

TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A MASTER'S OF ARTS IN EDUCATION AT FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item recommends approval of Fort Lewis College's (FLC) proposal to offer a Master's of Arts (M.A.) in Education. If approved, this will be FLC's first graduate degree. At the request of FLC, this proposed degree program is coming to the Commission prior to approval by FLC's governing board, which will vote on this proposed degree at its October 5, 2012 meeting. The Commission may approve this degree pending approval by FLC's governing board.

II. BACKGROUND

Pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121 the Colorado Commission on Higher Education considers approval of all educator preparation programs at public and private institutions of higher education. Because this degree does not lead to a recommendation for licensure by the Colorado Department of Education, an affirmative recommendation from the State Board of Education is not required. In this case, the process for initial approval of new educator preparation programs is as follows: DHE reviews the proposed program for the following statutory performance criteria (where applicable): admission system; advising and screening of candidates; integration of theory and practice in coursework and field based training; supervised field based experience; and assessment of candidates' subject matter and professional knowledge and ability to apply the professional knowledge base [C.R.S. §23-1-121(2)], as well as implementation of a procedure for collecting and reviewing evaluative data concerning the educator preparation program, which shall include periodic surveys of graduates and employers and educator identifier system data...for modifying the program as necessary in response to the data collected [C.R.S. §23-1-121(3)(b)].

III. DEPARTMENT REVIEW

Section III is summarized from FLC's proposal:

[The] Master's in Education [which will be offered with an emphasis in Teacher Leadership] will expand the "accessible, high quality liberal arts education to a diverse student population" by offering locally accessible classes, offered by regional

experts in the field of education and leadership. Using the historical roots of Fort Lewis College, the Teacher Education Department will seek out partnerships with local schools with focus on diverse communities throughout the Southwest that include high populations of Native American and Hispanic students and teachers.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports the role and mission of FLC, which states in part: (1) There is hereby established a college at Durango, to be known as Fort Lewis College, which shall be a public liberal arts college, with moderately selective admission standards with a historic and continuing commitment to Native American education. In addition, the college may **offer professional programs and a limited number of graduate programs to serve regional needs.** [C.R.S. 23-52-101]

EVIDENCE OF DEMAND

Evidence of need and demand for a MA in the education field has been researched for numerous years. Over ten years ago, regional studies were conducted and found local interest in Master's in Education at Fort Lewis College. As Fort Lewis College seeks to implement their Strategic Plan (November 2011), one of the critical action items is to implement a Master's Program in Education starting in the Academic Year 2013-2014. In choosing a M.A. in Education, it was recognized that adult learners were an important connection to developing a more diverse student population at Fort Lewis College. The College pursued several avenues to determine evidence of demand and need, including investigating local teacher Master's degree status, surveys of Fort Lewis College education graduates, and focus groups with local educators.

DUPLICATION

The proposed Fort Lewis College Program will be a distinctive addition to Master's level programming in Southwest Colorado. Fort Lewis College's M.A. in Education with an emphasis in Teacher Leadership will emphasize the need to integrate the knowledge of theory and practice of system change, school reform, instructional coaching, analysis of student assessments, leadership protocols, and cultural awareness. Related to other programs, the proposed M.A. program at Fort Lewis College would blend Teacher Leadership with traditional Curriculum and Instruction concepts with school and district reform efforts, recognizing the critical role of teachers in the change process as outlined in SB 10-191, which has resulted in numerous statewide and local efforts to professionalize the leadership responsibilities of public school teachers.

IV. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 23-1-121 and 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that FLC's proposed M.A. in Education degree meets educator preparation statutory performance measures and is consistent with FLC's role and mission.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Fort Lewis College's proposal to offer a Master's of Arts in Education pending approval by FLC's governing board.

VI. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-1-121 Commission directive - approval of educator preparation programs - review.

C.R.S. §23-5-129

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.