

## CAEP Annual Report

### Advanced Measure 2

#### Satisfaction and Stakeholder Involvement

##### **Satisfaction**

An Action Research study was conducted with the purpose to examine the effectiveness of West Virginia State University's (WVSU) Masters of Education in Instructional Leadership (MEIL) Program. The study looked at the following areas: communication, mentorship, educational stress, effective professors, and the effects of online learning. Four populations were surveyed, including current students, alumni, current professors, and employers of alumni. The groups were surveyed to determine how the categories of impact affect program strength.

There were a total of 52 subjects who participated in the study. Conclusively, data suggests the following: 1) The MEIL program attributes which determine program and student success are: consistent and timely communication between professors and students, mentoring, effective professors, program affordability, online course access, leadership development, and meaningful assignments, 2) The effectiveness of the MEIL program can be increased by adding a program mentorship element, increasing effective communication among professors and students, and decreasing educational stress related to online learning.

##### Results

###### Communication

When looking at the data the alumni students seem to agree that communication was an attribute that made the MEIL program effective. When looking at the communication results from the current students their results varied more. Some students that answered the survey said communication was an attribute that made the program effective, while others answered that communication was an issue they have had throughout the program. Many current students also said that getting feedback in a timely manner was a conflict they have had throughout the program which is a communication issue as well. Out of the professors who answered the survey they thought communication was an attribute of the program that made it effective. When it comes to how often the current student would like to receive communication from their professors, twelve out of thirteen responded weekly and one responded bi-weekly. When looking at how informed current students are about their post completion options the answers varied, this is also a communication issue. All students should have received the same information when it comes to post completion options. Three of the professors expect students to communicate with others within the program weekly to be successful and one expects them to communicate daily.

###### Mentorship

Of the three populations from which we received survey responses, current students, alumni, and professors, the data trended in such a way that suggests a mentorship program would strengthen the MEIL program. 75% of the professor population either agree or strongly agree that a mentorship is vital to the success of the program and the success of graduate readiness for school leadership. One professor indicated that he or she strongly disagreed with the addition of a mentorship. All current

students either agreed or strongly agreed that a mentorship with an experienced educational leader would increase their abilities as future educational leaders, while 92.3% of the same population believes that a mentorship would benefit their education in the MEIL program. The remaining 7.7% felt “neutral” regarding a mentorship. Among the alumni population, 85.7% believe that a mentorship would have benefited their education in the program, while 11.4% selected feeling neutral and 2.9% strongly disagreed. With no deviation, the same percentages agree or strongly agree that a mentorship would have increased their own abilities as a future leader in education. In contrast, 75% of the professors surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that a mentorship program would benefit their students’ future skills as a future administrator while 25% strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 75% of the same population either agreed or strongly agreed that a mentorship would benefit their students’ education, while 25% strongly disagreed. Over all, the data suggests that mentorship is both desirable and beneficial to nearly all populations involved, especially students.

### Effective Professors

The effectiveness of the professors can be valuable to the success of the program. With the input from current students, 85% of respondents claimed that their professors made them feel significant in their course. 72% of the same respondents also agreed that their professors worked with them to assist their learning throughout the course of the program. Both of these are essential characteristics for professors to be effective in their teachings. With our surveys with alumni, 100% of the respondents said that they would rate their communication with professors at an average or above average level. While completing a course that is completely online, communication with professors enhances the effectiveness of the instructors. The final respondents to our surveys came from professors themselves. 100% of the professors stated that communication needed to be had on a weekly basis in order to be successful. 75% of professors also stated that they still communicate with alumni in regards to preparedness for future and/or current employment. These are all characteristics of an effective instructor. Overall, the data that we have gathered showed that professors are exemplifying characteristics of effective instructors.

### Educational Stress

Based on recent surveys conducted among students enrolled in the MEIL program, most of them had a positive learning experience, even while facing some challenges. Despite the difficulties, the program has been successful in providing students with valuable knowledge. Modern education faces a significant issue with educational stress, which directly affects the ability of teachers to effectively teach their students.

According to the results of our recent action study conducted among 13 students, it is evident that stress has a negative impact on their education. Another study has shown that more than half of the current student population (53.9%) believe that a mandatory weekly class or professor meeting through platforms like Teams or Zoom could help reduce their stress levels and improve their learning experience. The negative impact of online classes on students' mental health has been a growing concern, with stress being a major issue. Educational stress has become a significant concern for students, as they face an increasing workload, expectations from peers and family, and a need to balance school, work, and other responsibilities.

