

## SAMFORD UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*In addition to reviewing program documents and other materials, interviews were conducted with 26 individuals for the Samford University case study. This group included the dean of education, the associate dean and chair of teacher education, the dean of arts and sciences, the director of graduate programs in education, the chair of mathematics, and nine teacher education faculty members, including the director of assessment and clinical experiences. The group of interviewees also included two graduate students, six principals, and four cooperating teachers. One of the graduate students is also a field supervisor; the other is an assistant principal. Among the principals, two are field supervisors, and three are graduate students at Samford. In addition, two of the interviewees are graduates of the Samford teacher education program. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes.*

### Program Description

***Institutional Context.*** Samford University, founded in 1842, is the largest privately supported and fully accredited institution of higher education in Alabama. Located in Birmingham, Samford is a Christian institution. Total student enrollment in 2001–2002 was 4,377 — 2,890 undergraduate and 1,487 graduate students. Samford offers degree programs through the college of arts and sciences and schools of business, divinity, education and professional studies, law, nursing, performing arts, and pharmacy. The student body is 88 percent White; 6 percent of the student body is African American, comprising the second largest ethnic group. Samford’s stated mission is to nurture individuals by offering learning experiences and relationships in a Christian community. In recent years, university programs have been influenced by principles of total quality management and problem-based learning (PBL). As part of an endowment grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, Samford redesigned core areas of its undergraduate curriculum to include PBL concepts.

***School of Education.*** In 2001, 751 students were enrolled in the Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education and Professional Studies, the majority (614) of whom were undergraduates. The school has three departments that grant degrees: teacher education, exercise and sports medicine, and human sciences and design. There are 20 full-time faculty members. The school promotes a PBL model for instruction and improvement and houses the Center for Problem-Based Learning. In 1998, the school opened the Children’s Learning Center as a demonstration model and laboratory school for children

from infancy through age four with varying needs and abilities. This center serves as a site for education students' initial field experiences.

**Department of Teacher Education.** Samford's teacher education program graduates 60–75 students each academic year and has 10 full-time faculty members. There are six undergraduate majors: general science, language arts, P–12 education, secondary education, social science, and a combined major that includes early childhood education, early childhood special education, elementary education, and elementary collaborative education. Candidates earn four certifications through the combined program. Certifications in secondary education and an optional middle school endorsement also are available. Graduate degrees offered include a master's of science in education, educational specialist, and a doctorate in educational leadership.

Samford teacher education programs are based on a model of reflective decision making. As candidates move through developmental phases of preparation, they continually reflect on their experiences. During a foundational phase, candidates complete introductory education courses and serve as aides in inner-city schools. After admission to the teacher education program, candidates study methodological aspects of teaching and increase their clinical experiences. During internship, candidates spend a semester in an inclusion classroom and a semester in a regular elementary classroom. Samford continues involvement with its graduates through first-year teacher seminars and continuing education.

Samford's teacher education program is accredited by NCATE and the state of Alabama. Coursework and clinical experiences also incorporate criteria for effectiveness from the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

## Evaluation of Individuals, Groups, and Program Components

Because Samford's winning program was its combined elementary education major, most of the information in this case study emphasizes that program. But as described in the following sections, many of the evaluation activities at Samford occur school-wide and include other education programs and majors.

**Data Collection.** The school's director of assessment reported 27 sources of data collected on the progress of individuals. Of these, 74 percent are performance-based measures, such as the annual appraisal of teacher education faculty members. Most of the data collected about individuals (96%) are used for formative purposes; 19 percent are used for summative evaluation (e.g., student teaching grades), and 15 percent for

confirming purposes (e.g., reading achievement scores). There are 26 sources of data used to collect information on cohorts of candidates, faculty, and cooperating teachers. Of these, 58 percent were identified as performance based; these data are used primarily for formative evaluation. Of the 15 sources of data on program components, most were not performance based and all are used for formative purposes. The primary recipients of results include the individuals on whom data are collected (e.g., students are given test results), advisors, department chairs, and the office of clinical experiences. The data collected on groups and program components are reported to the faculty, department chairs, office of clinical experiences, and deans of the school of education and college of liberal arts, as appropriate. Table 4 summarizes the data that Samford collects on the progress of individuals, groups, and program components that were rated as having “much” or a “great deal” of influence in making decisions about needed changes.

**Data Management Capacity.** Responsibility for data management resides primarily with one faculty member who is the director of assessment and clinical experiences. A part-time graduate assistant and a full-time secretary provide assistance to the director in overseeing data collection, analysis, and reporting. When possible, first-year graduates are contacted via e-mail, and undergraduate student workers are paid to call parents to collect contact information for graduates. Quantitative data are entered into Excel spreadsheets to which all department members have access. As a result of her clinical responsibilities, the director is heavily involved with external constituents, which helps support data collection efforts that involve K–12 schools.

