



MICHAEL D. AMIRIDIS
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PROVOST

MEMORANDUM

TO: Harris Pastides, President
FROM: Michael Amiridis, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
DATE: October 30, 2009
SUBJECT: Master of Arts in Teaching degree with a major in Middle Grades Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate

Attached is a new program planning summary for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree with a major in Middle Grades Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate. The planned program addresses curricular needs in the Upstate area, and is in keeping with the mission and goals of the USC system.

I write to request your approval of the summary, as indicated by your signature on its cover sheet and on an accompanying memo to the Executive Director of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. My staff will transmit the signed documents to CHE.

MDA/mbf
Attachment

c: Kristia H. Finnigan, Assistant Provost for Academic Programs

APPROVED

Signature/Date

HARRIS PASTIDES
PRESIDENT



October 30, 2009

HARRIS PASTIDES
PRESIDENT

Dr. Garrison Walters
Executive Director
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
1333 Main Street, Suite 200
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Dr. Walters:

Accompanying this letter please find a new program planning summary for the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree with a major in Middle Grades Education, School of Education, University of South Carolina Upstate. The suggested CIP code is 13.1203.

The planned program addresses curricular needs in the Upstate area, and is in keeping with the mission and goals of the USC system. I write to request that the summary be submitted for discussion at the next Commission on Higher Education Advisory Committee on Academic Programs meeting.

Sincerely,


Harris Pastides

HP/ba

Attachment

c: Kristia H. Finnigan, Assistant Provost for Academic Programs

Program Planning Summary

Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Middle Grades Education

to be offered by the

School of Education

of the

University of South Carolina Upstate



John C. Stockwell, Chancellor
University of South Carolina Upstate



Harris Pastides, President
University of South Carolina

September 21, 2009

Proposal for a Master of Arts in Teaching in Middle Grades Education University of South Carolina Upstate

1. **New Program Proposal:** Master of Arts in Teaching in Middle Grades Education with concentrations in two of the following: math, science, social studies, and English/Language arts.
2. **Proposed Date of Implementation:** August 2010
3. **Justification for Need for the Program:**

The *No Child Left Behind* legislation mandates a “highly qualified” teacher in every classroom. “Highly qualified” is interpreted to mean that teachers must be certified in the area in which they are teaching. Similarly, South Carolina School Report Cards, required under the Education Accountability Act, must indicate the number of its teachers who are fully qualified and the number who are teaching without appropriate credentials. Schools are required to notify parents individually if a child is a student in the classroom of a teacher who is not fully qualified. Moreover, the state has developed a timeline for phasing out all substandard certificates to include out-of-field permits, temporary provisos and transitional certificates, interim (PACE) certificates, warrants, and graded/regular (Grade B, C, or D certificates issued prior to 1970).

Offering the MAT in Middle Grades, a frequently requested master’s degree, the University will more completely fulfill its metropolitan mission of meeting the needs of citizens in the Upstate. Providing highly-qualified teachers, including teachers for the middle grades, should be a priority. A number of factors indicate that shortages in middle grades certification will soon reach crisis proportion: (1) redrawn certification bands, (2) *No Child Left Behind* legislation, (3) state accountability laws, and (4) the current level of preparation of middle school teachers in South Carolina.

South Carolina narrowed its certification bands limiting elementary certification to grades 2-6 rather than grades 1-8 and limiting secondary certification to grades 9-12 rather than 7-12. The state has created a separate certification for teaching in the middle grades (grades 5-8). By October 1, 2009, all teachers assigned to teach seventh and eighth grades must hold middle level certification in the subject(s) they are assigned to teach (language arts, social studies, mathematics, or science).¹ (SCDOE)

Many middle school faculty members are currently teaching in grades 5-8 on the strength of their elementary certification. They are now faced with either becoming “highly qualified” to teach particular content in middle school or returning to an elementary classroom. Should a large number of these current middle school teachers choose to move to an elementary classroom, leave the profession or retire, the need for middle school teachers will increase exponentially. For those who choose to acquire the greater depth of content now required to teach middle school, colleges and universities must be prepared to provide the content courses necessary to add middle grades certification. In the middle grades program at USC Upstate, teacher candidates must demonstrate expertise in two areas of concentration by completing a core of courses in each concentration area and by achieving a passing score on both Praxis II middle grades content area exams. This follows the recommendation of the National Middle School Association (NMSA).

