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An Assessment of Teacher Education Students' Perceptions and Satisfaction of their Learning Experiences in a Summer Pilot Program

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Abstract

This study assessed teacher education students' perceptions and satisfaction of their learning experiences concerning an accelerated summer pilot program. In addition, the study provided information on the impact and teaching effectiveness of the accelerated teacher education summer pilot program on participating students. Results from this study determined that compelling information and significant differences were found between students who attended summer session I and summer session II. Most importantly this study documented statistical significant differences among the two groups for questions regarding, “the clarity of exam questions,” ($t(198) = 10.460, p < .05$), “exams’ coverage of important aspects of the course,” ($t(198) = 16.566, p < .05$), “overall quality of the textbooks(s),” ($t(198) = 25.983, p < .05$), “problems or questions presented by the instructor for small group discussions,” ($t(198) = 1.971, p < .05$) and “work load for this course in relation to other courses of equal credit,” ($t(198) = 2.518, p < .05$). Open-ended data was retrieved from the Student Survey and Praxis Workshop Survey. The open-ended data was used to corroborate the findings from the Student Instructional Report II, Student Survey and Praxis Workshop Survey item analysis. Findings are discussed in terms of their implications on future research and prevention programming.

Introduction

The UNC Tomorrow Commission Report documents that “North Carolina Public Schools are challenged by a ... shortage of qualified, well-trained trainers” (p. 22). *The UNC Tomorrow Commission Report* further presents that “the school’s shortage of licensed, well-prepared teachers has contributed to poor student performance in our state’s low-performing schools” (p. 23). Given these astounding findings it is imperative that immediate interventions are set in place to address these issues. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), specifically public institutions, are charged to recruit, retain, and graduate highly qualified and licensed teachers who are well-trained and poised to meet the needs of the student population.

Fayetteville State University (FSU) is committed to doing its part to meet the demands for placing highly-qualified, licensed, and well-

trained teachers in classrooms in North Carolina and the nation. Therefore, one goal is to increase the productivity of teacher education programs at FSU, especially teachers in high needs areas – middle grades, secondary education mathematics and science, special education, and elementary education with concentration in content areas and special education. Seniors will enroll in methods courses during the summer and complete their student teaching and program by fall, one semester earlier than a traditional curriculum plan would facilitate. These seniors will graduate into the workforce as licensed teachers who are prepared to meet the needs of the students in their charge. The current enrollment numbers of FSU students majoring in teacher education, including secondary education shortage areas, document that many of these teachers are African-Americans, which will address one goal of *The UNC Tomorrow Commission Report* to help “increase the number of African-American public school teachers” (p. 20).

Rising juniors and sophomores will enroll in content area courses and/or early education courses, which are prerequisites for admission to teacher education. Admission to teacher education would propel these students into completing methods courses a semester earlier than planned. The result would mean that they, too, will be able to complete the program at least a semester earlier than intended. Rising juniors and sophomores will participate in PRAXIS I tutorials to meet admission to teacher education requirements. Many students struggle to meet the PRAXIS I (mathematics, reading, and writing) cut-off scores, which are an entrance to program and licensure requirement. These students struggle with writing and inferential comprehension skills. Mathematical competency is also a struggle for many students, especially students of color. Facilitators of the PRAXIS I tutorials will provide assistance in all these areas. Assistance provided in these PRAXIS I tutorial sessions will address the “writing weaknesses of incoming college students” as detailed by *The UNC Tomorrow Commission*, which further charges institutions to train “professionals to write more effectively” (p. 12).

Rising juniors, who are missing only the PRAXIS I requirement for admission to teacher education and methods courses, will participate in a spring 2008 PRAXIS I tutorial. Second semester sophomores, who will complete Track II content area and/or early education courses will participate in the summer PRAXIS I tutorials to assist in securing admission to teacher education and progress through the program. Teacher Education Summer Pilot participants will participate in both summer sessions, enrolling in 9 credits per session. Methods courses will be taught by full-time faculty or faculty who are currently teaching methods courses. Courses will carry a SP designation to allow us to distinguish these students who have been advised into the Project from others who participate in regularly scheduled summer courses. The SP designation will allow us to track the students in this project and to monitor time to completion as well as success on PRAXIS I after participating in the PRAXIS I tutorials.

