Friday, September 22, 2017

## Schar college of education summer audit ODHE finds issue in licensure of 76 students

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The Dwight Schar College of Education was audited by the Ohio Department of Higher Education this summer due to inconsistencies and errors in teacher license appli-

The audit meant several extra courses for 76 students who thought they were going to be licensed soon, especially Bachelor's Plus students.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education sent the college a notice

The ODHE had become aware

of a license being approved that should not have been, so they indicated there would be an audit of files May 18. Out of the 50 files the ODHE re-

quested, there were several inconsistencies. Every file should have contained program audit sheets, but some did not. There were questions about transfer equivalency for multiple courses. Some fields had been waived without paperwork, and there was a general lack of proper documentation.

Dr. Donna Breault, dean of the College of Education, said due to the inconsistencies in those records, the ODHE required the COE to review all files. That is when they found more mistakes, because those initially requested files did not come from their office, but rather a different place altogether.

"Licensing was happening in Graduate Online and Adult Studies," she said. "Students for advanced programs and Bachelor's Plus programs are admitted through GOAS, advised through GOAS, and our licensing officer was situated in GOAS at that

The College of Education "had no idea what was happening" until this audit took place, Breault said. Everything was happening in a separate unit, and there was little communication between the two. For instance, GOAS said courses students brought in were equivalent, when they actually were not according to the COE, but it was not brought to light until after the students had already "finished" the program Breault said.

The effect of the audit impacted

Most of those students are in the Bachelor's Plus program. This program, which has been offered by AU for the past two decades, was created so those with a bachelor's degree could become a teacher.

Adam Shulte, a Bachelor's Plus program graduate, was one student who was affected by the audit.

Shulte started the program in 2015 to become a science teacher. His academic adviser at the time, Catherine Williams, assured him that his biotechnology degree from Kent State University meant he would not need to take any more science courses.

"I have a signed transcript evaluation from 2014 that says I didn't need any science classes to be able to get a license for teaching integrated science," Shulte said.

Shulte believed he finished the program May 20, 2017 when he received his OEA results and sent his license application to ODE. He emailed his adviser June 2 to verify his status, and she assured him there was nothing else for him to do. Shulte checked the ODE's website for his license status every day.

Nearing the halfway point of July, he became nervous, as his license was still awaiting university approval. July 13, he emailed Williams again.

Five days later, Shulte received a response: his license would not be processed at that time and hopefully more information would be available within 10 days.

Williams informed him three days later during an over-thephone meeting that due to a state audit, Shulte would need to take three additional science classes before he could obtain his license.

Shulte had to take 11 credit hours

He was forced to quit his summer job and had to move the day of his wedding to compensate for these courses, he said in a phone inter-

The classes would be paid for by the university and he could take them anywhere he liked, but he needed to take those classes in a short timespan, Shulte said.

"When I found out the audit had occurred in May, but I was not notified in any way - that I was impacted, or that an audit even happened at all – until July 21st, I was incredibly disappointed," Shulte



The Dwight Schar College of Education is restructuring their licensure programs and filing system.

"It's been a nightmare, I literally lost my mind," he said. "I had to do it in that time frame because between conversations with Ashland, I had my first and second interview at Ashland High School for the job that I now have. I had no choice but to do it as fast as I did, because otherwise I would have essentially had to reject the job offer."

One of Shulte's biggest concerns was compensation.

Ashland High School said they were willing to keep Shulte on as a long-term substitute should he not have his license in time.

The salary difference between a substitute and a full time teacher is substantial, and since the university admitted full responsibility for the mistakes, Shulte wanted a plan.

"If I have a difference in salary because I didn't have my license on time, the only reason being Ashland University's mistake, having accepted full responsibility: will you compensate me?" he asked. "They said no. If I would have had to work as a long term sub, I would've been working for significantly less and they weren't going to do anything about it."

Shulte believes he is lucky to have finished his classes and is now a licensed science teacher at Ashland High School.

He attributes much of his relief to the high school administration's generous flexibility with his situation, but believes some employers may not have been as flexible with the other 75 students affected and he is "sure that some people lost their jobs because of this."

Breault said reviewing all of the files is an ongoing process, as they have not finished going through student records.

