

Report of Findings of the United States University Revisit Team November 2017

Overview of this Report

This item is the accreditation team report for the September 2017 revisit to United States University (USU). The report includes the revisit team findings on each of the Common Standards and a recommendation for USU's accreditation status.

Background

The initial site visit was held at the United States University (USU) from April 10-12, 2016; [the report of that visit](#) was presented to the Committee on Accreditation (Committee) at its June 2016 meeting. The Committee assigned the status of **Accreditation with Stipulations** to the United States University and all of its credential programs, and assigned two stipulations to be addressed in a focused revisit.

1. The University must provide evidence that a comprehensive and unit-wide assessment and evaluation system that addresses all credential programs is implemented and guides program improvement.
2. The University must provide evidence that district-employed supervisors are trained in supervision, evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner.

A revisit at USU was held March 7-9, 2017; [the report of that visit](#) was presented to the Committee at its March 2017 meeting. The Committee assigned the status of **Accreditation with Major Stipulations** to the United States University and all of its credential programs, and placed three stipulations to be addressed at a revisit.

- A revisit will take place no later than October 1, 2017. The revisit team will review the full 2015 Common Standards for United States University.
- As part of the revisit, United States University must provide evidence that a comprehensive and unit-wide assessment and evaluation system that addresses all credential programs is implemented and guides program improvement;
- United States University is required to submit bimonthly reports on the progress toward implementing an assessment system that includes the following:
 - A system that utilizes data on candidate and completer performance at the program and unit levels;
 - A system that collects, aggregates and utilizes data related to unit operations;
 - A system the collects, aggregates and utilizes data related to program effectiveness.

The September 27-29, 2017 revisit focused on the Commission's [Common Standards \(2015\)](#).

The site visit was completed in accordance with the procedures approved by the Committee on Accreditation regarding the activities of the site visit:

- Preparation for the Accreditation Visit
- Preparation of the Institutional Self-Study Report
- Selection and Composition of the Accreditation Team
- Intensive Evaluation of Program Data
- Preparation of the Accreditation Team Report

Common Standard Findings (September 2017 Revisit)

The table below is a summary of the September 2017 revisit team findings on the Common Standards.

Common Standard	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
1. Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	√		
2. Candidate Recruitment and Support	√		
3. Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	√		
4. Continuous Improvement	√		
5. Program Impact	√		

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

**Committee on Accreditation
Revisit Team Report**

Institution: United States University

Date of Revisit: September 27-29, 2017

**2017 Accreditation Team
Recommendation:** Accreditation

Rationale: All five Common Standards were found to be met at this September 2017 revisit. Therefore, the team’s recommendation is that the accreditation status should be **Accreditation**.

Previous History of Accreditation Status

Date	Accreditation Status
<u>April 10-12, 2016</u>	<u>Accreditation with Stipulations</u>
<u>March 7-9, 2017</u>	<u>Accreditation with Major Stipulations</u>

September 2017 Revisit Team Standard Findings

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation** was based on a thorough review of all documentation required to address the stipulations; additional supporting documents available during the visit; interviews with administrators, faculty, candidates, graduates, and local school personnel; along with additional information requested from program leadership during the visit. The team felt that it obtained sufficient and consistent information that led to a high degree of confidence in making overall and programmatic judgements about the professional education unit’s operation. The decision pertaining to the accreditation status of the institution was based upon the following:

Program Standards

All program standards were found to be Met at the visit in March 2017 so the Committee defined this revisit as focusing only on the Common Standards.

Common Standards (2015)

All five Common Standards were found to be Met. Other than one element of Common Standard 1 all elements of the Common Standards were found to be consistently evidenced during the revisit. The element of Common Standard 1 that was not found to be consistently evidenced during the site visit addressed how the institution ensures that faculty and instructional personnel collaborate with colleagues in P12 settings, college and universities, and the education community. There is ample evidence of collaboration taking place at this time.

The standard requires the institution to ensure that the collaboration takes place. There was no evidence of a process to ensure that the collaboration will be systemically maintained.

On the basis of this recommendation, the institution is authorized to recommend candidates for the following Credentials:

- Preliminary Multiple Subject Credential
- Preliminary Single Subject Credential
- Bilingual Authorization: Spanish

Further, staff recommends that:

- United States University be permitted to propose new credential programs for approval by the Committee on Accreditation.
- United States University complete Program Review and Common Standards Review in 2 years and host an accreditation site visit in 3 years so that the Committee has confirmation that the improvements that have been designed continue to implemented.

