SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

AND

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

concerning

CREATION OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION CONCENTRATION IN THE

EDUCATION MAJOR

(#3746)

Presented at the

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November 16, 2017

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

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This is a proposal for a new Special Education concentration in the Education major. The proposal notes that there is a shortage of licensed special education teachers for students with moderate disabilities, especially in Western Massachusetts. The proposed concentration will help to meet the need for qualified special education teachers, and will lead to Massachusetts licensure as a Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities. The proposal's development included consultation with school districts in the state. As is true for all students in the Education major, students in the Special Education concentration will also have a secondary major
(expected mostly to be in Psychology). Students will complete four prerequisite courses and receive a passing score on Communication and Literacy Skills on the Massachusetts Teacher Educator Licensure examination, and then join the Special Education concentration in their sophomore year. Almost all of the courses required for the concentration have been approved as regular courses by the Faculty Senate.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

On October 10, 2017, the Academic Priorities Council endorsed approval of this proposal #3746.

MOTION: That the Faculty Senate approve the Creation of a Special Education Concentration in the Education Major, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 18-013.

Provide a brief overview of the process for developing this concentration.

The special education concentration in the Department of Student Development at UMass Amherst is requesting the approval of an undergraduate concentration in the Education Major with an accompanying license through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The proposed program was part of a strategic investment by the Provost and the Dean of the College of Education to meet the needs of a high quality special education teacher preparation program in Massachusetts. This strategic investment was demonstrated by a successful search for two senior faculty members to support the development of the program. The proposed program will prepare highly skilled special education teachers to meet the substantial special education teacher shortage in the Commonwealth. The special education concentration in the Education Major will be housed in the special education program in the Department of Student Development. There are five tenure-track faculty members in the concentration who will teach and advise the undergraduate Education Majors. The majority of the courses for the major have been approved, with one course (EDUC 390CE Collaboration) currently in the submission process. We have received approval to license special education teachers in Moderate Disabilities, PreK-8 and 5-12 from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The education major with a concentration in special education will be fully aligned with the University and College of Education missions as a Land Grant university. The education major with a concentration in special education is unique because it will train undergraduates in innovative research-based practices and prepare teachers who will improve the lives of children with disabilities and their families in the Commonwealth, with a broader national and international impact.

All students in Special Education complete a primary major in Education with a concentration in Special Education and a secondary major. We anticipate the majority of these student will have a secondary major in Psychology (making up 90%). Upon completion of the five prerequisites (Math 113, Math 114, HUMANDEV 270, EDUC 325, passing score on Communication and Literacy Skills on the Massachusetts Teacher Educator Licensure [MTEL]), students will apply to Special Education during their sophomore year. Students will be expected to carry a typical course load of 15 to 18 credit hours to meet their general education requirements, complete a primary major in Education (with a concentration in Special Education) and complete a secondary major.

Provide a brief overview of the process for developing the proposal.

The proposed concentration was developed by the special education faculty, in collaboration with the College of Education Licensure Office, the Dean of the College of Education, and the Department of Student Development. We conducted an extensive needs assessment within the University, using the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Data Tools, and in the community by meeting with
Currently, Massachusetts has a shortage of 394 teachers with Moderate Disabilities licenses either at the PreK-8 or 5-12 level. Our region lacks sufficient teacher preparation programs to cover the shortage. According to DESE data, in 2014-2015 DESE issued 917 waivers for teaching, with the largest portion going to special education waivers (589–64% of all waivers). Waivers are provided to persons interested in teaching, but lacking the necessary training and credentials. The majority of the special education waivers were issued for Moderate Disabilities licensure (67%).

There are currently only three organizations that provide Moderate Disabilities licensure programs at the Baccalaureate level in Western Massachusetts: Elms College, Springfield College, and Westfield State University. Combined, these three programs successfully prepared just 34 special education teachers in 2014. Locally, there is a severe lack of teachers being trained in Western Mass to meet district needs for teachers licensed in Moderate Disabilities at the Baccalaureate level. This need was clearly demonstrated by the special education administrators. In November 2015, we surveyed the 20 special education directors in urban and rural school districts in Western Massachusetts. Thirty-five percent of those respondents identified recruiting and retaining qualified special education teachers as their most pressing issue. It is clear that there is a need for a high quality special education teacher preparation program in the region, and we can readily fill this gap. We also convened meetings with more than 30 special education directors or education leaders in the region. Nearly all of the leaders indicated a need for an undergraduate training program.

The content of the proposed special education concentration was developed with extensive feedback from school districts in Massachusetts. For instance, our proposed program of study in the special education concentration includes two reading methods courses designed to prepare undergraduates to support reading instruction for students with disabilities. This was a recommendation from the special education directors in the Commonwealth school districts. In addition, we have added courses on Universal Design for Learning and Research Methods and Evidence Based Practices. These are courses that are not offered at other teacher preparation programs, but are critical for highly qualified teachers and were recommendations from the special education directors in the Commonwealth. Subsequently, the proposed special education concentration program serves the land grant mission of the University of Massachusetts Amherst while establishing a cutting edge special education teacher training model.