Purpose of the Study

This current study was undertaken to describe teacher education students' perceptions and satisfaction of their learning experiences concerning their potential adaptation to an accelerated summer pilot program. A secondary purpose of this study was to provide information on the impact and teaching effectiveness of the accelerated teacher education summer pilot program on participating students.

Methodology

Profile of Summer Pilot Program Participants

As seen in Table 1, there were 284 Teacher Education Summer Pilot program students that initially enrolled in summer session I and II. A total of 131 (46.1%) students were enrolled in session I and 153 (53.9%) students were enrolled in session II. The Summer Pilot program focused on three tracks of students: seniors (Track I) already admitted to teacher education; rising juniors, second semester sophomores (Track II); and alternative degree students (Track III) enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program.

Table 1
Teacher Education Summer Pilot Program Participants by Summer Session Status

Question	Frequency	Percent
Summer Session I	131	46.1%
Summer Session II	153	53.9%
Total	284	100%

As seen in Table 2, 176 students (62.0%) were from Track I, 81 students (28.5%) were from Track II, and 27 students (9.5%) were from Track III. As far as grade point average, students enrolled in summer session I and II had an overall GPA of 3.077 and 3.056 respectively. An independent-samples t-test comparing the mean scores of summer session I and summer session II students were conducted, the analysis revealed that there was no statistical significant difference found between the two groups grade point averages ($t(280) = 7.117$ $p > .05$).

Table 2
Teacher Education Summer Pilot Program Participants by Track Status

Question	Frequency	Percent
Track I	176	62.0%
Track II	81	28.5%

Track III	27	9.5%
Total	284	100%

Instrumentation

Student Instructional Report II (SIR II)

The SIR II *Student Instructional Report* is a course evaluation survey that quickly and objectively captures students' perceptions of their higher education learning experience. The SIR II survey has helped faculty and administrators improve teaching effectiveness and learning quality for more than three decades by providing reliable insight into students' perspectives on eight dimensions of college instruction, as well as detailed information to improve teaching without taking up valuable class time, a free compendium (PDF) of actionable suggestions for improving college teaching based on best practices and input from educators nationwide, and comparative data from nearly one million students in more than 65,000 two-year and more than 117,000 four-year college courses nationwide.

A total of 86 summer session I and 114 summer session II student participants completed the Student Instructional Report II survey. Courses that had four students or less were eliminated from the data analysis of this report. The Student Instructional Report II survey consisted of ten sections (A-L) and 55 Likert type questions. The Student Instructional Report II survey responses for sections A through E consisted of 5—*very effective*, 4-*effective*, 3-*moderately effective*, 2-*somewhat ineffective*, 1-*ineffective* and 0-*Not applicable, not used in the course, or you don't know*. Section A consisted of statements that dealt with Course Organization and Planning; Section B consisted of statements that addressed Communication; Section C consisted of Faculty/Student Information; Section D, Assignments, Exams, and Grading, and Section E, Supplementary Instructional Methods. For Sections F (Course Outcomes) and Section G (Student Effort and Involvement), the following rating scale was used: 5-*much more than most courses*, 4-*more than most courses*, 3-*about the same as others*, 2-*less than most courses*, 1-*much less than most course* and 0- *not applicable, not used in the course, or you don't know*. Section H, which addressed Course Difficulty, Work Load, and Pace, the section responses were different in nature. For question 37, Likert type responses consisted of 5- *very difficult*, 4-*somewhat difficult*, 3-*about right*, 2- *somewhat elementary* and 1-*very elementary*; for question 38, Likert type responses consisted of 5- *much heavier*, 4-*heavier*, 3-*about the same*, 2- *lighter* and 1-*much lighter* and for question 39, Likert type responses consisted of 5- *veryfast*, 4-*somewhat fast*, 3-*just about right*, 2-*somewhat slow* and 1- *very slow*. For Section I (Overall Evaluation), the following Likert type scale was used: 5-*very effective*, 4-*effective*, 3-*moderately effective*, 2-*somewhat ineffective* and 1-*ineffective*. Section J consisted of General and Student Information such as course description, class level, English proficiency, sex and grade expectation.

