

## **Arkansas Tech University Response EPPQR 2020 Narrative response Section 4**

### **A. Describe what the EPP is doing to address Geographic or Academic Shortage Areas. Include Strategies, Resources, Goals, Data (if available), and a Communication Plan.**

The ATU EPP has initiated several efforts to address geographic or academic shortage areas. The EPP has its goal to continue to increase preparation in these academic shortage areas by 1% each year. The academic shortage areas are much easier to track in this way, and the EPP's efforts assisted the EPP in meeting this goal in the past year as indicated by hired graduates and education program applicants. In addition, the EPP has consistently had approximately 10% of its candidates teach in high-need geographical areas and is continuing its attempts to increase this percentage. The following describes some, but not all, of these efforts pertaining to academic and geographic shortage areas. First, the EPP has completed presentations in Orientation to Physical Science courses in order to attract candidates into the science education field. The ATU EPP has presented to this class of students for the past two years when they were true freshmen, invited students to meet with the department chair to discuss this opportunity, and provided contact information. This has led to a small number of contacts in the past two semesters (N = 3-5). Second, the ATU EPP has worked with North Arkansas College to develop and improve an online offering of the elementary education program, which services an area of the state that has historically been considered a high-need geographic area for teachers. Over the past three years, the program has varied in enrollment, which the EPP follows. Presently, this agreement has engaged approximately 15 students in the 2018-2019 year, and the EPP has initiated meetings with the education faculty advisor at North Arkansas College to meet and communicate with prospective students for the fall semester. Third, the ATU EPP pursued a STEM grant via the National Science Foundation Noyce Scholarship program in an effort to access funding and is presently reviewing the pursuit of another grant in this area. Fourth, the EPP conducted a presentation in Education Cooperatives in high-need geographical areas of the state to attract candidates for "grow your own" efforts. Fifth, the EPP has examined, each year, the geographic and academic shortage areas via publications on the Arkansas Department of Higher Education scholarship sites and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education sites and has communicated this information to potential candidates interested in teaching in secondary and middle level education and to the program directors in these areas. Sixth, the EPP initiated Project Lead the Way (PLTW) training conducted by the STEM Institute director for elementary education majors as part of their preservice training efforts, which allows the

students to have completed the PLTW training prior to entering their future classrooms in which they are employed. In this effort, the instructor of an upper-level elementary education serves as the communication liaison between the STEM director and the

elementary education students. Seventh, the EPP has conducted shareholders meetings each year to determine needs for local area schools and to provide a specific opportunity for this communication. Eighth, the EPP established a “First Choice” effort where administrators from across the state are notified and communicated with on how to contact the Director of Teacher Licensure and Support Services office, through which a system has been created to network the EPP’s graduates with potential employers in various areas of the state including high need geographical areas.

As noted previously, the EPP has worked with North Arkansas College to design, revise, and continuously improve an online offering using technological resources and training for its elementary education program in the historically high-needs geographical area in which North Arkansas College resides. As mentioned previously, approximately 15 students engaged in the online elementary education program offered for students in the North Arkansas College region in the time period under review. In addition, the ATU EPP has redesigned its website home page for the College of Education for use in promoting its efforts and has provided promotional materials to potential students in the Orientation to Physical Science course. The EPP completes its presentation to the Orientation to Physical Science course each spring to approximately 25 students per section. The EPP has worked collaboratively with other departments on campus to pursue a STEM grant and continues to work with others to consider this effort. Specifically, the Robert Noyce STEM effort involved approximately 15 participants from local area schools, three colleges on the campus, and five departments on campus. The EPP committed resources to complete a presentation at an education cooperative in a high need geographical region in the state. Within the PLTW efforts, approximately 40+ students have been trained in this STEM initiative via an agreement with the Arkansas Tech STEM Institute. Approximately 27% of graduates in 2018 were employed in an academic shortage area in Arkansas in 2018-2019. Approximately 10% of graduates in 2018 were employed in a geographic shortage area the following year. Based upon the 2018-2019 identified academic shortage areas, the EPP had approximately 51% of its Stage II applicants apply in major education fields that are considered high-need academic shortage areas. Concerning its shareholder meetings, the Spring 2019 Shareholders meeting included thirty participants from the university, local area schools, and the Arch Ford Education Cooperative. The group included school administrators, public school teachers, university faculty, university administrators, education cooperative participants, and university staff. This group provided information on curriculum, assessment, assessment results, and field experiences. In addition, the group discussed areas of need within their school districts. Finally, the EPP’s First Choice program was designed to provide administrators and graduates the ability to network with one another, which is particularly useful when the administrator’s geographical area is far removed from the EPP’s area. During 2018-2019, First Choice responded to requests from 61 districts from across the state of Arkansas.

