



The University of Georgia

University Council
Athens, Georgia 30602

January 13, 2011

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2010-2011

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Undergraduate Student Representative – Mr. Stephen Thompson

Graduate Student Representative – Ms. Lauren Moret

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal to offer the existing major in Reading Education (M.Ed.) as an external degree online will be an agenda item for the January 19, 2011, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

David E. Shipley, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost Jere W. Morehead
Dr. Laura D. Jolly

**Proposal for an External Degree
The University of Georgia**

Institution: University of Georgia, Athens

Date: November 10, 2010

College/School/Division: Education

Department: Language & Literacy Education

Degree: Master of Education (stand alone)

Major: Reading Education

CIP Code: 13.131505

Proposed Start Date: September 2011

1. Need Assessment

The need for quality teaching in reading and literacy has been well documented over the last decade. The No Child Left Behind Act has particularly emphasized early intervention in reading and has set ambitious goals for literacy over the next decade. In addition, calls by the New London Group and others have emphasized that, due to the proliferation of electronic media and online information systems, the importance of critical reading skills are more crucial than ever.

Significantly, we need to educate students for 2050 and not 1950. Therefore an online master's degree in reading seems not only appropriate, but also absolutely necessary. It provides teachers in Georgia with the opportunity to lead the field and be at the forefront of change in literacy education. Doing so will position Georgia schoolchildren for the opportunities of a globalized, technology-driven economy and culture.

Requests for reading courses from other departments (i.e., Communication Sciences & Special Education, Elementary and Social Studies Education) have tripled our core course offerings over recent years, indicating that teachers in fields other than reading acknowledge the importance of strong reading instruction. At the same time, we have seen that online iterations of on-campus courses, when offered simultaneously, fill faster and more consistently than their face-to-face counterparts.

Teachers, let alone qualified teachers, are in short supply. Attrition rates for new teachers over the first three years of teaching range from twenty-five to fifty percent, depending on the methods used for counting. Any number in that range is disquieting and indicates that we need to maintain and replenish faculties at higher rates than our current capacity. The best way to do so is to open new venues for reaching potential teachers and to provide current teachers with supportive learning networks that help them sustain and

enhance their classroom practices.

An online master's degree in reading education will meet the needs of many Georgians, particularly those living in rural areas, currently not being well served by UGA. It will access a student base that heretofore has rarely been able to participate in our programs due to distance, time, and cost. We project that a constituency for our courses lies beyond easy travel to Athens. We know that teachers in western and southern Georgia, many of whom received their bachelor degrees from UGA, have difficulty returning here for a master's degree due to time and distance. The recent recession has also created more burdens for families and extensive travel to Athens may be cost prohibitive. The online master's program would reach these potential students and alleviate many of these costs.

In looking beyond Georgia, our faculty has established international connections and reputations. For example, Dr. Michelle Commeyras has worked extensively in Africa and Bob Fecho and Donna Alvermann have educational collaborations with colleagues in Australia. If advertised strategically, this online program could be tapping an international educational vein. The result would be a diverse cohort of students whose collective expertise would enhance the learning of all involved.

In way of summary, this online M. Ed. program fills a number of gaps. It (1) allows us to use other means to address the attrition rate of inservice teachers (as was discussed above); (2) has the potential to bring a more diverse student population to the university; (3) is geared to attract students from across Georgia and beyond, students who frequently would not have come to UGA; (4) takes advantage of instructional technology currently being used only sporadically; (5) allows us to better compete with for-profit educational businesses; and (6) will better serve working teachers who do not have the luxury of quitting work and moving to Athens to get a master's degree.

2. Admission Requirements

Prospective candidates for the online M.Ed. program must hold a Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. Among other indicators of academic promise, the admissions committee seeks the following:

- (1) A strong undergraduate GPA with usual acceptance being 3.0 or higher
- (2) A strong Graduate Record Examination score with usual acceptance being 950 or higher on the combined verbal and quantitative sections OR a strong Miller Analogies Test score with usual acceptance being 402 or higher. As required by the Graduate School, these scores are valid until September 15 following the 5th anniversary of the testing date. Otherwise, applicants must take one of the tests again.
- (3) It is highly desirable for applicants to have at least two years teaching experience.

Due to the importance of electronic accessibility, there is an additional requirement for the online M. Ed. Before beginning the program, students must demonstrate that they have easy and consistent access to a personal computer, a high-speed Internet connection, and an email account. This accessibility will be demonstrated through online communication with the coordinator of the program.

The online program will stimulate greater diversity among the COE student population because it will give greater opportunity to all students no matter where they live or work. Students will be classified as in-state or out-of-state for tuition purposes based on USG Board of Regents Policy.

3. Program Content

The academic standards for this online program are the same as those for on-campus delivery. The degree requires the same standards of academic excellence and rigor. Expectations concerning student readings, discussions, papers, and grades are consistent with departmental standards. All of the courses offered are appropriate for distance delivery. There are no laboratory requirements required as part of the program. If students follow the prescribed curriculum then completion of the online program should take six consecutive semesters. The curriculum for the online cohort beginning in Fall 2011 is listed below. In order to facilitate cohort cohesiveness, courses that might be seen as electives on-campus are required and all course offerings are strictly sequenced.

