UMUC
Department of Education
Professional Dispositions Policy

University of Maryland University College
Education Department
July 2014
Introduction

In education, professional dispositions are the agreed upon and expected attitudes, values and behaviors of teachers and other educators. Universities develop their professional dispositions for consistency with their conceptual frameworks, and to guide the professional education of their candidates. Demonstration of these dispositions is essential for the effective education of K-12 students.

The Department of Education has a public responsibility for ensuring that its graduates demonstrate these behaviors. This responsibility is enacted, for example, each time UMUC graduates an MAT candidate and recommends this candidate for state teacher certification, which is a public license to practice the art and science of teaching.

UMUC’s professional dispositions are organized in three important areas of professional relationships: with Students through Curriculum and Instruction; with Students, Parents, and other Stakeholders through Effective Communication; and with the University Community, the School Community, and the Profession. In each area, dispositions identify concrete and expected behaviors, which are observable and measureable.

The Department presents these professional dispositions, as listed below, with two important assumptions in mind: 1) Together the listed items constitute a guiding framework for professional educators' development and self-review, and 2) Performance that departs from the listed items may be the basis of stages of corrective intervention.

This document consists of two parts. First, the list of dispositions by category sets forth UMUC’s specific expectations with bulleted indicators. Second, the Stages of Intervention when Candidate Performance Requires Corrective Action sets forth UMUC's policy for handling candidate cases of significant departure from these dispositions. Candidates unable to meet the dispositions may be subject to actions up to removal from the program, when eligibility for state certification is associated with program completion.

Importantly, the professional dispositions play an essential constructive role in candidates' professional development throughout their UMUC program. Candidates interact with these dispositions regularly, through private self-assessment, course assignments, and class discussions. All required assessments are submitted to the Department through Tk20.
Professional Dispositions
Categories, Disposition, and Indicators

There are three categories of UMUC’s Department of Education professional dispositions (Figure 1). Each category contains a number of indicators that act as examples of how the dispositions may be displayed.

Figure 1. Department of Education Professional Disposition Categories.

Relationship with Students through the Curriculum and Instruction:

1. Demonstrates teaching that enables all students to learn at high levels through:
   - Selection of words and actions with students, parents, and other educators
   - Providing appropriate assignments, guidance, and assessments
   - Following the principles of Universal Design for Learning by providing multiple ways for students to learn and show their learning

2. Displays respect for diversity as an essential curricular component through:
   - Seeking and offering multiple perspectives and diversity of ideas
   - Actively facilitating global perspectives and cross-cultural understanding
3. Demonstrates that important academic learning can be promoted through group work by:
   • Ensuring supportive learning environments that are empowering and safe
   • Providing collaborative learning opportunities which include critical thinking and problem solving

4. Demonstrates the ability to respond to individual differences in learning through:
   • Identifying aspects of the learning context, materials, and opportunities that promote each student's learning
   • Adapting instruction for individual learning needs to ensure that powerful options are available which are highly and functionally appropriate and meaningful

5. Demonstrates the importance of adaptability and innovativeness by:
   • Creating learning opportunities that nurture curiosity, innovativeness, and creativity
   • Modeling behavior that demonstrate curiosity, innovativeness, and creativity
   • Incorporating current and emerging technology to transform student learning

Relationship with Students, Parents, and other Stakeholders through Effective Communication:

6. Displays caring and trustworthiness through:
   • Professional behaviors that are honest, sensitive, and compassionate
   • Consistent demonstration of integrity and sound professional judgment

7. Communicates professionally, respectfully, and effectively through:
   • Personal contact and a variety of media, formats, and information sources, which are selected to meet specific information needs
   • Collaboration with parents and other stakeholders to improve student learning

Relationship with the University Community, the School Community and the Profession:

8. Contributes to the broad school community, including online professional networks through:
   • Professional participation in the UMUC online community
   • School-based and external professional development aimed at improving student learning
   • Supporting the needs of students and the school by advocacy and resourcefulness
   • Collaborating with and leading others in achieving important goals and objectives
   • Collaborating effectively to motivate others in shaping and improving the learning community

9. Demonstrates professional responsibility through:
   • Taking initiative and helping to motivate others
   • Constructive responsiveness to problem situations
• Exercising sound professional judgment and dependability
• Preparedness, attendance, and punctuality
• Appropriate demeanor and appearance

10. Demonstrates professional growth through:
• Giving and receiving constructive feedback and guidance
• Collaborative engagement with peers and others
• Habits of reflection and inquiry on teaching practice and student learning
• Practices of continuous improvement
• Continuous development of the knowledge base of one's field(s) of instruction
• Career-long growth and development

Professional Dispositions

Faculty Implementation and Assessment Procedures

Professional dispositions are the expected attitudes, values, and behaviors which are critical to effective interactions with students, their families, and the education community. Dispositions are developed and assessed to ensure that candidates graduate prepared to positively affect student learning (Figure 2). They are a prominent professional development component in the MAT and the MEd in Instructional Technology.

