

Lower admissions selectivity and high pass rates

Case study: Western Connecticut State University

Western Connecticut State University illustrates that institutions don't have to be among the elite to achieve excellence.

A strong partnership with the local school districts led **Western Connecticut State University (WCSU)** to create a rigorous interdisciplinary major focused on literacy, math, and science for its elementary teacher candidates. The program is specifically designed to incorporate the content knowledge needed to teach state content standards. As a result, according to Dr. Catherine O'Callaghan, Chair of the Education & Educational Psychology Department at Western Connecticut State University, “our students are in huge demand because they have strong background knowledge.”

WCSU's education programs have a longstanding partnership with local school districts. When the Danbury Public Schools and Bethel Public Schools expressed the idea that incoming teachers should have stronger STEM preparation, WCSU listened. The school's education department collaborated with the math department and the two school districts in 2010 to create a curriculum that addresses content areas identified as priorities by the school districts. The collaboration continues to this day, as school district content experts, including the math coordinator for one of the districts, teach in the program, and elementary ed students hold events such as an annual math night for parents of the districts' students. Partnership with districts “allows candidates in our program to see the connection with what they are learning in our coursework and what they will be teaching,” says Dr. O'Callaghan.

To support teacher candidates in completing the rigorous program, WCSU assists in a variety of ways. Course instructors can alert the department chair that a student is struggling, in which case the student academic review committee meets and creates a mandatory plan of remediation that can include writing or math support, as well as preparation for licensure exams. Program staff examine student data twice a year to look for areas where support is needed. As a result, the educator preparation program created study modules for licensure exams five years ago and is now planning to add a math bootcamp that will be available to entering freshmen. In addition, the minimum GPA for admission to teacher education was raised to 3.0 to ensure that students are prepared for the program. All of these forms of

support are especially important because most initial certification students come from low-income families and need to pay their own way. If students fail their licensure exams they may not be able to afford a second try, so it is especially important that WCSU sets them up for success the first time.

While infusing WCSU's elementary teacher preparation program with more content knowledge has made it more challenging for some future teachers, the payoff is clear. Dr. O'Callaghan says that "students come in saying that they hate math and science but leave loving it" because of their deep understanding of STEM and its importance for elementary teachers. WCSU graduates also love how eager school districts are to hire them.

Western Connecticut State University's district partnerships and attention to student needs have led to clear success. **Unlike many other institutions that have lower admissions standards (as measured by both the admissions criteria for the preparation programs and the institution), the institution sees a first-attempt pass rate on the Praxis Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) exam of 58%, noticeably higher than the state's average of 40%.**

Western Connecticut State University is an urban, public institution with approximately 5,000 students.

Institutions that have lower admissions selectivity and exceed the state's average pass rate

The following 56 institutions across 20 states dispel the myth that only selective institutions can achieve high pass rates. These institutions have lower admissions selectivity, meaning that they earned a C, D, or F on NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review Admissions* standard¹ – which considers both the selectivity of the institution and, in this case, the undergraduate elementary program – and their test takers earned a pass rate on the licensure test² that exceeds the state average.

State	Institution	Test or subtest used for comparison	Admissions selectivity	State average first-attempt pass rate	Institution first-attempt pass rate
CO	Colorado Mesa University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	46%	48%
CT	Western Connecticut State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	40%	58%
FL	Chipola College	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Not selective	34%	38%
FL	Daytona State College	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Moderately selective	34%	47%
FL	Florida SouthWestern State College	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Not selective	34%	35%
FL	Northwest Florida State College	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Not selective	34%	39%
FL	Southeastern University	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Moderately selective	34%	40%
FL	Warner University	Composite - Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) Elementary Education (060) Test	Not selective	34%	63%
IA	Mount Mercy University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Content Knowledge (5018) test	Moderately selective	81%	91%
IA	Waldorf University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Content Knowledge (5018) test	Not selective	81%	84%
IL	Western Illinois University	Subtest - Subtest 1: Language and Literacy (197)	Moderately selective	70%	74%