**Process for Acting on Results.** Clinical assessments, class grades, and GPAs determine candidate admission and graduation at Samford. In addition, candidates are monitored for professional teaching dispositions (modeled after INTASC’s) such as demonstrating enthusiasm for the content areas they are teaching. Infractions lead to a faculty-student conference; repetitive infractions can prevent candidate certification, if recommended by a faculty review panel.

Course evaluations are used in several ways that relate to program improvement. Students evaluate faculty courses twice each semester. A mid-course evaluation gives faculty members the opportunity to revisit the syllabus and make mid-course changes. Although these evaluations are not shared with others, faculty members complete a form for the department that indicates what, if any, changes they made. The end-of-course evaluations that students complete are sent to the provost and are used as part of the annual faculty appraisal. Faculty members with poor course evaluations meet with the dean of education and submit a written plan that indicates what and how they will improve. Course evaluations also are used as a source of information for the curriculum planning that occurs each semester.

**TABLE 4. SUMMARY OF KEY DATA SOURCES FOR SAMFORD UNIVERSITY**

<i>SOURCE OF DATA</i>		
INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS	PROGRAM COMPONENTS
GPA of teacher candidates (semester)	Major Field Assessment Test for cohorts of candidates by major (after coursework)	Course evaluations of teacher education and liberal arts courses (semester)
Dispositions rubric of teacher candidates (ongoing)	GPA for cohorts and majors (semester)	Evaluation by candidates of program: courses, field experiences, and support (semester)
Class grades of candidates (ongoing)	Clinical evaluations of cohorts (by course)	First-year teacher survey of teacher education courses (annual)
Clinical evaluations of candidates (by course)	Mean student grades for methods courses for different cohorts (semester)	Mission and values survey of professional courses and field experiences (semester)
Candidate portfolio (final semester)	Professional Education Personnel Evaluation (PEPE) of cohorts (annual)	ACT opinion survey of program by graduating seniors
Major Field Assessment Test (end of coursework)	Employer satisfaction survey of cohorts (Third year after graduation)	Liberal arts course syllabi collected for state review every 3 to 5 years
Achievement scores and work samples of candidates' and graduates' K-12 students (annual)	Principal survey of first-year graduates (annual)	K-12 student learning assessments during field experiences (semester)
Employment of cohort three months after graduation	Dialogue with liberal arts department chairs (ongoing)	Employers Advisory Group (annual focus group)
Service and scholarship of teacher education faculty (biannual)	Load and type of courses taught by liberal arts faculty (semester)	Beginning Teacher Team of first-year graduates and faculty (each semester)
P-12 collaboration of teacher education faculty (semester)	Course evaluations of liberal arts faculty (semester)	Recent graduates focus group (annual)
Teacher education faculty course evaluations (semester)	Informal surveys about cooperating teachers by candidates (semester)	
Experience and recommendations used for selecting cooperating teachers	Exit interview of cooperating teachers with university supervisors (semester)	
Field supervisor's evaluation of cooperating teacher (semester)		
School achievement test results used for selecting field placement principals		

The dean and the associate dean described how program change occurs. The results of surveys and focus groups of employers and graduates are communicated to the faculty and stakeholders (e.g., principals). If results indicate a need for a new course or some adjustment in the program, the faculty, with the advice of stakeholders — including principals, graduates, and current students — propose a change.

A faculty interviewee and the graduate director mentioned the importance of the state's assessment of first-year teachers, the Professional Education Personnel Evaluation (PEPE), a valid and reliable instrument developed by the state. The state aggregates PEPE results by the institution from which the teachers graduated. Low average institutional performance on the PEPE can cause the state to terminate a teacher preparation program. As a result, Samford has incorporated PEPE criteria into assessments of field experiences.

Three math methods faculty members said they use candidate feedback to determine if candidates are making meaningful connections between methods classes and regular mathematics classes. Faculty members talk to student teachers to determine if they learned from their methods classes what they needed to learn in order to teach mathematics. If there is an area that was not addressed, for example teaching long division, the methods instructors make changes so that the topic is covered. In addition, cooperating teachers and field supervisors monitor how student teachers are teaching mathematics. If there is a problem, the supervising teacher gives feedback to the methods instructors about a needed change.

Five principals commented on the importance of personal communication in program change. For example, when there was a problem with one of the student teachers who had transferred from another institution, the principal talked to the director of clinical experiences. The next year there was a program change to ensure that transfer students had the necessary skills. The principals said they receive surveys from Samford regularly and that Samford responds and lets them know that changes are being made. A principal said that when a Samford graduate was marked less than high on the PEPE, Samford immediately tracked the score and called the principal to see what the university could do to help. Another principal commented that the Samford program is based on research and that data are studied, talked about, related to the quality indicators, and followed by resulting action.

