



BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

BACCALAUREATE AND MASTER'S DEGREES

NEW PROPOSAL FORMS

(Submit One Copy)

LETTER OF INTENT

Institution: Ft. Valley State University

Institutional Contact (President or Vice President for Academic Affairs): Dr. Larry E. Rivers

Date: February, 2009

School/Division: College of Education

Department: Early Childhood/Special Education

Name of Proposed Program: Early Childhood/Special Education

Degree: MSED

Major: Early Childhood/Special Education

Degree Inscription: Master of Science in Early Childhood/Special Education

CIP Code:

Anticipated Starting Date: Fall, 2009

Program Classification: Graduate

1. Program Description and Objectives:

a. Objectives of the program

This program will significantly assist in alleviating the shortage of teachers in our general area while answering the mission of the Board of Regents to "Double the Number, Double the Diversity."

The teacher preparation program at Fort Valley State University (FVSU) in Early Childhood/Special Education leading to a Masters of Science degree will be guided by the College of Education's (CoE's) Conceptual Framework – The Proficient Educator. The five performance objectives in the conceptual framework are: 1) The Proficient Educator demonstrates competence in content knowledge; 2) The Proficient Educator uses effective pedagogical skills; 3) The Proficient Educator uses technology appropriately to enhance learning; 4) The Proficient Educator evidences a caring disposition; and 5) The Proficient Educator has an understanding of and appreciation for diversity. Other objectives include: to produce more highly qualified teachers; to give teachers opportunities to acquire advanced knowledge of teaching and learning at the graduate level; and to provide extended experiences and clinical practice for candidates.

In addition, the PSC/NCATE standards for new programs, the Regents' Principles, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium INTASC Standards will serve as standards for the program.

This Masters of Science in Early Childhood/Special Education is designed to provide alternative initial preparation at the master's level for qualified candidates who have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood and/or Special Education from a regionally accredited institution. The 36 semester-hour program will provide a curriculum incorporating the competencies and knowledge necessary for any accredited program. Candidates will receive 30 hours of professional pedagogical courses and practicum, concluding with an action research project, a supervised internship, and 6 hours of master's level content.

b. Needs the program will meet

The State of Georgia needs graduates from this program since a critical shortage of special education teachers exists in the state. Schools of the future need teachers who are skilled in regular classroom education as well as special education because schools are becoming more inclusive. The graduates from this program will have the advanced knowledge and skills in both early childhood and special education to meet the challenges of the diverse students they will encounter. We estimate an average of 10 students per year, for the first 3 – 5 years, will graduate from this proposed program. This number will significantly assist in alleviating the shortage and the demand for teachers with advanced knowledge in the areas of early childhood and special education. Additionally, FVSU has had several inquiries concerning a graduate program in Early Childhood and/or Special Education. This proposed program will be the only one

in the state offering a dual graduate degree/certification in Early Childhood/Special Education.

c. Brief explanation of how the program is to be delivered

Instruction will be delivered in formats already in use at FVSU, including face-to-face classes at the Warner Robins Center, through online classes, and some hybrid (a combination of on-line and face-to-face) classes. The advanced program is designed to assist students in acquiring a broad range of knowledge and skills and a repertoire of specialized teaching skills. Field-based instruction is incorporated in the course work leading to the degree. A specialized research practicum allows students to continue to apply content knowledge in an authentic setting.

d. Prioritization within the institution's strategic plan

Within the university's strategic plan, the proposed program is a priority. Strategic Initiative #1 of the Strategic Plan states: "Sustain and Increase Enrollment." One way to increase and sustain enrollment is to identify and offer new programs to attract students with varied educational and career interests. Moreover, the current administration is extremely supportive of the CoE and teacher preparation in general. In the past, we have been unable to fulfill numerous inquiries from persons asking about courses in special education. Research underscores a critical need for special education teachers. Employment of special education teachers is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2014.

Teacher preparation at FVSU is becoming one of the university's "niche" programs. Strategic Initiative #3 of the Strategic Plan states: "Develop and Maintain a Positive Institutional Image and Cultivate and Communicate the Brand of the University to all Stakeholders." FVSU is committed to changing its image in many ways, including through development of new initiatives and enhancement of existing initiatives and services to significantly increase name and brand recognition and the image of the institution by 2011-2012 academic year. The addition of a special education initiative to our program will enhance name recognition and offerings for the CoE and the university as well as prepare persons for the excellent job prospects because of rising enrollments of special education students and reported shortages of qualified teachers.

2. Description of the program's fit with the institutional mission and nationally accepted trends in the discipline.

FVSU Mission. The mission of Fort Valley State University is to advance the cause of education with emphasis upon fulfilling commitments that our

community members have undertaken collectively. This proposed program in Early Childhood/Special Education is consistent with the mission of the university which is, among other commitments, the enhancement of teacher training programs grounded upon a liberal arts foundation, as is reflected in over 112 years of experience and tradition.

CoE Mission. The mission of the CoE is to prepare proficient educators who demonstrate in-depth content knowledge, cultural competence and sensitivity as well as an array of effective pedagogical skills that have been honed through rigorous classroom and field-based experiences, and to facilitate successful teaching/learning outcomes in diverse environments. We strive to create learning environments and opportunities that prepare proficient educators to perform effectively and ethically in a global and technological society.