Summer Pilot Program Student Survey

The 2008 Summer Pilot Program Student Survey consisted of 32 questions that dealt with “the General Satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program, development of Professional Attitudes and Competencies and the satisfaction with Specific Aspects of the Summer Pilot Program. Additional open-ended questions that asked about General Satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program, Professional Attitudes and Competencies and Course Content were also included. The responses for the survey were Likert type and consisted of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey

Pre-service and in-service teachers at Fayetteville State University were given the opportunity to participate and prepare for taking the Praxis (NTE) exam, I or II. During the 2008 summer semester, a Praxis I workshop was scheduled for June 14 and a Praxis II workshop was scheduled for July 11. Praxis I or Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) consists of three exams: reading, writing and mathematics. In North Carolina, a passing score must be earned for admission to teacher education programs. Praxis II assessments cover many different subject areas and each major requires a different combination of Praxis II exams.

The 2008 Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey consisted of 10 questions that dealt with the satisfaction of the praxis workshops. Additional open-ended questions that asked about ideas/topics that the students thought should have been presented but were not, and a general comments section were asked the participants. The responses for the survey were Likert type and consisted of 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = NA, 4 = good and 5 = excellent.

Procedures

This study was conducted during the summer of 2008. The researchers administered the Student Instructional Report survey to students enrolled in summer I and summer II classes. The Summer Pilot Student Survey was downloaded to Taskstream, which is an electronic assessment system. Students were asked to log in to Taskstream and complete the student survey before the end of summer session II. In addition, students who attended the Praxis workshops were given a survey to complete and assess the effectiveness of the workshops.

Analyses of Data

The university's institutional research department provided and downloaded the student instructional report data into an excel spreadsheet. The excel spreadsheet data were then exported into SPSS, version 16. The demographic data were analyzed item by item

by determining the number and percent of responses for each choice. Means and standard deviations were scored and recorded for the SIR Report II, Student Survey and Praxis Workshop Survey. In addition, open-ended data was retrieved from the Student Survey and Praxis Workshop Survey. All open-ended data were subjected to a content analysis that isolated similarities, differences, and trends. The open-ended data was used to corroborate the findings from the Student Survey and Praxis Workshop Survey item analyses.

Results

Student Instructional Report II (SIR II)

When observing "**course organization and planning**," the student participants who completed the SIR II questionnaire felt that the course instructors *explanation of the course requirements, preparation for each class period, command of the subject matter, use of class time and way of summarizing or emphasizing important points in the class* were effective with an overall mean score of 4.69. When observing "**communication**" among the instructor, the student participants felt that the course instructors *ability to make clear and understandable presentations, command of spoken English, use of examples or illustrations to clarify course materials, use of challenging questions or problems and the instructor's enthusiasm for the course materials* were effective with an overall mean score of 4.73. When observing "**faculty/student interaction**," students felt that the instructor's *helpfulness and responsiveness to students, respect for students, concern for student progress, availability of extra help for their course and the instructor's willingness to listen to student questions and opinions* were very effective during summer session I with an overall mean score of 4.71. When examining **assignments, exams, and grading**, students indicated that the instructor's *information given to students about how they would be graded, clarity of exam questions, exams' coverage of important aspects of the course, instructor's comments on assignments and exams, the overall quality of the textbooks and the instructor's helpfulness of assignments in understanding course materials* were effective with an overall mean score of 4.45. It was interesting to note when comparing the mean scores of summer session I and summer session II students for question 17; *the clarity of exam questions*, the analysis indicated that there was a statistical significant difference found between the two groups, $(t(198) = 10.460, p < .05)$. Summer session I students felt that the instructor clarity of exam questions were "effective" for them with a higher mean score ($m = 4.41, sd = 1.282$) than the summer session II students ($m = 3.93, sd = 1.939$). Summer session II students indicated that the instructor clarity of exam questions was "moderately effective" for them. In addition, a significant difference was also found for question 18; *the exams' coverage of important aspects of the course* ($t(198) = 16.566, p < .05$), and question 20; *the overall quality of the textbook(s)* ($t(198) = 25.983, p < .05$). For both questions, summer session I students had a higher mean score ($m = 4.57, sd = 1.136$), ($m = 4.68, sd = .886$) than the summer session II students ($m = 3.98, sd =$

1.922), ($m = 4.01$, $sd = 1.876$) respectively. However, session I students felt that the exam coverage of important aspects of the course was “effective” for them and session II students felt that the exam coverage was “moderately effective” for them. For question 20, even though a statistical significant difference was found between the two groups related to the quality of the textbook(s), it was not considered a meaningful significant difference. Both groups felt that the overall quality of the textbook(s) was effective for them during the program.

