

## 4.3 Unit philosophy, purpose and goals

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### ***PREPARING COMPETENT, CARING TEACHERS***

United Tribes Technical College was founded as United Tribes Educational Technical Center in 1969 by an intertribal organization, the United Tribes of North Dakota Development Corporation, and chartered in the state of North Dakota with 501 (c)(3) non-profit status. Located in Bismarck, North Dakota, UTTC is owned and operated by the five Tribal Nations located wholly or in part in North Dakota. These tribes are the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara), and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. UTTC is governed by a ten-member board of directors made up of the tribal chairperson and one tribal delegate selected from each of the owner tribes.

The College was established to provide a residential, family-centered learning community by which American Indian people can acquire an education and obtain employment. Programs evolving over the years have kept this initial purpose in mind, providing not only occupational education and training but also individual and social skills development in a culturally relevant setting. Throughout its history, the College has maintained its commitment to the economic, social, and cultural advancement of Indian families by providing housing, childcare, an elementary school, cafeteria, transportation, interdenominational chapel, athletic programs, and recreational services. UTTC provides counseling, placement, medical services and other support services, all focused on the unique social and cultural context of its students.

Theodore Jamerson Elementary School (TJES), a tribal contract school located on the UTTC campus and funded by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), provides for the educational needs of 175-200 children in grades kindergarten through grade eight whose parents are UTTC students. TJES has an instructional staff of 25 teachers who are licensed through the state of North Dakota, three paraprofessionals, and two support staff. The three childcare centers are licensed to serve up to 176 children ages birth to five years. The centers also provide parenting education, evening care, and parental involvement activities. The centers are staffed with three directors 34 early care and education providers.

### **Shared Vision**

Development of the conceptual framework, from the onset, involved Teacher Education faculty members, as well as stakeholders from within and outside the UTTC community. This broad involvement guaranteed input from all constituencies and insights from a wide range of professional experiences based on the notion that a system developed by people who feel ownership is more likely to succeed. In 2007, with the driving force the students themselves, the President of the college assembled a task force of staff and faculty from across the UTTC campus to investigate the feasibility and the Teacher Education faculty began gathering materials and reviewing the research.

In 2008, the next step in the natural progression was the development of a rudimentary draft developed by a workgroup consisting of Teacher Education faculty and two adjunct faculty members from the community. The workgroup engaged in considerable discussion centering on

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beliefs and philosophy that set the stage for the first draft of the framework. A retired tribal college president who had just moved back to the state was invited to join the workgroup shortly after its inception and became an invaluable resource. Furthermore, during that time, the graphic representation was created through collaborative efforts between faculty and students.

In late 2009 and early 2010, the themes and ideas in the draft conceptual framework were further developed, refined, and revised into a final version by the workgroup. Technical assistance was requested from the Monarch Center, an Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) project based at the University of Illinois-Chicago, and Dr. Cecelia Steppe-Jones, Dean of Education at North Carolina Central University and NCATE consultant was assigned to review the document for clarity and coherence. Since then the conceptual framework has been put into use, guiding discussion about assessments, dispositions, candidate performance, and the quality of school partnerships. From the rudimentary draft in 2008 to final draft in 2010, the conceptual framework is a shared and powerful vision.

The conceptual framework will be shared with the students, faculty and staff at United Tribes Technical College through the campus website. Posters with the graphic representation and a brief description will be published and displayed in the Education Building and other buildings on campus. The information will also be included in the college catalog and in snapshot brochures for dissemination to prospective students and for the Teacher Education Advisory Council and other stakeholders.

The conceptual framework of the Teacher Education unit establishes the shared vision of the United Tribes Technical College (UTTC or College) Teacher Education program(s) as it functions to prepare competent, caring teachers to work in education settings. The conceptual framework is informed by core values and beliefs that are the foundation of our philosophy. The conceptual framework reflects a teacher education unit situated at an American Indian college whose primary purpose is to educate American Indian<sup>1</sup> students. The conceptual framework provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability.