**B. Describe what the EPP is doing to increase the number of Minority Teachers. Include Activities, Resources, Goals, Data and a Communication Plan.**

First, the ATU EPP is increasing efforts with concurrent credit courses particularly in schools with high numbers of students from underrepresented populations. Concurrent instructors note the increase of students from underrepresented populations within these courses in their high schools in the past three years, and this goal of increase has been communicated and discussed with concurrent credit instructors each year during annual concurrent credit faculty sessions. Within the past three years, the ATU EPP has doubled the number of participating schools involved with completing the Introduction to Education concurrent credit course via the Teacher Cadets and/or the Career and Technical Education path. In this effort, students visit the ATU campus, and ATU faculty members visit the high schools where these courses are offered for recruitment purposes. Second, the EPP has worked with other non-partner concurrent credit schools to assist and recruit. Third, and in line with these efforts, the ATU EPP participates in the Educators Rising event each year and recruits potential teacher education majors from this diverse pool of candidates from across Arkansas. Fourth, the ATU EPP participates in Career Day and teacher recruitment events in high schools and particularly in those high schools with high numbers of students from underrepresented populations (e.g., Dardanelle, Bryant, Fort Smith, Little Rock, etc.). Fifth, the ATU EPP has worked with community colleges in certain areas of the state to provide additional opportunities for teacher education candidates. Sixth, the ATU EPP Faculty members and administrators also participate in Time-Out-for-Tech, Tech Open House, and Tech Advise recruiting events during each year that draws a host of potential candidates to our university. Many of these students are from underrepresented populations. Communication of these events occurs by the university, through partnerships with local schools, through the college newsletter, through promotional materials (e.g., brochures, promotional cards, give-aways, banners, etc.), through the EPP website, and through email communications. The EPP commits monetary resources to these recruiting efforts for promotional materials, brochures, advertising cards, give-aways advertising merchandise, an EPP Education Ambassador program that assists in recruiting, and through funding for travel to various recruiting initiatives. These are some of the financial resources used to recruit minority candidates. In addition, as denoted previously, faculty members, College of Education (student) Ambassadors, and administrative members – human resources – are also committed to the recruiting process in order to recruit candidates from underrepresented populations.

The EPP collects data at Stage II application and Admission to Candidacy (the entrance point for the professional education coursework) application to determine the effectiveness of its recruiting strategies and to determine impact on the recruitment of minority teachers. The goal is for our underrepresented population student representation to grow, at minimum, by 1% each year. In line with this, the College of Education Leadership Team has a shared goal of increasing the diversity of our student

