December 11, 2019

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: John A. Elliott, Ph.D.
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees approve a new Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education.

BACKGROUND:

There are consistent, critical teacher shortages for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing (d/ hh) in Connecticut and across the nation at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Over the past decade, recruiters from surrounding states have routinely offered moving expenses, and signing bonuses to graduates of programs that are prepared to work in the full range of deaf education settings, but all struggle to find qualified applicants who are prepared to work with students who are d/ hh. This shortage can be explained, in part, because of the geographical distribution of deaf education teacher preparation programs. Nationally, the distribution of deaf education programs means there are areas of the country where prospective deaf educators have to cross state lines and travel hundreds of miles to seek certification. Though 36 states have at least one program, and some larger states have multiple programs (e.g., California), 14 states, including Connecticut, have no active deaf education programs. In fact, there is only one active program in all of the New England states, housed at Boston University. A program at the University of Connecticut would therefore be the only public university in New England offering courses in deaf education.

The proposed Neag School of Education Program in Literacy & Deaf Education would provide a 12-credit certificate in the area of literacy learning among deaf and hard of hearing (d/ hh) K-12 students. The Neag School of Education is unique in its combination of expertise in literacy, bilingual education and deaf education. This program builds on these programmatic strengths to enhance the knowledge of teachers who work with students who are d/ hh. Learning outcomes for this program are drawn from the standards of national accreditation bodies for deaf education (a division of the Council for Exceptional Children), deaf studies, bilingual education, and literacy education.

We have the capacity in existing courses to run the program. The program requires no additional courses, faculty, staff, or other resources.
Request for New UConn Academic Degree Program

General Information
Name of degree program: Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education
Name of sponsoring Department: Curriculum and Instruction
Name of sponsoring College: Neag School of Education
Campuses: Storrs
Contact persons: Associate Prof. Hannah Dostal
Type of Proposal: New
Type of Program: Graduate Certificate
Anticipated Initiation Date: Spring 2020
Anticipated Date of First Graduation: Fall 2020
Entrepreneurial program: No
Tuition for the program approved by Tuition-based
Provost’s Office: 13.1003 (Education/Teaching of Individuals with Hearing Impairments Including Deafness.)
CIP Code:

Justification for the New Program
1. There are consistent, critical teacher shortages for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing in Connecticut and across the nation at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Over the past decade, recruiters from surrounding states have routinely offered moving expenses, and signing bonuses to graduates of programs that are prepared to work in the full range of deaf education settings, but all struggle to find qualified applicants who are prepared to work with students who are d/hh. This shortage can be explained, in part, because of the geographical distribution of deaf education teacher preparation programs. Nationally, the distribution of deaf education programs means there are areas of the country where prospective deaf educators have to cross state lines and travel hundreds of miles to seek certification. Though 36 states have at least one program, and some larger states have multiple programs (e.g., California), 14 states, including Connecticut, have no active deaf education programs. In fact, there is only one active program in all of the New England states, housed at Boston University. A program at the University of Connecticut would therefore be the only public university in New England offering courses in deaf education.

Another reason for the shortage of deaf educators is the trend towards mainstreaming d/hh children into public school settings. As a result of this trend, itinerant ‘teachers of the deaf’ (TODs) are needed across a wider range of public-school districts. Trends towards mainstreaming also make it much more likely that general and special education teachers will
work with a student who is d/hh at some point in their careers. Courses that are part of this program could prepare or support educators who work with d/hh students or other students with linguistic differences in mainstream settings. For example, a recent online summer course focused on foundations of deaf education, offered at Fitchburg State University, attracted pre- and in-service teachers from the full range of programs and specialties (general education, special education and early childhood education). This course was only offered once with no pathway to certification, but patterns in registration suggest a wide and varied audience for such courses.

2. An increasing number of students at The University of Connecticut (UCONN) are pursuing advanced coursework in the area of ASL and linguistics.

In the Fall of 2019, two additional sections of American Sign Language (ASL) courses as well as an additional Deaf studies course were added in response to growing student interest at the university. Altogether, the Department of Linguistics offers six levels of ASL, ten linguistics and Deaf cultural studies courses and two minors which develop ASL language fluency and related cultural competency. Moreover, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Committee on Curriculum and Courses approved a new Major in ASL on January 28th, 2018 with a projected availability for Fall 2020.

In addition, the Department of Linguistics and Department of Curriculum and Instruction are collaborating on a program to prepare grades 7-12 teachers of ASL, and is proposing an ASL track within the World Languages teacher certification program. These course and program additions respond to a recent law allowing Connecticut high schools to use ASL classes to fulfill world language requirements, which has dramatically increased the number of students taking ASL classes in high school.