***Evidence of Teaching All Children.*** Samford requires all graduates to be certified in special education to ensure that they are prepared to teach all children. Clinical evaluations provide data on whether the candidate is sensitive to the learning needs of different students. Candidates have clinical experiences in urban, rural, and suburban schools. They are observed at all levels of their clinical experiences.

The director of assessment and clinical experiences and three field supervisors said that candidates must indicate in their lesson plans how they will identify children who are not doing well and how they will address children's learning styles. Samford student teachers are required to develop charts for the individual students they teach. As they begin to teach a lesson or unit, candidates plan how they are going to assess and interpret progress for every student. They use assessment data to design "correctives" or "extensions" for their instruction of different children. For student teaching, candidates are typically placed in inclusion classes with mixed abilities and special-needs students. Candidates are involved with individual educational plans (IEPs) and participate in parent conferences and student support team meetings. The faculty member who directs special education said that supporting this process is Samford's emphasis on problem-based learning, which helps candidates understand how to address the needs of different children.

The four cooperating teachers confirmed that Samford candidates collect data on individual students and use the data to plan for enrichment or remediation. Samford candidates come prepared to develop lessons that address all children at all levels of achievement.

## **Alignment of Evaluation with Program Standards and Goals**

**Program Goals.** The goal of teacher education at Samford is for graduates to demonstrate eight abilities: (1) to increase student learning in K–12 classrooms; (2) to apply a personal philosophy of teaching with knowledge of development in planning and implementing learning activities; (3) to apply problem solving and critical thinking in curriculum decisions; (4) to apply problem solving and critical thinking in instructional decisions; (5) to anticipate the needs of diverse students; (6) to utilize liberal arts core knowledge and subject content in planning and implementing classroom activities; (7) to work harmoniously with all participants in various school settings; and, (8) to engage in critical self-examination and professional growth. In addition to other requirements, the program emphasizes four areas of learning for prospective teachers: (1) problem-based learning to strengthen skills in solving real classroom problems; (2) the development and adaptation of lessons for diverse populations of students; (3) extensive clinical experiences in K–12 schools; and (4) the use of technology to improve student learning. Program goals and curricula align with NCATE and state standards as well as those of INTASC, the NBPTS, and subject-matter organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Faculty curriculum committees meet each semester to review program components. Goals and standards are coded on each matrix and on course syllabi. In 1992, the Samford education faculty developed 14 key performance indicators (KPIs) based on the notion of continuous quality improvement. The KPIs include four measures of intake (e.g., education students' ACT scores), three measures of process (e.g., percentage of the faculty involved in service activities), and seven measures of outcome (e.g., employer satisfaction). The dean and associate dean said that curriculum team members discuss and revise course and program practices based on data collection on the KPIs; results from candidate, graduate, and employer surveys; recommendations from advisory groups; and research on best practices.

The director of special education explained the influence of problem-based learning on the application of standards to the teacher education program. When the additional certification in special education was added, the faculty looked at the National Standards from the Council for Exceptional Children to identify skills and outcomes that Samford graduates needed as well as the type of teaching that faculty members would need to provide. Problem-based learning helped with the integration of standards because the emphasis was on helping teachers to become critical decision makers in applying standards. Thus, learning the process of how to implement standards in one subject area transfers to learning how to implement standards in other areas.

***Determination of Proficiency.*** According to the dean and the associate dean, the proficiency level of Samford candidates is determined by what teacher education standards documents recommend, research on best practices, and characteristics that employers look for in teachers. According to the graduate director, Samford collects data from candidates, graduates, and employers using surveys and focus groups. Samford regularly talks with employers about what teachers should know and be able to do and whether Samford graduates meet these requirements. Based on confirming data that graduates are successful in classrooms, Samford assumes that the goals and standards are working. If graduates are not successful, then the standards or goals might need to be changed. The director commented:

If we're getting back good data . . . that they are successful in their teaching . . . and if we can . . . make that next leap and determine that they are in fact impacting positively on what kids learn in their classrooms, then we ought to be able to make the assumption that the standard we have in place is doing what we want it to do.

