



## NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM PROPOSAL

**Institution:** University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)

**Program:** Early Childhood Inclusive

**Award:** Bachelor of Science in Education (BS)

**Institution's Existing Degree(s) in Same or Similar Discipline:** BS in education with early childhood supplemental endorsement\*

**Proposal Received by Commission:** August 10, 2015

**Proposed Start Date:** When approved by CCPE

### Description

The purpose of the proposed program is to prepare students to use family-centered and collaborative approaches as well as evidence-based instructional strategies to meet the needs of a diverse population. The program would focus on young children (birth to grade 3) with and without disabilities as well as those from diverse cultural and linguistic groups. Graduates would be prepared to work in a variety of settings, including public and private schools, early learning centers, child care centers, and social programs. The program would partner with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. The institute works with all University of Nebraska campuses, with offices at UNO.

The curriculum meets the requirements for the Nebraska Early Childhood Inclusive field endorsement\*. The existing early childhood endorsement at UNO would remain. It has a narrower scope, limited to ages 3 to 8 in a general population. It is a supplemental endorsement, consisting of only 18 credit hours and requiring that the teacher also hold an elementary education endorsement.

The proposed degree would require 120 semester credit hours: 41 hours in general education courses; 12 hours of required courses for teacher education; 55 hours in courses from early childhood and special education, including 2 hours of clinical practice; and a 12-hour area of emphasis (either age 3 to third grade or birth to age 3). Seven new courses would be needed.

**Consistent with Institutional Role and Mission?**     YES     NO

**Consistent with Statewide Comprehensive Plan?**     YES     NO

### REVIEW CRITERIA

#### A. Need for the Program

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

UNO addressed a variety of topics in presenting the need for the proposed program.

\*Nebraska Department of Education defines a subject endorsement as a specific course or a narrow range of courses. A field endorsement is two or more subjects which, considered as a single area of study, represent a wider and broader scope than that of a subject. A supplemental endorsement is one that can only be earned in conjunction with a subject or field endorsement.

### **Need for bachelor's degree for early childhood teachers**

UNO cites studies showing that children participating in high quality early childhood experiences benefit themselves and their community later in life and that those experiences are best provided by a certified teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Recognizing this benefit, Head Start now requires that 50% of its teachers nationwide have at least a bachelor's degree. The proposal also cites the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' opinion that most quality rating systems used today for early childhood education centers and child care centers include a bachelor's degree for classroom teachers as the standard for the highest quality rating. Such a rating system is under development in Nebraska.

### **Need for inclusive education**

The proposal addresses the need to include children with diverse abilities in activities with children their own age. Two national professional organizations, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, issued a joint position statement promoting inclusion. UNO asserts that to work in an inclusive classroom, teachers will need effective preparation such as that provided by the proposed program.

### **Need for special education**

Although the proposed program does not focus solely on special education, UNO notes that there is a shortage of special education teachers in Nebraska and that the number of children requiring special education services is growing. According to the proposal, special education has been on the Nebraska Department of Education's Teacher Shortage list since its inception in 2000-2001.

### **Need for preschool teachers in Nebraska**

According to UNO, the proposed program was developed in response to community needs. In 2013 a ballot measure was approved in Nebraska to increase funding for preschool education. The measure allows public school funds to be used for early childhood programs and creates an endowment with a \$40 million initial investment. The proposal also cites a 2014 study by First Five Nebraska that indicates an estimated 7,752 new or existing early childhood workers would need to obtain higher qualifications in order to ensure that all children at risk, age 0 to 5, can participate in quality programs with appropriate staff-to-child ratios.

### **Commission staff research**

Staff consulted the Nebraska Department of Labor (DOL) website. The proposed program combines early childhood education and special education, making it difficult to identify a category in the DOL data base. In Nebraska between 2012 and 2022 there were 91 annual average job openings projected for "Pre-school teachers, except special education" and 40 openings for "Special education teachers, kindergarten and elementary school." There was no data available for pre-school special education teachers. Average entry level salary for pre-school teachers in 2015 was \$17,892 and for special education teachers was \$38,947. The wage gap reflects the fact that many employers do not require a degree for pre-school teachers and therefore pay considerably less than school districts.