When rating the effectiveness of each practice used in the **instructional methods** section of the SIR II questionnaire, students indicated that *problems or questions presented by the instructor for small group discussions, the use of term papers, laboratory exercises for understanding important course concepts, assigned projects in which students worked together, case studies, simulations, or role playing, course journals or logs required of students, instructor's use of computers as aids in instruction* were effective practices used to contribute to their learning with an overall mean score of 4.08.

However, a statistical significant difference ($t(198) = 1.971$ $p < .05$) was found between summer session I and summer session II students for question 22, *problems or questions presented by the instructor for small group discussions*. The mean score was higher for summer session I students ($m = 4.77$, $sd = .960$) than the summer session II students ($m = 4.45$, $sd = 1.325$).

When observing the **course outcomes** section of the questionnaire, students felt that their *learning increased in this course, that they made progress toward achieving course objectives, that their interest in the subject area has increased, that the course helped them to think independently about the subject matter, and that the course actively involved them in what they were learning* more than most courses that they had taken at Fayetteville State University with an overall average mean score of 4.42.

When observing the **student effort and involvement** section of the questionnaire, students felt that they *studied and put effort into the course, prepared for each class (writing and reading assignments), and were challenged by their courses* more than most course taken at FSU with an average mean score of 4.39. However, it was interesting to note that when analyzing the data for the **course difficulty, work load and pace** section of the questionnaire, the summer session I pilot program students indicated that *preparation and ability, and the level of difficulty of their courses* were about right with a mean score of 3.76. In addition, the students also felt *the work load for their courses in relation to other courses of equal credit* was about the same with a mean score of 3.82. The students also felt *the pace at which the instructor covered the material during the summer session I term* was just about right with a mean score of 3.77. A significant difference was found for question 38: *work load for this course in relation to other courses of equal credit* ($t(198) = 2.518$ $p < .05$). The summer session I students mean score was higher ($m = 3.98$, $sd = 1.113$) than the

summer session II students ($m = 3.60$, $sd = .961$). For the **overall evaluation** section of this survey, students indicated that *the quality of instruction in their courses as it contributed to their learning* was effective with a mean average score of 4.54.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Student Instructional Report II (SIR II)

Question	Summer Session I $m(sd)$	Summer Session II $m(sd)$
*17. the clarity of exam questions	4.41(1.282)	3.93(1.939)
*18. the exams' coverage of important aspects of the course	4.57(1.136)	3.98(1.922)
*20. the overall quality of the textbook (s)	4.68(.886)	4.01(1.876)
*22. problems or questions presented by the instructor for small group discussions	4.77(.960)	4.45(1.325)
*38. work load for this course in relation to other courses of equal credit	3.98(1.113)	3.60(1.961)

Denote: *statistically significant at $p < .05$

Summer Pilot Program Student Survey

As seen in Table 5, students responded they “**somewhat felt**” that the Summer Pilot Program *was prepared and developed in an organized and professional manner, that the workshops were well organized and attended by other students, that the program planning time for taking courses was adequate and there was enough time dedicated for instruction to cover course content, that the time in the LEA classroom was beneficial, that the program should have one extended summer session next year as opposed to two sessions (providing more time to cover the content and receiving the experiential learning), that students were encouraged to attend advisement sessions and workshops during the program, that they received positive feedback from the Summer Pilot staff on a regular basis, that they received positive mentoring support from the Summer Pilot Program faculty and staff and they would recommend an on-line version of the Summer Pilot program to other students* with an overall mean score of 3.69.

In addition, the students “**agreed**” that *the program was relevant and suitable and benefited their academic progress, that the program prepared them to evaluate my own instructional strategies and improved their success as students, that the Summer Pilot Program motivated them to continue their education at FSU and to complete their degree at an accelerated pace, that the program*