¹ However, a proposal will be presented to the State Board of Education in the Fall of 2009 to phase in this requirement over a five year period from 2009-10 to 2014-15.

Quality teachers have an impact on improving student learning and performance, but teacher shortages remain a significant problem for American schools. The need for highly qualified middle level educators has reached a critical level in our nation. Not only are we already at a deficit for future middle level teachers but many teachers currently teaching at the middle level are now eligible for retirement according to a fact sheet from the South Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education. The website for the Center for Educator Advancement, Recruitment and Retention (CERRA) provides a list of critical need subject areas in South Carolina. Among those listed as of July 2008 are Middle Grades (all areas).

South Carolina faces a particular challenge as it moves toward a cadre of “highly qualified” middle grades teachers. In a report published by the Southern Regional Education Board (2002), one of the critical issues facing middle grades today was the quality of teachers at the middle level. They believe that middle grades teachers must have a content focus and that university programs should offer specific middle grades preparation that combines a content focus with instructional strategies proven to increase young adolescents’ achievement (p.9). On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frequently referred to as the “nation’s report card”—South Carolina’s average scores on 4th and 8th grade tests remain behind those of other states. The middle school years are pivotal for adolescents in the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that prepare them to be successful as they move into high school. At the middle school level, teachers MUST be well prepared.

To meet this critical need Congress created the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program that provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who agree to serve as a full-time teacher in a high-need (math & science) field in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves low-income students. Additionally the state of South Carolina has available the SC Teachers Loan and Career Changers Loan for applicants who teach in a South Carolina public school in a critical subject or critical geographic area. Middle Level Certification (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) is a critical subject area.

Given the compact time-line for completion of a typical MAT certification program (18-24 months), immersing candidates immediately in the milieu of schools is desirable. The proposed MAT degree will be designed in collaboration with local middle schools. Using a PDS school model, education classes in both fall and spring will be taught on site at an area school with candidates spending multiple hours both semesters observing, assisting, and teaching in middle school classrooms. USC Upstate faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences will provide content concentration courses. Collaboration in preparing new teachers for middle schools will maximize the use of the current resources of the higher education institution, the K-12 school district, and the graduate candidate. Collaboration will insure the existence of well-prepared, middle grades teachers for South Carolina in the future. Collaboration will provide opportunities for experienced, practicing teachers and MAT candidates to work together over an extended period of time to develop the pedagogical skills needed to effectively teach middle grades content.

A significant number of individuals holding bachelor’s degrees who chose not to pursue teacher certification as undergraduate students now are interested in entering the teaching profession. For these individuals, a master’s degree program that includes initial certification (a Master of Arts in Teaching/MAT) is the logical, desirable option. The MAT

allows individuals to maximize the resources of time and money invested in becoming a teacher. Institutions of higher education must be prepared to make these programs available.

4. Anticipated Program Demand and Productivity

Given the 50 middle schools in Cherokee, Greenville, Spartanburg, Laurens, and Union Counties and the number of middle school teachers who are employed on the strength of their elementary certificates, the requirement for middle grades certification is pressing and immediate. South Carolina's school report cards, the *SREB* report, and the *No Child Left Behind* legislation document and clarify this urgency. The mushrooming population of the Upstate indicates that the current teacher shortage in the area will only become more serious. Given the predicted demand for teachers, USC Upstate anticipates a cohort of 20 candidates seeking an MAT in Middle Grades Education in August 2009 with a similar cohort in August 2010. The program targets individuals currently holding bachelor's degrees in English, history, political science, math, biology, and physical science. Holders of other baccalaureate degrees will be eligible for the MAT degree program though more concentration coursework will be required. A transcript evaluation will be conducted to determine eligibility and/or prerequisites necessary in order to qualify for admission to the program.

