

## Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

**To:** The UVM Faculty Senate

**From:** Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair

**Date:** May 1, 2020

**Re:** Approval of a proposal for a new Place-Based Education Undergraduate Certificate submitted by the College of Education and Social Services and the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources

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At its meeting on April 30, 2020, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

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The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new Place-Based Education (PBE) Undergraduate certificate submitted by the College of Education and Social Services (CESS) and the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR) with collaboration from the Department of Geography in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALC). If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the program will be offered beginning fall 2020.

### ***Program Description and Rationale***

Place-based education is an approach to teaching and learning grounded in the local environment, its various narratives, and the lived experience of students. It is rooted in the idea that the local environment – complete with its natural and human histories, economic and social issues, and political and ecological dynamics – can provide a robust and integrative context for teaching and learning. Much of the power of this approach stems from the fact that participants are immersed in the social-ecological system they are studying, thus providing many opportunities for active engagement and deepening connections to people and places in the local community and environment. Place-based education is thus an important pedagogical approach to understanding the past while fostering a more sustainable future. Preparing educators to use place-based pedagogy in their future lives and profession is at the root of this proposed certificate. The proposed certificate will prepare undergraduate students to assess local communities and environments as a context for action-oriented teaching learning. Students will learn to design and implement curricula and interpretive materials based on the socio-political, cultural, ecological, historical, geographical, and pedagogical dimensions of specific places. The learning outcomes indicated in the proposal are below.

- Design and implement place-based curricula and interpretive materials that address local questions and issues and draw upon traditional ecological knowledge and local expertise.
- Analyze specific places through the integration of socio-political, cultural, ecological, historical, geographical, and pedagogical perspectives.
- Co-create new and engaging forms of experiential education by building meaningful and reciprocal relationships with community partners.
- Teach in a way that nurtures a sense of place while honoring individual identities, ideologies, ancestries, and ways of knowing.

- Reflect on how power, privilege, and position influence and potentially bias peoples' approach to education and the world.

***Justification and Evidence for Demand***

With its strong reputation as an environmental university, UVM routinely attracts students who hold a clear interest in environmental education, outdoor education, service learning, and experiential education. In many cases, students' interests are paired with concerns about sustainability and social justice. Some choose formal teaching as a pathway, seeking teacher licensure and a career as a classroom teacher; others pursue roles outside of the formal classroom as park interpreters, museum educators, or ropes course instructors. Regardless of their individual paths, all are committed to a type of education that adapts to local conditions and fosters learning in the context of particular places, cultures, and communities. Currently, UVM has no formal program for meeting the academic/career needs and interests of these students, and the proposed PBE undergraduate certificate is intended to fill that gap.

***Relationship to Existing Programs***

The proposed PBE undergraduate certificate reflects an ongoing collaboration between CESS and RSENr around issues of education and the environment. It also reflects a desire among core CESS/RSENr faculty to expand this collaboration to include the place-based and community-based knowledge and expertise of faculty in the CAS Department of Geography and CALS Department of Community Development and Applied Economics.

Currently, there are no other undergraduate certificates at UVM with a focus on place-based education. The proposed certificate intentionally shares some courses with several minors from sponsoring and supporting academic units. The intention of the overlap is to provide a certificate that undergraduate students can realistically complete within four years while still meeting their major and minor requirements.

***Curriculum***

Completion of the proposed PBE Undergraduate Certificate will require a minimum of 12 credits, with at least 6 credits at the 100-level (see table below). In the Place-Based Education Design Capstone course (EDTE 251), students will apply what they have learned through their certificate coursework to the design and/or implementation of a personalized place-based education project in collaboration with a community partner. Students' capstone projects will serve as the integrative learning component of the certificate. (A syllabus for EDTE 251 was provided with the proposal.) Potential partners include Shelburne Farms, Morgan Horse Farm, Burlington School District, and Four Winds Nature Institute (letters of support were provided). The elective courses allow students to explore the construct of place and model/reinforce the principles and practices of place-based education in different social, cultural, environmental, and disciplinary contexts, and include opportunities for students to concentrate their studies on indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and place-based education.

