

South Dakota  
Board of Examiners Report  
*for Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) approval*

ACCREDITATION VISIT  
TO:

Sinte Gleska University

SD State Board of Examiners Team:

State Consultant: Kathy Riedy  
Team Member: Dr. Ashley Digman, DWU  
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TYPE OF VISIT:

**CONTINUING**

## Summary for Educator Preparation Provider (EPP)

<b>Standards</b>		<b>Team Findings</b>	
		<b>Initial</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
1	EPP's Mission, Conceptual Framework, and Responsibility	M	NA
2	Preparation of Candidates in Teacher Education	M	NA
3	Assessment System and EPP Evaluation	M with stipulation	NA
4	Field Experiences and Clinical Practice	M with stipulation	NA

M = Standard Met

NM = Standard Not Met

NA = Not Applicable

## Standard 1

### EPP Mission, Conceptual Framework, and Responsibility

Higher education programs for the preparation of education personnel shall operate under a written mission statement. The EPP's statements of goals and program objectives, consistent with the mission statement, shall serve as a basis for decision making regarding policies affecting all of the programs for the preparation of education personnel and shall assure that education graduates are prepared to serve in P-12 schools.

This section sets the context for the visit. It should clearly state the mission of the EPP. It should describe the characteristics of the EPP and identify and describe any branch campuses, off-campus sites, alternate route programs, and distance learning programs for professional school personnel. This section also provides an overview of the EPP's conceptual framework. The overview should include a brief description of the framework and its development.

*Information reported in the Self-study report for Standard 1 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the SSR that are incorrect.)*

Yes

C.1.1 EPP Mission	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target X
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Sinte Gleska University (SGU), located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, is rooted in the Lakota tradition of education through oral history and lived experiences.

Established in 1971 and chartered by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, SGU evolved from Sinte Gleska College and was named after Chief Spotted Tail. It has grown from offering associate degrees to becoming the first tribal college to attain four-year accreditation and later offer master's degrees. SGU has prioritized preserving Lakota culture while integrating Western education, particularly through its Education Department, which has a long-standing legacy of preparing Native American educators.

SGU is a private, tribally chartered, land-grant institution with campuses in Mission, Lower Brule, and Marty, SD. It offers certificate to master's degree programs and was the first tribal institution approved by the Higher Learning Commission to confer both bachelor's and master's degrees in Education and Human Services. As a founding member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), SGU emphasizes culturally grounded, community-centered education.

SGU's Education Department collaborates with other university units, such as the Arts and Sciences Department and the Institute for Lakota Teaching and Learning, to provide core coursework. Additional support comes from Human Services and regular interdepartmental meetings to align curriculum and assessment plans.

The EPP is supported by one full-time faculty member and several adjunct professors. Faculty bring extensive P-12 experience and contribute to leadership, curriculum development, and professional organizations. While none are tenure-track, their practical teaching and administrative backgrounds enhance the program.

Two bachelor's programs are offered: K-8 Elementary Education and a dual major in Elementary Education and K-12 Special Education. Both have been previously state approved.

These initial education programs are offered on the main campus and through partnerships with community colleges at Lower Brule and Marty, SD. Video conferencing supports distance education.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SGU transitioned to online course offerings, boosting enrollment and graduation rates. While returning to in-person instruction, the institution aims to maintain improved participation levels.

The mission of SGU's Education Department is to enhance learning for all children by developing reflective, effective educators grounded in Lakota values. The department fosters cultural strength, individual development, and lifelong learning, emphasizing tribal autonomy and community responsibility.

The mission is explained in the student handbook, appears on the website and is consistent with the University's overall mission as well.

Testimonials and anecdotal evidence confirmed that candidates feel a strong connection between the mission of the EPP and their cultural values. It was also noted that faculty is purposeful in making those connections within their curriculum.

C.1.2 Conceptual Framework	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
		X	

The conceptual framework includes:

- **Vision & Mission:** Rooted in Lakota traditions, emphasizing wisdom (woksape), planning for future generations, and honoring the sacred nature of children.
- **Philosophy & Goals:** Reinforces cultural identity, reflective practice, and community engagement.
- **Knowledge Bases:** Draws from educational research, tribal wisdom, and culturally relevant pedagogy.
- **Candidate Proficiencies:** Emphasize cultural values, student development, and strong community ties, aligned with institutional and state standards.

- **Assessment System:** Includes Praxis exams, student portfolios, and ongoing course evaluations aligned with the InTASC standards.