### **Unit Goals as the Unifying Element**

The unit's philosophy and purposes as articulated in the core beliefs and dispositions, together with research of best practices, professional standards, and the experiential base of faculty, lead to the basic goals of the Teacher Education unit. Because these goals are an outgrowth of the unit's vision, mission, philosophy, core beliefs, and dispositions, and because the goals are aligned with the NCATE unit standards, the goals are the unifying element in this conceptual framework.

The Teacher Education unit consists of two Associate of Applied Science degree programs in Health, Physical Education and Recreation and Elementary Education and the

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<sup>1</sup> The terms American Indian, Native American, and Native are used interchangeably to indicate the indigenous people of the lower 48 states of the United States.

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Bachelor of Science degree program in Elementary Education. This preconditions report specifically addresses the professional Elementary Education program.

The goals of the unit are to:

1. Recruit, retain and graduate teacher candidates eligible for licensure in Elementary Education;
2. Demonstrate excellence in learner-centered instruction and advisement;
3. Demonstrate effective systems of candidate assessment and unit assessment;
4. Demonstrate strong partnerships with tribal and public schools and the community;
5. Demonstrate excellence in scholarship and professional activities;
6. Demonstrate commitment to the unit's conceptual framework in programs, projects, and activities;
7. Recruit and retain highly competent faculty who model the ethic of caring.

A matrix indicating the alignment of the unit goals with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards is included in section 4.4 of this document.

### **PRECONDITION 4.3 PHILOSOPHY, CORE BELIEFS, DISPOSITIONS & GOALS**

#### **Philosophy**

Recognizing the need for well-prepared teachers on reservations and rural areas of the northern Great Plains, UTTC developed the Teacher Education unit. The unit is built upon core principles or beliefs and cultural values; these principles/beliefs and values guide the development of a philosophical foundation upon which the unit is built. More importantly, the principles and beliefs are reflected in the expected professional dispositions of teacher candidates.

Our philosophy is grounded in the following **core beliefs** that guide the Teacher Education unit and the institution:

1. We believe that learning and teaching are most productive when educators and learners engage in purposeful reflection at all stages of the learning process.
2. We believe the practitioner's role is to facilitate learning by creating opportunities for all learners to engage the curriculum and progress through it at developmentally appropriate stages.
3. We believe consistent and purposeful assessment and evaluation must:
  - Take place at various points throughout programs,
  - Include multiple means to gather useful and adequate information,
  - Reflect on collected information to determine individuals' strengths and challenges, and
  - Analyze data in order to make decisions (i.e., program, curriculum, personnel).

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4. We believe emphasis on diversity is critical to the development of positive learning environments and that importance of diversity must be made explicit:
  - In the curriculum,
  - In classroom language and interactions with students and their families, and
  - In the selection of teaching and learning strategies.
  
5. We believe constructivist uses of technology must be woven into every aspect of the curriculum and the learning environment. The use of these technologies must:
  - Be carefully planned,
  - Support active learning, and
  - Be infused with intentional, authentic, and collaborative learning opportunities.

The philosophy of the UTTC Teacher Education unit is that a competent, caring teacher is prepared to teach *all* children. We believe that teaching from what was traditionally a Native perspective is the best way for all children to learn. A Native perspective begins with recognizing the child in the context of family, community, and culture. Learning is a natural part of human growth, development, and socialization in all cultures. In many cultures, particularly Native American, the learning experiences that constitute education are based in cultural values of relevance, relatedness, respect, and responsibility - referred to in this framework as the “4 Rs”.