courses prepared them to assess and develop a school culture that enhances their learning, that the program courses prepared them to maintain integrity, fairness, & ethics in teaching & decision-making, that the program courses prepared them to address the diversity needs of students and the school community, that the program courses prepared them to use technology for curriculum development and instructional support, that their working relationship with their Summer Pilot Program instructor was vital to their course completion success, that they received positive feedback from the Summer Pilot faculty on a regular basis, that their course instructor showed concern for their professional development, that they were given opportunities to develop and improve their teaching skills, that they would recommend other students to apply for admission to the next Summer Pilot Program, that their time in the field experience was beneficial for them during the Summer Pilot Program, that the instructional support that they received from the Summer Pilot Program faculty and staff was beneficial, that the Summer Pilot Program faculty was instrumental in their professional attitude development, enhanced their confidence and abilities to begin a career in teaching, enabled them to reach personal and professional goals, helped them learn to reflect on their development as a future teacher and to question personal assumptions as an educator, helped them develop professional skills and competencies during the pilot experiences, prepared them for becoming an effective teacher, that the classrooms were equipped with adequacy of space, technology, facility and equipment, that the 5 week course structure was convenient, and that they were satisfied with the overall structure of the Summer Pilot Program with an overall mean score of 4.35.

Table 5
2008 Summer Pilot Program Student Survey

5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somewhat, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree

	General Satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program	Mean Score
1	The program was prepared and developed in an organized and professional manner.	3.67
2	The program was relevant and suitable and benefited my academic progress.	4.5
3	The program prepared me to evaluate my own instructional strategies and improved my success as a student.	4.42
4	The Summer Pilot Program motivated me to continue my education at FSU and to complete my degree at an accelerated pace.	4.67
5	The Summer Pilot Program workshops were well organized and attended by other students.	3.58
6	The program courses prepared me to assess and	4.33

	develop a school culture that enhances students' learning.	
7	The program planning time for taking courses was adequate and there was enough time Dedicated for instruction to cover course content.	3.5
8	The program courses prepared me to maintain integrity, fairness, & ethics in teaching & decision-making.	4.25
9	I felt that the time in the LEA classroom was beneficial.	3.92
10	The program courses prepared me to address the diversity needs of students and the school community.	4.33
11	I felt the program should have one extended summer session next year as opposed to two Sessions (providing more time to cover the content and received the experiential learning).	3.42
12	The program courses prepared me to use technology for curriculum development and Instructional support.	4.17
13	My working relationship with my Summer Pilot Program instructor was vital to my course Completion success.	4.58
14	I received positive feedback from the Summer Pilot faculty on a regular basis.	4.25
15	My course instructor showed concern for my professional development.	4.5
16	Students were encouraged to attend advisement sessions and workshops during the program.	3.83
17	I was given opportunities to develop and improve my teaching skills.	4.5
18	I would recommend others students to apply for admission to the next Summer Pilot Program.	4.5
19	I received positive feedback from the Summer Pilot staff on a regular basis.	3.75
20	My time in the field experience was beneficial for me during the Summer Pilot Program	4.08
21	I received positive mentoring support from the Summer Pilot Program faculty and staff	3.75
22	The instructional support that I received from the Summer Pilot Program faculty and staff was beneficial.	4.33
	Development of Professional Attitudes and Competencies	Mean Score
23	The Summer Pilot Program faculty was instrumental in my professional attitude development.	4.33
24	The Summer Pilot Program enhanced my confidence and abilities to begin a career in teaching.	4.33
25	The Summer Pilot Program enabled me to reach personal and professional goals.	4.5
26	The Summer Pilot Program helped me learn to reflect	4.5

	on my development as a future teacher and to question personal assumptions as an educator.	
27	The Summer Pilot Program helped me develop professional skills and competencies during the pilot experiences.	4.25
	Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of the Summer Pilot Program	Mean Score
28	The Summer Pilot Program courses prepared me for becoming an effective teacher.	4.33
29	The Summer Pilot Program classrooms were equipped with adequacy of space, technology, facility and equipment.	4.33
30	The Summer Pilot Program 5 week course structure was convenient.	4.0
31	I was satisfied with the overall structure of the Summer Pilot Program.	4.17
32	I would recommend an on-line version of the Summer Pilot program to other students.	3.83

Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey

As seen in Table 7, program participants indicated that *the praxis workshop was well organized, well prepared, that materials and handouts were clear, that ample time was allotted for discussion, that the workshop provided beneficial information, that the workshop were relevant to the topic, that the facilities were adequately arranged and comfortable, that the length of the workshop was appropriate, that they would attend the praxis workshop again and that the overall rating of the praxis workshop session/activity was "good" with an overall mean score of 4.72.*

Table 7
2008 Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey

5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somewhat, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree

	Satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey	Mean Score
1	The Praxis workshop session/activity was well organized.	4.69
2	The presenter(s) was well prepared.	4.75
3	The Praxis workshop materials or handouts were clear.	4.39
4	Ample time was allotted for discussion.	4.67
5	The Praxis workshop session/activity provided beneficial information.	4.78

6	The Praxis workshop session/activity was relevant to the topic.	4.78
7	The facility was adequately arranged and comfortable.	4.58
8	The length of the Praxis workshop session/activity was appropriate.	4.69
9	I would attend this Praxis workshop session/activity again.	4.69
10	Overall rating of the Praxis workshop session/activity	4.72

Opened-ended Analysis

Open-ended questions were designed and listed at the end of the Summer Pilot Program Student Survey and the Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop Survey. These questions were designed to investigate and elicit more narrative responses related to the students' general satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program, how the Summer Pilot Program may have contributed to the development of the students professional attitudes and competencies about beginning a career in teaching, and how effective the Summer Pilot Program process was in covering methods courses in 5 weeks as opposed to 15 weeks. In addition, opened-ended questions were designed to investigate and give a more narrative response to the students' ideas and suggestions about the praxis workshops that they attended during the summer pilot program.

Six responses to the question about general satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Programs are transcribed below:

1. I think that the general satisfaction of the summer pilot program was good.
2. The one thing I would suggest for future pilot programs is more organization.
3. I understand that it was the first program but I think that the courses should be 8 weeks instead of 5 weeks. I believe that would have helped all students. Overall I enjoyed the first session and I am excited about the second session.
4. I was extremely pleased with the program as a whole. It was beneficial to students like me who are older and ready to start their careers. I learned a lot and feel that I am prepared to enter the teaching profession.
5. I was very appreciative of the Summer Pilot experience. Though fast paced, I was able to follow along without getting behind. My instructors were very helpful at all times, providing answers and direction when needed.
6. The instructor was a caring, kind, and informed instructor. She knew the content area and related well with us as her students. She is part of the reason for my success in Summer Session I.

Four responses to the question about how the Summer Pilot

Program may have contributed to the development of the students' professional attitudes and competencies about beginning a career in teaching are transcribed below:

1. The summer pilot program helped me realize that I want to teach upper grades. My professional attitudes and competencies have also developed towards my classmates and instructors because we all had to work together as one team and this is what I would have to do if I were teaching at a school.
2. I feel I am more confident. The presentations and assignments forced me to think like a teacher.
3. The Summer Pilot Program allowed me to reflect upon my practices as a teacher in a positive way. It allowed me to work first hand with experienced individuals in my subject area. Also to model the professional image of my instructors would be a pleasure and rewarding in my career.
4. I am grateful for the program.

During the Summer Pilot Program, the administrators decided not to change the course content (i.e., expecting a 15 weeks methods course to be covered in 5). Four responses to the question *do you feel that this has been an effective process? If not, please explain a better method* are transcribed below:

1. The instructors did a great job covering the content in such a limited time but I would suggest extending the classes to 8 weeks. I believe this will help with all the work that is required from the students and the professors won't have to grade everything at the last minute.
2. It has been grueling but effective. I wouldn't change a thing.
3. I do feel that the modified course was beneficial. Even though the material is covered at a fast pace, additional help and resources are available and recommended by the staff. As with any subject, learning has to take place at home as well as in the instructional setting. With the assistance of the instructors and initiative to work independently and consistently, one should do well.
4. It was very effective. FSU hired the best professors and it has been an enriching experience.

Four responses to the question, *list ideas/topics that you thought should have been presented in the Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop* are transcribed below:

1. Handouts would have been great instead of researching all the information from home
2. More specific in content area
3. I thought we would go over questions and strategies to help
4. This is the second praxis workshop that I have attended—by far best presenter.

