Valley City State University  
School of Education and Graduate Studies  
Changes and Data Driven Decisions since 2008

VCSU Background
Valley City State University (VCSU) has been known for teacher education preparation since the institution began in 1890. VCSU has been a nationally accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) since 1954.

Changes for VCSU since 2008

• **Bush Grant initiatives**
  VCSU has worked collaboratively with 14 institutions as part of a Bush Grant initiative and the Network for Excellence in Teaching (NExT). Valley City State University (VCSU) is a member of the Valley Partnership and works collaboratively with North Dakota State University (NDSU) and Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). The goal is improve teacher education preparation in ways that enhance student learning in K-12 classrooms.

  • **Co-Teaching**
    o Decision was based on research and Bush Grant collaborative efforts
    o VCSU works with K-12 educators in workshops and training sessions

  • **Summer Academies**
    o Summer workshops for first year teachers
    o Involvement of Valley Partnership and K-12 educators who provide advice and resources at a time when the information is extremely meaningful

Data driven decisions were made to improve VCSU teacher education preparation and curriculum in the following areas:

• **GPA for admission to Teacher Education Program raised from 2.50 to 2.75**
  o Significant correlation existed between GPA and student teacher evaluations from cooperating teachers
  o Process for decision and follow-up research discussion available upon request

• **Curriculum changes**
  o Formative Assessment
  o English Language Learner Strategies
  o Differentiated Instruction
  o Technology
    ▪ Work groups of area K-12 educators and VCSU faculty members shared strategies and resources useful in K-12 classrooms.
    ▪ The connection time was valuable.
    ▪ The outcome of the work group meetings was a book of strategies and resources for each of these four areas that is useful to VCSU teacher candidates as they progress through their methods courses, student teaching experience and enter the profession
  o Assessment curriculum change in EDUC 450 course
    ▪ A workgroup of area K-12 educators and VCSU faculty members met to discuss what teachers entering the profession needed to know and do in order be informed about assessments and the use of data in schools
    ▪ The workgroup also viewed multiple textbooks before deciding on The Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning
    ▪ The outcome of the feedback from the workgroup helped to shape the assessment course

  o Classroom Management curriculum changes
    ▪ The EDUC 351 course on classroom management and additional practicum time was established to enhance classroom management learning opportunities for secondary majors
• The EDUC 350 practicum course for elementary majors incorporated additional classroom management learning experiences

• **Student Teaching Length** changed from 10 to 12-weeks in the fall of 2009
  o Decision was based on survey data and feedback from area K-12 educators, VCSU students and VCSU faculty
  o Decision was followed up with VCSU student teacher research

• Additional areas of significant change in which K-12 educators have collaborated with VCSU faculty to impact teacher education preparation at VCSU
  o Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA, now called edTPA) workshops engaged P-12 educators and VCSU faculty in developing a Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) Unit for VCSU teacher candidates to complete during their student teaching experience
    ▪ The TLC Unit adds rigor and consistency to the expectations of student teachers in areas planning, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting on a unit of teaching and student learning
  o 20 area K-12 teachers worked with field experience representatives from VCSU, Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) and North Dakota State University (NDSU) to develop a common final evaluation for student teachers from the three institutions

• **Additional changes in Assessment**
  o Bush Grant Common Metrics efforts (designed in collaboration with 14 institutions):
    ▪ Entry Survey (Intro to Education teacher candidates)
    ▪ Exit Survey (Student teachers in the final weeks before graduation)
    ▪ Transition to Teaching (1st year teacher/Alumni survey)
    ▪ Supervisor Survey (Employer/Administrator survey)

**VCSU Unit and Program Data Sharing**
All faculty members who teach methods or professional education sequence courses are part of the unit.

• Unit faculty members receive access to updated unit data every August
  o An example of unit data in a report would include the final evaluation data for all VCSU student teachers.

• Program data are shared in September and February.
  o Program reports disaggregate the data by academic area, so faculty (shared through the methods teachers) can see GPA, licensure tests, and student teacher final evaluation data in isolation for their particular content area.

Often the data indicate areas of strength in which VCSU teacher candidate and graduates have performed well. The intention of the data sharing sessions is to provide awareness and hopefully useful information in the decision-making process for improvement.

Unit faculty members are involved in the preparation and assessment of our students. VCSU provides release time for an assessment coordinator and has three division assistants in the SEGS area.

VCSU has a Central Assessment System and regular calendar for gathering data on teacher candidates for admission to the program, GPA, Praxis tests for licensure, field experiences (student teaching the most), dispositions, portfolios, and surveys at the entry and exit level while at VCSU, and then gather data as the transition to becoming first year teachers (alumni) and their supervisors (administrators/employers).
1 NCATE has merged with another organization and is in the process of transforming into the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The next national accreditation visit for VCSU will be in the fall of 2015.

2 The 14 member institutions of the NExT initiative include the Valley Partnership (VCSU, NDSU, MSU-Moorhead), University of South Dakota, St. Cloud State, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, Winona State, Minnesota State Mankato, and a consortium of six private universities in the Twin Cities (Augsburg, Bethel, Concordia St. Paul, St. Catherine’s, Hamline, and St. Thomas).

3 Valley City State University, North Dakota State University, and Minnesota State University Moorhead are teamed together in the Bush Grant to form the Valley Partnership.

Valley City State University
Graduate Studies
Changes and Data Driven Decisions

Changes for Graduate Program

• Student Assessment
Data from candidate and alumni surveys indicate that students feel their skills in formative and summative assessment are not as strong as other areas. Changes have been made in courses to help build the candidate’s skills in this area.
  o EDUC 640


  ▪ Three texts contain numerous diagnostic, formative and summative activities and strategies that can be implemented in K-12 classrooms
  ▪ Students in the course have various options and are provided the opportunity to implement them in their classroom settings, reflect on implementation, evaluate and discuss with peers and course instructor
  ▪ Students are encouraged to choose strategies which best match “who they are and who their learners are” in their respective classrooms
  ▪ Dueck – provides an opportunity for students to question current practice: is it working? How well is it working? How can it be more learner centered?

• Curriculum Development and Planning
  o Understanding by Design (UBD) is used for curriculum materials development and assessment alignment in several core and program specific courses
UBD provides students with a “template” for understanding the alignment of curriculum with assessments and learning outcomes.

**Strengthen Skills in Action Research**
- LMIS 660 Applied Research in Current School Library Issues was added to the Library and Information Technology Concentration.
- All concentrations have two required courses in research. All courses have been aligned to establish common expectations for research.

**Focus Groups**
- A focus group of area K-12 educators, VCSU faculty members and program alumni review data and share suggestions for curriculum changes and program improvement.
- Established as a way to improve feedback from employers as well as program alumni.
- All graduate faculty members receive access to updated program data every August in the annual data sharing session.

**Student Tracking and Advising**
- Program of study templates were developed for each concentration to assist students and faculty in determining timelines for completion and program requirements.
  - Intended to help improve retention through a consistent schedule of coursework.
- Informal “Cohort” groups were established to monitor student progress and ensure they follow an approved program of study.

Although the data indicate candidates are performing well, there are areas in which students scored themselves lower. The purpose of the data sharing is to provide the faculty and program administration with information that would be useful for curriculum updates and program changes.

VCSU has a Central Assessment System and regular calendar for gathering data on teacher candidates for admission to the program, GPA, exam scores, field experiences, dispositions, portfolios, and surveys at the entry, mid level and exit level while at VCSU, and then gather data from alumni.