

Standard 4

How does the unit prepare candidates to work effectively with all students?

Focus on diversity is a priority in UTM's teacher education program. Standard 1 exhibited program alignment with Tennessee standards. [State standards](#), derived from [national standards](#), embody an inherent commitment to diversity. The UTM teacher education program is based on these and is designed to fully [prepare candidates to work effectively in diverse contexts](#). The TEP models, [initial](#) and [advanced](#), feature [diversity](#) uniting the keys to teacher education. [Course design](#) ensures multiple opportunities to learn to educate students from all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds and exceptionalities thus [developing candidates](#) who value diversity and who consider religion, geographic origin, gender, and sexual orientation and their influences on students' learning experiences. The unit has adopted a statement to fully articulate [diversity proficiencies](#).

To this end, diversity is woven into education coursework and field experiences. A comprehensive diversity awareness course at the initial level is [SWRK 220](#); advanced candidates take [EDFN 720](#). A [matrix](#) shows the intersection of diversity proficiencies and coursework. Specifically, [ECED 341](#), [LIBS 451/651](#), [TCED 475/675](#) have assignments on diversity awareness; [SPED 300](#), [TCED 302](#), and [TCED 305](#) have assignments demonstrating preparedness to work in diverse settings.

The [Unit Assessment System](#), fully articulated in [Standard 2](#), generates feedback data on diversity proficiencies for the unit and individuals. Each program stage involves strategic diversity assessments. Before admittance to initial or advanced licensure, students must satisfactorily address diversity issues in [TEP interview](#). At required check points at both levels, unit faculty assess candidates' [diversity dispositions](#). [Cooperating teachers and university](#)

[supervisors](#) must positively evaluate diversity proficiencies during practicum and clinical experiences. For successful program exit, candidates must document diversity experiences in all [portfolio](#) divisions. The [diversity proficiencies](#) are aligned with [Tennessee Professional Education Standards and Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth of Teachers](#). Thus, student teaching assessments, exit surveys, and employer ratings measure diversity awareness. A [survey](#) of self-efficacy beliefs toward diversity is administered before program exit; [candidates at both levels](#) have responded good to very good on all indicators. This data informs [program improvement and professional development](#).

UTM general education [faculty](#) represents gender, racial, linguistic, and ethnic diversities. TEP faculty represents gender and racial diversities; however growing faculty diversity remains an unquestionable priority. UTM and the TEP unit strive to [recruit](#) diverse faculty. For assistant professors and above, national searches are required using media such as *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Ads include a [statement](#) on the university's commitment to diversity. Regional searches are done for instructors and term positions. Historically black colleges and universities are notified of all vacancies as a matter of procedure.

UTM continues to set record enrollment, perhaps due in part to recognition by Princeton Review as a "[Best Southeastern College, 2009](#)," enjoying concomitant increases in [minority admissions](#). Socio-economic status is diverse: 43.3% are first generation college attendees; 47% receive need based financial aid. Forty percent of teacher candidates are from outside west Tennessee (2007-2008). Distance and [online learning programs](#) also bring geographic diversity to the program. For 2009-2010, 516 students are enrolled in online courses. Selmer, Ripley, and Parsons [satellite campuses](#) extend the program's scope, giving convenient access to aspiring educators in rural areas. UTM makes a concerted effort to retain its freshmen, especially through

the efforts of the [Student Center Success programs](#). The center works with students to develop reading, math, and study skills in a continual effort to retain students. Sixty-six percent of students receive at least one service from the Student Success Center. Also, 3% of students receive American Disabilities Act (ADA) services which are also administered through the Student Success Center. A second retention initiative, SOAR (Student Orientation and Registration) classes, assists freshmen. A third support, Education Student Services, provides [consistent advisement](#) to lower division education majors. Finally, [Young Scholars Academy](#) aims to retain high achieving African American students; three unit faculty are YSA mentors.

Teacher candidates are offered many diversity events and opportunities. The UTM Civil Rights Conference is the only annual conference in the U.S. on the Civil Rights movement ([2009](#), [2010](#)). [The Center for International Education](#) underwrites international travel, speakers, and programs. [Tennessee Intensive English Program](#) instructs internationals in classrooms on the same floor as TEP. [Student organizations](#) accent diversity issues. Candidates are invited to a [miscellany of programs](#): SABER (Sexual Assault Behavior Education Response), Caps of Distinction, Life in a State of Poverty simulation, Prosthetics workshop and [honors programs](#).

