We education faculty members have been engaged in a fascinating process of clarifying and reaffirming our very identity (and preparing an accreditation self study) through the development of a conceptual framework, which we characterize as HEART. The current thinking regarding standards-based teacher education emphasizes the shared vision of a program’s efforts in preparing teachers to work effectively in P42 schools. This means that teacher education programs must establish a conceptual framework, or operating philosophy, which guides all programmatic and curricular development and must demonstrate the program’s effectiveness through the work of their teacher candidates in school settings. The conceptual framework, therefore, is the foundation upon which all efforts to prepare education professionals are based.

To these ends, the UH Hilo Education faculty has developed a conceptual framework to identify core values, desired outcomes, shared beliefs, and characteristic practices which distinguish our programs as unique. Simply put, we envision our department’s future as the HEART of a learning community of caring, ethical, and creative people. We view our work as nothing short of a calling. We symbolize our commitment to preparing excellent teachers with the acronym HEART, which represents five critical concepts that define our teacher education programs: Holistic, Empathic, Artistic, Rigorous, and Transformational.

As we strive to promote the professionalization of teaching, we dedicate ourselves to the development of educators who are committed to equity, empowerment, and a critical understanding of our world. In so doing, we embrace the following principles:

**Teaching and learning are holistic endeavors;**
*Empathy between self and others is an essential aspect of a pedagogical relationship;*
*Effective teaching embraces artistic ideals;*
*Excellence follows a rigorous path; and*
*Teachers are change agents capable of transforming the environments in which they work.*
We believe that HEAR T provides a conceptual understanding of how our professional commitments and dispositions are integrated across the curriculum, instruction, field experiences, assessments, and evaluations of our programs. Here is a thumbnail sketch of how we view this integration.

**Holistic** thinking asserts that everything is connected, on multiple levels, to everything else. We maintain that everything a teacher candidate learns, whether in our courses, during field experiences, from relationships with cohort classmates, or through self reflection, can only be experienced in realization of the larger, diverse context of the learning community. Viewing this through a wide-angle lens, all learning experiences are legitimate and powerful. It follows then that teacher preparation must contain several connected components, that when taken together, develop a system and culture which nurture the spirit of a whole and caring professional.

Clearly, professional teachers are **empathic** individuals who through understanding and appreciation express the ethics of care as they value students and their diverse traits. The teachers who come through our programs develop **artistic** processes of keen observation based on insightful, reflective practice as they create new and culturally meaningful knowledge through the synthesis of personal learning experiences. Through **rigorous** pursuits, teachers commit to life-long learning and social responsibility. These teachers acknowledge, accept, and embrace **transformational** opportunities as they build interdependent and empowering coalitions with the cultures and communities they serve.

As the UH Hilo Education faculty continues to develop our HEART conceptual framework, we invite your input. Certainly, as members our Advisory and Advocacy Group and as representatives of the communities we serve, you are personally connected not only to our past but also to our future. We value and invite your thoughts about what we have shared with you in this brief explanation.

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