Academic Program: Master of Science in Educational Technology

College: College of Education

Institution: Dakota State University

Date of On-Site Visit: June 2, 2009

External Reviewer: Michael R. Simonson, Professor
Instructional Technology and Distance Education
Fischler School of Education and Human Services
Nova Southeastern University
1750 NE 167th St.
North Miami Beach, FL 33162
simsmich@nova.edu
954-224-3051

June, 2009

Part 1: Executive Summary

On Tuesday, June 2, an external visit to Dakota State University was conducted by Michael R. Simonson (Appendix I – Summary: Professional Background). The purpose of this visit was to review the Master of Science in Educational Technology (MSET) program. Prior to the physical visit was a review of a collection of documents describing, explaining, reviewing, and assessing the various components of the MSET program. Documents were reviewed prior to the campus visit, during the visit, and following the visit as this report was written.

The report that follows is divided into four sections, preceded by this Executive Summary. There is some duplication of information between sections, but this makes the report more comprehensive. The four sections of the report are:

- Schedule of the On-Site Visit
- Program Evaluation
- Recommendations for Change
- Reviewer Recommendations – Eight Proposals

Generally, the MSET program at Dakota State University (DSU) is strong, has an adequate curriculum, a dedicated faculty, excellent students, and acceptable resources. The MSET program is central to the vision, mission, and goals of DSU. It is a program that can become a center of excellence for DSU.

This report concludes with two sections discussing recommendations. The first collection of observations and recommendations were required in the guidelines for preparing this report. The second set of eight guidelines is offered for consideration by faculty and administration. It is hoped that the recommendations can become the foundation for the continuous improvement of the MSET program at DSU. The eight are:

1. Develop a marketing plan that includes an improved web presence and promotional materials – both electronic and printed – that can be used to advertise the program.
2. Identify three peer institutions that offer educational programs similar to MSET and conduct an in-depth analysis of these programs.
3. Develop a curriculum review process involving all MSET faculty that critically examines the MSET academic vision, mission, courses, course content/learning objects, and learning outcomes, and use this analysis to develop a plan for continuous improvement of the MSET curriculum, including the revision, addition, and deletion of courses in the curriculum.
4. Examine the individual roles of each faculty person involved in the MSET program and develop a comprehensive plan that identifies teaching, research/scholarship, and service for the MSET program, and for individual professors.
5. Use the analysis of faculty activities to develop a proposal to add at least one additional professor who possesses the background and potential to complement and supplement the teaching, research/scholarship, and service activities of other MSET professors.

6. Plan and propose the acquisition of hardware, software, materials, and facilities that directly relate to the teaching, research/scholarship, and service responsibilities of MSET faculty and students.
7. Plan and conduct yearly faculty retreats where the continuous improvement of the MSET program is the primary activity. The outcomes of the MSET retreat should be made available to students and administrators.
8. Identify and conduct one significant event or activity that spotlights the MSET program, students, and faculty – an innovative and important contribution of the program to the field and to South Dakota.

Finally, MSET is a strong program, with the potential for regional and national recognition.

Part 2: Schedule of On-Site Visit

Dakota State University
Master of Science of Education in Educational Technology
Institutional Program Review
Schedule for On-Site Visit
Tuesday June 1-2, 2009

Monday, June 1

5:51 PM Arrive: Flight 1563 NWA, travel to Madison

Accommodations: Super 8 Hotel

Tuesday, June 2

08:00 – 08:30 AM Mark Hawkes, MSET Program Coordinator

08:30 – 09:00 AM Omar El-Gayar, Dean Graduate Office and Research

09:00 – 09:30 AM Cecelia Wittmayer, Academic Vice President, Heston Hall 314

09:30 –10:30 AM Assessment – Carrie Ahern, Heston Hall 310

10:30- 11:00 AM Judy Dittman, Dean of College of Education, KC 151

11:00 – 11:30 AM Peg O'Brien, Director of Extended Programs TCB 114

11:30 – 12:00 PM Observation: Portfolio Review Jim Parry, Arlington (DDN)

