

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Special Education

ACADEMIC PLAN III

2009-2014

Department of Special Education

Academic Plan III

Mission and Aspirations

The Department of Special Education is committed to preparing qualified personnel to serve all students with varying needs in the least restrictive environment and in ensuring their access to the general education curriculum. We value diverse and evidence-based pedagogical, instructional, and curricular approaches and research methodologies, designed to produce positive learning outcomes for all students. We believe that educational decision-making is the responsibility of a collaborative team that welcomes the input of all relevant stakeholders, including the student; promotes the use of best practices; is responsive to and sensitive to cultural diversity; celebrates social justice; follows a non-categorical approach to educational analysis and delivery; and seeks, via the use of *Response to Intervention* and *Positive Behavior Support* practices, to lessen the separation between general and special education and the over-identification of students into special education programs.

The master's program is an academically rigorous program that allows students to complete a master's degree that leads to certification in special education. The program is delivered on campus as well as via distance education. The program seeks to meet all professional standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), which are used as the standards for National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation, as well as all Wyoming PTSB and University of Wyoming College of Education standards. The CEC Standards are designed to provide a comprehensive taxonomy of the professional competencies, skills, and knowledge needed by educators to effectively teach all students with disabilities in general education. These skill areas include: philosophical, legal, and pedagogical foundations of special education; development and characteristics of learners with varying learning and behavior needs; individual learning differences; scientifically-based instructional strategies; creating positive learning environments and social interactions; behavior and classroom management; promoting effective and culturally-sensitive language use and communication; instructional planning; assessment; professional and ethical practice; and collaboration, all in the context of social justice and sensitivity to diversity issues. The program provides a sequence of didactic classes and field experiences that allow students to interact with learners of various needs and ages across varying settings.

Previous Planning Accomplishments

The Department of Special Education has met all of the goals of the Departmental Academic Plan II. First, special education content has been infused into the teacher preparation program via several Methods classes and EDEX 2484 (Goal 1). Second, the Master's program was revised, approved, and Nationally Recognized with Conditions by NCATE (Goal 2). Third, scoring rubrics have been developed for all courses, and all course activities have been aligned with PTSB standards (Goal 3).

Fourth, the special education program was accredited by NCATE and CEC (Goal 4). Fifth, inclusive educational practice was advanced by infusing special education content into the teacher education program, collaborating with community colleges, delivering presentations at national conferences, submitting publications in refereed journals, and obtaining external funds (Goal 5). Sixth, the promotion of best practices was achieved through collaboration with Wyoming school districts, hiring a new department head with expertise in inclusion, and working with general educators across numerous committees and task forces (Goal 6). Seventh, a collaborative mentoring teacher preparation was developed and delivered, and active marketing activities were conducted to recruit candidates to become highly qualified special education teachers (Goal 7).

Relevant Institutional Issues

Central to the Department of Special Education is the mission to provide *excellence* in our graduate programs (i.e., Masters, Ph.D. option) and in our one stand-alone undergraduate course required of all education majors, EDEX 2484. We define *excellence* in ensuring that the content of all our classes is current and meets all CEC and NCATE standards; that we prepare our graduates to meet the complexities, challenges, and high levels of accountability in Wyoming schools; that we conduct state-of-the-art research and contribute to the national dialogue; and we continue to investigate practices to promote learning and social acceptance, and enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities, special needs, or who are at risk for such conditions; and we strive to meet national, state, local, and university needs by participating in a full array of service and volunteer activities.

Goal 1: To achieve full National Recognition with the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Rationale: The program received the status of National Recognition with Conditions from CEC in Spring 2008. The department seeks to achieve full National Recognition to enhance our national visibility and potentially recruit more students.

Action Item 1: Submit revised common assessments and rubrics, analyze data sets and revise courses as necessary, and align courses with any future modifications in CEC and NCATE standards.

Implementaion: 2008-2010

Goal 2: To infuse *Response to Intervention* and *Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports* content into the Teacher Education Program.

Rationale: The *Response to Intervention* and *Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports* initiatives represent two major educational reforms that are being replicated throughout Wyoming and the nation. The department is committed to ensuring that teachers in Wyoming are knowledgeable about these initiatives. All graduates of the Teacher Education Program need the skills and knowledge to serve typical students, as

well as students with disabilities and those at risk. Activities will be conducted to achieve this outcome.

Action Item 2: In collaboration with appropriate preservice faculty, establish a task force and identify curricular changes; provide systematic support and instruction for preservice candidates placed in Partner Schools that employ these models; facilitate and infuse special education content in general education classes; and facilitate UW faculty involvement through collaboration, team teaching, and shared partnerships.

Action Item 3: Support and participate in the development of a college-wide professional development plan for inservice teachers in Wyoming to include RtI and PBIS.

Implementation: 2009-2010

Goal 3: To develop and gain College of Education, University of Wyoming, and Professional Teaching Standards Board approval of a Director of Special Education endorsement program.

Rationale: The Professional Teaching Standards Board has approached the department to develop and deliver a Director of Special Education endorsement program. This endorsement is currently not available in Wyoming and represents a critical need to ensure that Wyoming special education administrators promote learning for all students, and meet all of the legal, budgetary, instructional, and procedural responsibilities of directorships.

Action Item 4: Submit proposal to appropriate college and state committees for approval; advertise and implement program; and evaluate and revise program as needed.

Implementation: 2010-2011

Goal 4: To improve the national visibility of the department, establish a culture of scholarship, and highlight the excellence of the Special education specializations within the college-wide graduate degree programs.

Rationale: As part of our effort to enhance the national visibility of the department, we will recognize faculty achievement, disseminate our work across state and national venues, and implement strategies to recruit more students.

Action Item 5: Increase manuscript submissions to referred journals; submit grant applications for external funding; and manage and direct editorship of the journal, *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*.

Implementation: Ongoing.

Goal 5: To provide and support access to the Master's program for certified teachers throughout Wyoming.

Rationale: The Master's program is designed to be accessible throughout Wyoming. Dedicated efforts will be made to recruit and retain students and improve the quality of the program based on student feedback.

Action Item 6: Conduct aggressive marketing and advertisement of the Master's program; secure input from current students and alumni about quality and efficiency of the program; and revise the program as necessary.

Implementation: Ongoing.