Twenty-four responses to the question, *list general comments about the Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop* are transcribed below:

1. Great job
2. Presenter did a very good job
3. Presenter was encouraging, humorous, full of great information, enjoyable
4. The presenter was awesome
5. Presentation was simply wonderful
6. This was the best praxis workshop I have ever attended
7. Great presenter
8. Good explanation of praxis format and ideas/suggestions for praxis
9. Enjoyed workshop
10. Great
11. Great presentation of information and methods for taking the Praxis, excellent instructor
12. Good strategies on test taking skills on the day of the test
13. Very enlightening, extremely helpful
14. Great workshop (fun)
15. Great interaction style
16. This workshop really helped me, the presenter helped me to understand what I was doing wrong
17. Best workshop I have ever attended, 30 day study plan was a great idea
18. Excellent
19. Very good
20. Very interesting strategies, the presenter made it fun
21. I felt very confident after completing this workshop
22. Sessions were long but good information
23. Thank you for providing the praxis workshop
24. Great program will attend again, keep the program going

Discussion

This study sought to document changes in teacher education students' perceptions and satisfaction of their learning experiences in an accelerated Summer Pilot Program. The findings of this analysis indicated that the teacher education students who participated in summer session I and II were significantly more satisfied with the overall structure of the Summer Pilot Program. More specifically, the students reported that they were quite satisfied with the course organization and planning, communication among the instructors, faculty/student interactions, assignments, exams and grading, the instructional methods used in the classroom, the course outcomes, the student effort and involvement, course difficulty, work load and pace, the general satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program and the satisfaction of the Summer Pilot Program Praxis Workshop. With regards to the overall evaluation, which asked to rate the quality of instruction in the Summer Pilot Program courses, students indicated that the program was "effective" with an overall mean score of 4.54.

Two teacher education students' open-ended responses to "general satisfaction of the summer pilot program," transcribed show similar views:

I think that the general satisfaction of the summer pilot program was good.

I was extremely pleased with the program as a whole. It was beneficial to students like me who are older and ready to start their careers. I learned a lot and feel that I am prepared to enter the teaching profession.

According to Hicks (2005), the summer program atmosphere is surrounded with positive early-academic components, such as initial course selection, intrusive advising, developmental instruction, study groups, tutoring, and labs. The evidence, from evaluation research, that summer programs play an important role in increasing retention among college students, especially at-risk students, is solid. Furthermore, Johnson & Romanoff (1999) note that the overall general satisfaction is important for the student and institution of higher education that wishes to enhance the college academic experience for its students while increasing retention. Secondly, this overall general student satisfaction goes against *The UNC Tomorrow Commission Report* as it speaks to schools' shortage of licensed and well-prepared teachers. If participating students felt pleased and prepared then that helps the overall mission of the university, which is placing highly-qualified, licensed, and well-trained teachers in classrooms in North Carolina and the nation.

It was interesting to note that responses for both summer session I and summer session II students showed possible misperceptions about the clarity of exams questions, the exams' coverage of important aspects of the course, the overall quality of the textbook(s), problems or questions presented by the instructor for small group discussions and work load for this course in relation to other courses of equal credit. Students in summer session I reported that they felt that the instructor's clarity of exam questions and exams' coverage of important aspects of the course was effective; the summer session II students did not totally agree. They felt that those two items were moderately effective. This finding is somewhat consistent to what students were indicating in the open-ended responses when asked about the Summer Pilot Program course content and the limited time of the five week summer session courses. When asked if the five week summer session had been an effective process, students felt that the instructors did a great job covering the content in such a limited time but they would suggest extending the classes to 8 weeks. The students felt that this strategy would help with all the work that is required from the students and the professors won't have to grade everything at the last minute. In contrast, some students felt that the modified course was beneficial. They felt that even though the material was covered at a fast pace, additional help and resources are available and recommended by the staff. The

students felt that with any subject, learning has to take place at home as well as in the instructional setting. In addition, they felt that with the assistance of the instructors and initiative to work independently and consistently, one should do well.