12:00 – 1:00 PM Lunch – MSET Faculty (TBD)

1:00 – 1:30 PM Meet with MSET Faculty – Regents Room (TCB)

1:30 – 2:00PM Meet with MSET Graduates/Students, Regents Room (TCB)

2:00 – 3:00 PM Preparation time/ follow-up/other interviews, if desired

3:00– 4:00 PM Exit Interview with Dr. Wittmayer, VPAA and Judy Dittman, Dean College of Education

Part 3: Program Evaluation

I. Program Goals and Strategic Planning

Appropriateness of Goals and Goal Accomplishment

The Master of Science in Educational Technology (MSET) lists five goals in its self-study document. These goals are appropriate and typical for a program in Educational Technology. Additionally, the documents that summarize the assessment of student learning clearly indicate that students are meeting the learning outcomes of the MSET program.

Program Goals and the Institutional Mission

The vision of Dakota State University (DSU) states that the University "has a national reputation for providing a dynamic, information technology rich learning and research environment." Appropriately, the mission for the MSET program states the program "is an instructional technology program designed to meet the rapidly increasing demand for educators who are trained to integrate computer technologies into the curriculum and instruction. As computers and technology have become a significant part of the teaching and learning process, addressing the information needs of teachers has become the key to integrating technology into the classroom and increasing student learning. The primary emphasis of the master's program is to prepare educators who can create learning environments that integrate computers into the teaching and learning process."

It is readily apparent that the MSET's mission, goals, and objectives are based on and directly related to the vision, mission and goals of DSU. MSET is a program that is central to the future of DSU.

Program Goals Relative to National Trends and Forecasts for Educational Technology

Certainly, the goals of the MSET program reflect the traditional national trends for Educational Technology programs, and it is apparent that the faculty involved in the MSET program understand the significance of educational technology in the teaching and learning process. However, the modern and future impact of educational technology, certainly difficult to accurately identify, must be reflected in the mission and goals of the MSET program. MSET programs at universities such as DSU should not change their curriculum based on untested approaches. Thus, from a national perspective the MSET program's mission and goals are appropriate. Online learning is certain to be important in higher education, and MSET faculty should consider expanding their online offerings.

Observations Related to Program Goals and Strategic Planning

First, there is a readily apparent emphasis in the mission and goals of the MSET program on the computer, specifically the microcomputer. A careful study of the curriculum and the specific activities of students reveal that there is a broader perspective related to various instructional

media. However, there should not be an over-emphasis on a specific tool, the computer, since this may be perceived as the only reason the program exists. The use and integration of all appropriate educational technologies is at the foundation of most Master of Science programs in educational technology, and should be the basis for the MSET curriculum.

Second, there is a phrase in the mission of the MSET program that states, "…increasing student learning." The attempt to demonstrate that learning will increase because of "integrating technology into the classroom" may be worthwhile, however it is not realistic.

Third, it is not clear from the documents provided, or from the discussions held, if the process of strategic planning within the MSET program has been recently conducted. Perhaps, a continuous improvement plan for the MSET program could include a process that regularly reviews the mission, goals, and outcomes of the program; a three year plan is typical.

II. Program Resources

Effective Use of Resources to Meet MSET goals

Educational technology programs are resource intensive. In order for programs such as the MSET to maintain their currency, there must be resources for new equipment, for staff development which is best obtained by attending regional and national conferences where sessions and workshops are held, and for software and materials for instruction, demonstrations, experimentation, and research. If the MSET program is to provide its students with critical skills and competencies in educational technology, then faculty must be aware of, skilled with, and knowledgeable about traditional, current, and emerging technologies.

Faculty – Levels and Credentials

A qualified faculty is the heart of any academic program. MSET's professors are certainly qualified and in possession of the appropriate credentials. The faculty is outstanding.