The framework has remained unchanged since the last review, continuing to guide curriculum and instruction through a culturally grounded, constructivist lens. It places learners at the center and integrates Lakota values into all aspects of teacher preparation.

The framework is communicated on the website and is in alignment with the EPP mission and overall mission of the university.

Testimonials and anecdotal evidence also indicated that the EPP has remained committed to this framework and that changes to the programs are made with it in mind.

**Summary of Strengths:**

- There is a strong sense of tradition and community that aligns culturally with the demographic they serve.
- The small class sizes support a personalized experience for the candidates.
- The EPP recognizes the varied nature of candidate backgrounds and is able to offer flexibility in accommodating their needs.

**Areas for Improvement:** None

**Stipulations:** None

**Rationale:**

**Recommendation:** Standard Met

**Corrections to the Institutional Report:**

## Standard 2

### Preparation of Candidates in Teacher Education

The EPP shall print and distribute a policy with specific admission standards and procedures that govern student recruitment and acceptance into the preparation programs. The EPP shall provide written verification that candidates are informed about state laws and rules that govern the issuance of certificates for educational personnel.

The EPP shall prepare candidates to work in a school as a teacher, administrator or school service specialist. These candidates must know and demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills necessary to help all students learn. Assessments shall be given to the candidate to ensure the candidate meets professional, state, and EPP standards.

*Information reported in the Self-study report for Standard 2 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the SSR that are incorrect.)*

**Yes**

C.2.1 Candidate Knowledge and Skills	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
		X	

According to the Self-Study Report (SSR), acceptance into the Teacher Education Programs is not automatic. All students must apply and be accepted to the teacher education programs before taking most upper-level courses (300-400 numbered) unless otherwise advised by the student's academic advisor. Applications to the Teacher Education programs are made at the end of the sophomore year or the beginning of the junior year. The admission application requires several requirements, including GPA, letters of recommendation, and Praxis content practice tests, along with several other criteria. Application criteria are communicated within the SGU Student Teacher Handbook and through the SGU website. Interviews with students and faculty supported the location of these documents and indicated that students were well informed of the requirements. However, the process for acceptance and denial of applications was unclear, including who makes the decision and how this is communicated with students.

Once accepted into the program, students must maintain a required GPA and adhere to the policies in the Student Handbook and Lakota Values.

During interviews, it was clarified that students are required to pass the Praxis II content exams before they are allowed to student teach. However, one student was placed and then was removed from student teaching because they did not pass the final portion of the exam before the add/drop date. Student teaching also requires a 2.6 GPA. Students must pass the PLT praxis exam as a requirement for graduation. Both the requirements of the PLT for graduation and the Praxis II for student teaching are new program requirements.

SGU provided data on pass rates for the ELED and SPED content exams, and the ELED PLT (0622). There were no SPED Foundational Knowledge (5355) test takers at the time of the report.

Over the past five years, the Elementary Education program has demonstrated a 55.56% pass rate on the overall content exam. One possible conclusion is that the overall number of test takers is small, which can lead to unreliable results. However, the pass rates indicate that students may need more support in passing the exam. SGU has integrated more course time in the Methods of Teaching course series and is working on incorporating more math and science in those courses and the general education curriculum. During interviews, faculty noted a Praxis prep session that is offered during the school day.

The ELED PLT pass rate over the past 5 years was 100%, indicating that students are confident in and prepared for the pedagogy licensure exam.

C.2.2 InTASC Standards	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
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SGU designated 6 assessments given to the candidate to ensure the candidate meets professional, state, and EPP standards. These assessments include: Praxis Core Content, content course grades, portfolio and final projects in Methods of Teaching series, evaluation forms, student teacher portfolio, and Praxis PLT.

The EPP utilizes six key assessments to determine that candidates meet the InTASC standards. These assessments include:

- Praxis Content Exam
- Content Course Grades
- Methods of Teaching Series portfolios and final projects
- Student Teacher Portfolio (including evaluation forms)
- Student Teacher Portfolio: Student Choice of Materials
- PLT Exam

During interviews, students explained the portfolio process and course assignments. They were able to clearly explain the connection of these assignments to the program outcomes.

During the 2024-2025 school year two open forums for local schools and stakeholders were held. Conversation around current issues occurred in an informal way. No formal follow up surveys of graduates or employers are included in the program.

**Summary of Strengths:** The EPP has an admissions application and requirements that are clearly communicated with students, and was supported in the student and faculty interviews. The EPP had 100% pass rates on the K-6 PLT during the reporting time period. The EPP added the content Praxis as a student teaching requirement and the PLT as a graduation requirement.

