

## ACADEMICS

# BSU adapts to trends in education

## Teacher's College emphasizes gender, technology, diversity

Leslie Benson  
Special Projects Reporter

Senior Dennis Fry feels better prepared to start teaching at local high schools than many teachers already in the profession, he said.

"I've dealt with new technology," Fry, a social studies education major, said. "Making a digital portfolio acquainted me with more computers and software."

Fry, who has worked with the Motivate Our Minds program to tutor children on reading, will student teach in EDSEC 380 Principles of Teaching in the secondary school this semester. The course allows Ball State secondary education majors to observe, team teach and teach individually the classrooms of local high school and middle school students for a total of eight weeks.

With new teachers entering the work force, Ball State instructors are acknowledging the pressure to shape their teaching methods to meet the needs of a changing society,

one filled with technological advances and diversity issues in colleges and universities.

### TECHNOLOGY

Graduating more than 900 total students each year, the Teacher's College remains one of the top of its kind in the nation because of its multimedia focus, Roy Weaver, dean of the Teacher's College, said.

"We are one of the few colleges of education in the United States and the only one in Indiana that has a laptop requirement for incoming students," he said. "We require them to make a digital portfolio. Using multimedia they're able to show their strategies for working with children. It's no longer enough to have good grades. You have to demonstrate your competence through performance."

Ball State is one of about 57 professional education organizations given initial accreditation or reaccreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The Teacher's College is accredited by the Indiana Professional Standards Board as well.

Weaver said the college stands out because its students are assessed not only for teaching competence but also for their values and attitudes toward the teaching profession. The assess-

ment includes students' ability to handle issues of diversity, such as sexual orientation, in schools with responsibility.

### DIVERSITY

Keeping on top of diversity issues, Ball State won the 2004 Best Practice in Diversity award from the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education — an award given to one of 800 competing teacher's colleges per year.

The award was given for Ball State's junior-level urban semester course in Indianapolis. Students in the class work in inner-city elementary, middle and high schools as a partnership between the College of Science and Humanities and the Teacher's College.

However, Dennis Wible, instructor of secondary education in the department of educational studies and a 1969 Ball State graduate, said the college and its graduates could be even stronger.

"We're trying to do things differently and refocus what we're teaching," Wible said. "We assess how our students apply what they have learned by letting them teach rather than having them answer questions about teaching on a test."

In EDSEC 380, students not only get hands-on experience

in local high school classrooms, they also learn to be responsible in multicultural situations, Wible said.

"At Ball State, we teach the three R's, though they've changed," he said. "They are relevance, recognition and reward. Teachers need to recognize students and their abilities, and just because you have a license to teach doesn't make you a teacher."

Graduating Ball State student teachers may have a leg up on their competitors, Wible said. His classes focus on strategies to teach the growing number of technology-savvy high school students.

"The attention of high school students has shortened due to the immediate gratification they receive from video games and other things," Wible said. "That's the difference between students of the 1990s versus the 2000s. The kids that my students will teach have more access to technology through the Internet and therefore come in more prepared to class."

"Our biggest obstacle is participation by the community," he

said. "We need everyone involved in our kids' educations. All the students wonder is 'What's in it for me?' The relevance needs to come from the community."

### GENDER ISSUES

Martin Wood, a Ball State health educator, conducted a recent survey in which he surveyed 118 high school and middle school counselors in a total of 39 rural counties and eight urban counties. He found that 14.4 percent claim to possess adequate skills to assist gay and lesbian students deal with their problems.

Wood, who serves as a faculty ally

for Spectrum, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight-allied students association at Ball State, decided to prepare the study after hearing stories from university students about the verbal and physical abuse they had endured during high school because of their sexual orientations.

"Teacher preparatory programs are doing a half-way de-

cent job of discussing racial and ethnic issues," Wood said. "I saw in my study that the majority of school counselors felt unprepared but willing to address issues of sexual orientation, and there were not enough resources available to them or in the community."

Wood's study found 51 percent of urban school counselors had referred students to a support group, while only 26.8 percent in rural communities had done so.

"This is a population of students with an unmet need," Wood said. "Schools should be a safe learning environment for everyone."

The Teacher's College has examined these changes and offered new outlooks on education. To ensure success, a curriculum committee meets regularly to discuss improving approaches to teaching styles and programs in the Teacher's College.

Wood and Michael Stevenson, chair of the department of psychological science, as well as other faculty members, are in the process of forming a coalition on campus to create a plan that would increase the number of courses focusing on sexual orientation issues in the work force.

"We're trying to improve the training students get across the board," Wood said.

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ROY WEAVER  
Dean of Teacher's College