Over the past five years, the USC Upstate School of Education has received approximately fifteen inquiries per month concerning the availability of a master's program which includes initial certification. The three master's programs in education (early childhood, elementary, and special education-visual impairment) currently available at USC Upstate are advanced master's degrees indicating that initial certification is required for admission into the degree program. Consequently when inquiries about a master's degree in education which includes initial certification are answered at USC Upstate, potential students are advised that they must come to USC Upstate as a non-degree student, earn certification by completing approximately two years of coursework including student teaching—and then apply for admission to an existing USC Upstate master's program. Not surprisingly, most potential students quickly turn to a private college in the area in search of certification at the master's level.

5. Assessment of the Extent to Which the Proposed Program Duplicates Existing Programs in the State

The requirement for middle grades certification went into effect in July 2003.

There are two MAT middle grades programs in the state. Converse College has a MAT in Junior High/Intermediate/Middle School Education & Teaching; Clemson in Middle-Level Education. No public institution in Spartanburg, Union, Laurens, or Cherokee Counties offers the Master of Education in Middle Grades Education (MAT).

Many potential candidates inquire about the availability of an MAT offering initial certification at the master's level, and a few choose to come to USC Upstate as non-degree seeking or "certification-only" students taking undergraduate courses. Most choose to go to a local private institution, which makes the MAT degree available.

6. Relationship of the Proposed Program to Existing Programs at the Proposing Institution:

USC Upstate was one of the first institutions in the state to develop and implement an undergraduate major in middle grades education. USC Upstate undergraduates may select language arts, science, mathematics, or social studies as areas of concentration. USC Upstate graduated its first bachelor's degree students in middle grades at the commencement

ceremony in May 2003. Further, USC Upstate has extended the availability of undergraduate middle grades certification to its campus in Greenville. This opportunity is the result of collaboration with Greenville Technical College which is providing, in addition to required general education courses, a number of concentration courses required for middle school preparation. Given this leadership role indicating its commitment to and interest in preparing teachers for middle grades classrooms and the high demand for well-prepared middle school teachers, it is natural that USC Upstate should seek to extend its programs to individuals holding baccalaureate degrees who are interested in entering the teaching profession as middle school teachers. Faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences at USC Upstate are interested in teaching the graduate level content courses required in these degrees. This effort will bring a stronger working relationship between the USC Upstate School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences and emphasize the collaborative responsibility of schools of education and colleges of arts and sciences expected by the National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE). USC Upstate has full accreditation for all of its programs. Additionally, its Middle Grades program report to NMSA was selected as an 'exemplar' for other programs seeking accreditation to follow.

7. Relationship of the Proposed Program to Other Institutions via Inter-institutional Cooperation:

The inter-institutional cooperation of the proposed programs with programs at other institutions will be determined by the criteria currently specified in the *2008-2009 USC Upstate Academic Catalog*. "Transfer work from a regionally accredited institution applicable to a master's degree must be within six (6) years prior to USC Upstate degree completion. A maximum of twelve semester hours credit (nine if part of a master's degree at the other institution) may be considered . . ." subject to specific conditions (p. 218). This will apply to graduate level content courses and to graduate level education courses at other accredited institutions.

8. Total New Costs Associated with Implementing the Proposed Program

There will be no new administrative costs for this program; it will be administered under the current USC Upstate School of Education Office of Graduate Programs. The program will mandate an additional faculty member for the School of Education with expertise in middle grades education and possibly a new faculty member in arts and sciences.

Selected References

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). National assessment of educational progress (NAEP). Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- Southern Regional Education Board. (2002). A highly qualified teacher in every middle grades classroom: What states, districts and schools can do. Retrieved from: http://www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/publications/pubs/02V56_HighlyQualifiedTeacher.pdf.
- South Carolina Department of Education Division of Educator Quality and Leadership (9/10/07). South Carolina middle level teachers: Certification and NCLB highly qualified status requirements. Retrieved from http://www.scteachers.org/Cert/Certpdf/MiddleLvl_NCLB.pdf