#### **Areas for Improvement:**

- Written procedures that specify admissions decision criteria, who is responsible for making admission decisions, notification methods, timelines, or appeal options must be implemented.
- The EPP must continue to implement strategies to increase the Praxis content scores in this area.
- The EPP needs to formally measure graduates' knowledge and skill preparedness of the ELED and SPED program through a graduate and employer survey after graduation.

**Stipulation: None**

**Rationale:**

- The EPP does not have a clearly defined, documented, and consistently implemented process for communicating admissions decisions (approvals and denials) to applicants.
- While the EPP has recently implemented the Praxis II content exam as a requirement for student teaching, it does not demonstrate consistently acceptable Praxis Elementary Education content assessment pass rates. During interviews, content faculty did say they address content in their courses based on students' needs for the Praxis. The EPP has also incorporated a test prep hour during the school day. However, the reported test scores remain below benchmarks.
- While the EPP informally meets with area principals, cooperating teachers, and alumni, it is important that a formal process occurs to track data and input from these important stakeholders for future program improvement.

**Recommendation: Standard Met**

**Corrections to the Institutional Report:**

**Standard 3**

## Assessment System and EPP Evaluation

The EPP shall develop an assessment system with its professional community that reflects its conceptual framework and professional and state standards. The EPP's system shall include a comprehensive and integrated set of evaluation measures that shall be used to monitor candidate performance and to manage and improve programs. Decisions about candidate performance shall be based on assessments conducted during admission into programs, at appropriate transition points, and at program completion. The EPP shall take effective steps to eliminate sources of bias in performance assessments and work to establish fair, accurate, and consistent assessments.

The EPP shall regularly and systematically compile, summarize, and analyze data, which shall be used to improve applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate proficiency, and program quality.

The EPP shall regularly and systematically use data, including candidate and other school personnel performance information, to evaluate the efficacy of its courses, programs, and clinical experiences. The EPP shall analyze program evaluation and performance assessment data and initiate changes if necessary. The EPP shall regularly share candidate and faculty assessment data with candidates and faculty to help them reflect on and improve their performance.

*Information reported in the Self-study report for Standard 3 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the SSR that are incorrect.)*

Yes

C.3.1 Assessment System	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
		X	

The narrative for C.3.1 shows that the EPP has an established a plan for a cycle of data review with semester checks, biennial internal program review, Board of Regents reporting and is attentive to culturally responsive, Indigenous-centered assessment practices through the Institute for Indigenous Teaching and Learning and curriculum/assessment committee review. The description of key transition-point assessments like Praxis exams, GPA, observations, internship portfolio and the role of the Assessment Committee, VPAA, and Board of Regents helps clarify who is involved in evaluating the system and making operational decisions.

The EPP did not provide sufficient evidence that these processes are formalized or take place at regular intervals. The connections to standards are unclear and it did not seem faculty fully grasped the connections and purposes of assessments either. It would be helpful for the EPP to more explicitly connect specific key assessments to candidate proficiencies in the conceptual framework, state standards, and InTASC/professional standards such as a brief map or examples of which assessments provide evidence for which proficiencies. The table of transition-point assessments appears incomplete and could be expanded or clarified. Decision rules and timelines are unclear. The discussion of fairness, accuracy, consistency, and bias would be strengthened by concrete examples of processes such as rubric calibration, scorer training, or checks for reliability and bias in high-stakes assessments.

C.3.2 Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
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The C.3.2 narrative and evidence shows that the EPP has identified a core set of assessments with Praxis exams, course and Methods of Teaching grades, student teaching portfolios and has documented where data live (ETS, Jenzabar, Google Sites) and who is primarily responsible for collecting them. The inclusion of the university-level complaint process and governing committees indicates there is a formal structure for addressing and documenting candidate complaints and resolutions.

To fully meet C.3.2, the EPP should formalize this process with faculty and stakeholders and devise an analysis cycle. The EPP could strengthen this standard by more clearly describing the analytic side of the cycle: when and by whom data are compiled, aggregated, and discussed with specific semesters/years, committees, or standing meeting agendas and how often formal summary reports, tables, or dashboards are produced and shared. The current table focuses on collection, but it provides limited detail on how data are summarized and used to improve applicant quality, candidate/graduate proficiency, and program quality. Faculty did not provide details in the site visit that they understood how data informed decision-making. In addition, the narrative focuses almost entirely on candidate and test data; it would be helpful to note any systematic data sources from applicants, graduates, employers, and faculty, or acknowledge these as planned developments, as required in the standard. The decision not to disaggregate at all may warrant reconsideration; even if students are all SGU students, the EPP should be prepared to disaggregate key indicators by some trends to monitor for differential outcomes, even if that disaggregation combines a multi-year segment of students.