Accreditation Revisit Team

Team Leader:

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Staff to the Visit

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Documents Reviewed

University Catalog
Common Standards Report
Course Syllabi
Candidate Files
Fieldwork Handbooks
Follow-up Survey Results
Needs Analysis Results

Field Experience Evaluations
Schedule of Classes
Advisement Documents
Faculty Vitae
College Annual Report
TPA Data

Interviews Conducted

Stakeholders	TOTAL
Candidates *	0
Institutional Administration	5
Program Coordinators	1
Faculty	7
Employers	5
Advisors	4
Field Supervisors – Program	1
Field Supervisors – District	4
TOTAL	27

*Note: Interviews noted may be greater than the number of individuals interviewed due to both multiple interviews and the multiple roles an individual occupies at the institution. *This revisit focused only on the Common Standards—issues of institutional infrastructure. All program standards were found to be met at the March 2017 revisit.*

Program Participation

Program Name	Program Completers (2016-17)	Candidates Enrolled (2017-18)
Multiple Subject	1	5
Single Subject	5	8
Bilingual Authorization	1	1

Source: USU Matrix of Completers and Enrollment; Some completers earn more than 1 authorization so the numbers do not represent unique individuals.

Background Information

United States University (USU) is a private, for-profit university located in San Diego, California. It currently serves approximately 370 students in four colleges with graduate and undergraduate degrees in health sciences, business, and nursing as well as teaching credentials and a Master of Arts in Education. The student population includes approximately 42% nonresident (international) students, 16% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 10% White, 7% Black, or African American, 2% Pacific Islander and the remaining non-specified.

USU was initially founded in 1997 as InterAmerican College (IAC), a non-profit college geared

toward educating immigrants to increase bilingual capacity in education and healthcare in southern California. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing granted the institution initial accreditation and approved the multiple and single subject credential programs, including the bilingual emphasis credentials in June 2000. Since its beginning, IAC was dedicated to educating future bilingual teachers. According to the 2008 Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) report on IAC, the area in which the college was previously located (National City) was once considered the 13th most impoverished city in the nation. In 2009, IAC received initial accreditation from WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). At that time, WASC also approved a structural change from nonprofit status to for-profit status. This change took place in April 2010, and the school was renamed United States University (USU). The USU vision is for students to achieve their fullest potential to live, work, and lead within the global community. The university seeks to provide opportunities with a special outreach to underserved groups.

Education Unit

The USU College of Education offers a Master of Arts degree in Education in five areas of focus; STEM, Administration and Leadership (K-12), Early Childhood Education, Higher Education Administration, and Special Education as well as three Commission-approved teacher preparation programs: the Multiple Subject and Single Subject (English, World Languages-Spanish, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Science, Social Studies) preliminary teaching credentials and the Bilingual Authorization.

The College of Education enrollment is extremely small, with current enrollment of 13 individuals in Commission-approved programs and 30 in the Master of Arts, a total enrollment of 43 for the College. The College of Education is led by the Provost's office (Provost/Chief Academic Officer and Associate Provost of Accreditation and Curriculum). The Master of Arts in Education is chaired by a Core Faculty member, while the Teacher Credentialing Preparation Program (TCPP) is led by a Director, both of whom are supported by the Provost's office. Both faculty oversee and direct their respective programs. The Director of the teacher preparation and eleven adjunct faculty members comprise the credential program faculty.

The Visit

All program standards were found to be fully met at the March 2017 revisit and no program standards were reviewed at this visit. Although this is a revisit, the Committee on Accreditation defined this revisit as a full review of the Common Standards (2015). The reason for COA taking this unusual action was because at the time of the presentation of the March 2017 revisit, it was clear that there had been a change of ownership at the institution, significant turnover of key personnel, and that significant aspects of the implementation of the Common Standards had changed since the original visit of 2016. The COA felt that these many changes potentially impacted the decisions on the Common Standards and therefore called for a full review under the 2015 Common Standards at the time of the second revisit. There were no unusual circumstances during this visit.

PROGRAM REPORTS AND FINDINGS

United States University hosted an accreditation revisit in March 2017. At that time all program standards were found to be met and the Committee defined this revisit as focusing only on the Common Standards (2015). For information on the teacher preparation programs sponsored by United States University please consult the team report from the [March 2017 revisit](#) or the report from the initial site visit in [April 2016](#).