According to the MEIL program's data, student stress levels varied from 2 to 10 on a 0-10 scale. Out of 13 students, 8 rated their stress levels at 5 or higher. All participants acknowledged that stress adversely

affects their academic performance. Additionally, the MEIL program concluded that educational stress was a significant contributor to the students' heightened stress levels.

Online learning in the MEIL program has some drawbacks, but there are solutions to make it more effective, such as requiring professors and classes to meet on Zoom or Teams at least once a week. This addresses the issue of communication gaps and the lack of feedback, which 53.8% of current students find challenging. Students who have mandatory meetings with their instructors have less difficulty than those who do not. These meetings create a sense of community and reduce stress by allowing students to ask questions and address concerns.

Copious amounts of stress is proven to cause burn out in both students and instructors. Our action research shows that 94.3% of the responses agree that there are advantages learners and teachers can anticipate from controlling and minimizing stress related to their studies and work. If one can control their stress load, then burnout will not occur as often, and mental health will be better. Research by Alexandria Palmieri in 2020, showed that blended learning, a combination of virtual and in-person learning, can effectively reduce stress levels among students. While mandatory meetings with instructors can be helpful for some, it may not be the best approach for everyone. Some students may feel more comfortable expressing their concerns and asking questions online, where they can type out their thoughts instead of speaking aloud. While blended learning may suit some students, others may prefer either all online classes or all in-person classes. The decision of choosing between in-person and online classes can add stress to students' already stressful educational experience, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and unsure of the best option for them.

Thirteen current students in the MEIL program provided feedback, with seven indicating that a weekly online discussion with the class and professor could help reduce stress related to readings and assignments. The stress levels of these online courses range from 2-10 out of 10, with seven students experiencing stress levels between 2-5 and six students participating levels between 6-10. However, eight out of the thirteen students rated their stress levels at 5 or above. All respondents concurred that stress could impact academic performance, with 100% agreement from alumni. Educational stress is a common issue among students, caused by several factors, and online courses can be particularly challenging due to the lack of physical and emotional support from peers and professors. The absence of face-to-face interaction can also be a significant source of stress, making it difficult to form relationships or seek help when needed.

We have not had much formal feedback from employers. The MEIL Assessment Committee will discuss how to better gather this information.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

The advanced program separated the external stakeholder group from the initial program in 2020-2021, the year of the CAEP visit, creating the MEIL Advisory Council. Members of the Advisory Council represent the program, schools and districts from across the state, representatives from administrator organizations, the state department of education, and program completers. The group includes former and current elementary school principals, current middle and high school administrators, central office administrators and superintendents, leadership from the WV Association of Secondary Schools

Principals and their Elementary/Middle school counterpart group, and representatives from the WV Department of Education. In order to make the most of stakeholder involvement, a second group was created, the MEIL Alumni Advisory Group. This group consists of program completers, some of whom remain in the classroom while others have moved into leadership positions in local school districts. These groups meet regularly with the Alumni Group meeting more frequently in order to serve as a working group that helps hone material for presentation at the Advisory Council.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, the alumni group held meetings on September 14, 2022, February 8, 2023, and April 19, 2023. Agenda items included input on proposed changes to the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), a trial run of Content Validity, studies, and ideas for recruitment, particularly of students from diverse backgrounds. One change based on input from this group is evident in minutes from the September 2022 meeting in which the group voted to add something related to “attracts and retains quality staff” to the PLOs. The Advisory Council held a meeting on April 20, 2023. Agenda items were similar to those with the alumni group. A goal of the advanced program is to have at least two meetings of each group in each academic year.

The requirement to identify models of excellence is not found in the new advanced level standards. Still, as a requirement of our previous visit and resulting AFI, we seek out models of excellence in leadership programs. A member of the program has made application to volunteer as a reviewer for the National Educational Leadership Preparation Specialized Professional Association (SPA) program review process. If accepted as a reviewer, additional training through the National Policy Board for Educational Administration will benefit the program through review of other programs. Two professors who teach part-time in the advanced program, one who is the initial Assessment Coordinator, have completed CAEP training and began serving as CAEP reviewers during this academic year. All are members of the MEIL Assessment Committee where discussions are made about how to gather evidence for continuous improvement through program evaluation and identification of models of excellence.