C.3.3 Use of Data for Program Improvement	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
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The C.3.3 narrative shows that the EPP is actively using multiple data sources like course grades, attrition, student course evaluations, cooperating teacher and supervisor feedback, Danielson-based student teaching evaluations, Praxis scores, and advising insights to monitor course, program, and clinical effectiveness. The description of recent changes such as increased credit hours in Methods courses, Praxis Core Content as a pre-student-teaching requirement, block scheduling and proposed Praxis prep supports provides concrete examples of how data and grant-funded initiatives are prompting adjustments. It is also clear that faculty and candidates regularly receive feedback through course evaluations, internship observations, advising, and annual faculty evaluations, and that Jenzabar is functioning as a common data resource.

To fully meet C.3.3, this section would benefit from clearer evidence of systematic use and documentation of impact. For example, naming specific standing meetings or committees where data are reviewed, indicating how often key datasets such as Danielson, Praxis, course success, attrition are aggregated and shared, and providing at least one brief example where a documented pattern in the data led to a specific course or clinical change and subsequent improvement. The narrative focuses primarily on in-program candidate data. The EPP did not provide evidence that data is collected from alumni or employers; data strategies could be strengthened by noting any regular use of graduate or employer feedback in improvement decisions, or by acknowledging plans to develop these sources. The EPP should clarify faculty access to and use of data; it is

mentioned that the data exists, but it is unclear the structures in place to formalize the use of data as it is received. This would further support the claim of a culture of continuous improvement.

### **Summary of Strengths:**

The EPP has outlined a developing assessment system that uses multiple measures like Praxis exams, course and Methods of Teaching grades, Danielson-based evaluations, and internship portfolios to monitor candidate performance across key transition points. There is an emerging culture of data use supported by semester checks, biennial internal program review, Board of Regents reporting, and use of Jenzabar and ETS data, with evidence that findings are prompting concrete program changes like increased Methods credits, Praxis Core requirement, and proposed Praxis supports. The unit also demonstrates attention to culturally responsive, Indigenous-centered assessment practices and maintains formal structures for addressing and documenting candidate complaints.

### **Areas for Improvement: None**

### **Stipulations:**

- The EPP must develop and implement a written assessment plan that maps each measure to standards and the conceptual framework; defines transition points, performance expectations, and decision rules clearly; details quality-assurance procedures particularly post candidate completion; establishes a data governance calendar for collection, analysis, and reporting; and documents how findings are communicated and used to improve candidate qualifications, candidate and completer proficiency, and overall program quality.

### **Rationale:**

- In its current form, the system does not specify the full set of evaluation measures, the decision rules at admission, transition points, and program completion, or the performance levels used to make candidate progression decisions, particularly with regard to InTASC standard progression. Processes to monitor instrument quality are not clear nor described sufficiently, especially how the EPP established scoring consistency and document reliability and validity evidence. The EPP does not demonstrate a regular, systematic cycle for compiling, summarizing, and analyzing assessment data, nor does it show how those data are used to evaluate and make changes to course, program, and clinical efficacy and to drive continuous improvement. Evidence that candidate and faculty assessment results are routinely shared with stakeholders to support reflection and growth is limited and was not supported in discussions during the site visit.

### **Recommendation: Standard Met**

### **Corrections to the Institutional Report:**

#### **Standard 4**

#### **Field Experiences and Clinical Practice**

The EPP and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to help all students learn.

In this section the EPP must include (1) initial and advanced programs for teachers, (2) programs for other school professionals, and (3) off-campus, distance learning, and alternate route programs, noting differences when they exist.

*Information reported in the Self-study report for Standard 4 was validated in the exhibits and interviews. (If not, provide an explanation and indicate the pages of the SSR that are incorrect.)*

**Yes**

C.4.1 Collaboration Between EPP and School Partners	Unacceptable	Acceptable <b>X</b>	Target
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The EPP maintains active partnerships with local school districts, including Todd County School District, St. Francis Indian School, White River School District, Crow Creek Tribal School, and other area schools on the Rosebud Reservation. These partnerships ensure placements are both accessible and culturally responsive, reflecting the Lakota values central to SGU's conceptual framework.

