

Request for Graduate Intent to Plan
COEPD, Elementary & Secondary Education
October 5, 2015

Attachment 1 - Rationale

* Please note that the proposed MA in Education is not, per se, an entirely new degree; rather, it will replace COEPD's current MA degrees in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. *

COEPD's Elementary and Secondary Education Program proposes to combine its existing Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education, Master of Arts in Elementary Education, and Master of Arts in Secondary Education into a single Master of Arts in Education.

We present a four part rationale for this change:

1. Changes to the teacher employment and certification landscapes: The three separate MAs in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education were originally planned when alignments between degree titles and position titles were more important to both graduates and potential employers. An applicant with an MA in Elementary Education who applied for a teaching position in an elementary school, for example, might have had an edge over applicants whose degrees carried different names. Such alignments are not as meaningful today; moreover, we anticipate that the current policy environment's push toward alternative teacher certification will make degree titles even less important going forward. Changing from three separate degrees to one will focus the Program's resources.
2. Student confusion and difficulty in designating one area over another: In a number of more recent cases, students have found that having to choose a degree title that is tied to a specific age group can present difficulties. Moreover, although some of the Program's Areas of Emphasis are tied to very specific age and grade ranges, others are not; some, in fact, make students eligible for Pre-K to Adult Teaching Endorsements. Today, students often prefer to "keep their options open"; to earn degrees that will allow them the maximum amount of professional flexibility. Combining the three degrees will create one umbrella degree, under which students can gather whichever Areas of Emphasis are most relevant to their educational goals and career plans.
3. Shared Curricula: The current three programs are already identically designed. Each contains the same 15 credits of Core Courses and Capstone Experience; each also contains a 15-21 credit Area of Emphasis, most of which lead to a particular added endorsement for teachers. Combining the three degrees will not diminish the student's educational experience.
4. Administrative efficiencies: Combining the three degrees will promote administrative efficiencies. Elementary and Secondary Education currently writes three separate reports for the MAs in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. This change will allow Elementary and Secondary Education to create a single umbrella document for the MA in

Education. Moreover, and as a side note to Rationale 1, current changes in the teacher employment and certification landscapes are compelling Program students and faculty to re-think the current design of the Program's MAs. Combining the three degrees into one will allow us to move forward with redesigns, such as streamlining time to completion or adding new areas of emphasis, more efficiently and holistically.