However, over the last few years there has been attrition in the number of professors involved with the MSET program. The professors who remain are sufficient in number to maintain and deliver the program, if not to move the reputation and quality of the program to a higher level. Additional faculty should be requested, based on future plans for the continuous improvement of the MSET program.

Classroom Facilities

Observations and comments seem to support the statement that the classroom facilities available to MSET professors and students are outstanding. The vision, mission, and goals of DSU mandate high-quality, modern classrooms, and these classrooms exist.

Laboratory Facilities and Equipment

The availability of laboratories (other than computer labs) and production equipment and software for professors and students was not apparent. These kinds of resources are available on the DSU campus, but not specifically for MSET faculty and students. As was stated above, educational technology programs are resource intensive, and educational technology laboratories are critical to the quality of programs such as MSET. Laboratories permit experimentation with new approaches, study of different techniques, and opportunities to improve skills. Thus, a rich and regularly upgraded laboratory with modern equipment is an obvious component of a high quality program in educational technology, and is an indicator of a quality program.

Financial Support

Money is not the most important indicator of academic quality; ideas are. Certainly, the financial support for the MSET program could be improved. However, more money is not necessarily a good idea. Quality programs in educational technology have a technology plan that includes sections related to the continuous improvement of resource use and allocation. These plans are used to maintain and build programs, and are indicators of quality programs.

Observations Related to Program Resources

Faculty are strength of the MSET program. Collaboration is apparent, and cooperation is obvious. What is not clear is the level of collaboration and amount of cooperation among the professors involved in MSET. As DSU evolves to a university with greater expectations for faculty, the MSET professors might gain from revisiting the traditional roles of faculty; teaching, research/scholarship, and service. A collaborative investigation of these three areas of professorial responsibility with an emphasis on individual roles related to other members of the MSET team is important to the continuous improvement of MSET. Not every professor who is part of a faculty team needs to mirror the qualifications of other professors who are part of the team, but the collection of faculty qualifications in teaching, research, and service for a team of professors should show a commitment to these three fundamental faculty responsibilities.

An educational technology laboratory, containing teaching and learning resources, is a generally accepted requirement for a high-quality educational technology program. DSU provides the resources and materials that might be found in an educational technology laboratory. However these resources are not dedicated to or even readily accessible by the professors and students in the MSET program. It is very difficult to remain current in this field without ready access to the traditional, modern, and emerging technologies used for teaching and learning.

Technology plans are regularly found at the institutional or college level. Technology plans can also be valuable for programs such as MSET. Perhaps, a collaboratively developed technology plan that includes the sections listed above could be at the foundation of the continuous improvement of the MSET program.

III. Program Curriculum

The MSET curriculum is appropriate for DSU and mainstream for the field of educational technology. Collaboration with the University of South Dakota is commendable, if difficult. Faculty from both Universities are to be commended for this sharing and cooperation. The emphasis in the mission and goals of MSET on the computer could become a strength of the program since it sets MSET somewhat apart from other educational technology programs. The schools and businesses of South Dakota need technology (computer) support staff and MSET helps meet that need. An emphasis on this somewhat unique characteristic of the MSET program as compared to other Educational Technology programs might be useful during recruiting and helpful in the continuous improvement process.

Several curriculum areas that might be examined during faculty meetings for future course revision include:

- Additional instructional systems design course(s)
- Social Networking
- Virtual Schooling
- Digital Media
- Instructional Technology Management (A similar course was eliminated several years ago. Perhaps this decision could be revisited.)

IV. Technology Integration

MSET professors are highly qualified in the production, use, integration, and evaluation of educational technology. Classrooms at DSU are equipped with appropriate modern educational hardware and software. The level of actual integration of educational technologies into the teaching, learning, and research process was difficult to determine. This topic should be discussed by faculty during regular and special meetings.