As in our campus-based M Ed., online students will be required to take 12 courses. The course sequence will provide students with a strong core understanding of research-based literacy instruction (LLED 6010e, 6020e, 6060e, 6420e), cultural and historical foundations (LLED 7920e, 7930e, 8340e), and research (LLED 7070e). This core will be augmented by twelve credits of specialization courses (see course titles & explanation below). Prior to completion of this online degree, students, having completed the first two semesters, would qualify for the Georgia Reading Endorsement.

Each online cohort will have an area of specialization. For the first cohort, and perhaps beyond that, the specialization will be in New & Digital Literacies, so those courses are listed below. In subsequent online cohorts the area of specialization courses could remain these courses or focus on another area of specialization. Regardless, specialization courses will be scheduled across the last four semesters of the six-semester sequence.

Key

* Online version of course currently offered

** Face-to-face version of course is currently offered. Online version is in development to be ready by Summer 2012

*** New online course that is in development to be ready by Summer 2012

Fall Semester First Year

Online orientation before classes begin

LLED 6010e Survey of Reading Instruction Pre-K through Grade 12* (Core)
Principles and practices in preschool through secondary reading instruction. An overview of the methods, principles, and practices of teaching reading. This is a reading endorsement course.

LLED 6420e Literacy Development and Instruction in Early Childhood* (Core)

Emergent literacy development of preschool through grade three children; theory and research relevant to instructional approaches and practice. This is a reading endorsement course for elementary teachers.

Spring Semester First Year

LLED 6020e Practicum in Reading Instruction and Assessment (Clinic)* (Core)
Formal and informal assessments, instructional procedures, and materials for children experiencing reading difficulties. This is a reading endorsement course. Tutoring is a requirement.

LLED 6060e Content Area Literacies* (Core)

Theory and instructional strategies for enhancing reading, writing, speaking, and listening across various subjects in the school curriculum for grades 4-12. This is a reading endorsement course for middle school teachers.

Summer Semester First Year

LLED 7910e New Literacies*** (Specialization #1 for the first cohort)
This course provides an overview of the ambiguities and tensions created by a current move from the long established autonomous model of “reading” to the “New Literacy Studies” (NLS). It also addresses the implications of NLS for teaching students to comprehend a wide range of texts.

LLED 8340e The History of Teaching Methods for Literacy Learning in the United States** (Core)

A historical examination of literacy education from colonial America to the present.

Fall Semester Second Year

LLED 7070e Research Methods in Language Education** (Core)
Research methods appropriate for studying language teaching and learning.

LLED 7110e Computer-Based Instruction in Reading Education** (Specialization #2 for the first cohort)

Integration of computers into instruction to enhance literacy in elementary through secondary schools.

Spring Semester Second Year

LLED 7930e, Culture and Literacy Classrooms ** (Core)
This course explores the ways culture transacts with teaching and learning in literacy classrooms.

LLED 7920e Assessing Literacy Materials and Programs *** (Core)

Criteria to evaluate and select materials and programs for use in the classroom.

Summer Semester Second Year

LLED 8330e Popular Culture in Literacy Classrooms K-12** (Specialization #3 for the first cohort)

Examination of how schools and institutions of higher education should respond to popular culture especially in terms of literacy teaching and learning.

LLED 7940e Electronic Assessment in Literacy Classrooms*** (Specialization #4 for the first cohort)

This is a capstone course on how to use online assessments with students to document their literacy learning. An electronic portfolio documenting learning across coursework will be required.

4. Student Advising

The online cohort will be assigned an advisor from existing faculty. Dr. Michelle Commeyras is willing to take on this responsibility. Students in the online cohort will be able to get advisement online, via telephone, or in person if they wish. The cohort will also have access to an online advising webpage with related university links.

5. Resident Requirements

The residence requirement is two consecutive semesters of six credit hours (12 total hours) of online coursework.

6. Program Management

Maintenance of the quality and viability of the online program will be the responsibility of the READ faculty, with the Degree Program Coordinator (DPC) taking the lead with the full support of program and departmental administration. All courses will be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty of the Reading Education Program or part time faculty associated with that program. All effort will be made to minimize the latter option in order to better insure continuity of instruction. However, because the courses are taught online, judicious use of guest professors (e.g., former UGA doctoral students teaching at other institutions, former UGA faculty teaching at other institutions, noted professors with particular expertise teaching at other institutions) could enhance the program with little cost and effort.

It is hoped that the online program will support, at the minimum, a new cohort of twenty students every two years.