State	Institution	Test or subtest used for comparison	Admissions selectivity	State average first-attempt pass rate	Institution first-attempt pass rate
KS	Fort Hays State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (5017) test	Moderately selective	90%	91%
KS	Kansas State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (5017) test	Moderately selective	90%	93%
KY	Kentucky Christian University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	46%	46%
KY	Lindsey Wilson College	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Less selective	46%	54%
MA	Assumption College	Subtest - Mathematics subtest	Moderately selective	50%	59%
MA	Bay Path University	Subtest - Mathematics subtest	Moderately selective	50%	53%
MA	Eastern Nazarene College	Subtest - Mathematics subtest	Moderately selective	50%	67%
MA	Merrimack College	Subtest - Mathematics subtest	Moderately selective	50%	62%
MD	Frostburg State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Instructional Practice and Applications (5019) test	Not selective	90%	93%
MO	Park University	Subtest - 010 Elementary Education: Social Studies Subtest	Less selective	70%	71%
ND	Valley City State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (5017) test	Moderately selective	87%	89%
NH	Rivier University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Not selective	43%	54%
NJ	Centenary University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	34%	40%
NV	Great Basin College	Praxis II Elementary Education: Instructional Practice and Applications (5019) test	Moderately selective	86%	90%
NY	Keuka College	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Moderately selective	73%	81%

State	Institution	Test or subtest used for comparison	Admissions selectivity	State average first-attempt pass rate	Institution first-attempt pass rate
NY	Marist College	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Moderately selective	73%	81%
NY	Nazareth College	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Less selective	73%	85%
NY	SUNY Buffalo State College	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Moderately selective	73%	74%
NY	SUNY Potsdam The State University of New York at Potsdam	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Moderately selective	73%	75%
NY	Utica College	Subtest - Part Two: Mathematics Subtest (222)	Moderately selective	73%	80%
OH	Bluffton University	Subtest - Subtest 2 (Social studies, math, science and health, fitness and the arts) (019)	Moderately selective	72%	78%
OH	Lake Erie College	Subtest - Subtest 2 (Social studies, math, science and health, fitness and the arts) (019)	Moderately selective	72%	79%
PA	Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	64%
PA	Clarion University of Pennsylvania	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Less selective	62%	64%
PA	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	75%
PA	Lock Haven University	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	65%
PA	Marywood University	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	66%
PA	Shippensburg University	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	65%
PA	Thiel College	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Less selective	62%	65%
PA	Washington & Jefferson College	Subtest - Module 3 (Math, science and health)	Moderately selective	62%	68%
TN	Martin Methodist College	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (5017) test	Less selective	93%	100%
TN	Martin Methodist College	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Content Knowledge (5018) test	Less selective	67%	86%

State	Institution	Test or subtest used for comparison	Admissions selectivity	State average first-attempt pass rate	Institution first-attempt pass rate
TN	Tusculum University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Content Knowledge (5018) test	Moderately selective	67%	68%
TX	East Texas Baptist University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Less selective	71%	95%
TX	Howard Payne University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	82%
TX	Midwestern State University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	71%
TX	Sam Houston State University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	74%
TX	Tarleton State University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	74%
TX	Texas A&M International University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Less selective	71%	72%
TX	Texas Lutheran University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	75%
TX	Texas Wesleyan University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Moderately selective	71%	81%
TX	Wayland Baptist University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	Not selective	71%	81%
TX	West Texas A&M University	Subtest - Social Studies Subtest (803)	TXa Moderately selective	71%	71%
WV	Fairmont State University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	39%	44%
WV	West Liberty University	Composite - Praxis II Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001) test	Moderately selective	39%	44%

ENDNOTES

- 1 Institutions where the undergraduate elementary program earned a C are identified as “Moderately selective,” those earning a D are identified as “Less selective” and those earning an F are identified as “Not selective.” For more on the methodology of the Admissions standard, visit <https://www.nctq.org/review/standard/Admissions+methodology>.
- 2 When the state provided composite pass rate data, composite pass rates were used to identify strong institutions. When composite data was not available, analysis focused on the subtest that had the lowest state average pass rate, as this presumably is the test on which test takers face the greatest challenges.