## The Development of Program Evaluation

**Development Efforts.** According to the dean and assistant dean, the initial motivation for developing systematic evaluation at Samford was the needs of customers — education students and their prospective employers. The two main goals of the Samford teacher education program are to have every candidate employed and to be successful after being hired. The first step of the process was to ask employers to evaluate graduates; in addition, graduates were asked to evaluate Samford’s program and to indicate what they needed in the first year of teaching that the program had not provided. Surveys as well as focus groups were used to collect feedback. Based on data collection, small changes were made, for example, a classroom management course was added. Several problems, however, continued to emerge in the data. Graduates needed more skills related to solving real classroom problems, using technology, and teaching special needs students in regular classrooms. Another problem was the need for additional clinical hours before graduation. Simultaneous with the school of education’s emphasis on database change, the university adopted PBL as its new approach to curriculum. The PBL emphasis and the need to address more than just small changes in the curriculum resulted in an education faculty retreat in summer 1997 to begin discussions around curriculum redesign. The primary motivation for “throwing out the curriculum” was the need for teachers to be able to work with special needs students in regular classrooms and to still graduate in four years (a state requirement). Some of the processes used during redesign were the use of an outside facilitator, the creation of course matrices to address the four identified needs, guest speakers on critical thinking, the investigation of case studies by the faculty, feedback from practitioners, and faculty feedback on new courses. The redesign culminated in the creation of the combined four-certification program.

To approach improvements more systematically and with less threat to faculty and staff members, the school of education designed a five-step model of Essential Changes. The model involves specifying the (1) goal, (2) baseline, (3) plan, (4) action, and (5) evaluation. For each step, data are collected and conclusions are made based on the data. The school of education also developed the Quality Education Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP), a visual model that shows that planning is based on input from faculty members within and outside the school of education and various advisory groups that include candidates, graduates, practitioners, and employers. The model also indicates that data sources include candidate performance, surveys, focus groups, and K–12 student achievement. Interviews and documents corroborated the implementation of the CAP by Samford’s school of education.

Based on comments by the dean of liberal arts and sciences, the emphasis on customer satisfaction reflects Samford’s campus-wide adoption of ideas related to Total Quality Management. The university’s Director of Quality Assessment was a driving force in

encouraging program faculty members to develop KPIs as measures of success that could guide improvement efforts.

The director of assessment described the 1997–1998 redesign of the teacher education curriculum. The revision was based on research, particularly research on problem-based learning and on feedback from graduates and principals through surveys and focus groups. The goal of the re-design was to increase the percentage of graduates hired from 85 percent to 100 percent. Faculty members wanted to know what skills graduates needed in order to be hired immediately. In addition, the department of teacher education wanted to broaden the base for decision making about program design to include factual and quantitative information in addition to research, accreditation guidelines, national standards, and new trends. The faculty began to realize the value of asking graduating candidates and graduates about the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The faculty also realized the importance of asking principals how new teachers from Samford compared to those from other universities and what knowledge and skills first-year teachers need to be better prepared.

Five principals confirmed their involvement in the redesign and continuing evaluation of teacher education at Samford. One principal remarked that she noticed changes in the program even after she first gave input to a focus group and that as the program progressed, she observed positive changes in Samford graduates.

***Barriers to Evaluation.*** According to the dean and associate deans, early in the development of evaluation and the implementation of changes, faculty members were afraid that their courses would be dropped and that they might lose their jobs. Department chairs had to assure faculty members that no jobs would be lost as a result of program redesign. Throughout the revision process, changes were not mandated. Instead, the approach was one of gathering and reporting on data (e.g., the KPIs) and asking for faculty input on how the department could redesign the curriculum to address the problems that the data indicated.

The deans indicated that another issue was aligning program changes with teachers' preferred styles, for example PBL versus a strictly lecture approach to instruction. To address this issue, it was important for the faculty to have input and for the department chairs to recognize that faculty members did not need to look exactly alike in their teaching. Instead, changes (e.g., PBL) could be adapted to current contexts.

The director of assessment, who is responsible for data collection on the teacher education program, also cited the lack of time as a barrier to evaluation. However, having a secretary and a graduate assistant has helped.

**Confirming Data.** The director of assessment and the graduate assistant who focuses on confirming data commented that a challenge to collecting these data is the lack of consistency in the way this information is reported. Principals report different measures of student learning, making it difficult to summarize the data. Another difficulty is tracking graduates because students typically move after graduation. The graduate assistant observed:

We've got to develop this in such a way that, starting with each clinical experience, and then specific to student teaching, they are [collecting confirming data]. But they also need to understand how important it is for us as a university to receive information after they're out. . . . how valuable that is and how much more prepared future teachers can be based on that.

Field supervisors indicated that candidates are required to gather pre- and post-assessments on the children who they teach lessons to during clinical experiences and student teaching. One field supervisor who is also a principal commented that Samford graduates bring to their jobs knowledge of how to collect and use student data.