<b>Required Courses (6 credits)</b>		
EDTE 061/NR 061	Foundations of Place-Based Education	3 credits
EDTE 251*	Place-Based Education Design Capstone	3 credits

<b>Elective Courses (6 to 8 credits; at least one course at the 100-level)</b>		
CDAE 102	Sustainable Community Development	3 credits
CDAE 271	Local Community Initiatives	3 credits
CDAE 276	Community Design Studio	3 credits
CDAE 278	Applied Community Planning	3 credits
EDEC 181	K-3 Inquiry	3 credits
EDEL 157	Social Education and Social Studies	3 credits
EDML 171	Middle Level Teaching Practicum	3 credits
EDSC 227	Teaching Science in Secondary Schools	3 credits
ENVS 173	Landscape Natural History	3 credits
ENVS 181	Environmental Justice	3 credits
ENVS 187	Campus Sustainability	3 credits
ENVS 294	Environmental Education	3 credits
GEOG 050	Global Environments & Cultures	3 credits
GEOG 061	Place, Landscape, Environment in VT	3 credits
GEOG 070	Society, Place, and Power	3 credits
NR 001	Natural History & Human Ecology	4 credits
NR 009	Natural and Cultural History of VT	4 credits
PRT 149	Wilderness Education and Leadership	3 credits

*\*Pre-requisites are EDTE 061/NR 061 plus one of the 100-level elective courses.*

An additional elective course (GEOG 1XX Geography of VT) is planned and will be added to the list once it is approved.

### ***Anticipated Enrollment***

It is estimated that 10 to 25 students per year will participate in the proposed PBE undergraduate certificate program. The courses included in the certificate were selected in consultation with colleges, schools, and departments to distribute students across the sponsoring and supporting academic units. Courses were selected to enable undergraduate students in each of these units to fulfill the certificate requirements within their major field of study.

### ***Admission Requirements, Advising, and Assessment***

There are no requirements for admission to the proposed undergraduate certificate. Academic advising will take place in the home department of each student's major. The capstone course will be used to assess whether or not the program goals and student learning outcomes are being met, and whether or not particular students can be seen to have successfully met program benchmarks.

### ***Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget***

CESS will manage the work of program administration, including the administration of course substitutions and supervision of integrative projects. CESS will also manage documentation of student progress towards completion. The core faculty for the certificate program (Drs. Jorgenson, Toolin, and Poleman) will meet bi-weekly to discuss any emerging issues related to course offerings and substitutions. Integrative project supervision will be handled within the context of the required capstone course (EDTE 251). To ensure program quality, the PBE capstone course will be taught by one of the program's core faculty.

No new funds are needed to inaugurate the proposed PBE undergraduate certificate. Existing courses in the curriculum have capacity or have agreed to increase capacity to accommodate additional students. The Chair of the Department of Education, Kimberly Vannest, has agreed to cover the two new courses (EDTE/NR 061 and EDTE 251) through exiting workloads of faculty.

### ***Evidence of Support***

The proposal for the new PBE undergraduate certificate was approved by the CESS Curriculum Committee, and the RSENR Curriculum Committee and faculty. Additional letters of support were provided by the individuals below:

- CESS Dean, Scott Thomas
- Chair of the Department of Education Kimberly Vannest
- Chair of the Department of Geography Beverley Wemple
- Director of the Wildlife and Fisheries Biology Program, James Murdoch
- Chair of the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, Jane Kolodinski
- RSENR Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Faculty Development, Nathan Sanders
- CALS Interim Dean, Jane Harvey
- Director of Community-Engaged Learning, Susan Munkres
- Project Director, Burlington City & Lake Semester, Andy Barker
- Shelburne Farms Vice President and Program Director, Megan Camp
- Executive Director of the Four Winds Nature Institute, Lisa Purcell

### ***Summary***

The proposed Place-Based Education undergraduate certificate is designed to meet the growing academic interest among current and prospective UVM students in the nexus between education, social justice, and the environment. The goal of the program is to prepare educators to teach in a variety of settings using the interdisciplinary construct of place, and the principles and practices of place-based education, to address local social, cultural, and environmental issues with learners of all ages, with the ultimate goal of establishing UVM as a national center of expertise on place-based education. Support is evident from the leadership of the UVM academic units involved in the program as well as from community partners.