UTM is well-situated to provide [diverse settings](#) for field experiences and clinical practice, primarily in rural west Tennessee, a high poverty area. These sites allow interaction with P-12 students from divergent socioeconomic groups and from at least two ethnic and/or racial groups as indicated in the chart.

UTM teacher candidates use [feedback](#) from faculty, clinical supervisors, and classroom teachers throughout their coursework, field experiences, and clinical practice to reflect on their skills in working with diverse groups. Additionally, the [results](#) from [Praxis II Principles of](#)

[Learning and Teaching](#) indicate mastery of content knowledge about diversity issues.

Continuous Improvement

The first initiative which has created an increased emphasis on educating diverse populations in the UTM TEP has been a concerted effort to clearly articulate and delineate the objectives of the program as it relates to specific diversities. This effort has been led by the [Diversity Committee](#) and is organized around the nine areas of diversity outlined by NCATE. Within the past three years, the unit faculty has developed and adopted [Teacher Candidate Diversity Dispositions](#) centered on nine areas of diversity. It has also developed and implemented two aligned assessments of diversity dispositions for both [faculty](#) and [teacher candidates](#): The faculty self perceived readiness to teach the diversities is addressed in the faculty survey, and the candidate self perceived efficacy in educating diverse populations is addressed with a teacher candidate post survey. Following is a timeline of how the process evolved.

In January 2007, the unit faculty participated in an assessment addressing perceived faculty needs in professional development aligned with nine different diversities: ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, exceptionality, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic diversities. The faculty indicated that their highest areas of need for professional development were in the areas of exceptionalities, linguistic diversity, and sexual orientation.

To address these perceived faculty needs, an ongoing professional development program was initiated. In the area of exceptionality, [Maria Sargent](#), a medical doctor and a special needs educator from Ohio University, spoke to both students and faculty in the spring of 2008. Post surveys of both [faculty](#) and students indicated that they perceived themselves to be more

knowledgeable of the issues concerning exceptionalities and felt better prepared in teaching diverse populations. Scheduling conflicts prevented our hosting a speaker on culturally and linguistically diverse speaker in 2009. However, in [Summer 2010](#), a speaker is scheduled to bring professional development workshops to the faculty, local school personnel, and teacher candidates on identification of exceptionalities, such as autism with specific “hand-on” strategies for working with students. The professional development program is slated to continue on an annual basis and is being funded through an external benefactor and university funding.

The second initiative was made to better articulate diversity objectives and in order to insure that all areas of diversity are effectively addressed in the teacher education curriculum. In fall, 2008, the unit faculty adopted a document entitled [Teacher Candidate Diversity Competencies](#). This document was also aligned with the nine areas of diversity, and within each area of diversity specific competencies are listed including teaching all students, respecting all peers as equals, and partnering with all parents and all stakeholders. The faculty incorporated the diversity competencies as appropriate in the [objectives of each of the courses taught](#).

Also in spring 2008 a post assessment for teacher candidates was developed and implemented, again aligned with the nine diversity competencies. This [instrument](#) allows teacher candidates to indicate their levels of self perceived efficacy in teaching and working with diverse populations. The resulting [data](#) from the assessment (administered from Spring 2008 forward) indicates a high level of awareness and preparedness on the part of the teacher candidates, (both initial and advanced); they self-assess on average between agree and strongly agree on all questions. This survey will be continued and used for program improvement.

A third initiative has been in the area of recruitment of diverse students. [Project STEP \(Success in Teacher Education Project\)](#) is a collaborative effort among Dyersburg State Community College, the University of Tennessee at Martin, and a Northwest Tennessee county school system to recruit, prepare and retain teachers from underrepresented groups who [embrace diversity](#) as an instructional tool. Two key areas that Project STEP focuses on are (1) intentional recruiting strategies and (2) individually designed academic success strategies. The intended outcome of Project STEP is the placement of underrepresented groups among the teacher ranks of local school systems in rural west Tennessee. Through this program UTM is able to [recruit, support and mentor minority](#) teacher candidates in order to increase the ratio of minority teachers in west Tennessee schools.

The UTM teacher education program has been intentional in its recent efforts to strengthen its assessment system in regard to diversity, to clearly articulate diversity competencies and connect them to the curriculum, to increase professional development for faculty and candidates in diversity issues, and to make a concerted effort in the recruitment of diverse candidates.