Finally, the proposed special education concentration was developed in alignment with the DESE special education licensure requirements, and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards which guide the licensing component of the special education teacher training program. The proposed special education concentration is an innovative research-based teacher training program with an accompanying DESE-approved license. The concentration will fill a substantial teacher shortage in the Commonwealth and will support an under-supported and underserved part of the population, people with disabilities and their families.

Describe the proposal's purpose and the particular knowledge and skills to be acquired.

The proposed special education concentration is an innovative research-based teacher training program with an accompanying DESE approved license for Pre-K-8 and 5-12. The purpose of the concentration is to prepare highly skilled special education teachers with expertise in evidence-based practices for students with moderate disabilities. Additionally, the proposed concentration will fill a substantial teacher shortage in the Commonwealth and will support an under-supported and underserved part of the population, people with disabilities and their families.

The proposed special education concentration will lead to a Massachusetts license as a Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities in either PreK-8 or 5-12. The primary major will be Education, with a concentration in Special Education, and will include a total of 39 credit hours (with 12 prerequisites) plus Sheltered English Immersion (3 credits), the Junior Writing Course (3 credits), and Educational
Issues in Real World Contexts (3 credits) as the Integrative Learning Experience in their major across the junior and senior years. This course load provides students with flexibility to be able to complete their requirements for their primary major in Education as well as their secondary major.

All students will receive training to assist them in passing the two additional MTEL examinations required for licensure. The existing special education license for M.Ed. students is already accredited through NCATE, and we will complete accreditation approval for the undergraduate program upon successful approval of the concentration in special education in the Education Major. We have had the highest rating from NCATE in our last two reviews, and we anticipate approval within 12 calendar months of the major approval.

Students in the special education concentration will obtain knowledge and expertise in the following areas: (1) Strategies to assess students with disabilities, (2) Strategies for collaborating to assist students with disabilities and their families, (3) Research methods for identifying Evidence-Based practices in Special Education, (4) Methods to teach reading, writing, and mathematics to students with disabilities using evidence-based practices, (5) Implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports to manage behaviors of students with disabilities, (6) Universal Design for Learning and the Application of Universal Design for Learning in inclusive settings, and (7) Teaching practice in applied settings through a variety of experiences (pre-practicum) and student teaching (practicum). All students will be prepared to take a position as a special education teacher of students with moderate disabilities either PreK-8 or 5-12 upon completing their coursework and passing their additional MTEL examinations.

Finally, this proposal will establish UMass Amherst as a preeminent special education training program in the region, state, and nation. It will be the only undergraduate special education teacher preparation program in the region run and taught by nationally recognized scholars at a Research-Intensive University. The special education concentration has a national profile because of its current faculty members and their scholarly contributions to the field. In the last three years, the concentration has brought in approximately $6,000,000 in external funding. The concentration is currently running two special education leadership projects funded by the federal Office of Special Education Programs. The concentration is also running two National Science Foundation projects. The profile of the faculty make UMass Amherst a destination of choice for students interested in an Education Major with a concentration in special education leading to licensure. The faculty have designed an innovative special education program that is informed by its scholarly activity and its understanding of research to practice. This distinguishes the proposed UMass Amherst Education Major with a concentration in special education from the other regional special education teacher training programs that are taught by adjunct professors and instructors who do not conduct research that can be applied to the teacher training program. Consequently, the UMass Amherst Education Major with a concentration in special education has the capacity to become a nationally recognized program.

If this proposal requires no additional resources, say so and briefly explain why. If this proposal requires additional resources, explain how they will be paid for. For proposals involving instruction, indicate how many new enrollments are expected and whether the courses have room to accommodate them.

The proposed special education concentration requires no additional resources. The necessary resources to implement this program already exist. The current tenure-track faculty members in special education can cover the courses with their standard course loads. In addition, the college of education already has the system and supports for placement of student teaching as well as licensure advising. Instructional materials to train the preservice teachers will use similar materials that are used in K-12 schools. There will be a need to purchase and update materials, which can be done within the current department and college budget framework. All courses will be able to accommodate the students entering this major as this is a new program designed to meet these enrollment needs.
Curriculum

Provide a curriculum outline showing degree program requirements, requirements of any existing concentrations, requirements of proposed concentration, and how they relate. You may include this outline and any additional documents as attachments below.

We attach three documents showing the proposed concentration requirements, the requirements of the existing concentration in the Education Major with a concentration in Early Childhood Education, and a document showing how the two concentrations are aligned.

The Special Education Concentration Program of Study and Course Descriptions shows the program of study for the proposed concentration, as well as brief descriptions of the course content.

The Early Childhood Concentration Program of Study displays the program of study for the existing Early Childhood Education Concentration, the only current concentration in the Education Major.

The Alignment of Concentrations Table shows how the proposed special education concentration and the existing early childhood education concentration are aligned.

Attachments:

For attachments, please refer to Proposal #3746 in the Course and Curriculum Management System.