Principals said they collect confirming data on Samford's graduates because of their partnerships with Samford. Samford asks these principals for confirming data (with student names removed) aggregated by Samford graduates. As one principal commented, "Samford is like a marriage. If you ever get involved with them, you're with them forever." One principal brought confirming data to the interview that showed that students of Samford graduates at her school were achieving higher than the school average. This principal is also a Samford graduate student who is taking courses at Samford that emphasize the importance of assessment and evaluation.

**Institutional Participants in Program Evaluation.** The university's Quality Assessment Office is responsible for collecting assessment data from each department on campus including exit examinations, senior portfolios, and senior research projects. The school of education's assessment director attends meetings with the quality assessment director throughout the year. The meetings result in decisions about how to compile, interpret, disseminate, and utilize the data that are collected.

**Role of the Teacher Education Faculty.** The department of teacher education has weekly faculty meetings at which data are shared. The requirement that all Samford students attend a number of campus convocations held on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings frees that time for faculty meetings. Faculty members use data from course evaluations and various surveys and focus groups to plan curriculum and program changes. Candidates

contribute to evaluation at Samford through course evaluations and an end-of-program survey.

***Role of the Arts and Sciences Faculty.*** According to the dean of arts and sciences, the college of arts and sciences shares “much” responsibility for teacher education at Samford, and there is a significant amount of collaboration. The dean has attended focus groups of teacher education graduates and employers to understand how Samford graduates are performing at teaching. The dean and associate dean of education said there are annual meetings of the arts and sciences advisory group that bring together education and liberal arts faculty members. There are ad hoc meetings when problems occur related to subject matter, for example when negative feedback is received about the PEPE. The mathematics chair agreed with these observations and described the collaborative design of a geometry course for candidates.

***Role of Dean and Associate Dean.*** The dean, associate dean, and the director of graduate programs described the leadership of evaluation as shared and the school of education as a learning organization. To this end, the school has adapted four Quality Principles of Change: (1) When there is a problem, it is generally the result of a faulty process rather than faulty people; (2) teams make better decisions than individuals; (3) decisions should be based on data and information rather than on opinions; and (4) the faculty needs to learn together as a learning organization. This approach emphasizes teamwork that requires the dean to act as a “facilitator leader.” The dean commented that the organizational chart of the school is more like a circle (rather than a top-down diagram).

Four faculty interviewees identified the dean and associate dean as providing leadership for the concept of evaluation and continuous improvement. One faculty member said the dean has been active in promoting the idea that constituents (e.g., employers, graduates) should be surveyed more frequently. Two principals cited the deans and the director of graduate programs as providing leadership for evaluation. A principal commented that the dean, who comes from a background in total quality management, asks probing questions to see what people need, investigates and researches the issue, comes back and discusses what she’s found, and then asks for input. This principal commented, “She’s about 10 steps ahead. . . . She is such an excellent facilitator.”

***Role of Graduate Students.*** A graduate student commented that Samford faculty members also learn from current graduate students, several of whom are principals. Faculty members ask for feedback from graduate students on different ideas.

***Funding.*** The university, the school of education, and monies received through grants directly and indirectly fund evaluation activities. The university Quality Assessment Office gives funds for the Major Fields Assessment Test of candidates and for external

reviewers of candidate portfolios. A grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts provided training in PBL for all Samford faculty members. The school of education funds the data collection activities that the director of assessment supervises (e.g., surveys). Both university money and grants will be used to fund the school of education's new center for learning and student achievement.

**Quality Assurance of Evaluation.** There are several sources for informal quality assurance of instruments used for evaluation activities. These include feedback from the director of institutional research, who also teaches in the educational leadership program, and feedback from the psychology department. A former member of the psychology department, who now teaches research in the school of education, also provides feedback on instruments. The Samford teacher education department uses several valid and reliable evaluation instruments from external sources. These include the Major Field Assessment Test, the American College Testing (ACT) Student Opinion Survey, and the PEPE, which is Samford's model for clinical assessments.

The school of education conducts a significant number of focus groups for evaluation purposes. The director of graduate programs observed that there is a lot of conversation in these groups but they are focused experiences. Deans and directors who have developed skills in conducting focus groups spend time setting the stage so those involved understand the purpose and goals of the group. As the director of graduate programs commented, "We do so much around small group, problem-based learning kinds of things that conversation just becomes natural. . . . Instead of some problem we set up, . . . we're looking at their [own] experience."

