

April 9, 2010

To: University Senate

From: Senate Planning & Review Committee (SPRC)
Frances Jackson, Chair

Re: Education Specialist Degree in Early Childhood Education and Intervention
Program

SPRC received the proposal from the School of Education Human Services to initiate an Ed.S in Early Childhood Education and Intervention. This proposal is submitted by the Department of Human Development and Child Studies.

Summary

This proposal seeks to get approval to offer an Education Specialist Degree in early childhood education and intervention aimed at preparing individuals to work with young children with disabilities. A key component of this proposal is the compelling argument that separate education for children who qualify for special education has not been effective and does not meet the legal standard for the least restrictive and natural educational environment. Traditionally, educators were trained as either special education instructors or in early childhood. This degree seeks to blend these two areas so that teachers who have students with disabilities will have the expertise to teach these children in regular classrooms.

The Department of Human Development and Child Studies is comprised of faculty with expertise in early childhood education, special education, and educational foundations. This degree would combine content in special education and early childhood, with training in research, administration, collaboration, and policy development.

A comprehensive needs assessment was conducted to gauge the interest in this program. Key informant interviews were held with leaders in the field. In addition, students who graduated from OU between January, 2001 and June, 2007, with a masters degree in either early childhood or special education received an electronic survey to measure interest in this degree. Results showed that there were 40 interested applicants.

This proposal is a 36 credit, post-masters program. In addition to the above, interest from professionals trained in other disciplines has also been expressed. People with a background in criminal justice, music, psychology, reading, curriculum and instruction, educational leadership, and English have also expressed an interest in this degree.

It is anticipated that 15 students would be admitted to a cohort model each year. This would yield a steady state of 45 students.

The proposal requests one tenure-track faculty member who would hopefully have experience in both early childhood and special education. Also, at least one Teaching Assistant is requested to

teach three master's levels courses so that faculty can be freed to teach in this new program. A coordinator for the program would be identified from among the current faculty.

The curriculum consists of 8 new courses, four credits each, plus the final project. Most courses would be taught with a hybrid model combination of on-line and traditional classroom, as indicated by respondents to the needs assessment. Detailed course descriptions are included in the proposal.

There are a limited number of letters of support in the appendix. There is also a letter of support from the Interim Dean of SEHS, Dr. William Keane. This program is the only one of its kind in the state of Michigan.

Strengths

SPRC believes this proposed degree meets a real need. The fact that no other programs like it currently exist in the state of Michigan is a strength. There is good historical background and support for the program. The collaborative nature of this program is also a strength. A review of faculty credentials supports that the needed expertise is available to teach the proposed courses. Enrollment projections are reasonable and achievable. It is clear from the documentation provided that at some point, those not getting this degree will eventually become obsolete

Overall, this is a strong, well written proposal. Support for the need of this program, congruency with the mission of OU, and societal need are well documented and supported.

Concerns

This proposal requests a new, tenure-track faculty line. In addition, there is strong reliance on a number of part-time faculty to teach master's levels courses. There is concern on the program's ability to recruit part-time instructors or the use of doctoral students to do teaching at the master's level. The proposal does not delineated how this will be accomplished.

Recommendation

By unanimous vote of SPRC, this program is recommended for approval by the University Senate.