V. Program Assessment

Appropriateness of assessment measures/activities for the discipline

Based on data and reports made available it appears that program assessment activities are appropriate and useful. Certainly, graduate level programs and students should be assessed by more than objective measures. The faculty and administration seem to be aware of the variety of ways that assessment for MSET should occur and have selected the most appropriate techniques.

Major-field assessment activities, relative to the program goals

Assessment data provided indicate that the program's learning goals are being accomplished.

Program accreditation

There is no professional group accreditation that is necessary for MSET.

VI. Student Support/Student Enrollments

Student recruitment

Faculty and students indicated that "word-of-mouth" is the primary method that new students are recruited. This has worked satisfactorily in the past, but is most likely to be in-effective in the future as the variety of educational options for students increases—especially from on-line institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that during upcoming faculty meetings and retreats a marketing plan be developed. This plan would form the basis for student recruitment activities and might include some or many of the following activities:

- Promotional video posted on the MSET web site and made available on a CD to prospective students.
- Promotional brochure for distribution at meetings and given to current students for distribution.
- Improved web-site that hi-lights the MSET program, curriculum, faculty, and students.
- Active involvement at local and state conferences and conventions, such as the annual TIE conference.
- Sponsorship of meetings, conferences, staff development activities and online webinars featuring faculty activities and student successes.

Student enrollment numbers

The MSET program faculty, in concert with administrators, should identify an optimum number of students in the program. Enrollment trends for MSET enrollments show a relatively steady enrollment number of about forty. Perhaps this number is appropriate. MSET programs at similar institutions generally have enrollments between 30 and 50 students who are actively enrolled in the program.

Academic support services

Academic support services are adequate.

Academic advising

Advising of students in the MSET program seemed to be appropriate. During faculty meetings the needs of enrolled students should be a topic of discussion and advising should the shared by all.

VII. Program Strengths and Areas for Improvement

A number of strengths have been mentioned in this report, as have recommendations for change. In summary, the MSET program at DSU has the following areas of strength:

- A strong and committed faculty.
- Intelligent and energetic students.
- A supportive administration.
- A contribution to the local educational community by alumni.

The following areas should be reviewed for possible change:

- The number of faculty directly involved in MSET.
- The curriculum that might not reflect current trends in the field of Educational Technology.
- The professional responsibilities of faculty – teaching, scholarship, and service.
- The ready availability of the educational technology resources needed by students and faculty.

VIII. Other Issues—curriculum, assessment, program enrollments

Curriculum – faculty should identify peer institutions – institutions with similar missions and goals – and compare course offerings and program outcomes, with special emphasis on bench-mark, end-of-program outcomes.

Assessment – program assessment seems appropriate.

Enrollments – enrollments have been generally consistent. Perhaps as a consequence of a curriculum review, additional faculty, and an invigorated marketing plan, the enrollments in the MSET program will increase.

It is recommended that these issues and others mentioned in this report be discussed during a faculty retreat and that as a consequence of this retreat there be a report on the plan for continuous improvement of the MSET program.

Part 4: Recommendations for Change

General Comments: The MSET program at DSU does not need to dramatically change. It is functioning satisfactorily and is serving a need within the university and community. The program has a dedicated and qualified faculty and presents a curriculum that is within the mainstream of Educational Technology programs. Students are knowledgeable and are employable. Alumni are supportive. Few changes are needed for the MSET program to maintain its current status within the university and the field.

However, the dynamic nature of Educational Technology mandates a high level of innovation. The field of Educational Technology has a foundation sometimes called its intellectual technique. The intellectual technique of the Educational Technology professional is the application of instructional systems design to the teaching and learning process. MSET faculty should revisit this foundation, and the curriculum emphasis on instructional systems design.

Finally, it is the faculty that make a program improve; once convinced there is a sense of urgency about continuous improvement, then faculty members can make the best decisions. This is a fundamental recommendation of this report.

