

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REVIEW

*Western Nevada College
Certificate of Achievement, Early Childhood Education*

I. Description of Program Reviewed

The Early Childhood Education Certificate of Achievement program provides its graduates with the academic knowledge and skill training necessary for employment as directors or teachers in private child care programs or as assistant teachers in publicly funded child care programs. Students must complete a three-credit preschool practicum at the Child Development Center (CDC), WNC's lab school.

I. Review Process and Criteria

The review team conducted a self-study from 2008-2009 in order to identify program strengths and challenges in terms of recruitment, enrollment, curriculum, scheduling, advisement, student satisfaction, community partnerships, and the lab school partnership. The Early Childhood Associate of Applied Science program was reviewed at the same time, and one self-study report addressed both programs. Appropriate distinctions were made between the two within the report. Institutional Research staff provided data used to inform conclusions about the programs.

Advanced ECE students were involved throughout the review process as was external reviewer Lisa Roberts, surveyor for Nevada's Bureau of Services for Child Care. Both the external reviewer and the internal reviewer, WNC Nursing Instructor Jamie-Sue Coleman, provided feedback on the self-study during a site visit and exit interview that included members of the program review team, members of the Program Assessment and Review Committee, the Dean of Instruction, the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and the President. Both reviewers also met with a focus group of students to gain additional insight into the program's strengths and challenges.

II. Major Findings and Conclusions of the Program Review

The following are the major strengths of the program that were identified during the review process (most are strengths shared with the AAS degree and are included in that program review summary):

- Students serve in community agencies and participate in community related events through their required Community Service Projects, thereby increasing their awareness of opportunities available to ECE graduates.
- Guest speakers representing local, state, and federal children and family support agencies visit ECE classrooms every semester.
- ECE faculty and students host an annual Early Care and Education Forum that provides an opportunity for students to learn about area ECE initiatives and programs.
- Classes are offered late afternoons, early evenings, nights, and Saturdays, and students in the program review focus group indicated that they were satisfied with scheduling.
- Practicum and curriculum students work closely with Devoria Sanger, the practicum mentor from the CDC and the only CDC teacher who currently practices developmentally appropriate teaching methods that are consistent with ECE program teachings.
- The program participates in the Peer Mentoring Program, which ensures a more supportive environment for students.
- Students are encouraged to take advantage of Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grants available to students working in child care programs.

- The program coordinator actively recruits students by participating each year in the College Day and Tech Prep events for high school students, attending National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conferences and workshops, and working with the Nevada Registry, Bureau of Childcare Licensing, TEACH, and the Apprenticeship Project.
- Students in advanced ECE classes are asked to make suggestions for improving the program during in-class discussions.
- Students found the ECE faculty to be very supportive. They were comfortable with Lori Magnante, the program coordinator, and said she motivated them to succeed.

Several opportunities to improve the program were also identified (many of the same challenges were described in the program review summary for the AAS degree). Recommendations from the program review team [P], the internal reviewer [I], and the external [E] reviewer are in italics:

- The CDC lacks central philosophies and practices that align with theories taught in the ECE classroom.
Form a stronger connection between the ECE program and the CDC so that practicum students can see the theories they are learning put to use in the classroom. [P,E]
- None of the licensed child care facilities in the service areas are accredited, including WNC's lab school center.
The CDC is pursuing NAEYC accreditation so that it can be a true lab school with a program that reflects best practices in all classrooms. [P,E]
- The preschool practicum requires many contact hours between the practicum mentor and the students, creating a significant and uncompensated increase in the CDC teacher's workload.
Provide academic support through a teaching assistant contract for the practicum mentor. [P,E]
- Total student credit hours in the program dropped 14 percent from 2005-06 to 2007-08, likely due to the fact that Carson and Douglas high schools have discontinued teaching child development classes that sparked an interest in students who would continue their ECE studies at WNC.
Research the possibility of either helping the high schools to resume their child development classes or of forming a dual-credit program with the high schools. [P,E]
- Although satisfaction data is collected informally from students at the end of the program and from employers, no formal methods exist for gathering such data.
Develop graduate and employer surveys for gathering information that could be used to improve the program. [P,I]
- Currently, ECE students observe teaching at the CDC only, a practice that limits their perspective on child guidance, curriculum, and programming.
Provide students with opportunities to observe at other child care and preschool programs. [E]
- Although infant and toddler training hours are embedded in courses, they are not listed on the syllabi, an omission that makes it difficult for licensing agencies to track the qualifications of applicants.
Update syllabi to reflect infant and toddler training hours required for licensing. [P,E]

III. Descriptive Statistics

A. Number of students with declared major in the program area:

2008-09* 16

B. Number of graduates from the program for the following years:

2006-07 0
2007-08 1
2008-09* 1

C. Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated):

Fall 2008 23

* Does not include summer 2009.