According to an audit summary prepared on June 6 by Jessica Mercerhill, senior director of educator preparation (ODHE), "interviews with staff confirmed that there was no clear process for completing the work across institution offices. While individuals had their own systems overall, even those were not followed consistently."

The summary also stated Ashland will be required to work across offices to develop a policy and procedures manual for procedures from admission to licensure program through licensure clearance and e-signing.

Mercerhill will be back on campus in November with the university's accreditation agency, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, to tie up loose ends.

Breault said the college is being

asked to restructure and redesign their licensing process, and in effort to rebuild have borrowed some policies from other universities such as Kent State.

It is now a requirement for those getting a license to fill out an Ashland Internal Application to aler the college within 60 days of applying with the Ohio Department of Education.

GOAS has also been restructured so it is now part of the college of education, under Breault's direct supervision.

"We put together a policy manual that put checks and balances in place. For the next year, when we approve a license, we are required to submit documentation to show evidence that the person can get that license; that includes program check and a program audit, which is the official document that says everything has been completed,'

Breault said. She is working with the university president and provost to put together a competency based intervention system as a form of aca-

demic support. The college has also created a few new positions to add more layers of oversight to the program which Breault believes has "helped us clean up a lot of things."

## Ashland's emergency alert system

## **LUQMAN TAROUTI**

@AUCollegian

After a very long day at work, Mark Rafeld, director of Ashland County Emergency Management, finally closes his eyes to get some

His sleep does not last long.

His phone starts ringing and shaking at 11 p.m. He picks up, a 911 dispatch stating a person in the neighborhood is threatening to harm himself and others with a

Rafeld immediately jumps to go to the scene as the dispatch requests. They are planning to evacuate some residents in the neighborhood and need his assistance in getting shelter and transportation

Once he understands what is needed from him, he starts calling the American Red Cross, the designated agency for providing shelters.

The Red Cross begins searching for shelters in the Ashland area, but the search is not successful.

Rafeld makes his own phone calls to see if he can help find a shelter for the nine residents evacuated. He finally finds a place and sets up a bus to transport them.

He is frustrated; the Red Cross could not do its designated job to find shelter for only nine people.

In preparation for the unknown and learning from the past, Ashland county is working on redressing and updating its emergency management system.

Two weeks after the incident, Ashland County Emergency Management rolled out their updated emergency alert system, moving from Reverse 911 to the Wireless Emergency Notification System. Also, they are working on addressing sheltering support plans.

"The Red Cross are going

through a rebirth right now, they have some organizational changes we've since worked through," Rafeld said.

The new Wireless Emergency Notification System was open for people to register on Sept. 1.

The system can send around 30 alert options concerning weather that comes directly from the National Weather Service.

There are also around 20 options focusing on getting alerts from specific departments such as the Ashland Fire Department, Ashland Police Department and Ashland County-City Health Department. The service also provides safety alerts for villages like Haysville and Savannah.

"The process to register is not going to take more than three minutes," Rafeld said. "People can go www.ashland-ohio.com/residents/emergency-alert-system and start signing up right now."

More than 1,700 people have signed up in the program since its release. Ashland County is planning to publicize the service through the Ashland County Fair.

They are preparing staff with computers to register people on the fly while they are walking around the fair.

Wireless Emergency Notification System is focusing exclusively on emergencies. The system will not be used for advertisement or general announcements, Rafeld said.

"Our concern is the civil disturbance things," he said.

While the Wireless Emergency Notification System service is buildt to distribute tasks to different departments for more efficiency and speed, the system is not fully yet ready to be used from all departments directly. The Sheriff's Office is not alerting people directly at present.

They contact the county emer-

Sunny 87/59

gency management office to send

"We are working on bringing the ability to alert people directly from [the Sheriff's Office] in the near fu-

ture," William Bragg, 911 coordinator and IT manager at Ashland County Sheriff's Office, said. "We were not happy with what we had."

The system allows them to alert people in a particular area by drawing a circle in a map.

Also, it makes it possible to send alerts from a simple, user-friendly phone application that doesn't require a lot of training to use, Bragg explained.

"We did not use Wireless Emergency Notification System so far," Bragg said. "Although we want to test it and make sure that it's working as expected, we don't wish to have the need to use it."

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