

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA: MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to establish a new Master of Arts Program in Teaching English in Secondary Schools (TESS) in the College of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Executive Summary: Currently offered as a concentration in the Master of Arts Program in English-Teaching English in the Secondary Schools, Middle/Junior High and Senior High, the proposed program will be established as a stand-alone program in the department. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of existing emphasis.** The current Master of Arts Program in English-Teaching English in Secondary Schools builds on the preparation that secondary English/Language Arts teachers experience in their undergraduate teacher licensure programs. It offers advanced study of literature, writing and secondary English/Language Arts pedagogy guided by faculty expertise in these content and pedagogical areas. Courses focus on the specific content and pedagogical interests and needs of secondary English/Language Arts teachers in Iowa. The proposed program will be a stand-alone program that replaces the current Emphasis in the Master of Arts Program in English.
- ◇ **Relationship to existing programs at UNI.** The proposed program is integral to filling the department’s, college’s, and university’s mission to provide opportunities for continuing professional development for practicing teachers. With a cohesive program of graduate coursework in literature, writing, and English pedagogy, practicing secondary English teachers can expand the content and materials they use and strengthen their pedagogical resources and strategies. The proposed program will strengthen the university’s outreach to secondary teachers in this specific content area, offering significant professional development that is focused and integrated.
- ◇ **Unique features.** The University of Northern Iowa has an established history of teacher preparation. The Continuing Education and Educational Technology units have extensive experience providing outreach professional development programs to practicing teachers. While the Master of Arts Program in English with an Emphasis in Teaching English in the Secondary Schools, Middle/Junior High and Senior High has been offered for more than 20 years, the proposed stand-alone program will allow the College to provide a sharper focus and clearer identity as an important professional development opportunity.
- ◇ **Duplication.** A similar program is offered at the University of Iowa as a Master of Arts Program in English Education. The University of Iowa’s program is offered as an on-campus program while the proposed program will be offered off-campus using distance learning technology.

- ◇ Need for proposed program. Establishing the proposed program as a stand-alone program will result in better communication and advising; improved tracking will address retention and graduation rates. The stand-alone program will better identify and promote its distinctive nature, consistent with other outreach master's programs offered by UNI to practicing teachers, including the Master of Arts Program in Science Education and the Master of Arts Program in Mathematics for the Middle Grades.
- ◇ Student demand. The cohort size for the Master of Arts Program in Teaching English with a TESS Emphasis has been approximately 20 students. The cohort size for the stand-alone program is expected to be the same. The opportunity to enroll in the program on a part-time basis and to take courses through distance learning will continue to attract practicing teachers who seek high quality professional development courses that can be applied to a graduate degree. It will be particularly attractive to prospective students who cannot participate in an on-campus program.
- ◇ Workforce need/demand. All secondary schools in Iowa and across the United States require the completion of English/Language Arts courses for graduation. Licensed practitioners who teach these courses typically begin their teaching careers with a baccalaureate degree that includes basic courses in professional education and English methods. As beginning teachers acquire teaching experience, they seek high-quality professional development coursework and programs to strengthen their teaching performance and versatility and to advance professionally. Furthermore, a Master of Arts degree can qualify a teacher for special assignments, such as Advanced Placement Literature and Composition courses.
- ◇ Resources. Current faculty, facilities, and equipment serve the existing TESS Emphasis in the Master of Arts Program in English. These resources, including the English Department faculty, distance learning facilities, equipment, and support staff housed in the Continuing Education unit, will continue to serve the program's needs. No new resources are anticipated.
- ◇ Cost. No new costs are anticipated because the resources are currently in place.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The projected enrollment is 22 students in Year 1, increasing to 24 by Year 7. Each cohort of students will progress through the program during a three-year period.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program will support UNI's Strategic Plan goals to "provide a rigorous and relevant graduate education that meets the needs of graduate students, the university, and the community" and "lead the state and nation in PreK-12 education."