Placement decisions are highly collaborative and intentionally individualized. The EPP works closely with candidates and school partners to identify placements that are mutually beneficial and likely to lead to successful outcomes. Many student teachers are already employed in schools or hope to work in those communities after graduation, and the EPP coordinates directly with principals to align placements with those goals. This responsiveness not only supports candidate success but also strengthens long-standing relationships with area districts.

C 4.2 Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Field Experiences and Clinical Practice	Unacceptable	Acceptable <b>X</b>	Target
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Field experiences at Sinte Gleska University include classroom observations and a student teaching internship. Candidates engage in methods courses that provide opportunities for instructional planning and culturally responsive practice. *The Methods of Teaching* series offers applied experiences aligned with InTASC standards and emphasizes the integration of Lakota culture and values into instruction.

Entry into the Student Teaching Internship requires candidates to complete program coursework with a GPA of at least 2.6, pass the Praxis Core Content exams (5001 or appropriate subject tests), and complete a Praxis PLT practice test and consultation under faculty supervision. Candidates also meet with the Department Chair to review expectations and confirm placement details. Exit requirements include completion of 600–1,200 hours of student teaching,

submission of a student teaching portfolio aligned with InTASC standards, a final grade of B or higher, and recently implemented, passing the Praxis PLT before graduation.

While these expectations ensure that student teaching is structured and standards-based, interviews and document review indicate limited opportunities for candidates to plan and teach lessons in authentic classroom settings prior to the internship. For those who are not employed as paraprofessionals, this creates a gap between early observation experiences and student teaching. Although candidates working in schools gain valuable exposure, these experiences are not consistently documented or evaluated by the EPP.

It is also unclear whether a standardized observation or evaluation tool is used across placements. Cooperating teachers and principals often rely on district-specific instruments rather than a university-developed rubric, resulting in inconsistent formative feedback and evaluation data.

Continued attention to data collection and consistency across placements will support program improvement and ensure equitable preparation for all candidates

### **Summary of Strengths:**

The EPP demonstrates strong collaboration with partner schools across the Rosebud Reservation, providing candidates with culturally relevant and community-centered field experiences. Placements are responsive to individual candidate circumstances, often allowing student teachers to serve in schools where they are already employed or hope to work in the future, which strengthens both candidate success and district partnerships. The integration of Lakota culture and values throughout coursework and field experiences enhances candidates' understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Alignment with InTASC standards, and active involvement of cooperating teachers and principals ensure that student teaching is well-structured and effectively supervised. The close relationships among EPP faculty, candidates, and school partners contribute to a supportive learning environment that prioritizes both professional growth and community connection. .

### **Areas for Improvement:**

- A university-developed field placement observation and evaluation tool should ensure that cooperating teachers and supervisors use a common framework for providing formative and summative feedback that incorporates Sinte Gleska's mission.
- The EPP should strengthen its system for tracking and verifying all field experiences to ensure alignment with program standards and state expectations.

### **Stipulations:**

- The EPP must ensure that all candidates participate in varied and developmental field experiences prior to student teaching. These experiences should include supervised opportunities for candidates to plan and deliver instruction in authentic classroom settings and to receive formative feedback from qualified supervisors.

### **Rationale:**

- The student teaching internship at Sinte Gleska University reflects a strong commitment to culturally responsive educator preparation and meaningful collaboration with partner schools. Enhancing consistency in documentation and expanding supervised pre-student-teaching experiences will ensure that all candidates progress through a clearly defined developmental sequence.
- Establishing a structured pre-student-teaching practicum will address gaps between early observation and the student teaching internship.
- These improvements will strengthen the connection between coursework and clinical practice, enhance the reliability of program data, and ensure candidates are fully prepared to meet the diverse needs of P-12 learners.

### **Recommendation: Standard Met**

#### **Corrections to the Institutional Report:**

Rejoinder submitted by SGU: Factual correction to Standard 4: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice. It was stated in the report, "It is also unclear whether a standardized observation or evaluation tool is used across placements. Cooperating teachers and principals often rely on district-specific instruments rather than a university-developed rubric, resulting in inconsistent formative feedback and evaluation data."

To address this issue, a standard student teacher observation tool was developed for use during observations by the university supervisor and cooperating teacher. It was recently updated to align with InTASC standards. This tool was in the submitted documentation as SGU Lesson observation form for student teachers (InTASC Aligned). Building principals have the option to utilize this tool during their observation of the student teacher or to use their district teacher observation tool. Many are based on the Danielson model, and it has been noted anecdotally as a positive experience for student teachers to be evaluated in this manner before entering the classroom.

– **The AFI recommending a standard evaluation and observation tool will stand as it is essential for program analysis that all candidates are measured against the same criteria.**