**Relevance** is demonstrated through meaningful and authentic learning experiences tied directly to state and national standards. Students learn and experience reflective practice through field placements in the classroom under mentor and instructor guidance. They are provided the opportunity to engage in opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to one's life and interests. Developing a curriculum around student interests fosters intrinsic motivation and stimulates the passion to learn. One way to take learning in a direction relevant to student interest is to invite student dialogue about the lessons and units of study. Given the opportunity for input, students generate ideas and set goals that make for much richer activities than those without their contributions. When students have ownership in the curriculum, they are motivated to work hard and master the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their goals.

**Relatedness** is believing and behaving as if you are a relative to another person or thing. It is demonstrated and reinforced through collaborations with children and families. Teacher candidates are expected to develop relationships with each other, with their mentors, with their instructors, with their students, and likewise instructors develop relationships with students, their families and with their colleagues. The dispositions of respect, honesty, openness, empowerment, safety, and warmth are developed through person-to-person contact. Graduates enter the teaching field with an understanding of the connectedness of the world and the relatedness of all things...living and non-living. The Lakota say, “Mitakuye oyasin” and the Ojibwe say, “indinwaymahganug” to describe the concept that all things are related (LaFrance & Nichols, 2006, slide 27).

**Respect** is a very important traditional Native value. Respect is demonstrated through student contributions and their respect of others' contributions. The disposition of respect is demonstrated through courtesy, kindness, and acceptance of individuals and their contributions. It is meant to be reciprocal and is modeled by accepting student contributions and expecting

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them to accept the contributions of others. This is especially important for students who lack self-confidence because of previous negative school experiences or because of cultural conflict they may feel as described by Huffman (2001) and Tate and Schwartz (1993). Acknowledging students as credible sources of information honors their *personal sovereignty*. Personal sovereignty means that individuals have their own unique gifts to offer the community. It is an honoring of individuality (LaFrance & Nichols, 2006).

**Responsibility** is a core value of Native cultures as well as the teaching culture. Candidates are expected to demonstrate accountability for their actions and decisions as they engage in their general education and teacher education curriculum. Responsibility means that candidates accept and respect the standards, rules, and regulations that guide their preparation to become competent, qualified, and certified teachers. Responsibility is grounded in achieving the skills and knowledge required to become competent. Candidates' commitment and dedication to the teaching profession is in part exemplified by their persistence in taking and passing pre-professional tests of their ability to become a competent teacher and public servant. Responsibility means that candidates learn from their mistakes and do not blame others for their shortcomings. Effectively balancing tasks and schedules expected in one's personal life and the expectations of a teacher candidate is a demonstration of dependability that is essential to being a responsible person.

The 4Rs are integrated throughout the UTTC Teacher Education unit and program(s) and are placed in the context of a holistic worldview and global interconnectedness. These and other values will prepare teacher candidates, and in turn the children they will teach, to be productive members of society and have a good quality of life.

When individual and cultural values are accepted by the institution, reciprocity occurs between and among individuals within the institution and is carried with students when they leave—students are changed by the institution and the institution is changed by the students (Barnhart & Kirkness, 1991). The diverse cultural backgrounds of the students at UTTC are accepted and valued. Students become cultural brokers as they share their cultural and linguistic knowledge with their peers and their professors in teaching and learning experiences. The institution is enriched by the diversity of Native American cultures represented in its student body.

We believe that if UTTC students are well grounded culturally, they will be able to teach all children from a Native perspective. Therefore, United Tribes Technical College embraces individual and institutional values and presents an educational program in which a Native perspective is threaded throughout the curriculum of the Teacher Education program(s) within the unit.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the UTTC Teacher Education unit is to prepare competent, caring teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions as reflected in the 4Rs philosophy who can teach all children. Because the purpose of UTTC is to provide a family-centered, supportive post-secondary education for Native students, it is only natural that the focus of the Teacher

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Education unit is on preparing candidates in the teacher education program(s) to be caring, competent teachers for Native children specifically but not exclusively; the richness of the classrooms in today's schools are inclusive of *all* children.

