrators, and the director of accreditation work together in their roles and responsibilities of collecting, gathering, analyzing, reporting, uploading, and disseminating data results to education faculty through meetings, online availability of reports, and sharing results with stakeholders in Teacher Education Unit (TEU) Meetings, Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Advisory Council Meetings, College of Education and Social Sciences Advisory Council Meetings, and the Dean, Leadership, and Superintendent Meetings and Focus Groups.

The EPP, administrators, and the Vice President of the Office of Learning Assessment monitors the quality assurance system operations and data and reviews our system regularly.

Evidence presented for each of the five standards demonstrates that the West Texas A&M University Educator Preparation Program satisfies all CAEP standards.

(Continued).
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Multiple Evidence Sources:

- 5.1.1a. WTAMU Annual Learning Assessment Cycle.
- [See Standard 1 Evidence].
- [See Standard 2 Evidence].
- [See Standard 3 Evidence].
- [See Standard 4 Evidence].
- [See Standard 5 Evidence].