## The Influence of Stakeholders on Evaluation

**Samford Stakeholders.** Interviews with the deans, faculty members, principals, and graduates indicated that the primary stakeholders are the program's customers, who are the principals who hire Samford graduates and the candidates who become graduates. All stakeholders and advisory groups, and especially principals and superintendents, are informed of results from data collections. Most of Samford's evaluation efforts are directed at determining whether Samford is addressing what teachers need to be successful at their jobs. To support these efforts, the deans and the graduate director conduct teacher and administrator workshops across the state. They also talk to superintendents and directors of staff development through these workshops. This process helps them stay in touch with what is happening in education systems in the state. The teacher education program has partnerships with both upper-class suburban and inner-city schools and is willing to work with principals of schools throughout the state who are hosting Samford student teachers. Recently, Samford hired a retired staff

developer from one of the school systems to be a consultant for Samford's graduate program in teacher leadership. Some of the field supervisors are also principals who are supervising both Samford student teachers and Samford graduates employed at their schools. A principal who is also a graduate student commented, "They [Samford] optimize the talents of people around them."

***How Stakeholders Influence Evaluation.*** Samford holds annual focus groups for principals and assistant principals where participants share their views on the teacher education program, how Samford graduates are performing at their schools, how students of graduates are performing, and what program improvements are needed. The associate dean circulates minutes from the meetings to attendees and to the teacher education faculty.

Samford also holds annual focus groups of recent program graduates, conducts an annual first-year teacher survey, and offers professional development activities for first-year teachers. According to the director of assessment, Samford graduates are used to having a role in giving feedback about the program and often will communicate with faculty members about what worked or needs improvement. The assessment director said, "They know we want that information, they know we will act upon that information, and they know that if they give us that information, that will have an impact on the people coming behind them."

According to the principals who were interviewed, there is an easy exchange of information and communication, and principals have Samford faculty members' home phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Program leaders share new knowledge and information with principals. One principal said, "The whole group makes you want to learn." Another principal noted that participation on committees for other universities usually results in no actions, and a plan will simply "sit on a shelf." However, at Samford, changes discussed and agreed to are implemented, for example the adoption of the PEPE for assessment of student teachers.

Cooperating teachers participate indirectly in program evaluation through formal feedback about student teachers and through periodic conversations with field supervisors. One cooperating teacher said that two years ago she served on a panel for a group of cooperating teachers. Samford had convened the panel to determine how the teacher education program could be improved. This teacher said that program directors asked, "What can we change? What needs to be revamped? This is your time to tell us. We want to change it if it needs changing." The teacher commented that program directors listened to input from the cooperating teachers. Another cooperating teacher commented that she wouldn't hesitate to call Samford to discuss a problem or to ask someone from Samford to come to her classroom.

## External Influences on Program Evaluation

**State Influences.** The state requires a joint accreditation review with NCATE every five years. Although the state of Alabama does not have a teacher-licensing test, it has implemented the PEPE as a measure of teacher preparation effectiveness. Principals must conduct observations of novice teachers using the PEPE. As described previously, poor results on the PEPE by a program's graduates can cause repercussions, including program termination. Samford has aligned its clinical evaluations with the PEPE.

The Alabama Reading Initiative involves standards for best practices in teaching reading and teacher training to implement these standards in classrooms. Samford adjusted its course syllabi to incorporate the new standards and prepares candidates to implement them in lessons and use the associated student assessment. A principal commented that when the Initiative first occurred, only recent Samford graduates were prepared to use this assessment.

State K–12 content standards (the Alabama Course of Study) in mathematics and science are addressed in methods classes. According to three math methods faculty members, in science and math methods classes, candidates identify state and national standards in their lesson plans and indicate how the two are related. Part of the course grade reflects this activity, and candidates include the lesson plans in their portfolios.

The dean of arts and sciences commented that new state teacher education requirements have made cooperation between arts and sciences and education easier. In the past, specific course requirements led to the teacher education program micromanaging arts and science courses for teachers and did not promote good relationships. For example, arts and sciences had to offer specific courses in the different content areas. Now the state uses a system based on competencies that can be addressed in different courses.

**Other External Influences.** As mentioned previously, Samford teacher education programs are accredited by NCATE and incorporate assessment elements from INTASC. The candidate portfolio incorporates NBPTS criteria. In addition, the master's of teaching program requires graduate candidates to simulate the NBPTS process, and some attain this certification at the same time they earn their master's degrees.

The director of secondary education indicated that both the curriculum and candidates' assignments have to meet national standards in the subject fields. The director of special education said that the special education program is aligned with the standards of the Council for Exceptional Children.

The dean and associate dean of education reiterated that customer satisfaction drives evaluation at Samford; the university emphasizes employer and graduate satisfaction.

Although the initial motivation of evaluation was to make internal program improvements, evaluation activities now are aligned with external accountability measures (e.g., the PEPE, NCATE).

## The Culture for Program Evaluation

**Incentives.** The dean indicated that the most important component in the evaluation of education faculty members is their teaching, although service and scholarship also are considered. Participating in evaluation-related activities is considered service. The director of assessment said her work on program evaluation was a significant part of her tenure portfolio. According to the graduate director, because Samford is not a research university, faculty members are encouraged to try different things in their classrooms and do not face institutional barriers (such as lack of support or pressure to publish).