Trends. Graduates from the Master of Science in Early Childhood/Special Education program have a larger knowledge base than those who complete a bachelor's degree in early childhood or special education and are therefore more knowledgeable in working with diverse student populations. This program contributes to the NCLB mandate of the "highly qualified teacher" in that it graduates candidates with more content knowledge and master's level pedagogy. This program will be attractive to individuals who are considering a career change as it will offer an option for certification at a higher pay rate.

3. Description of how the program demonstrates demand and a justification of need in the discipline and geographic area and is not unnecessary program duplication.

Research shows that student populations are expected to increase more rapidly in certain parts of the country, such as the South and West, resulting in increased demand for special education teachers in those regions. Job opportunities will be better for teachers who work with children with disabilities such as autism, learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders because of increasing enrollment of special education students classified under those categories. In addition to job openings resulting from growth, a large number of openings will result from the need to replace special education teachers who switch to teaching general education, those who change careers altogether, or those who retire. This program will be unique in its offering of a dual graduate level degree in early childhood and special education in Georgia for PreK through grade five. A number of public and private institutions in the state offer graduate degrees in Early Childhood or Special Education. Georgia State University offers a Special Education General Curriculum ECE graduate degree for ages 0 – 5 and

the University of Georgia offers a Masters of Early Childhood with an Endorsement in Preschool Special Education.

Due to the growing shortage of teachers in Georgia, there is an ever increasing demand for colleges and universities to offer more educator preparation programs. The Board of Regents expects educator preparation programs to begin now to plan how they will fulfill the need for teachers in 2020.

In addition, FVSU is very attractive to commuter students because of its central location. By offering this program primarily at the Warner Robins Center, students will have an easier access to facilities as that campus is only a few miles off the interstate. Convenience does play a role in choice of schools for working adults.

4. Brief description of institutional resources that will be used specifically for the program (e.g., personnel, library, equipment, laboratories, supplies & expenses, capital expenditures at program start-up and when the program undergoes its first comprehensive program review.

Personnel – At least one faculty position will need to be filled. This position is currently vacant and budgeted at approximately \$62,000. Advertisements for this position will indicate that applicants need to be qualified for both undergraduate and graduate positions, as current faculty in CoE teach in both programs. It is hoped that within a few years, the enrollment will sustain moving existing faculty to fulltime graduate status or will sustain hiring of more graduate faculty.

Start – up Costs – The primary costs for start-up of the program will focus on the purchase of library/learning resources and possible upgrade of technology at the Warner Robins center and marketing and advertising. A recent grant to the library will cover the costs in that area and all other start-up costs will be covered through General Education Funds (E & G funds). Approximate start-up cost for the program will be \$15,000 to cover recruitment and marketing.

Operating Costs – Operating costs will include consumable supplies, travel for professional development of faculty and reimbursement of travel expenses associated with supervision of candidates in clinical experiences, and the purchase of additional library/learning resources for the Warner Robins center library. Approximate operating costs for the first two years will be \$50,000: fees collected from increased enrollment will defray costs not covered through E & G funds.

Library - We have plans to significantly increase and update our holdings by spring 2010. Following the acquisition of a grant for one million dollars, faculty have begun to submit requests for books and journals related to their discipline. Currently, we have 2,452 print titles in our collection that are cataloged under the Library of Congress (LC) classification range for education. These consist of a combination of reference and circulating books. There are also approximately 40

subscriptions to education journals. As part of the library's participation in GALILEO, Georgia's statewide virtual library, students have access to over 400 full-text journal titles in the subject area of education.

Our library resources need building to accommodate the needs of candidates in the new program. The CoE recently received \$25,000 to begin the process of building resources in the Curriculum Materials Center (CMC) located on the main campus and available to all FVSU students. We understand that it will take several years to acquire the kind of collection we need for this new program. We have hired a library support person for the CMC who is assessing our needs and making recommendations to faculty as well as accepting recommendations from faculty regarding pertinent library resources. This person is a trained librarian with many years of experience.

Facilities Our current College of Education facilities include: comfortable, well-equipped offices that are well maintained; a Curriculum Materials Center; a Tutorial Center; a Distance Learning room; and several computer laboratories. The Curriculum Materials Center provides resources and literature for examining teaching/learning trends in P-12 education. The Henry Alexander Hunt Memorial Library, also known as the Learning Resource Center (LRC) or simply, the library, employs modern technology in services offered to increase users' social, intellectual, and global interaction. The library subscribes to a limited number of CD-ROM databases and print resources from other institutions that may be accessed through interlibrary loan. Our students enjoy the services of Georgia Library Learning Online, Public Access Works Sources (PAWS), Interlibrary Loan, and Web access.

The Warner Robins Center is a modern structure with several classrooms, a computer center, multi media resources, and administrative offices. It serves the community well as it is centrally located and easily accessible and as it provides adequate classroom space in a modern and comfortable atmosphere. The technology center allows students access to the Georgia Library Learning Online (Galileo), Interlibrary Loan, and Web access.