We agree with the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future that "A caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in education reform and, we believe, the most frequently overlooked" (1996 p. 3). We believe that caring is an essential quality for all/any teachers; therefore, among the professional attitudes, values, and beliefs we expect to see in our teacher candidates, caring is the most important and over-arching disposition.

We know that there is simplicity and complexity in developing caring teachers. There is simplicity in that we assume teachers care; otherwise why would they pursue the teaching profession? Thus there is often an assumption that candidates come to the admission process with a caring belief or attitude which is, more often than not, true. The complexity of caring discussed by Noddings (1992) is that as humans we need to be cared for and we need to care, "...but not all of us have been cared for or learn to care for other human beings (p. xi)." Noddings believes the need for care in our present culture is acute; our youths feel uncared for in schools. It is for this reason that caring is a dispositions centerpiece in our program. Other dispositions we expect of our teacher candidates are described in the next section.

A particular mind-set guides the Teacher Education unit philosophy and is infused throughout this framework. The need for more Native American educators in classrooms is undisputed. Because the UTTC Teacher Education Chair and faculty members all have extensive experience in tribal communities with Native American children and their families, we are adamant that the graduates of our programs are first and foremost highly qualified, competent, dedicated, professional educators who are prepared to teach the children in the tribal communities. If they aren't, the challenges in tribal schools on reservations will be perpetuated. Therefore, the Teacher Education unit will strive to uphold stringent admissions, retention, and completion criteria in the best interest of the candidates and, most important, the children they will teach.

### **Candidate Dispositions**

Teaching involves more than effective planning, instructional knowledge, and teaching skills. It also extends to professional dispositions. Dispositions are similar to professional beliefs or values systems, but they are more than that. Dispositions extend to professional modes of conduct and the ways in which beliefs and attitudes are displayed by teachers' actions in and out of the classroom.

The typical students who come to UTTC have life skills and experiences unlike students in the mainstream college environments. They are typically older-than-average and come to UTTC viewing education as the means to improve their lives and those of their families. All of the faculty members in the Teacher Education unit see the potential our students have and recognize their strengths. Possibly due to socio-economic reasons (Payne, 2005), our students need guidance in developing dispositions to increase their level of professionalism. Within the



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scope of preparing competent, caring teachers, the Teacher Education unit articulates the expectation that teacher candidates will convey professionalism both in and out of the classroom.

Teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate the following behaviors related to professional dispositions while participating in classes and in interactions with peers, faculty, and/or staff. If dispositional concerns arise, they will be formally submitted to the Teacher Education chair by the faculty member for resolution by the student. Teacher candidates will not be graded directly on disposition indicators unless faculty or staff identify major concerns; however, grades in courses are often indirectly impacted by disposition issues. As a proactive self-reflective exercise, candidates are required to complete a self-evaluation during the first semester in the program. Every semester after that, the status of the disposition assessment is reviewed. If there is evidence submitted by a Teacher Education or General Education faculty member that a disposition needs to be addressed for a particular candidate, a corrective action plan will be developed and implemented.

**Collaboration:** Collaboration can be as simple as two teachers informally discussing a student's progress or as complex as long-term, regularly scheduled meetings, involving various school stakeholders, state standards, and research to overhaul curricula. One of the constants, however, when educators come together to collaborate is the intellectual effort they put forth to better themselves as a group to benefit their students. The Dispositions Assessment Tool (Appendix A) comprises many, but not all, of the qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors which characterize a set of collaboration skills that the teacher candidate must demonstrate.

**Integrity:** Integrity can best be described as doing the right thing even when no one else is watching. Teachers must have personal integrity as they are, for the most part, unsupervised during the time with the students. Therefore, it is vitally important that the teacher exhibits proper classroom instruction and discipline even when there are no other adults present. The education experience consists of teaching important life skills and meaningful objectives that include: learning to cooperate, understanding how to share, completing tasks, showing compassion, and reflecting on the world around. If a teacher hasn't already mastered those skills herself, it will be nearly impossible for her to set that example for the children. These skills are specifically identified on the Dispositions Assessment Tool.