This increase in ASL skills across a broader population of Connecticut high school and college students, along with strong enrollment in courses within the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, indicate a strong base of interest in working with people who are d/hh, as well as a growing population of UCONN students who already carry credits that would prepared them for a program in deaf education.

3. Interdisciplinary preparation and research are critical for improving educational outcomes for d/hh students.

D/hh students as a group have a long history of difficulty acquiring literacy due to access to language and demonstrating academic success in both specialized and mainstream settings. Despite largely isolated efforts in the areas of speech-language pathology, linguistics, cognitive psychology and education, trends in achievement, especially on assessments of language and
Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education

literacy, have been low and stagnant (Gallaudet Research Center, 2004), and research to support stronger educational outcomes has failed to accumulate in supportive ways (Luckner et al., 2005). UCONN is uniquely positioned to offer a program in deaf education, and support a parallel research agenda in this critical area, because of the highly-regarded, well-established programs in Literacy, Bilingual Education, ASL, Linguistics, and Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences. The combination of strengths across these areas is rare at any single university, but desperately needed in order to change outcomes for students who are d/hh.

Researchers from across the university already participate in an interdepartmental ASL study group to support interdisciplinary perspectives on related research. In addition, three faculty members/instructors serve on the education subcommittee of American School for the Deaf’s board of directors/corporators, and one on the Board of Directors for Willie Ross School for the Deaf. This demonstrates the university’s existing commitment and capacity for research and service in this area. A program in deaf education would benefit from the intersections of the university’s many strengths in deaf-related areas of research, service and teaching to offer a state-of-the-art program of preparation.

Are there similar programs in CT or elsewhere?
Currently, no university in Connecticut offers a program focused on deaf education. The only program in New England that prepares teachers to work with d/hh students is housed at Boston University (BU). BU’s deaf education program focuses on preparing future teachers of the d/hh to work primarily in signing environments and offers a BA/MA program of study.

This proposed certificate program would be the first of its kind in the region. Moreover, this program would attract a range of teachers (e.g., general education, special education, early childhood) from far and wide because of the availability of online and/or summer participation (see course information below). Special summer and online course options in deaf education have been offered on an ad hoc basis by Dr. Dostal, in partnership with area schools for the deaf both in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Requests for such courses, and strong enrollment from students attending a range of area universities, is further evidence of the need for and interest in such programming.

What are the desired learning outcomes of the program?
The proposed Neag School of Education Program in Literacy & Deaf Education would provide a 12-credit certificate in the area of literacy learning among deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) K-12 students. The Neag School of Education is unique in its combination of expertise in literacy, bilingual education and deaf education. This program builds on these programmatic strengths to enhance the knowledge of teachers who work with students who are d/hh. Learning outcomes for this program are drawn from the standards of national accreditation bodies for deaf education.
Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education

(a division of the Council for Exceptional Children), deaf studies, bilingual education, and literacy education. Please see the list of outcomes below.

Upon successful completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Convey basic knowledge and understanding about the language and culture of Deaf people, including their history and social experiences
2. Support the unique literacy development needs of students who are d/hh
3. Support the unique language and literacy development needs of students who are d/hh
4. Create safe, inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments so that individuals who are d/hh become active and effective learners and develop emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and self-determination
5. Use knowledge of general and specialized curricula to individualize learning for individuals who are d/hh
6. Use multiple methods of assessment and data-sources in making educational decisions
7. Select, adapt, and use a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to advance the learning of individuals who are d/hh
8. Use foundational knowledge of the field and their professional Ethical Principles and Practice Standards to inform special education practice, to engage in lifelong learning, and to advance the profession
9. Collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, individuals who are d/hh across a range of learning experiences

Program Description

The proposed Neag School of Education Program in Literacy & Deaf Education would provide a 12-credit graduate certificate in the area of literacy learning among deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) K-12 students for pre- and in-service teachers. The Neag School of Education is unique in its combination of expertise in literacy, bilingual education and deaf education. This program builds on these programmatic strengths to enhance the knowledge of teachers who work with students who are d/hh. Learning outcomes for this program are drawn from the standards of national accreditation bodies for deaf education (a division of the Council for Exceptional Children), deaf studies, bilingual education, and literacy education.