population across the college, which is further in line with the university's strategic plan. Student applicants note concurrent credit participation, Time-Out-for-Tech, and presentations at high schools as being strong reasons for selection of ATU along with our website presentation, promotional materials, and encouragement from faculty members and alumni. The concurrent credit choice by candidates within the program has increased from 10, 18, 23, to 33 students choosing this option from 2016 to 2019, which indicates the effectiveness of this recruiting effort. Time-Out-for-Tech has remained one of the top 5-7 choices each year as has encouragement from faculty and encouragement of alumni. The selection of presentations at high schools has nearly doubled in responses from 7 to 12 over this time period. With these aforementioned recruiting efforts, from 2016-2019, the percentage of underrepresented students increased from 9% to 12% with the largest percentage growth involving students from Hispanic American backgrounds. The EPP communicates these findings in faculty meetings, shareholder meetings, and in reporting measures. The College of Education Leadership team reviews these data to determine if goals are being met including if the EPP's participation of students from underrepresented population groups is increasing and to brainstorm ways in which to further increase this enrollment. The EPP has initiated test preparation/tutoring through the APEX Center on campus to assist candidates in preparing for Praxis Assessments, has provided materials and resources for test preparation within its Teacher Education Student Services Office, and has an advising/mentoring system in place for candidates where each candidate has an advisor within their respective program of studies to personally assist them in moving toward completion of the respective program. In addition, the EPP has worked with the university within a process, which includes counseling, resources, and assistance for all students, when necessary, including those from underrepresented populations.

**C. Describe what the EPP is doing to increase P-12 School and/or Community Partnerships. Include Strategies, Resources, Goals, Data, and a Communication Plan.**

The ATU EPP has worked in various ways to increase its P-12 school and community partnerships. The EPP has a goal of meeting with its shareholders and to collect data/information from these shareholders annually to determine the effectiveness of the EPP and to assist in preparing its candidates more effectively. In addition, the EPP desires to engage its students in various partnership efforts. To meet these goals, the EPP has initiated the following as a sample of some of its efforts. First, the EPP schedules an annual shareholders meeting where various shareholders gather to discuss program curriculum, assessments, assessment results, field experiences, and to identify needs within local area schools and teacher preparation concerns via shareholder perspectives. The EPP communicates via email and letters to prospective participants and meets with these participants for a meal and working session. Second, the ATU EPP works with the Arch Ford Education Cooperative to assist in reviewing and providing revision suggestions for its novice teacher training conducted at the cooperative. The EPP has at least one representative who participates in these

meetings, including recent graduates of education programs, to work toward novice teacher training continuous improvement efforts. Third, the EPP worked with the Russellville School District to develop a “yearlong internship” experience for its candidates involving certain schools in the district that serve students particularly from minority and low socioeconomic backgrounds. The EPP’s department head and associate dean met with principals and the assistant superintendent to initiate this effort and to benefit the schools in the process. The EPP has collected data concerning the benefits of this effort to local schools involved. Fourth, based upon feedback and communication with local area schools and with the STEM Institute director at Arkansas Tech, the ATU EPP initiated Project Lead-the-Way (PLTW) training for its candidates in elementary and middle level education. Candidates complete this training prior to employment, which benefits schools and the candidates due to cost deferral and preservice expertise in the STEM field. An upper-level education course instructor serves as a liaison in this effort and facilitates communication between students and the PLTW trainer each semester to ensure the success of this initiative. Fifth, the EPP worked in service efforts, in line with the university’s strategic plan, in both the community and across nations. As examples, the EPP initiated efforts to assist with initiatives involving Friendship Services, Austrian public schools, and the Ray of Hope Academy in Cameroon, Africa. Sixth, the EPP has initiated and revised its First Choice effort to network administrators with the programs’ graduates within the EPP. The ATU EPP’s Shareholders Meetings in spring 2019 involved 30 participants. The participants included public school administrators, public school faculty, university administrators, university faculty, university staff members, and education cooperative participants. The EPP provided an evening dinner and a working session for the participants to discuss the aforementioned and to provide face-to-face communication opportunities for shareholders. In addition, the ATU EPP worked with the Arch Ford Education Cooperative to assist with the continuous improvement of the novice teacher training program offered via the cooperative. The EPP representative assisted in data analysis and suggestions for revisions after data review. The EPP values this partnership and supplies time and travel for the EPP representative to participate in this impactful role.