**Attitudes.** According to the dean of arts and sciences, the ethos at Samford University is one of working together. Although at some universities, the liberal arts faculty neither collaborates with education faculty nor respects the school of education, the dean feels that Samford's school of education is one that deserves and receives respect from other Samford faculty members.

As mentioned previously, the deans of education said that some faculty members were afraid they would lose their jobs as a result of the curriculum redesign that evaluation was driving. The deans assured the faculty that they would not lose their jobs. In addition, decisions were not mandated; faculty members had input on redesign decisions, and individual teaching styles were respected. For example, although problem-based learning is heavily emphasized in instruction, faculty members have the freedom to structure their classes as they see fit. The deans emphasized that significant planning time was important to facilitate the redesign process.

Faculty members who were interviewed agreed that there is a very collaborative culture among faculty in teacher education; a graduate student also commented that the faculty works well together. A faculty member said that although their number is small (which might facilitate collaboration), this small number puts pressure on individuals to assume more responsibilities. According to another faculty member, faculty members need to be part of the vision and the scope for the future of education if they want to continue to serve as faculty members at Samford.

Data collection is part of the culture of Samford's school of education. As described by the graduate assistant to the director of assessment, "It's become part of the culture. . . . That's just how they work. . . . They don't make decisions without data." A principal in the interview added, "They don't, and then they share that data so you know what's going on."

From the perspective of the schools, principals (including some who are Samford graduate students) reiterated the openness of the Samford faculty to input from principals, graduate students, and undergraduate candidates. A principal commented, “They’re so open. . . . They’ll [ask] me . . . what do they need, what are you seeing? . . . No other university does that for me. . . . The big thing to me is their attitude and the personal relationship they try to build. . . . They’re not into the power thing.”

**Training.** Through the Pew grant and some school of education funds, the faculty had training in PBL at sites in Denmark and in Mississippi. An emphasis of the training was benchmarking, which the deans described as observing people who are doing something differently or better and then integrating those ideas into one’s own work. Benchmarking also involves collecting data to support change in the desired direction. A Pew grant also supported training for the faculty in how to design their own teaching portfolios.

**Faculty Research.** The faculty teaching portfolios incorporate PBL and provide faculty members with opportunities to reflect on and improve their teaching. These portfolios, which are considered scholarly activities, are used for tenure and promotion. The director of assessment, who is primarily responsible for collecting evaluation data, is conducting qualitative research on the first three years of teaching. The school of education’s new center for teaching and student achievement will help faculty members conduct research related to effective teaching.

Because the school of education has a doctoral program in leadership, there is an emphasis on research related to leadership. This program is hoping to partner with the Southern Regional Educational Board to research the best ways to train people to be instructional leaders. The director of graduate programs reiterated that tenure is based on teaching service and scholarship, “but if you do the research on something that really has an impact on what you do day-to-day with students and . . . that, in turn, has an impact on what happens out in the schools . . . that seems to be a win-win for everybody.”

**Institutionalization.** The associate dean of education and the directors of graduate programs and of assessment were asked about signs of institutionalization of teacher education program evaluation. They generally agreed that there are a “great deal” of formal descriptions about evaluation, of routine timelines, and of time allocations for evaluation, shared faculty understandings, and “much” rewards and funding allocations. Other signs of institutionalization noted were that other schools in the university seek information about evaluation from the school of education and that graduates send information to faculty members to be used to make program changes. The average amount of time reported to achieve this degree of institutionalization was seven years.

## Advice About Program Evaluation

Ten interviewees gave advice about using systematic evaluation to guide continuous improvement of teacher preparation. These included the dean and the associate dean of education, the director of assessment, the director of graduate programs in education, education faculty members, principals/field supervisors, and graduate students. Their comments are listed below. (Comments made by more than one interviewee on the same subject are indicated by *n*.)

- Earn the academic and administrative support of the university for teacher education programs. “You’ve got to have a teacher education program that’s recognized by the university, as a very essential part of the university” (education faculty member).
- Maintain strong partnerships with surrounding community schools and with their administrators and teachers.
- Try to determine how the teacher preparation program fits with the realities of teaching (*n* = 2). Programs should look “outside of that ivory tower of education and say how do we need to fit into the world and prepare graduates to be practitioners first” (principal/field supervisor).
- Seek feedback from customers — the employers and the graduates (*n* = 2).
- Incorporate research on best practices and trends in education.
- Benchmark what other successful programs are doing.
- Embed evaluation into the teacher preparation program so it becomes a way of doing things, “so it’s a mindset that is shared by both faculty and students in the program, and therefore graduates” (graduate assistant).
- Choose data sources that will be most helpful in understanding the teacher education program and determine the most efficient ways to collect the data. Then examine and use the data to determine what changes are needed in the program (*n* = 3).
- Connect the teacher education program with the desired product. “And if the product is learning . . . then you’re going to look at the student achievement, connect it to the student teacher, connect it to the preparation program” (principal/field supervisor).