**Respect:** Respect as a teacher disposition is demonstrated when the teacher appreciates and values human diversity, shows respect for students' varied talents and perspectives, and is committed to the pursuit of individual excellence. The teacher respects students as individuals with differing personal and family backgrounds and various skills, talents, and interests. The teacher must be sensitive to community and cultural norms and make students feel valued for their potential as people, and helps them learn to value each other. The Dispositions Assessment Tool comprises the qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors which characterize a set of skills or tendencies that reflect the disposition of respect.

**Reverence for Learning:** Candidates with this set of dispositions have the ability to examine closely, to critique, and to ask questions. They do not accept the status quo at face value but employ higher level thinking skills to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize. Self-evaluation and reflection characterize candidates with this set of dispositions. The specific qualities, tendencies,

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and/or behaviors which characterize a set of critical dispositions are identified on the Dispositions Assessment Tool.

**Professionalism:** The disposition of professionalism is multi-faceted and broad reaching. Professionalism includes qualities and practices teacher candidates must exhibit in order to be recommended for licensure. The candidates will display *all* of the qualities and/or behaviors that characterize professionalism on the Dispositions Assessment Tool.

**Reflection:** Reflection is the ability to review, analyze, and evaluate the success of past decisions in an effort to make better decisions in the future. This disposition includes the practice of critical reflection. Indicators of the ability to reflect include, but are not limited to, those listed in this section of the Assessment Tool.

**Flexibility:** Flexibility is the willingness to accept and adapt to change. Teachers must be consistent but also flexible. Since no two situations are ever the same, a teacher must be flexible enough to adhere to all situations presented. The teacher must be able to stand firm in his or her own convictions but be flexible and welcome changes to routine. As with the other categories, the specific skills or behaviors for flexibility are included on the Tool found in Appendix A of this document.

**Responsibility:** To act independently, demonstrating accountability, reliability, and sound judgment indicates the disposition of responsibility. Teachers take responsibility for establishing a positive climate in the classroom and participate in maintaining such a climate in the school as whole. Teacher candidates must demonstrate particular qualities, tendencies, and/or behaviors which characterize responsibility at the preservice level.

### Program Outcomes

The philosophy, core beliefs, purpose and dispositions identified in the previous section are the foundation of the Teacher Education unit; however, the unit acknowledges there is often a discrepancy between beliefs and practices. Therefore, it is important that the goals, or outcomes, of the programs that constitute the unit are clearly articulated.

Outcomes of the programs, including specific candidate proficiencies, answer the question, “What do candidates in the United Tribes Technical College Teacher Education programs *look* like when they reach program completion?” Outcomes and proficiencies describe what candidates know, understand, and are able to do. They are introduced, practiced, developed, and applied throughout the Teacher Education professional educator program(s). The proficiencies are demonstrated before the completion of the program documenting the candidates overall professional development. Candidates make the shift from a teacher development model to a learner-centered model during the program and demonstrate that instructional decision-making significantly impacts student learning.

The outcomes listed below are the unifying element in this conceptual framework and inform the intended outcomes for our candidates (see Candidate Proficiencies in section 4.5).



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Outcomes are aligned with the Teacher Education Core Beliefs, the 4Rs - Relevance, Relatedness, Respect, and Responsibility – and the corresponding Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards (revised).

### Candidate outcomes:

1. **Content Knowledge and Skills:** To provide the content knowledge necessary for effective teaching and learning (Core Beliefs 3 and 5; Relevance, Responsibility; INTASC Standards 4 and 7);
  - Demonstrates content area knowledge.
  - Demonstrates effective communication skills in reading and writing.
  - Demonstrates effective communication skills in listening and speaking.
  - Synthesizes content effectively from a variety of resources, utilizing professional knowledge to communicate to students.
  