Timetable for the first iteration of the degree program

August – December 2010: Ready all online courses

January - July 2011: Advertise for and enroll online cohort; complete online course development

August 2011: Hold online orientation for first online cohort and begin first two courses in sequence,

January 2012: Assess needs for hiring new faculty to support online program

August 2012: Assess impact, successes, and concerns of first year of program

August 2013: First cohort completes online program and graduates; start second online

cohort; Assess impact, successes, and concerns of first cohort of online program

Assessing the Program

August 2012: In-process assessment of first year of the online program via online interviews, course evaluations, and/or surveys of students. Focus will be to determine strengths and struggles of the first year of coursework. Online program inquiries will be evaluated to determine if sufficient demand exists for program expansion (i.e., starting a new cohort every year rather than every other year).

August 2013: A similar set of evaluation methods will take place after the second year in order to better determine how to adjust the online program for future cohorts. After the first online cohort, all future cohorts will be given an exit survey and a random sample of the students will be interviewed online.

Application & Matriculation

Students will apply for this online degree program in the same manner as they would apply for the on-campus program. The only differences are that they will indicate their intention to be part of the online cohort and that they have easy and consistent access to a personal computer, a high-speed Internet connection, and an email account.

Applications will be reviewed between September 1st and April 1st every other academic year. Acceptance into the online program will be determined by the Reading Education faculty as a whole or a committee thereof using the criteria above. If necessary, the faculty will maintain a waiting list. A byproduct of the online cohort is that we then guarantee that, when offered, these courses will make at least the minimum enrollment.

In order to create community--a characteristic we feel is necessary for all classrooms, but especially for e-classrooms—we will establish a cohort of students who will follow a set sequence of courses. This sequence of courses will be listed on Oasis as unpublished and will only be accessible to students in the online cohort. Therefore, as experience with other online programs in the College of Education informs us, these students will quickly come to know each other well due to their sharing of a common advisor and their matriculating through the same series of classes as a group. Furthermore, we will take advantage of the technology to conduct an online orientation at the start of each new cohort and encourage live and delayed online dialogue as well as use online conferencing and imaging wherever possible throughout the course sequence. Again, professors in COE who have been teaching online courses for over ten years agree that they and their students all come to know each other as well and often better than what occurs in face-to-face courses.

The online master's degree will be obtained in two years following the sequence above and requiring students to matriculate in the summer semester. As a cohort, students will be expected to remain in sequence. If illness or some other emergency necessitates a leave for a semester, students will have the following options: (1) coming to campus and taking a face-to-face version of the course (2) taking an online version of the course when

it is offered to students outside the cohort (3) taking the course as an independent study, or (4) waiting until the missing course returns in sequence for the next cohort.

The final course in the sequence, 7940e Electronic Assessment in Literacy Classrooms, will act as a capstone course as well as help inservice teachers learn how to have students use online assessments in their own practices. Throughout the sequence of courses for the online M. Ed., instructors will encourage students to reflect on what they have learned in each course and what such learning might mean for their teaching. Then, in 7940e, the focus will be to create an online portfolio that will require students to reflect across the whole of their coursework in terms of what it means for their future teaching practice and learning in the field. This portfolio will also be presented to faculty via online means that could include online conferencing, Skype or iChat interviews, interactive wiki sites, webpages, or other media still waiting to be developed. The combination of portfolio and presentation will constitute the comprehensive examination for the online degree.

Duplication

As of this writing, we know of no other online degree programs in reading education in the state of Georgia and of very few nationwide. The market has great potential.

7. Library and Laboratory Resources

There are no laboratory requirements for the online program. In terms of library access, students will have access to Galileo and GIL, as fine an online library system as exists in the US. Also, students will have access to the World Wide Web.

8. Program Costs Assessed to Students

Costs for students taking the online M Ed would roughly approximate those costs incurred by on-campus students, aside from slight fee differences. For example, online students might be able to waive the campus transportation fee and will have no parking fees.

9. Accreditation

The online master's degree, like all Reading Education degrees, will be subject to accreditation by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

10. Budget

We believe this online degree program can be started and maintained with relatively low costs for COE, particularly when compared to the income it will generate.

Expected Yearly Tuition Income (Minimum based on an estimate of \$1890 for six credits times 3 semesters times 20 students)

\$113,000. Revenue generated would be sufficient for sustaining the continuity and growth of the program.

Start Up Costs

Two 12 month 1/3 Graduate Assistant = \$30,708

Upgrading of faculty computers = \$5000

Purchase of computers for TA use = \$5000

Advertising = \$2500

Total = \$43,208

Expected Yearly Maintenance Costs (subject to reassessment)

Two 12 month 1/3 Graduate Assistant (dedicated to the program) = \$30,708

Upgrading of program technology = \$5000

Advertising = \$2500

Total = \$38,208

April 2010

Reading Education Online M Ed Proposal

Signatures:

M. A. Adams LLE 4/28/10
Department Head Dept Date

Wendy Ruona 4/26/10
College Curriculum Committee Chair College Date

Arthur M. Home COE 5-5-2010
Dean College Date

Maureen Johnson 10/20/10
Dean of the Graduate School Date

University Curriculum Committee Chair Date