

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**PROPOSED NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
REALIZING EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER HOPES (REACH) PROGRAM**

**Actions Requested:**

1. Consider recommending approval to the Board of the request by the University of Iowa to establish the proposed REACH Program.
2. Consider requesting that the University of Iowa submit a status report to the Board in November 2007 providing whatever additional details are available about the proposed program, such as budget data and staffing and housing information.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed REACH Program is a two-year post-secondary educational certificate program for young adults with multiple learning disabilities that would be administered by the College of Education. Training would focus on academic skill building, career preparation, life skills, socialization, and job placement after graduation. Students would live in residence halls and participate in campus life with SUI undergraduate students, as appropriate. The University will explore collaborations with agencies that might assist students with tuition costs.

**Background:**

- ◇ Impetus for proposed program. During the past two years, the University has researched the possibility of developing and implementing a postsecondary program for young adults with multiple learning disabilities, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder, dyslexia, and autism. Such a program would reflect many of the components of the PACE (Professional Assistant Center for Education) developed by the College of Education at National-Louis University in Evanston, Illinois.
- ◇ Literature. There is a growing body of literature that suggests that adults with multiple learning disabilities are more likely to be productive members of society when educational opportunities are available for them. The expectation for a better future increases the need for more knowledge and understanding about best practices in providing inclusive post-secondary education for adults with learning disabilities. Such expectations also advance educational pedagogy in adult learning, consistent with the University's fundamental goals.
- ◇ Need/demand. A marketing study conducted on behalf of the University determined that 150 students in Iowa would qualify, meet the financial obligations, and have a strong interest in the proposed program. The research identified a population of students with multiple learning disabilities who have completed high school and are capable of achieving independence (including employment) with appropriate instruction in an environment that allows and encourages them to interact with their age peers.

- ◇ Research results. Tuition costs and location were the two most prevalent concerns of parents for participation in a postsecondary multiple learning disabilities (MLD) program. Some respondents saw the college courses as providing a better foundation for future employment, while others wanted their MLD children to share in the same “college” experiences as their siblings.
- ◇ Principles. In conceptualizing the Program, the University has been guided by the following principles:
  - ☑ REACH participants will benefit from the unique opportunities offered by locating the Program on the campus of a major public research university.
  - ☑ The REACH Program will benefit the participants and will support the research and teaching mission of the University.
  - ☑ The REACH Program will encourage full participation in all community activities as the hallmark and philosophy of the faculty and the Program.
  - ☑ The REACH Program will be financially self-supporting through tuition, fees, philanthropy, grants, and contracts.
- ◇ Proposed program features. The proposed program would focus on meeting the transitional needs of students with multiple learning disabilities in an active and inclusive university setting. Training would center on academic skill building, career preparation, life skills, socialization, and career placement following graduation.
- ◇ Enrollment. The proposed program would enroll a total of 50 students – 25 per class. Students would be between the ages of 18-30; have identified learning problems that have significantly interfered with school performance throughout their academic careers; typically have been involved in some form of special education resource programming; and have sufficient skills to adjust to all aspects of the proposed REACH program.
- ◇ Proposed curriculum. The proposed program would address three curricular components – academics, including math/computational skills and computer applications; life skills, including problem-solving and conversational interactions and public speaking; and career development, including child care assistant and data entry systems and computer entry coursework.
- ◇ Timeline. The University anticipates enrolling the first class of REACH Program students in August 2008 or January 2009. However, there are a number of significant tasks that need to be completed before enrolling the first class of students:
  - ☑ Curriculum development;
  - ☑ Admission policies and procedures;
  - ☑ Support systems for students;
  - ☑ Identification of field placements for career development;
  - ☑ Development of training materials for staff;
  - ☑ Recruiting faculty and staff; and
  - ☑ Development of recruiting materials and strategies for program participants.

- ◇ Challenges. The University has identified two challenges regarding the development of the proposed REACH Program and has indicated that strategies to meet the two interrelated challenges shall be implemented to complete the development of the proposed Program.
  - ☑ Housing – A strategy for housing REACH participants that integrates them with their age peers must be developed, especially in light of the fact that housing options on the SUI campus are constrained. Renovation, acquisition, or construction of housing may be necessary.
  - ☑ Start-up funding – Start-up funds will pay for operational costs associated with the early years of the program, e.g., faculty and staff members must be hired to complete the development of the proposed Program; there might not be a full complement of students paying tuition for some time after the Program is implemented. Start-up funds may also be needed for capital expenditures, including renovating space to house the Program's staff.