

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Stephen Everse, Co-Chair
Date: March 15, 2022
Re: Approval of a Proposal from the College of Education & Social Services for a No-contest Deactivation of the BS in Early Childhood Special Education

On March 3, 2022, the Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) approved (15 in favor, 1 against, 0 abstentions) a proposal from the College of Education & Social Services (CESS) to deactivate the BS degree in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). The goal of the proposed deactivation of the ECSE major in CESS reflects the faculty's desire to realign the structure and content of the degree to correspond with new national standards and demands of the field.

The admissions halt through no-contest deactivation was approved unanimously by the Special Education program faculty on October 15, 2021. The DoE Faculty voted electronically at their November 5, 2021 meeting in support of this proposal (32 in favor, 2 against, and 3 abstentions) from the 45 members of the faculty eligible to vote after the discussion. On December 10, 2021 the CESS CAC voted unanimously to approve no-contest deactivation for the Early Childhood Special Education program, indicating that the CESS CAC believes the process used to recommend the deactivation was fair and reflects faculty input in decision making. Dean Shepherd provided a letter in support of this request by the Special Education program faculty. Zero public comment was received during the 30-day circulation.

Rationale for Deactivation

Students completing the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) undergraduate program are recommended for Vermont teacher licensure in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education. Presently there are 1.5 FTE across two tenured faculty who anchor the ECSE program, with additional support from allied K – 12 programs in Special Education and Pre-K- age 6 Early Childhood program faculty.

ECSE was already under review prior to the Provosts' call to review low enrollment and completion programs. Catamount data indicate that the three-year average (AY2018 – 2020) enrollment and degree completion in the program to be 10.7 and 7.7, respectfully.

Conversations at both the department and program levels have focused on the analysis of enrollment trends along with issues related to program staffing, accreditation requirements, and the relationship of the ECSE major to programming in K-12 special education. Discussions involving all special education faculty (early childhood special education and K – 12 special education) continued into Fall 2021 and identified the potential for the period of deactivation to result in proposals for changes that will align

with student demand, increase enrollments at the course and program level, clarify undergraduate and graduate options, and reduce redundancy in ECSE and K – 12 course offerings. Thus, this deactivation request comes forward from the faculty who wish to rebrand and realign the structure and content of the degree to meet new national standards and demands of the field.

Impact

The Chair and Dean assure that deactivation of the ECSE major will have no implications for loss of faculty and/or staff. Courses for existing majors will continue and all students (6 Fr, 4 So, 4 Jr, 3 Sr) currently in the major will continue to have access to all courses needed for degree program through their graduation. No new students will be admitted in Fall 2022.

Plan to Exit Deactivation

A deactivation would provide time for fact-finding on student and alumni outcomes, field and market needs, and a comprehensive curriculum review that would allow them to address the following:

- A. New accreditation standards and the need to develop new CAEP accreditation assessments as part of the transition to new standards.
- B. A persisting national crisis in special education teacher shortages serving children birthage 21. Two members of the Special Education faculty have joined the Dean and Chair in a VT Statewide team who in partnership with the national CEEDAR center are in the process of writing a state blueprint to address this special education teacher shortage crisis and increase the pipeline of special education teacher candidates. Part of this work is examination of curriculum and licensure options within Educator Preparation programs.
- C. The need to develop more clarity and distinction between the undergraduate major, Accelerated Master's program and existing special education minors.
- D. The need to continue to restructure Early Childhood Special Education courses that have historically served both undergraduate and graduate students together, into separate course offerings.

The College supports and welcomes the development of a proposal for a new Special Education undergraduate degree to come from Special Education faculty long before the deactivation would expire.