

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:
TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

Action Requested: Consider recommending approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to terminate the Master of Arts Program in Special Education: Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments in the Department of Special Education in the College of Education.

Executive Summary: The request to terminate the Program is necessary due to low enrollment and faculty resignation. This request was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ Description of program. The Master of Arts Program for teaching students with visual impairments from birth to 21 is a graduate program which requires a minimum of 44 credit hours (thesis) or 41 credit hours (non-thesis) for completion. The program leads to both a graduate degree and state teacher certification as a teacher of the visually impaired (with nine additional hours of student teaching experience). Enrollment in the program requires a bachelor’s degree and certification as an early childhood, elementary, or secondary teacher. UNI is the only state post-secondary institution in Iowa that provides this degree and teaching certification course and field work since 2004.
- ◇ Reason for proposed termination. Two factors played a role in the request for program termination. (1) Historically, the program has had very low enrollment. Since Fall 2010, only five students have completed the program. This area of study and teaching expertise serves a low incidence population of preK-12 students in Iowa of approximately 576 students.¹

(2) A unique and specific skill set is required for the faculty member coordinating and providing instruction in the program. There are few doctoral programs available and few graduates nationally. The structure of the program placed responsibilities for leadership, course instruction, and field experience supervision with only one faculty member. Two faculty members have held this position – one from 2004-2008 and the other from 2008-2013. After the departure of the faculty member in 2013, no faculty member has been hired. Likewise, there has not been an existing faculty member qualified for leadership and teaching in the program.
- ◇ Five-year trend in enrollments and graduations. Between 2010 and 2015, there were 29 enrollees. During that period, there were five graduates.

¹ Consultant contact, Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

| | Applications | Total Enrollment | Graduations |
|------|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| 2010 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| 2011 | 3 | 8 | 0 |
| 2012 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| 2013 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| 2014 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 2015 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

- ◇ Effect on current students. As of Spring 2016, there were no students in the program. Students who were previously admitted and who completed their degrees between 2013 and 2015 were provided the necessary vision specific coursework and field experiences through adjunct instruction; the remaining graduate research requirements were addressed by existing faculty in the department.
- ◇ Impact on resources. The proposed termination is expected to have little or no effect on costs because there is no faculty member assigned to this program. Furthermore, there are no students currently enrolled in the program.
- ◇ Impact on workforce. The proposed termination will affect workforce needs by necessitating alternative means of providing certified teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) for Iowa students requiring service in these areas. The Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired currently provide professional development outreach and training for current TVI teachers. Initial study and training in TVI for interested individuals to meet supply and demand needs may need to occur by accessing training and study programs in TVI in surrounding states (e.g. Missouri, Illinois, and Nebraska) or in another manner.
- ◇ Alternative programming. There are no other programs in the state for teachers of the visually impaired.
- ◇ Effective date of termination. If the proposed program termination is approved by the Board, termination of the program will become effective immediately. At such time, information about the termination of the program will be reflected on the department website and University Catalog.