COMMON STANDARDS FINDINGS (September 2017)

Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
Each Commission-approved institution has the infrastructure in place to operate effective educator preparation programs. Within this overall infrastructure:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institution and education unit create and articulate a research-based vision of teaching and learning that fosters coherence among, and is clearly represented in all educator preparation programs. This vision is consistent with preparing educators for California public schools and the effective implementation of California’s adopted standards and curricular frameworks 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institution actively involves faculty, instructional personnel, and relevant stakeholders in the organization, coordination, and decision making for all educator preparation programs. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit ensures that faculty and instructional personnel regularly and systematically collaborate with colleagues in P-12 settings, college and university units and members of the broader educational community to improve educator preparation. 		√	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institution provides the unit with sufficient resources for the effective operation of each educator preparation program, including, but not limited to, coordination, admission, advisement, curriculum, professional development/instruction, field based supervision and clinical experiences. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Unit Leadership has the authority and institutional support required to address the needs of all educator preparation programs and considers the interests of each program within the institution. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and faculty development efforts support hiring and retention of faculty who represent and support diversity and excellence. 	√		

Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institution employs, assigns and retains only qualified persons to teach courses, provide professional development, and supervise field-based and clinical experiences. Qualifications of faculty and other instructional personnel must include, but are not limited to: a) current knowledge of the content; b) knowledge of the current context of public schooling including the California adopted P-12 content standards, frameworks, and accountability systems; c) knowledge of diversity in society, including diverse abilities, culture, language, ethnicity, and gender orientation; and d) demonstration of effective professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit monitors a credential recommendation process that ensures that candidates recommended for a credential have met all requirements. 	√		
Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	Met		
<p>Additional information applicable to the standard decision</p> <p>The team found that much work has been accomplished in this area to provide the evidence and documentation needed to find the standard met. Interviews with university administration and faculty indicate that although they are small in number (only one full-time faculty and eleven part-time faculty), there is a strong commitment to serving a diverse student body. Part-time faculty represent the diversity of southern California school districts and student body. There was no process found to ensure that the faculty collaborates with P-12 educators. Eleven of the twelve faculty members are practicing P-12 educators so the collaboration is taking place at this time. They are practitioners in classrooms and teachers, as well as administrators. In interviews, they expressed a thankfulness that USU allows them to make sure the content is grounded in both theory and practice. Faculty interviews indicated that there is a process for providing feedback to the faculty regarding their instructional practices. A monitoring process for credential recommendations has been implemented.</p>			

Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
Candidates are recruited and supported in all educator preparation programs to ensure their success.	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit accepts applicants for its educator preparation programs based on clear criteria that include multiple measures of candidate qualifications. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit purposefully recruits and admits 	√		

Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
<p>candidates to diversify the educator pool in California and provides the support, advice, and assistance to promote their successful entry and retention in the profession.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate information and personnel are clearly identified and accessible to guide each candidate's attainment of program requirements. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence regarding progress in meeting competency and performance expectations is consistently used to guide advisement and candidate support efforts. A clearly defined process is in place to identify and support candidates who need additional assistance to meet competencies 	√		
Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support	Met		
<p>Additional information applicable to the standard decision USU is committed to supporting individuals from underserved populations (low socio-economic and persons of color) in the quest to become teachers. The university has a number of individuals who provide support, guidance, and feedback to candidates prior to application to the program, during the program, and as the completers move into the profession. The application process includes multiple requirements including a college degree from a regionally accredited institution, a 2.5 GPA, a letter of purpose, transcripts, letter of recommendation, and the assessments required by the Commission. Clear information related to the application process and the program requirements are available on the website, in the candidate handbook, and the university catalog. USU monitors candidates by having an advising contact with each candidate during each 8 week session. In addition, if a candidate is having trouble in a course the program coordinator and instructor work together to support the candidate through the course.</p>			

Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
<p>The unit designs and implements a planned sequence of coursework and clinical experiences for candidates to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills to educate and support P-12 students in meeting state-adopted content standards.</p>	√		
<p>The unit and its programs offer a high-quality course of study focused on the knowledge and skills expected of beginning educators and grounded in current research on effective practice. Coursework is integrated closely with field experiences to provide candidates with a cohesive and</p>	√		

Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
comprehensive program that allows candidates to learn, practice, and demonstrate competencies required of the credential they seek.			
The unit and all programs collaborate with their partners regarding the criteria and selection of clinical personnel, site-based supervisors and school sites, as appropriate to the program	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through site-based work and clinical experiences, programs offered by the unit provide candidates with opportunities to both experience issues of diversity that affect school climate and to effectively implement research-based strategies for improving teaching and student learning. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site-based supervisors must be certified and experienced in teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process and criteria result in the selection of site-based supervisors who provide effective and knowledgeable support for candidates. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site-based supervisors are trained in supervision, oriented to the supervisory role, evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All programs effectively implement and evaluate fieldwork and clinical practice. 	√		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For each program the unit offers, candidates have significant experience in school settings where the curriculum aligns with California's adopted content standards and frameworks, and the school reflects the diversity of California's student and the opportunity to work with the range of students identified in the program standards. 	√		
Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	Met		

Additional information applicable to the standard decision

The program director is responsible for ensuring that the fieldwork and clinical practice takes place for each candidate. The program is small so the program director is the program supervisor for all candidates. In two of the earlier courses in the program, candidates complete 20 and 12 hours of targeted observations in schools. Candidates complete clinical practice placements at a Title I school. The site based supervisors are credentialed and receive an orientation and support from the program director. One principal reported that the program director is at the school regularly and always makes a point to stop in to meet with the principal and gather information on how the candidate is doing. A site based supervisor reported that her student teacher was supported very well, much better than the master teacher had been when she earned her credential. Site based supervisors reported being very supported in their work with student teachers who needed a bit more time and attention to demonstrate the necessary skills to be a beginning teacher.

Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement

Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
The education unit develops and implements a comprehensive continuous improvement process at both the unit level and within each of its programs that identifies program and unit effectiveness and makes appropriate modifications based on findings.	√		
The education unit and its programs regularly assess their effectiveness in relation to the course of study offered, fieldwork and clinical practice, and support services for candidates.	√		
Both the unit and its programs regularly and systematically collect, analyze, and use candidate and program completer data.	√		
The continuous improvement process includes multiple sources of data including 1) the extent to which candidates are prepared to enter professional practice; and 2) feedback from key stakeholders such as employers and community partners about the quality of the preparation	√		
Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement	Met		

Additional information applicable to the standard decision

USU has developed an assessment plan for its teacher preparation programs, its advanced degree programs in the College of Education, and the institution as a whole. The plan includes gathering data from candidates, faculty, completers, master teachers, and employers. Historically, data gathering had been informal at USU but the assessment plan has systematized the collection of data, analysis of the data, and scheduled meetings to decide if modifications are necessary. The teacher preparation programs are quite small so the program director is able to have regular contact with each of the other 11 faculty members, the cooperating teachers, and the candidates.

Common Standard 5: Program Impact			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
The institution ensures that candidates preparing to serve as professional school personnel know and demonstrate knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support effectively all students in meeting state adopted academic standards. Assessments indicate that candidates meet the Commission adopted competency requirements as specified in the program standards.	√		
The unit and its programs evaluate and demonstrate that they are having a positive impact on candidate learning and competence and on teaching and learning in schools that serve California's students	√		
Common Standard 5: Program Impact	Met		
Additional information applicable to the standard decision			
In the last 5 years there have been approximately 16 program completers. Interviews with employers noted that not only are candidates well prepared, but they praised staff at USU for contacting them after the teacher had started to see what, if any needs, there were with the new teacher and what feedback they might provide to the program. This small number of program completers has allowed for a more informal and anecdotal process for demonstrating program impact. If the program grows, as faculty and administration hope it does, there are plans to incorporate more formal measures of program impact as a part of continuous improvement.			

INSTITUTION SUMMARY

United States University is a small, private university that focuses on second career individuals as well as underrepresented individuals, some of whom want to become teachers. The provost, associate provost, and program director have worked together to make the improvements in the teacher preparation programs at USU. Evidence reviewed at the visit, including documentation and interviews, exceeded the expectations of the team based upon earlier visits and submissions of narratives in preparation for this visit.

The story of their work together is commendable as they learned more about providing supporting documentation and evidence, as well as constructing an interview schedule for the visit. All of their work is in support of the preparation of teachers who are knowledgeable in their instructional strategies, sensitive to issues of diversity and committed to making adjustments in their instruction or assessment for student achievement.

USU is in the process of a change of ownership with the new owners, the Aspen Group, indicating commitment- to providing affordable programs and to its students not accumulating significant debt while completing a degree or program. At this time candidates in the master's in education program have the option to pay for the USU program with a zero percent promissory note and a reasonable monthly payment. This allows students to complete the program and finish paying for the program within 16-18 months of program completion. The default rate for the payment plan option is about 4%. The university is looking to expand this program to its teacher preparation candidates.