When the summer pilot program students are recruited and have registered for the two summer sessions, the academic component is usually discussed. Because the summer sessions are structured for five weeks each, it makes sense that the students would expect to receive academic support from their instructors, academic advisors and tutors. In addition, the students are admitted to the university and summer pilot program with the understanding that they are required to meet with an academic advisor and attend special sessions to assist in their academic pursuits. For example, in the Summer Pilot Program, rising juniors and sophomores were enrolled in content area courses and/or early education courses, which are prerequisites for admission to teacher education. Admission to teacher education would propel these students into completing methods courses a semester earlier than planned. The result would mean that they too will be able to complete the program at least a semester earlier than intended. During the summer program, rising juniors and sophomores participated in praxis I tutorials to meet admission to teacher education requirements. In the past, many FSU students struggled to meet the praxis I (mathematics, reading, and writing) cut-off scores, which are an entrance to program and licensure requirement. These students struggle with writing and inferential comprehension skills. Mathematical competency is also a struggle for many students, especially students of color. To combat this issue, praxis workshops were provided for summer program participants. Student participants who attended the praxis workshops felt that the overall design and structure of the praxis sessions ($m = 4.72$) were beneficial. In addition, students open-ended responses corroborate with what was statistically found about the praxis workshops. Students reported that good strategies were given for test taking, that great information and methods for taking the Praxis were given, and that they now felt very confident about taking the praxis exam. These findings echo previous research conducted on summer programs and the original design of what the Summer Pilot Program administrators hope to address in improving the overall writing weaknesses as detailed by *The UNC Tomorrow Commission*, which further charges institutions to train "professionals to write more effectively" (p. 12). Guthrie (1992) and Walters & Marcus (1985) reported that there is solid evidence from evaluation research that summer program projects play an important role in increasing retention among at-risk students. Also, Guthrie (1992) indicated that summer programs, which are often but not always residential, build cohesion among participants and between participants and staff. As a result, students are less likely to enter fall semester feeling isolated.

In addition, Guthrie (1992) indicated that improving academic skills gives students a better chance of performing well and improves their self-confidence. Guthrie noted that getting a few credits under

their belts enables students to experience success. Guthrie indicated that summer programs offer much more time for advising about majors and possible careers, as well as for directing students to fall courses and faculty where they are likely to perform well.

There were a few weaknesses indicated on the Summer Pilot Program student survey. For example, areas of concern reported on the survey were that students felt the program should have one extended summer session for next year ($m = 3.42$), the program planning time for taking courses was not adequate, there was not enough time dedicated for instruction to cover the course content ($m = 3.50$), and that other workshops excluding the praxis workshops were well organized and attended by other students ($m = 3.58$). These findings are consistent to what was found in the open-ended responses highlighting more time for instruction, feedback and participation:

I was very appreciative of the Summer Pilot experience. Though fast paced, I was able to follow along without getting behind. My instructors were very helpful at all times, providing answers and direction when needed.

The instructors did a great job covering the content in such a limited time but I would suggest extending the classes to 8 weeks.

I do feel that the modified course was beneficial. Even though the material is covered at a fast pace, additional help and resources are available and recommended by the staff.

Summary

The Teacher Education Summer Pilot Project, designed and piloted during the summer of 2008, was created in an effort to increase the productivity of teacher education programs at FSU, especially teachers in high needs area – middle grades, secondary education mathematics and science, special education, and elementary education with concentration in content areas and special education. The intent of this Pilot Project is to enable teacher education students to complete their degree in a shorter period by providing major courses during both sessions for summer 2008. The program served 284 Teacher Education Summer Pilot Program students that initially enrolled in summer session I and II. A total of 131 students (46.1%) were enrolled in session I and 153 students (53.9%) were enrolled in session II. The Summer Pilot Program focused on three tracks of students: seniors (Track I) already admitted to teacher education; rising juniors, second semester sophomores (Track II); and alternative degree students (Track III) enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program.

The Summer Pilot Program surveys received from the

participating students indicated an overall satisfaction with the program, though they highlighted several possible suggestions for improvement. It is important to note that this was a pilot program implemented very quickly after funding was secured and that many students suggested a longer summer session rather than 5-weeks. However, results from the survey and open-ended responses clearly indicate that all concerned considered the program a benefit for the students served. These results are encouraging; research has suggested that such a program provides a structured learning environment for the participating students during the summer and substantially helps many minority students complete the necessary courses and prepares them to meet the needs of the students in their charge.

The survey results suggest ways for improving such a program, most commonly around issues of duration and workshop participation. A program longer in duration, possibly eight weeks for the method courses instead of 5 weeks, may continue to improve the academic gains throughout the summer program, but allow for professors and students to have more structured faculty/student interaction.

It is important to note that this is the first year of the summer pilot evaluation. To adequately measure the effectiveness of such a program, more than one year is needed for assessing the advantages and disadvantages. A comparable group of students who did not participate would need to be recruited and, optimally, the two groups would be followed until graduation. In addition, an evaluation which allows random assignment of participating students from a list of those recruited and which measures other important academic variables such as grade point averages or SAT scores for both of those selected and those who were not is needed to provide evidence of the effects of a summer program before the program is brought to scale.

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