

Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA: BACHELOR OF ARTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND TEACHING (ONLINE)

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa for a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Teaching (online) in the College of Education.

The Council of Provosts and Board office support approval of this program.

Description of proposed program. The Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Teaching is not a new program at UNI, but this request is for a change in delivery mode. The additional delivery mode option responds to the need for greater access to the Inclusive Early Childhood endorsement (ED 1001) in Iowa from in-service teachers who need to extend previous qualifications and non-traditional students desiring to work in an inclusive early childhood setting in public and private institutions. UNI offers the Elementary Education program online (synchronous) for its 2+2 program, supporting strong transfer relationships between Iowa community colleges, regional universities and UNI. The institution would like to add this offering option of the Early Childhood Education program (leading to ED 1001) online (synchronous) in response to the severe shortage of early childhood teachers in Iowa and requests for greater access by students.

Academic objectives. Candidates will:

- use developmental knowledge to create learning environments and classroom procedures that promote positive social interaction, active engagement, and high expectations for learning, mutual respect and self-regulation through individually appropriate expectations and positive guidance techniques for each child to meet their optimum potential regardless of proficiency;
- use culturally sustaining child guidance strategies;
- create a positive and inclusive classroom climate in which children learn to self-regulate their behavior and implement environmental and instructional adaptations for children with diverse abilities;
- plan and implement a curriculum incorporating child-initiated inquiry learning;
- implement and evaluate preventative and reductive strategies to address challenging behaviors;
- use motivational and instructional interventions to teach individuals with exceptionalities how to adapt to different environments;
- intervene safely and appropriately with individuals in crisis;
- analyze collected data and interpret assessment information to make instructional decisions and monitor progress to support the development of young children with diverse abilities; and
- develop home-community-school relationships to promote the education of each child in reaching her/his maximum potential.

Need for program. This is a statewide shortage of early childhood educators and a growing demand for greater online access to programs that allow preservice and in-service educators across the state to attain an ED 1001 endorsement serving PK-3 Teacher, Regular Education/Special Education students.

Relationship to existing programs at the institution. This program currently exists as a residential program. By offering this program online, UNI will provide greater access to non-traditional

students and support school success in children receiving educational support from birth to grade 3. UNI's mission is to create, empower and innovate to enrich Iowa and beyond. This program supports that mission and the university's strategic plan.

Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. Iowa State University offers an Early Childhood Education major. The provosts from both ISU and SUI provided their support for this addition of an online delivery mode to an existing program at UNI.

Private colleges in Iowa that offer an Early Childhood Education major include the following:

- Central College
- Dordt University
- Mount Mercy University
- Northwestern College
- St. Ambrose University
- Simpson College
- Upper Iowa University

Tuition comparisons of programs include: Dordt tuition cost is \$405/credit, Mount Mercy is \$556/credit, and Upper Iowa is \$333/credit, with UNI at \$350/credit.

Resources to establish a high-quality program. The terminally degreed faculty in the Early Childhood division currently offers an early childhood minor for residential and 2+2 students that prepares them for the ED 103 endorsement serving PK-K children in schools. Adding the online Early Childhood major allows for a new pathway for 2+2 students to an Early Childhood major, leading to ED 1001 and the access to in-service teachers to opt into five additional classes to upgrade to ED 1001, requiring minimal adaptations and using the ED 103 minor classes in the endorsement. Adding the option to take the courses at the undergraduate or graduate level further increases options for practicing educators or undergraduates planning to pursue additional graduate coursework.

The online platform provides access to remote preservice and in-service teachers in rural and urban settings and will access local schools through agreements to host practicum experiences. The Placement Office of the College of Education manages these connections to schools. No additional facilities or equipment is required as the platforms already exist at UNI. As enrollment in the program increases over time additional faculty resources will be necessary.

Student demand. The demand for the ED 1001 endorsement has been high in the last two to three years. Current students in the 2+2 program who are interested in Early Childhood have taken the minor that is currently available (ED 103). While this meets the need for these students to have additional pedagogy around best practices in early childhood education, that strategy does not meet the needs of students who desire to teach in an inclusive setting or whose school district requires the ED 1001 endorsement to teach in the voluntary four-year-old preschool program. It also does not qualify early childhood educators to work with birth to preschool children currently being supported through AEA support services.

UNI receives requests from practicing teachers who are serving as voluntary four-year-old preschool teachers who need to add the ED 1001 endorsement to their degrees to keep their positions. Adding an online option supports in-service teachers extending qualifications and meeting the needs of Iowa communities and school districts in inclusive practices, child development, and meeting the needs of diverse learners. Using synchronous delivery, face-to-face engagement facilitates engagement between learners and instructors, increasing the opportunity for professional networking.

Workforce need/demand. Findings from the 2019 Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) Needs Assessment identified two training-related priority needs.

- Gaps exist in service utilization for vulnerable children, including those in rural counties, low-income and minority families, and with identified risks at birth, such as low maternal education and inadequate prenatal care. Families face significant access challenges, including long waiting lists and out-of-reach costs that prevent many families with young children from receiving the care needed when they need it.
- Shortages exist in the quantity and quality of Iowa's early childhood workforce. Staffing challenges are particularly acute in rural counties, which comprise 89% of Iowa counties.

Funding and Cost. The online courses run through the Office of Distance Education at UNI and are supported by student tuition.

Projected student enrollment.

Undergraduate	Y1	Y 2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Majors	15	30	30	30	30
Non-majors	5	10	15	15	15
Graduate					
Non-majors	5	10	15	15	15

Accreditation. No additional accreditation is needed. The program is part of the teacher preparation programs that meet the rules and requirements of the Iowa Department of Education and the Board of Educational Examiners.

Date of implementation. May 2024.