2. **Applications of Pedagogy within Learning Environments:** To develop the skills in teaching methodology that allow for the establishment and maintenance of an environment conducive to the learning of all students (Core Beliefs 2 and 3; Relatedness, Respect; INTASC Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8);
  - a. *Lesson Planning & Instruction*
    - Demonstrates knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice.
    - Utilizes appropriate standards in the design of lesson objectives.
    - Demonstrates ability to design and implement a complete and effective lesson plan in accordance with the instructional objectives of the lesson.
    - Demonstrates ability to design and implement effective unit plans.
    - Demonstrates ability to identify appropriate short and long-term goals (content, learning goals, core curriculum, whole course, whole year).
    - Provides clear directions.
    - Demonstrates appropriate and varied instructional strategies when teaching (questioning, wait time, transitions, etc.).
    - Demonstrates ability to create and modify lesson plans for differentiated instruction.
    - Demonstrates ability to use various formal and informal assessment strategies arising from instructional objectives.
    - Demonstrates the ability to apply the resulting assessment data to inform professional practice.
    - Provides appropriate rubrics, or other measurements, for assignments.
    - Provides appropriate feedback to students
  - b. *Learning Environments*
    - Promotes realistic expectations for students' behavior.
    - Encourages students toward self-regulation (acting appropriately without reminders).
    - Employs positive classroom climate and provides for student choice and decision making.

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- Maintains students' engagement through effective classroom management techniques.
  - Maintains an efficient use of time management (paces lessons appropriately, provides enrichment activities for those who finish early).
  - Demonstrates encouragement, respect and rapport with students appropriate for age/grade level, maintaining level of professionalism.
3. **Technology for Teaching and Learning:** To use technology as a means of transforming teaching and learning, infusing it across the curricula (Core Belief 5; Relevance, Responsibility; INTASC Standards 1, 2 and 5);
- Demonstrates ability to develop student-centered, technology-rich learning activities.
  - Demonstrates ability to incorporate technology into classroom presentations, lesson plans, and other course assignments.
  - Demonstrates evidence of ability to transfer knowledge of technology practices from the “college classroom to real-life situations”.
  - Demonstrates ability to select and implement technologies relevant to various learning situations, in the college classroom and in schools.
4. **Empowerment, Equity, & Inclusion:** To promote a deep respect for diversity demonstrated in candidates' belief that all students can learn (Core Belief 4; Relatedness, Respect; INTASC Standards 2, 7 and 8);
- Models and encourages respect for diverse learning groups.
  - Knows and is able to address issues of diversity.
  - Demonstrates the commitment to promote educational equality.
  - Demonstrates a knowledge of and commitment to adhere to the North Dakota Code of Professional Conduct for Educators to guide practice and professional interactions.
  - Demonstrates ability to adapt learning to diverse populations of learners.
5. **Reflective Practice:** To encourage reflective practice as a means by which professional educators continually improve the teaching and learning process (Core Beliefs 1 and 2; Relevance, Responsibility; INTASC Standards 6 and 9); and
- Considers and utilizes feedback on performance to improve lessons.
  - Demonstrates evidence of self-evaluation to monitor and improve performance.
  - Collaborates with others to reflect on, plan, and improve instruction.
  - Displays appropriate decision-making in a professional setting.
6. **Professional Partnerships:** To develop effective communication skills so that viable partnerships between colleagues, students, and families can be nurtured (Core Beliefs 1 and 4; Relatedness, Respect, Responsibility; INTASC Standards 7, 9 and 10).
- Demonstrates professionalism through a willingness and ability to collaborate with faculty and staff.

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- Demonstrates professionalism through a willingness and ability to collaborate with families, and non-school based organizations.
- Models professional appearance and demeanor.
- Demonstrates a positive attitude toward teaching and working with children.
- Demonstrates self-confidence and emotional maturity.
- Accepts responsibilities for all aspects of school-related activities.
- Exhibits dispositions expected of a professional educator.