



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Cc: Tara Maltby, Term Assistant Professor  
Donna Gail Shaw, Professor Emerita and CAEP Coordinator

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Special Education GC-MEd

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); currently pursuing Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP); Specialty Program Review (SPA) through the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Members of the program review committee:**

Tara Maltby, Term Assistant Professor  
Donna Gail Shaw, Professor Emerita and CAEP Coordinator

**Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role**

UAA's mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. It is also committed to instruction at multiple academic levels, success of all students regardless of their higher education goals, and service to the diverse peoples and communities of the state. UAA's core themes are (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, (3) Student Success, (4) UAA Community, and (5) Public Square. UAA values international and intercultural education, diversity of experiences and perspectives, and the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska that comes from the Alaska Native peoples of this area.

The College of Arts and Sciences CAS contributes to UAA's mission with a suite of programs that provide, among other things,

1. general education courses for undergraduates in CAS and other Colleges,

2. opportunities for undergraduates to pursue majors in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts, and
3. opportunities for faculty and students to pursue research and creative activities in CAS's academic disciplines,
4. graduate programs for advanced studies.

Given decreased enrollments across UAA and significant budget cuts to CAS, the challenge is to serve UAA's and CAS's missions with only 75% of the funds it had in 2018-2019. CAS's shrinking budget is especially challenging for programs that rely on state financial appropriations through CAS because the programs have a gap between (a) the total costs of everything the program does and needs, and (b) the tuition CAS receives to cover those costs. This describes most programs in CAS: most rely on state appropriations and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

The School of Education's MEd and Graduate Certificate in Special Education contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by preparing licensed educators for work with K12 students with special educational needs. Filling Alaska's gaps for pre-K and K12 teaching positions is a priority for the University of Alaska and its Board of Regents. The gap extends to special education services throughout Alaska. The MEd and Graduate Certificate in Special Education address that gap. The program is currently accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). It is preparing for accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP.)

#### **Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity**

With 26 students in 2019, the program's demand is on par with other graduate programs in CAS where the median number of students is also 26. Student credit hours and class sizes dropped in recent years but the program consistently covers the instructional costs of the courses with the tuition that CAS receives. The number of awards also dropped from a high of 37 in 2013 to 15 in 2019, a decrease that paralleled a drop in the number of faculty in the program. It should be noted that 15 degrees in 2019 – although low for this program – is 50% higher than the median for CAS's graduate programs. Overall, this program is efficient and productive.

#### **Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success**

The program is nationally accredited, attesting to the quality of the program's documentation, evidence, and outcomes. The entire program is offered online, allowing teachers from across Alaska to train in work with students who have special educational needs.

#### **Program Duplication / Distinctiveness**

As the faculty stated in their report, there are numerous programs in the UA system that provide graduate-level training in special education, including a UAF post-baccalaureate certificate, a UAF MEd, a UAS graduate certificate, a UAS MAT, and a UAS MEd. The case is proposed that the need for graduate-level practitioners in special education across the state is strong enough that the duplication and overlap is justified.

#### **Commendations and Recommendations**

The faculty who wrote the report are commended for plugging holes among the tenured and tenure-track faculty at UAA who cover special education. They have kept the program strong and are working well toward CAEP accreditation. They are commended for that work and the strong report they submitted.

#### **Decision**

Continued review.

There are many positive things about this program, but there are two significant challenges. First, it is housed in CAS which is faced with steeper budget cuts than any other college at UAA. The budget cuts are particularly problematic for programs – like this one – that do not cover their instructional costs through tuition and rely on state appropriations through CAS. Moreover, accredited education programs require considerable faculty and staff time, and therefore, financial assistance and expertise from a college office that is best found in a College of Education. Second, the uncertainty surrounding the administration of teacher preparation programs in the University of Alaska system makes it hard to know about the administrative future of this program. Therefore, I recommend that this program be reviewed again in 2021 to see if CAS has enough state appropriations to retain the program and where the program will stand relative to the Alaska College of Education.