Students will be required to take EDCI 5165: Introduction to Deaf Education and EDCI 5170: Literacy and Deafness, and will select two additional courses from the set of courses outlined below. Depending on the student's interest, the two self-selected courses will be focused on either a) language development, or b) bilingual education. The bilingual track/option will support students as they consider how d/hh students who use American Sign Language (ASL) acquire language and literacy in both ASL and English. The language development track will support students as they explore how d/hh students develop expressive and receptive language skills in spoken English and/or ASL and the link to literacy learning.
**Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education**

- EDCI 5140 Content Area Reading & Disciplinary Literacy (offered on campus during traditional semesters and as a summer online course)
- EDCI 5750 Language Diversity and Literacy (offered online as part of the online Graduate Certificate in Teaching Bilingual Learners)
- EDCI 5742 Sheltered Instruction
- EDCI 5705 Curricular Issues in Bilingual Education (offered online as part of the online Graduate Certificate in Teaching Bilingual Learners; recommended for Language Development Track)
- EDCI 5890 Educational Linguistics (offered online as part of the online Graduate Certificate in Teaching Bilingual Learners; recommended for Language Development Track)
- PSYC 5441 Language Modality, Neural Plasticity, and Development
- SLHS 5123 Bilingualism in Typical and Atypical Populations: Language and Cognition

**Proposed Graduate Catalogue Copy**

The Neag School of Education Program in Literacy & Deaf Education is a 12-credit graduate certificate designed for pre- and in-service teachers. Students are required to take EDCI 5165: Introduction to Deaf Education and EDCI 5170: Literacy and Deaf Education, and select two additional courses from the set of courses listed below.

EDCI 5140 Content Area Reading & Disciplinary Literacy
EDCI 5750 Language Diversity and Literacy
EDCI 5742 Sheltered Instruction
EDCI 5705 Curricular Issues in Bilingual Education
EDCI 5890 Educational Linguistics
PSYC 5441 Language Modality, Neural Plasticity, and Development
SLHS 5123 Bilingualism in Typical and Atypical Populations: Language and Cognition

**Faculty Involvement**

- Hannah Dostal, Associate Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, Reading Education (advising & teaching students in the program);
- Rachael Gabriel, Associate Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, Reading Education (teaching students in the program);
- Liz Howard, Associate Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, Bilingual Education (teaching students in the program);
- Michele Back, Associate Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, Bilingual Education (teaching students in the program);
- Marie Coppola; Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences (teaching students in the program);
Graduate Certificate in Literacy & Deaf Education

• Adrian Garcia-Sierra; Assistant Professor, Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (teaching students in the program)

Enrollment and graduate projections
32 students (4 courses x 8 students per course)

Program Evaluation

Enrollment. Our recruitment plan involves partnering with area institutions and organizations, including the American School For the Deaf; Connecticut Association of the Deaf; Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired; Department of Rehabilitation Services; Soundbridge; Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), Willie Ross School for the Deaf, and the Connecticut Association of Schools Principal and Superintendent Centers. We will also share information about the program with national associations of deaf education, e.g., Association of College Educators - Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the American Speech-Language Hearing Association. Trends in enrollment, including a projected increase over time, will be evidence of the usefulness and success of our program. In addition, feedback from these partners will allow us to continuously increase the relevance and accessibility of program options.

Placement of certificate recipients. This program focuses on providing relevant, robust professional education for pre- and in-service teachers. We anticipate that this certificate will set teachers apart on the job market. Therefore, we will track their placement changes and program satisfaction using program exit surveys.

Program Administration
Hannah Dostal, Associate Professor of Reading Education, will coordinate admissions for and advise students in this proposed graduate certificate program. Future programmatic changes will be made in conjunction with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction's C&C committee.

Funding and Financial Resources Needed
We have the capacity in existing courses to run the program. The program requires no additional courses, faculty, staff, or other resources.

Other Resource Needs
No additional or unique resources are necessary for program success.

Consultation with other potentially affected units
Faculty teaching the courses listed have all been contacted and are in support of this proposed graduate certificate. A meeting was held with faculty in the ASL Linguistics program to ensure consistency and alignment of both courses and content. Additionally, the Department of
Curriculum and Instruction's C&C committee met and voted unanimously in favor of the program (4/17/19).

Internal and external applicants can apply to this program.

Anticipated term and year of first enrollment
Spring 2020

Admission Requirements
Educational prerequisites (all students): Bachelor’s/Master’s degree in education or related area, or current enrollment in Bachelor’s/Master’s/Ph.D. program in education or related area; Minimum of a 3.0 grade point average or a GPA greater than 3.0 for the last two years of study.

If applying to the bilingual track, successful completion of ASL 4 or its equivalent is required. Students who meet language requirements and select one or more courses related to bilingual education will have “bilingual track” indicated on their certificate. Those who do not meet language requirements must choose the “language development track”.

Required for application:
• Other (see Admission Requirements)

Term(s) to which students will be admitted
• Fall
• Spring
• Summer

Rolling application deadline.

Initiator
Hannah Dostal, hannah.dostal@uconn.edu, 860-486-9523

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