## Samford Case Summary

**Structures.** The school of education’s key performance indicators constitute a structure for program evaluation at Samford. To measure these, the program administers surveys of

graduates and employers. Validated instruments such as the Major Field Assessment Test, the PEPE, and the ACT Student Opinion Survey are used to evaluate candidates' knowledge, clinical performance, and perceptions of the program, respectively. Field assessments culminate with a candidate portfolio that includes samples of student work. Faculty members are evaluated through course evaluations and their records of teaching, service, and scholarship. The structures used for faculty promotion and tenure emphasize excellence in teaching and service to the program, such as participation in evaluation activities, and scholarship, such as teaching portfolios.

Many sets of standards and principles guide program evaluation at Samford. The eight program goals and the four program emphases (problem-based learning, diverse populations, clinical experiences, and technology) are documented in course matrices. The matrices also indicate links to NCATE and INTASC standards. In addition, the school of education has made explicit its approach to program improvement. The Essential Changes model, the Quality Principles of Change, and the Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP) are verbal and visual ways of structuring program evaluation and improvement.

The school of education's office of assessment, staffed by a director, secretary, and graduate assistant, is an important structure for collecting and analyzing program evaluation data. Formal groups, such as the faculty curriculum teams and the arts and sciences advisory group, also are influential. The university provides some structures that support program evaluation at Samford. The Quality Assessment Office encourages and supports the collection and use of data for program improvement. The campus-wide PBL initiative provided training for faculty to incorporate PBL into the teacher education curriculum. The establishment of a PBL center in the school of education and the school's new center for learning and student achievement are other examples of university support for activities related to evaluation of teacher preparation.

**Processes.** The most commonly used processes for obtaining feedback about teacher education are surveying and focus groups. Interviews with principals and cooperating teachers indicated that the focus groups have been especially effective in gathering input from the field. These interviewees commented on their appreciation of the opportunity to give feedback and their realization that this feedback was valued. Several interviewees observed that the program changes they suggested were implemented quickly and that there were noticeable improvements in graduates soon thereafter. Related to focus groups is the emphasis on communication. Faculty members, practitioners, and graduate students stressed the accessibility of the deans and program directors. Other processes used are weekly faculty meetings, faculty retreats, meetings with the arts and sciences faculty, seminars for new teachers, and state-wide teacher and administrator workshops. The

latter are ways for deans and directors to better understand the needs of current practitioners.

Samford's major revision of its teacher education program four years ago resulted in establishing processes for program evaluation and improvement. The dean's (and the university's) use of ideas related to Total Quality Management led to the evolution of effective change processes that the program refers to as models and principles. The Essential Changes model resembles action research through its inclusion of a goal, baseline measurement, a plan, action, and evaluation of the action. The Quality Principles of Change guide the emphasis on teamwork and avoidance of personal blame; that is, when there is a problem, it is generally because of a faulty process rather than faulty people. The CAP is a visual model that shows that evaluation of teacher education at Samford involves input from people both within and outside the program. These change processes seemed to have resulted in an appreciation for the use of data and a faculty mindset that evaluation is the way to improve programs.

An interesting process that emerged from the interviews is related to the collection of confirming data indicating that graduates are improving their students' learning. The teacher education department obtains these data from principals in partner schools. Some of these principals are graduate students at Samford, where they learn about student work samples and ways to collect data on student achievement related to teaching practices. They then use these skills to collect confirming data on the Samford graduates who are employed at their schools. In other words, they employ a "grow-your-own" approach to collecting evaluation data.

**Issues.** Samford continues to work on the challenge of collecting confirming data. The director of assessment noted the need for more consistency in data reported by different schools and the complexity in summarizing these data. Some interviewees suggested that it would help if the state became more involved. The main task of the graduate assistant assigned to the school of education's assessment office is to collect and synthesize confirming data, indicating the importance that Samford attaches to the use of confirming data. The new center of learning and student achievement will be another vehicle for Samford to address this issue.

The deans and faculty members indicated that issues arise when program changes dictate changes in instruction. Samford has addressed this concern by allowing sufficient time for planning changes, by not mandating changes but instead designing them based on information and faculty input, and by respecting individual teaching styles. Interviewees remarked on the effectiveness of the deans as facilitative leaders in promoting teamwork and the establishment of a learning community within the school of education.