



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,
NY 12234

To: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

From: Joseph P. Frey

Subject: Concordia College: Master plan amendment to authorize the College to offer a Master of Science in Education (M.S.in Ed.) degree program in Childhood Special Education

Date: February 23, 2011

Authorizations:

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision (Consent Agenda)

Should the Board of Regents approve an amendment to the master plan of Concordia College authorizing the College to offer the Master of Science in Education (M.S. in Ed.) degree in Childhood Special Education? Master plan amendment is required because this will be the institution's first master's level degree program.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

Proposed Handling

This question will come before the full Board at its March 2011 meeting where it will be voted on and action taken.

A related charter amendment, to authorize the College to award the Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.) degree, appears separately on the Regents agenda.

Background Information

The Trustees of Concordia College, Bronxville, have petitioned the Regents to amend the College's master plan to authorize the College to offer a program in teacher education leading to the Master of Science in Education (M.S. in Ed.) degree.

In 1936, Concordia College was granted a provisional charter under the name Concordia Collegiate Institute, and an absolute charter in May 1940. Concordia College's mission is to engage and nurture a diverse student body in a value-oriented liberal arts education for lives of service to church and community.

The Regents have authorized the College to award the degrees of Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), Associate in Occupational Studies (A.O.S.), Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Bachelor of Professional Studies (B.P.S.), and the Bachelor of Music (MUS.B.). The College currently offers programs in the disciplinary areas of biological sciences, business, education, fine arts, health professions, humanities, and social sciences.

The proposed program will be the College's first master's level program and will lead to initial/professional certification in Childhood Special Education certification.

Program Purpose. The purpose of the proposed program is to prepare teachers who are lifelong scholars who will be eligible for certification in Students with Disabilities 1-6. Graduates will also be prepared for further study and research in relevant graduate programs.

Review Findings. A peer review visit took place in March 2010. The Readiness Review visit and external program review reports raised a number of questions related to the five site visit focused areas: Curriculum, Faculty, Administration and Support Services, Long Range Planning, and Finance. The College's extensive response, supported with documentation, satisfied all issues of concern; therefore, the program appears to be in compliance with Commissioner's Regulations and certification requirements in Childhood Students with Disabilities as indicated below.

Based on information from the Department's Office of Audit Services, Concordia College is financially healthy; it appears to have the necessary resources to offer the program, which includes the hiring of additional full-time qualified faculty upon Regents approval and program registration.

Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation. In response to the team's recommendations, the College has drafted a handbook with proposed graduate program details, which includes fieldwork requirements, student teaching, and a list of local schools for candidates' placements. Detailed syllabi clearly address pedagogical content, goals, objectives, assignments, student outcomes, use of technology and resource materials aligned with New York State Learning Standards.

The College is working with a consultant to assure alignment among NCATE accreditation standards, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards, Content Specialty Test parameters, and College program standards. Plans to evaluate candidates and the program through Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI) will develop, distribute and provide analysis of data regarding student alumni and employer satisfaction with the candidate and program.

The College has requested registration of a Childhood Special Education program leading to the Master of Science in Education, and Students with Disabilities 1-6 grade level certification. The proposed program is structured as a two-year, 38-credit program consisting of 16 courses, and the required 100 hours of field experience and 40 days of student teaching for initial/professional certification. The 38-credit program includes introductory courses, and a focus on instruction in classroom management, assessment, differentiated instruction, technology, development, literacy and mathematics, and research. Classes will be offered over four terms each year - fall, winter, spring, and summer session.

Faculty. The proposed program currently consists of three full-time faculty members, two of whom hold doctoral degrees in appropriate fields; the third has extensive experience in special education and is in the process of applying for doctoral studies. In addition, the College plans to hire an additional full-time faculty member with a doctoral degree in special education who will also serve as dean of the program. The College is also actively seeking an additional full-time doctorally prepared faculty person who is expected to be hired in August 2011. Once these searches are successfully completed, there will be five full-time faculty members, four of whom will hold doctoral degrees. The College expects to hire an additional full-time faculty member the following year.

Students. Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree in a liberal arts or science discipline from a regionally accredited college or university and achieved a cumulative grade point average of 2.8 or above. Admissions requirements will include passing scores on the LAST, writing samples, and faculty interviews. Admission is also open to certified teachers in an area other than Students with Disabilities. The College will attend Graduate Fairs at institutions of higher learning with high percentages of historically underrepresented groups; conduct private visits to such institutions; and promote the program at local and regional school districts to reach out to diverse faculty interested in master's programs.

Enrollment will be by cohorts, with a group starting each fall, and is expected to begin with no more than 15 – 20 candidates annually.

Resources. Based on the peer review team's findings, Concordia College is in a sound financial condition with available funding on hand to meet the estimated three year start up costs of \$265,000. The budget for Fiscal Year 2011 is balanced, including costs supporting the new master's program. The College's balance sheet shows a sound cash balance and manageable debt relative to total assets.

The library subscribes to over 200 print journals, of which 40 focus on education issues. There is access to over 104 special education journals in a mix of electronic and print format. The College's monograph collection consists of almost 75,000 volumes of which over 5,000 relate to education and 240 deal specifically with special education. In addition, the library is a member of the WALDO consortium.

The IT department has conducted an analysis to address the need for capital investment in IT resources for the proposed program's needs. Capital investment amounts to \$307,000 and is arrayed by priority in a supplemental schedule.

Technology, interactive whiteboards and renewal/replacement policy in place assure ongoing adequacy of electronic resources.

Program Registration. The Department has determined that the proposed program, if authorized, would meet the standards for registration of teacher education programs set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Following standard procedure, the Department canvassed the colleges and universities in the Metropolitan and Mid-Hudson Regions. Two responses were received. The College of Westchester expressed support for the proposed program. The second respondent, Iona College, expressed doubt about the need for an additional graduate program in Childhood Special Education in the region, but indicated that it respected the right of Concordia College to move forward with the development of its own program.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize Concordia College to offer a Master of Science in Education (M.S. in Ed.) degree program in Childhood Special Education as its first master's program. This amendment will be effective until March 31, 2012, unless the Department registers the program prior to that date, in which case master plan amendment shall be without term.