In the first course of the MAT and the MEd programs, professional educators (faculty) will introduce and model dispositions and discuss their importance through instruction. Collaborative discussion occurs within a conference or study group within the class for a week long period. These interactions allow the candidates to share their impression of dispositions’ meanings and discuss how they will manifest within their classroom when they begin to teach. Candidates self-assess their professional dispositions using the Department’s Professional Dispositions Assessment for UMUC Teacher Candidates (Appendix A).

Additional opportunities for engagement and assessment of candidate dispositions occur during other key intervals within the program sequence. At these mid-points the candidates’ knowledge base has developed and they have a new opportunity to consider their professional strengths and areas for development. These mid-program interactions provide candidates an opportunity to revisit the professional dispositions and share new impressions of meanings based on program
content. Additionally, during these mid-point assessments, program faculty have an opportunity to intervene where appropriate (see Intervention Procedures).

During the last course in each program, candidates complete a self-assessment and the professional educators, which may include instructors and clinical faculty, assess professional dispositions. The final courses include the Teaching and Leading Beyond Boundaries assignment where candidates reflect and discuss their ability to meet the professional dispositions and any changes that they have discovered about themselves.

**Intervention Procedures**

Both programs implement informal corrections and guidance as first steps in supporting candidates development of professional dispositions. Faculty are directed to use the disposition assessment form as they evaluate candidates assignments, discussion posts and during clinical experiences. When issues regarding candidates dispositions occur, faculty are to provide informal corrections through guidance and redirection to individual candidates as necessary.

This informal approach is the first step (and most often the only step needed) in ensuring that candidate performance is consistent with the Department of Education’s professional dispositions. Corrective actions that go beyond the informal approach are specified in *UMUC Department of Education Professional Dispositions Policy/Stages of Intervention when Candidate Performance Requires Corrective Action*. The goal is to always see that candidates perform the professional dispositions effectively.

In the event these informal corrections are ineffective or the behaviors are egregious and faculty issues and concerns remain, then more formal actions will occur. The program director is to be notified of any disposition issues that are not remedied through informal measures. Under these circumstances, a meeting will be scheduled with all involved parties, according to the *Stages of Intervention* policy, to address the issues and formulate an action plan. The meetings will be documented and shared with all involved parties. Faculty will continue monitoring the candidate’s behaviors in the class and assess as prescribed by the action plan.

In the event, the dispositions concern is not rectified or addressed satisfactorily, faculty members, university supervisors, and mentor teachers will follow the procedures outlined in *Stages of Intervention when Candidate Performance Requires Corrective Action*.

**Stages of Intervention when Candidate Performance Requires Corrective Action**

In education, professional dispositions are the expected attitudes, values, and behaviors, which are critical to effective interactions with students, their families, and the education community. These dispositions are developed and assessed to ensure that candidates graduate, prepared to affect student learning positively. Professional dispositions are a prominent professional development component in the MAT, MEd in Instructional Technology [MEd], and Certificate in Instructional Technology Integration [Certificate] programs which candidates are expected to meet. Students
unable to meet the dispositions may be subject to actions up to removal from the program, when eligibility for state certification is associated with program completion (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Stages of Intervention when candidate performance requires corrective action.

**Appeal:** The Candidate has the right to appeal a decision through the process in UMUC Policy 130.70 *Student Grievance Procedures*, during any point in the corrective action process.

UMUC's candidate review process is guided by the following documents, all of which are provided to students in the online MAT and MEd Student Handbooks

- UMUC Department of Education Professional Dispositions
- UMUC Student Code of Conduct
- National Education Association Code of Ethics
Assumptions and Processes:

- All candidates have experience with the UMUC Professional Dispositions through self-assessment, course-based training, and direct use when planning lessons and working directly with students.

- All faculty, university supervisors, and school-based mentor teachers, a group referred to in this document as "professional educators," have been trained with the UMUC Professional Dispositions and the Stages of Intervention.

- All members of the teacher education community, whether at UMUC in online classrooms or in Pre-K - 12 school placements, are aware that they should seek to resolve issues related to dispositions first in an informal manner that is associated directly with the behavior and the expectations. The informal approach is one that occurs between the professional educators and the candidates as written or personal remarks and conversation, to provide an opportunity for the candidate to address the issue, agree to the corrective feedback, and move forward in the course and program.

- The involved professional educators document all communications involving or pertaining to candidates, by dating corrective communication, and explaining purposes and outcomes of meetings.

- In the MAT, the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences is included during Stages 1-3 when the circumstances involve behaviors in schools. The Director of Field and Clinical Experiences updates the Program Director.

