

TOPIC: RECOMMEND REAUTHORIZATION OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION UNIT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends reauthorization of the University of Colorado Denver's educator preparation unit and educator preparation programs. Department staff, in collaboration with CDE and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), conducted an on-site visit at the University of Colorado Denver on November 3-6, 2013. The institution was last reauthorized by Commission at its November 2, 2006 meeting. This current reauthorization visit was conducted later than the usual five-year cycle at the request of University of Colorado Denver to align their state reauthorization with their national accreditation and be able to reduce duplication by writing one report and hosting one on-site visit.

II. BACKGROUND

Pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121 the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) considers reauthorization of all educator preparation programs at public and private institutions of higher education, after receiving an affirmative recommendation from the State Board of Education. The process for reauthorization of educator preparation programs is as follows: Colorado Department of Education (CDE) conducts a review of the endorsement programs to ensure that the content is designed and implemented in a manner that will enable a candidate to meet the requirements for licensure in Colorado (C.R.S. §22-60.5). Department of Higher Education (DHE) reviews the unit (all academic and student services departments involved in the preparation of educators) and its individual educator endorsement programs for the following statutory performance criteria: admission system; screening and counseling of educator 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). DHE and CDE then jointly conduct an on-site visit of the unit and its educator preparation programs. CDE then makes a recommendation to the State Board of Education, which then makes a recommendation to DHE. Upon receiving an affirmative recommendation, department staff makes a recommendation to the Commission.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

At its December 11, 2013 meeting, the Colorado State Board of Education approved the content of the educator preparation programs at the University of Colorado Denver. CDE staff transmitted its affirmative recommendation to the department.

Pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121(2), department staff reviewed University of Colorado Denver's (UCD) educator preparation unit and its programs and confirmed that they meet the statute's performance criteria. Findings derived from UCD's institutional report are described below:

1. **Comprehensive Admission System:** UCD utilizes selective criteria for admission to the various programs. This includes past academic records, transcripts, letters of recommendation from faculty, and evaluations by supervisors of experience with youth.
2. **Ongoing Advising and Screening:** UCD engages in ongoing screening and counseling. Specifically, "The candidate's progress is continuously assessed and formative feedback from the central teacher, site coordinator and site professor is provided on a continual basis."
3. **Course work and field-based training:** Within the initial licensure process, UCD utilizes a gradual release timeline for pre-service educators that includes focused observations, limited facilitation and engagement, and leads to full control within the educational environment. This process reflects the deliberate and strategic process inherent throughout all of UCD's programs, with appropriate modifications for graduate level and in-service teacher programs. The number of hours involved in field work in all licensure programs meets or exceeds the minimum number of hours required by statute.
4. **Teacher candidate skills and content knowledge:** Teacher skills and knowledge within the content areas is based on both experiential review of candidate performance and performance on numerous formal and informal assessments. Students seeking initial licensure are required to achieve a passing mark on the Praxis series of exams to demonstrate content knowledge, and all students within programs offered at UCD are required to demonstrate high levels of proficiency in both their pedagogical and content knowledge.

The department will collaborate with CDE and UCD to provide ongoing monitoring and support for the continual evaluation of teacher candidates. UCD is utilizing a new process where program effectiveness will be linked to educator success upon candidate matriculation. (It should be noted that UCD took the initiative to do this on its own while the state's educator evaluation system is being developed and implemented). Through the utilization of its own teacher effectiveness data, UCD will initially evaluate the strengths and areas for improvement within the program based on the performance of their program completers. Final results are not yet available. Accordingly, the department will continue to monitor this process to ensure candidates and the educator preparation program pursues continual improvement modifications as needed.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission reauthorize the educator preparation unit and the educator preparation programs at the University of Colorado Denver.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

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

(2) The commission shall adopt policies establishing the requirements for educator preparation programs offered by institutions of higher education. The department shall work in cooperation with the state board of education in developing the requirements for educator preparation programs. At a minimum, the requirements shall ensure that each educator preparation program complies with section 23-1-125, is designed on a performance-based model, and includes:

(a) A comprehensive admission system that includes screening of a candidate's dispositions for the field in which he or she is seeking licensure, consideration of a candidate's academic preparation for entry into his or her desired endorsement area or areas, and preadmission advising for students who are considering becoming candidates. The department shall work in collaboration with the programs to define any dispositions considered to be appropriate for educators.

(b) Ongoing advising and screening of candidates by practicing educators or faculty members;

(c) Course work and field-based training that integrates theory and practice and educates candidates in the methodologies, practices, and procedures of standards-based education, as described in parts 4 and 10 of article 7 of title 22, C.R.S., and specifically in teaching to the state academic standards adopted pursuant to section 22-7-406, C.R.S., or, beginning December 15, 2012, teaching to the state preschool through elementary and secondary education standards adopted pursuant to section 22-7-1005, C.R.S.;

(d) A requirement that, during the course of the preparation program, each teacher candidate in an initial licensure program complete a minimum of eight hundred hours, each principal and administrator candidate complete a minimum of three hundred hours, and each other advanced degree or add-on endorsement candidate complete appropriate supervised field-based experience that relates to predetermined learning standards and includes best practices and national norms related to the candidate's endorsement;

(e) A requirement that each candidate, prior to graduation, must demonstrate the skills required for licensure, as specified by rule of the state board of education pursuant to section 22-2-109 (3), C.R.S., in the manner specified by rule of the state board;

(f) Comprehensive, ongoing assessment including evaluation of each candidate's subject matter and professional knowledge and ability to demonstrate skill in applying the professional knowledge base.