Specific Recommendations:

Program Goals and Strategic Planning
The vision, mission, and goals of the MSET program are directly related to and supportive of the vision, mission, and goals of Dakota State University.

Program Resources
The educational technology resources needed by students and faculty in MSET are adequate but not outstanding. A faculty-developed continuous improvement plan should identify resources needed to bring the MSET program to a level of increased excellence.

Program Curriculum
The MSET curriculum is adequate, but possibly dated. The emphasis on information technology skills and computer applications in the curriculum is not mainstream. However, this may be a unique aspect of MSET that can be promoted to set it apart from other programs. Faculty should identify peer institutions, review their curriculum offerings, and develop plans for curriculum revisions.

Technology Integration
Instructional technologies are available but not in the quantity and quality required of an outstanding graduate program such as MSET.

Program Assessment
Program assessment activities are outstanding.

Student Support and Enrollments
A faculty-developed continuous improvement plan should be developed and this plan should attempt to identify an optimum student-body size that can be managed optimally.

Reviewer Recommendations

Eight recommendations are included next for consideration by the faculty involved with the MSET program:

1. Develop a marketing plan that includes an improved web presence and materials – both electronic and printed – that can be used to advertise the program.
2. Identify three peer institutions that offer educational programs similar to MSET and conduct an in-depth analysis of these programs.
3. Develop a curriculum review process involving all MSET faculty that critically examines the MSET academic vision, mission, courses, course content/learning objects, and learning outcomes, and use this analysis to develop a plan for continuous improvement of the MSET curriculum, including the revision, addition, and deletion of courses in the curriculum.
4. Examine the individual roles of each faculty person involved in the MSET program and develop a comprehensive plan that identifies teaching, research/scholarship, and service through outreach for the MSET program, and for individual professors.

5. Use the analysis of faculty activities to develop a proposal to add at least one additional professor who possesses the background and potential to complement and supplement the teaching, research/scholarship, and service activities of other MSET professors.
6. Plan and propose the acquisition of hardware, software, materials, and facilities that directly relate to the teaching, research/scholarship, and service responsibilities of MSET faculty and students.
7. Plan and conduct yearly faculty retreats where the continuous improvement of the MSET program is the primary activity, and report the outcomes of this MSET retreat to students and administration.
8. Identify one significant event or activity that spotlights the MSET program, students, and faculty – an innovative and important contribution of the program to the field and to South Dakota.

These eight recommendations are offered to the MSET faculty and University administration for their consideration. As Daniel Burnham said, “Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir the blood.” The Master of Science in Educational Technology at Dakota State University should develop a continuous improvement plan that “stirs the blood.”

Appendix 1

External Reviewer's Biographical Statement

Michael Simonson is a program professor at Nova Southeastern University in the Instructional Technology and Distance Education program. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in Instructional Systems. He works with schools and corporations to assist them to integrate instructional technology and distance education into teaching and training. Simonson has authored four major textbooks dealing with distance education, instructional technology, instructional computing, and instructional media. Mike has over 150 scholarly publications, and in excess of 200 professional presentations dealing with distance education and instructional technology. Simonson has considerable experience working with domestic and international businesses and industries, especially on projects related to virtual schools, instructional technology and distance education. He is editor of the *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, *Distance Learning* Journal and *Proceedings of Selected Research and Development Papers Presented at the Annual Conventions of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology*. He has won the award for most outstanding research in the field of distance education presented by the United States Distance Learning Association. Most recently he has been consultant to the Army Research Institute in Fort Benning, GA, Iowa's and South Dakota's Star Schools grants, and South Dakota's *Connecting the Schools* and *Digital Dakota Network* projects. Simonson was honorably discharged as a Captain in the USMC(R).

Michael Simonson, Ph.D.
Program Professor
Instructional Technology and Distance Education
Nova Southeastern University
1750 NE 167th St.
North Miami Beach, Florida 33162
www.nova.edu/~simsmich
800-986-3223 x8563
954-262-8563