The proposal documented a need for qualified preschool teachers and a need for special education teachers. The Early Childhood Inclusive program at UNO combines both and would meet the requirements for the Nebraska Department of Education's Early Childhood Inclusive field endorsement.

**B. Demand for the Program**

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

UNO reports that enrollment in the Teacher Education Department doubled from 2012 to 2013. They estimate that 15 new students would enroll in the proposed program in the first year, with 10 in the second year, and five in each of the following three years. The proposal states that these numbers would make a viable major and maximize, without overwhelming, the existing capacity in the required courses.

UNO asserts that need for the program has been identified by potential and current students as well as community members who need qualified teachers. The proposal also suggests that the program would be attractive to the person who currently holds an associate degree in early childhood education or another child and family-centered associate degree and is looking to move into a leadership position.

The projected enrollments are based on national and local studies. The fact that the community requested the program and the Nebraska Department of Education created the endorsement also suggests there would be student demand.

**C. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication**

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

The proposal states that the early childhood inclusive major is available at UNL and UNK. The Nebraska Department of Education also lists the endorsement at Chadron, Peru, and Wayne State Colleges, as well as College of Saint Mary and Concordia University. Despite the number available in the state, this is an endorsement appropriate for the institution serving the largest metropolitan area in the state.

**D. Resources: Faculty/Staff**

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

The departments of Teacher Education and Special Education and Communication Disorders have five full-time and four part-time faculty who would be responsible for teaching the courses for the program and overseeing the practicum. UNO reports that they have worked together to develop the seven new courses needed. Since some faculty would teach only part-time in the program, the budget includes salary for the equivalent of four full-time faculty.

Part of a graduate assistant's time and part of an academic advisor's time would be devoted to the program. Administrative assistants from the two participating departments would also provide support. All are included in the budget. No new faculty or staff would be needed.

**E. Resources: Physical Facilities/Equipment**

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

The program would be housed in existing facilities in Roskens Hall, where office space, a resource room, and classrooms, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, are available. The budget includes \$3,400 in the first year for equipment such as books, videos, curricula, assessment tools, and toys.

**F. Resources: Library/Information Access**

High-----Low
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

UNO has budgeted \$11,150 in the first year for online access to journals not currently available through the Criss Library holdings.

**G. Budget**

The Teacher Education Department received a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Early Childhood Education Program of Excellence funding award that was used to support one faculty member.

**PROJECTED COSTS AND ANTICIPATED REVENUES FOR THE FIRST FIVE YEARS  
As reported by UNO**

<b>PROJECTED COSTS</b>		<b>ANTICIPATED REVENUES</b>	
Faculty and Staff <sup>1</sup>	\$1,307,167	Reallocated Funds	
General Operating <sup>2</sup>	\$26,480	New State Funds	
Equipment	\$3,400	New Local Funds	
Library/Info Resources	\$11,150	Tuition <sup>3</sup>	\$1,083,619
Other (GA tuition)	\$16,507	Other: Program of Excellence funds	\$100,000
<b>Five-Year TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,364,704</b>	<b>Five-Year TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,183,619</b>

<sup>1</sup> Represents the portion of time that the existing faculty would devote to the program (equivalent to four FTE), as well as half of a graduate assistant's time and .35 FTE for support staff.

<sup>2</sup> Represents approximately 10% of the operating budgets for the departments of Special Education and Teacher Education

<sup>3</sup> Based on 15 students in year 1 taking 30 credit hours at \$200.25 per credit hour, 10 new students in year 2, and 5 new students in each of years 3, 4, and 5. Fees vary and are not included in this figure.

**Committee Recommendation: Approve**

**First Regular Program Review Date: Due June 30, 2022.**