

**Program Proposal
Center for Montessori Education
Lander University**

Summary

Lander University requests approval to create a new unit within the School of Education, the Center for Montessori Education, to be implemented immediately upon Commission approval. The Center will be located on the main campus.

The proposal was submitted to Lander's Board of Trustees for information, rather than approval, because it is not an academic program and will be funded initially by non-state appropriations. A purpose of CHE approval of Centers is to permit sponsoring institutions to seek funding from the General Assembly. The proposal was submitted to the Commission on May 15, 2006, and reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs without substantive comment on July 31, 2006.

According to the proposal, the purpose of the Center for Montessori Education is site to improve early childhood education in South Carolina and the nation by providing a site for research and dissemination of materials on Montessori-based education. According to the proposal, the need for the program is based on the state of South Carolina facing a crisis in early childhood education, owing to a historical limited access to high quality early childhood education, which has contributed to an achievement gap between South Carolina and many other states. According to the proposal, the Montessori Method of education is the only globally recognized early childhood curriculum. The South Carolina State Department of Education designated Montessori as one of the accepted early childhood curricula.

The long term goals of the Center are to:

- Expand and refine Lander's own campus Montessori Children's House.
- Expand opportunities for Montessori teacher education at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Provide Montessori-specific professional development.
- Sponsor, promote and disseminate research on Montessori education, and develop instructional materials for Montessori teacher education, particularly the use of instructional technology.
- Develop instructional materials for Montessori teacher education.

Lander University is uniquely placed to host this Center, since it is the only institution of higher education in South Carolina to offer an accredited program in Montessori Education. The director of the Montessori program at Lander is an executive board member of the South Carolina Montessori Alliance.

As distinct from the academic program, the proposed Center will offer workshops, lectures, summer institutes, and provide a venue for research for improving any additional certification levels or courses offered through Lander's Department of Teacher Education. The Montessori teacher education program at Lander University is currently an emphasis area attached to the B.S. degree in Early Childhood Education, which requires an additional 18 hours of coursework and field experiences. Discussions with administrators at Lander and CHE staff indicate that the proposed Center's activities will be limited to 1) offering special seminars, programs and lectures on the Montessori method for inservice teachers 2) producing and disseminating scholarly research on the Montessori method; and 3) providing only Continuing Education Units (CEUs), not credit, for any seminars, programs and lectures offered under its auspices.

There are no other university-based Montessori Centers in South Carolina. Although there are other Montessori-related academic programs in the Southeast (Barry University in Miami, Florida, Kennesaw State, and University of Georgia), none of these has a designated Montessori "Center" attached to it.

There are no admissions requirements nor targeted enrollment figures for the Center, since it will not serve as a degree granting academic unit. Accreditation, approval, licensure or certification is not applicable to the Center. However, the Center will work to ensure that the Lander Department of Teacher Education's Learner Outcomes and the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) Competencies are addressed in any programs, workshops, or professional development activities provided under the Center's sponsorship.

The current director of Montessori Education at Lander University will serve as the director of the proposed Center and will spend 50% of professional time (.5 FTE) in that capacity. Fifty-percent of the director's salary will be paid by grant funds. Current full-time and adjunct faculty in Lander's teacher education program will participate in planning and delivering professional development opportunities for the Center, but the Center activity is not part of their academic load. Staff conversations with administrators at Lander University indicate that no new personnel will be hired for the Center.

The Center will initially be housed in the Children's House that is located on the campus of Lander University. The administration at Lander has identified a new site that would allow the expansion of the number of children served and the hours of operation. A timeline for the completion of the new facility is being developed. Jackson Library on the Lander campus has over 10,200 holdings related to education, with 110 volumes specific to Montessori education. Participants in the Center's activities will have access to a variety of electronic databases including Discus, ERIC, and PASCAL.

New costs for the program are estimated to begin at \$27,000 in year one and include expansion of the existing Montessori Children's House, printing, travel, speaker

fees, publicity, development of an on-line journal and video streaming. Estimated new costs decrease to \$17,000 in the second year and beyond. The proposal suggests that course release may need to be funded for a faculty member to serve as the editor of the on-line journal. The source of funding for the editor is identified as outside funding requests. The total estimated new cost is \$95,000 for the program's first five years.

Revenues will be generated through local private funding, participant fees, federal funding, and other non-state outside funding sources, and the Montessori Children's House at least through the second year of the program's implementation. Officials from Lander University stated that the Montessori Education Program currently has two main external sources of revenue: tuition generated by the Montessori Children's House and a congressionally-directed federal grant in the amount of \$248,525.00. Discussions with officials from Lander indicate that Lander will not request any state funding for the Center through the end of 2007.

In summary, Lander University has proposed the creation of the Center for Montessori Education to improve early childhood education in South Carolina. The Center aspires to become a national model for the promotion of Montessori-based education through a variety of programming and research for inservice teachers. Sources of current funding for the Center are tuition from the Montessori Children's House and a federal grant. State funding will not be requested at least until 2008.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve Lander's proposed program for the Center for Montessori Education at Lander University, to be implemented immediately upon Commission approval.