

Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA: MASTER OF EDUCATION IN TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa for a Master of Education in Transformative Education in the College of Education.

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

Description of proposed program. The Master of Arts in Education in Transformative Education (MAETE), is a 30-credit hour interdisciplinary non-thesis master's pathway comprising education-related stackable graduate certificates (two or more) and a culminating project. One of the graduate certificates will be the Transformative Education Graduate Certificate, which consists of four courses with recurring themes throughout each class and is taught by a collaborative team of four faculty members. The four courses focus on exploring, engaging, critiquing and creating transformative education. Other graduate certificates that may be pursued alongside the transformative education core certificate include graduate certificates focused on English as a Second Language, Special Education, Computer Science 5-12, PE, and Career and Technical Education, among others.

Academic objectives. Transformative education aims to foster deep, meaningful and sustainable changes in individuals, communities and societies by going beyond simply imparting knowledge and skills to empowering learners to critically examine their beliefs, values and assumptions. Key features of transformative education include an action orientation based on critical reflection, empowerment, orientation to societal fairness, and recognition of the interconnectedness of the individual, the community, and global issues. Individuals address learning holistically and consider multiple dimensions of the human experience. The four-course graduate certificate, serving as the core of the program, intersects with the areas of specialization that the student pursues with a view toward the transformation of education in the field. The MAETE will be offered asynchronously with biweekly synchronous discussion meetings; some will be optional, and others required.

Need for program. Post-pandemic, traditional master's programs have seen a decline in student enrollment, and the rate at which educational practitioners are leaving the field exceeds the rate at which new educators are entering. Teachers report feeling overwhelmed by their workload and the growing needs of students. School leaders aim to hire more highly qualified educators to meet the demands of their students. Although there are more teachers today than in the past, the shortage is intensified by teachers' frustrations with frequent testing, inadequate systems for supporting students' physical and mental health, and limited opportunities for community collaboration, among others. In districts serving high-poverty and high-minority populations, resources are even scarcer, further challenging the goal of creating inclusive learning environments.

To address these challenges, both education and educators must evolve. Educators must employ innovative pedagogical models that foster personalized learning experiences, academic mastery and positive social development. Districts and intermediaries must facilitate engaging learning experiences, with expanded access to post-secondary education for first-generation, low-income and underrepresented groups.

Teachers remain the most critical factor in student learning (Goldhaber, 2016; OECD, 2011), necessitating educator preparation programs to incorporate knowledge and skills related to social-emotional learning and integrating curriculum content within and beyond schools. The outdated factory model of schooling is no longer helpful. Research demonstrates that the complexities of today's world require more from our educational systems.

Educational research offers substantial recommendations that have yet to fully influence traditional schooling structures. Emerging teaching strategies and methods show promising results when implemented. The pandemic has accelerated progress and necessitated change. America's future teaching leaders are ready to collaborate with district leaders and their communities to transform learning environments. This MAETE program aims to prepare educators and those providing professional development to support this transformation within schools and local communities.

Relationship to existing programs at the institution. There is an interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Study (MAIS) that creates a pathway drawing upon a wide variety of content from across the university, with a culminating project. While also interdisciplinary, the MAETE, is focused on education and training environments to prepare current and next-generation educators and training leaders. The two programs are quite different.

Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. This program is unique to UNI. At the other Regent universities, each has an interdisciplinary master's program that is general and more like the MAIS at UNI.

Resources to establish a high-quality program. The university has a well-developed system for supporting online synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid coursework. UNI's Rod Library has well-developed systems to support remote learners with access to research materials. Qualified faculty are available to support the graduate certificates that will stack with the Transformative Education Graduate Certificate (TEGC). The TEGC faculty represent the Departments of Curriculum & Instruction; Special Education; and Educational Psychology, Foundations & Leadership Studies. As additional graduate certificates develop at UNI, they will be options to be stacked with the Transformative Education Graduate Certificate and part of the MAETE.

Student demand. The students anticipated in this program will be educators, likely with experience with a disconnect between theory and practice. They will also desire to take on more responsibility and leadership in their workplace while still staying close to classrooms and students. The shorter stackable graduate certificates allow students to focus on high-interest topics or co-enroll in grad certificates related to career goals and capacity for advanced study. A growing literacy program in the summer with similar teacher leaders ready to be part of the change process suggests positive expectations for healthy MAETE enrollment by the second year of availability.

Workforce need/demand. The graduates of this program will be educators who will return to classrooms, instructional coach ranks, and discipline-based consultants working with teachers from the district office and Area Education Associations (AEA). They will play a role in supporting district initiatives to reorganize the structure of schools and support student learners.

Their experience will facilitate a move away from the legacy of factory models to support individualized learning and alternative pathways to content knowledge and skills development that supports all students in school success. Their support will facilitate changes by district-level administrators working on curriculum updates and policies. Some of these graduates will elect to complete their Ed.D. degree with the intention of greater responsibility in curriculum and instruction.

Funding and Cost. College reallocation will occur during phase-in and be managed as faculty workload assignments upon full implementation. The program will pursue recruitment and retention of students to ensure substantive enrollment and warranted additional faculty.

Projected student enrollment.

Graduate	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Majors	7	10	20	25	30

Accreditation. UNI is approved for distance education. No additional HLC approval is necessary. The mode of delivery will be online in collaboration with UNI's College of Graduate, Research and Online Education. The coursework will be offered by faculty who meet HLC accreditation requirements.

This program will not seek programmatic accreditation.

Date of implementation. Fall 2025.

Letter of Support



October 3, 2024

To the Board of Regents:

The Council of Provosts discussed the University of Northern Iowa proposal for a Master of Arts in Education (MAE) in Transformative Education and reviewed associated documentation. The university has the resources and expertise for this program already in place through the College of Education coursework that will be offered in stackable certificates to create the degree. There is evidence of student demand for flexible graduate programs that meet student interests and meet the teaching and other educational needs of Iowa employers. The plan indicates due diligence with the other Regent universities regarding related programs. Based on the evidence and documentation, this program is likely to benefit the University of Northern Iowa and the state of Iowa.

The Council of Provosts is supportive of the program and wishes the University of Northern Iowa the best in its implementation.

Signed by:
Kevin Kregel
E2CB1E4CA5D34F3...

10/3/2024

Kevin Kregel
Exec. Vice President and
Provost

DocuSigned by:
Jose Herrera
0E4B9A1870CF4F5...

10/3/2024

José Herrera
Exec. Vice President and
Provost

Signed by:
Jason Keith
E4D1E40170AA451...

10/4/2024

Jason Keith
Sr. Vice President and
Provost