

PROGRAM PLANNING SUMMARY
Clemson University
Eugene T. Moore School of Education

Master of Education in Early Childhood Education

I. New Program Proposal

II. Proposed date of implementation: September 1, 2007

III. Justification of Need for Proposed Program

Clemson University is the land-grant university in South Carolina with a focused research mission at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Clemson University's Teacher Education programs are currently undergoing a transition toward a math/science/technology emphasis across all curricular areas. In conjunction with this emphasis there is a need for a Master of Education Program in Early Childhood, with an emphasis in math/science/technology. This is a direct response to the need to improve the early science and math basic skills and understandings of preschool and early elementary children, as the basis for improving math and science skills and career interests across all educational levels. This can be accomplished by meeting the growing need for graduate-trained early childhood professionals with math/science expertise in South Carolina and across the nation to assume professorial and leadership positions in college, universities, and public school systems and agencies. A large market exists as reflected in the survey data from undergraduate early childhood majors at Clemson University. Students reported they had a need for a master's level program in the field of early childhood (94% of students responding had an interest).

IV. Anticipated program demand and productivity

Current undergraduate students in early childhood education are expressing a desire for a master's degree in early childhood. These students, along with in-service teachers in the Upstate who are seeking graduate level training and certification in the field of early childhood education, represent a viable number of potential graduate students. The unique math/science/technology emphasis will provide special training for early childhood teachers in South Carolina and nationally. We anticipate this program would begin with 10-12 students per year and grow to a substantial number (at least 20) within three to four years. We desire to establish a master's of education in early childhood that has a thesis option in order to strengthen

the research base in the field of early childhood education in South Carolina and to encourage continuation of professional training at the doctoral level. The research-based thesis tract would serve as a recruitment vehicle for the doctoral program. Thus, we see an important outcome of this program to be research-based publications as well as theses that will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of early childhood education.

V. Assessment of extent to which the proposed program duplicates existing programs in the state

There is a need in South Carolina for a unique, research-based master's of education degree program in the field of early childhood education with a math/science/technology emphasis. This graduate program would provide a unique specialization tract in the area of math and science, aligning with strengths of Clemson University faculty expertise and existing curriculum. Current early childhood master's programs in South Carolina are primarily practice-based rather than research-based. The need for a quality, research-based master's level program to serve the large in-service teacher population in the Upstate and Greenville area is significant. In addition, this program would incorporate essential coursework for the addition of early childhood certification. This would meet the need for quality early childhood classroom teachers that has been increased by the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind legislation*.

VI. Relationship of the proposed program to existing programs at the proposing institution

The Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University is an endowed school involving teacher preparation. Developing a cohesive, collaborative and supportive system of high-quality master's of education programs is one of the goals of the School of Education. Master's level programs exist in elementary, secondary, special education, and reading. The early childhood education program has one of the largest undergraduate populations in the School of Education. Thus, establishing a master's of education in early childhood education would complete the system of needed programs at the master's level and would reflect the growing demand in the field of early childhood education. There is a collaborative and collegial working relationship with the elementary education program that includes shared research, service, and some content teaching areas. The proposed master's of education in early childhood education would provide for specialization in tracts that reflect strengths of the Moore School of Education, including special education; literacy/reading; and leadership and administration.

Thus, the proposed masters' of education in early childhood education would fit well into the existing programs and capitalize on strong, existing programs and faculty expertise.

VII. Relationship of the proposed program to other institutions via inter-institutional cooperation

The proposed Master's of Education in Early Childhood Education would benefit from a number of existing cooperative relationships, and the Moore School of Education is very receptive to new and collaborative working relationships. Eight-school districts—Anderson 1-5, Pickens, Oconee, and Greenville—work closely with the Moore School of Education to provide graduate-level coursework for their in-service teachers, and many of these teachers would benefit greatly from this program. In addition, this proposed program offers specialization tracts that could be fulfilled partially (up to 12 hours) at other institutions, such as special education at the College of Charleston, early literacy and reading at the University of South Carolina, and training for National Board of Professional Teaching Standards at both USC and Winthrop. Clemson University is implementing a new MAT in secondary education with other institutions. Clemson University also participates in the Goodlad initiative known as the National Network of Educational Renewal (NNER) and the South Carolina initiative (SCNER) in collaboration with several other institutions including Columbia College, Lander, USC-Columbia, Winthrop, Benedict College, and Furman University.

VIII. Total new costs associated with implementing the proposed program.

Because of the demand for undergraduate early childhood education, the School of Education has been expanding faculty resources in this program area. In the past four years, two tenure track and two clinical faculty positions have been established. We anticipate being able to implement the undergraduate and master's degree programs with current faculty resources. In addition, current Teacher Education resources are adequate for the anticipated need for graduate assistantship and student research support. The proposed program would also integrate technology through distance education, web-supported courses, and on-line courses which are supported currently across campus.