Further, the EPP’s efforts with the Russellville School District, concerning a newly initiated yearlong internship experience, were subsequently analyzed via surveys to mentor teachers and administrators. The EPP found benefits of this effort for the schools’ students, the mentor teachers, and for the EPP’s candidates. On a scale of “1” to “4” with “4” being the highest, average ratings for this initiative nearly all approached a level “4” rating. In addition, mentor teachers noted numerous benefits in narrative responses (e.g., work ethic, assistance with students with special learning needs, initiation of new ideas for the classroom, etc.). The EPP communicates the results of these findings back to shareholders via respective faculty, administrator, and shareholder meetings. Approximately 40+ students completed the PLTW training via the collaborative efforts of public schools, the ATU STEM Institute, and the EPP. The local area schools can now hire candidates who have already completed training in this area



providing greater flexibility with both human and fiscal resources. In the efforts with Friendship Services, the Austrian public schools, and the Ray of Hope Academy in Cameroon, Africa, the EPP engaged elementary education students in working with Friendship Services during their family night events. In addition, seven students and a faculty sponsor traveled to Austria where the students taught for one month in the public schools due to this agreement. In addition, the EPP, in cooperation with 5 colleges and a number of departments, pursued an initiative to assist Ray of Hope Academy financially and via training efforts for its teachers. The school serves a number of students with special learning needs. Previous to this, the elementary education program students created a curriculum for use in this school and provided resources to assist its operation. These efforts are in line with Arkansas Tech University's Strategic Plan – Goal 4 concerning our impact on our community, state, and world. The EPP's faculty members involved in this initiative have recently submitted an article, accepted for publication, to communicate these efforts. In addition, the EPP's associate dean has served as the communication point for the various departments and colleges in this Cameroon effort. Finally, the EPP's First Choice program was designed to provide administrators and graduates the ability to network with one another, which is particularly useful when the administrator's geographical area is far removed from the EPP's area. During 2018-2019, First Choice assisted 61 districts in the state of Arkansas with requests for candidates to fill vacancies.

**D. What is the EPP doing within the program to monitor the effectiveness of the changes made to meet the Science of Reading requirements? Were any changes made to the program in the last year?**

The ATU EPP has initiated a number of revisions based on the Science of Reading requirements. First, in the past year, the EPP revised courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to ensure its candidates were proficient in the science of reading competencies. These changes included revisions in courses in the Special Education, K-12 graduate program and the undergraduate Elementary Education program. In addition, the EPP revised key assessments to meet the science of reading competencies expectations. The EPP introduced these changes to students beginning in the fall 2019 semester. Second, the EPP revised its other initial licensure programs to ensure candidates in these programs have awareness of the science of reading competencies. The EPP accomplished this through the transitioning of its programs into having students complete the science of reading AETN/IDEAS awareness modules.

Third, and in addition, the elementary education, middle level education, secondary education, MAT, and MTLL-NTL programs have their students complete disciplinary literacy coursework in which they explore content/disciplinary literacy approaches and the reading awareness competencies. The elementary education, middle level

education, and special education programs revised their program reading expectations and assessments based partly upon recommendations in the research work of the book titled *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* by David A. Kilpatrick. According to literacy specialists on the faculty of the EPP, this text is frequently cited as a basis of research/data on what to teach concerning the science of reading. Although the elementary education pass rates on the Praxis Elementary Content Reading Test average scores have been high for first-time test takers (typically > 85%) and Pearson Reading Assessment scores approached 100% pass rates in this past year, the EPP continuously seeks to improve its science of reading preparation of its candidates and has implemented new assessments and new course alignment to the science of reading competencies in order to achieve this goal. Educational Testing Service and Pearson data produced within the next year should begin to provide evidence of the effectiveness of these changes. In addition, the EPP's changes in the middle level program's reading preparation were partly initiated due to the perceived need and feedback from shareholders within the upper-elementary classrooms for which middle level candidates may potentially be employed. The EPP has worked toward revision of its artifacts, alignment, and efforts to ensure its middle level candidates are competitive in the area of reading when pursuing employment in upper-elementary grade levels. The EPP will note whether or not these changes have been beneficial based upon data findings for candidates who choose to complete the Pearson Reading Assessment after completion of the middle level coursework.