- Candidates unable to meet the dispositions on their own or through corrective informal means may be subject to actions up to removal from the program, when eligibility for state certification is associated with program completion.

- The candidate may be accountable under UMUC's procedures for a Code of Conduct violation

STAGE 1:

The professional educator (e.g., online instructor or field/clinical educator) works with the candidate, under the direction of the Program Director or Director of Field and Clinical Experiences.

If informal steps to correct behaviors that are inconsistent with the Professional Dispositions for UMUC Teacher Candidates are unsuccessful, the professional educator notifies the Program Director. For MAT interns, the university supervisor and/or mentor teacher notifies the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences.
Stage 1 procedures are initiated within 10 calendar days after the professional educator suspects or is informed, that informal steps have not corrected the inappropriate behavior(s).

Procedures:
- The professional educator informs the Program Director or Director of Field Experiences about the candidate's behavior and then informs the candidate that he or she is to complete the Professional Dispositions Assessment as self-assessment.
- The professional educator completes the Professional Dispositions Assessment assessing the candidate's performance.
- The candidate and professional educator discuss the issue(s) and work toward resolving the inappropriate behavior(s) within a specified timeframe.
- The professional educator updates the Program Director or Director of Field and Clinical Experiences.

STAGE 2:

The Program Director meets with the candidate and the professional educator.

Stage 2 is initiated when inappropriate behaviors have continued, are not being resolved, and/or are becoming more severe. Stage 2 may also be initiated as the first formal corrective stage when the behaviors are of severe magnitude from the outset.

The professional educator initiates Stage 2 by contacting the Program Director or Director of Field and Clinical Experiences.

Procedures:
- Within 10 calendar days of being informed of candidate behaviors that have been unresolved under Stage 1 or are of severe magnitude, the Program Director schedules and holds a meeting with the candidate and the professional educator. The purpose of the meeting is to develop and agree to a plan for improvement with a specified timeframe, and the potential consequences of failing to correct the problem.
- If an improvement plan is agreed to, the candidate, Program Director, and professional educator sign the plan, and it is filed with the Department of Education. A copy of the signed plan will be given to the Candidate.
- Following the meeting, the Program Director notifies the Department Chair and the Graduate School Director of Student Relations of the patterns and issues related to the candidate's behavior and whether an improvement plan has been filed for the candidate.
- If an improvement plan is not agreed to or insufficient progress is made, MEd and Certificate candidates will be referred to the Department Chair. MAT candidates, because the MAT
program results in eligibility for state certification, will be referred Stage 3 Actions.

STAGE 3—MAT Only:

The Program Director, Department Chair, and Graduate School Director of Student Relations confer to review the case and implement Stage 3 procedures.

Stage 3 is initiated in one or more of the following circumstances:

• During Stage 2, the candidate, Program Director, and professional educator are unable to agree to a plan for improvement.

• The candidate makes unsatisfactory progress under the Stage 2 plan for improvement time frame.

• The Program Director and Department Chair, working with the Director of Graduate Student Relations, determine during Stage 2 that the extent of the problem and/or continuing pattern of inappropriate behaviors is so egregious that a higher level of intervention is needed.

Stage 3 Review Process:

• Within 10 calendar days of initiating Stage 3, the Program Director provides documentation relevant to the case to the Department Chair for review. The candidate is also notified and may provide relevant documentation to the Department Chair for review within the same period of time.

• Within 10 calendar days of initiating Stage 3, the Program Director coordinates a meeting of the candidate with the Department Chair, which will be held within the next 10 calendar days. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the relevant documentation presented.

• Within 10 calendar days following the meeting between the candidate and the Department Chair, the Program Director and Department Chair review the findings, identify an appropriate action, and notify the candidate in writing of the action to be taken. A copy of the notification is filed with the Department of Education and with the Director of Graduate Student Relations.

Stage 3 Possible Actions:

• Continue the candidate in the program with no conditions. The concern has been resolved.

• Contract with the student on the conditions upon which continuation in the program depends and the consequences if the conditions are not met. These conditions are concrete, specific to the Department of Education's Professional Dispositions, and function as requirements. The written document includes goals, timelines, scheduled monitoring, and other functions important for accountability. Conditions
might involve re-scheduling one or more field experiences and/or the internship.

- Terminate the candidate's enrollment in the MAT. The candidate is given written explanation of the reasons, and possible conditions, if any, for re-applying, as well as information on appealing the case. The candidate may choose to seek a different program in The Graduate School, but the courses taken during the MAT do not count toward another degree at UMUC.

- For MAT candidates during or preparing for their internship -- immediate withdrawal of the candidate from a placement. In this case, additional actions may be considered, including moving the candidate to a new placement or discontinuing the candidate from the program.
## Appendix A

### Disposition Survey used by candidate and professional educator

#### Relationship with Students, Parents, and other Stakeholders through Effective Communication

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