

# **UAA School of Education**

## **Frequently-Asked Questions**

**Updated 12:00 – 03/08/19**

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### **Why are these FAQs changing?**

We want to ensure that students have the best, up to date information about their options. As we learn more about options and practical solutions, we will update these FAQs. Please check back periodically.

**UPDATE:** Whether the university will seek re-accreditation for the School of Education is yet to be decided. At its meeting Feb. 28-March 1, the UA Board of Regents directed President Jim Johnsen to conduct an expedited review of UAA's education programs and report the findings back to the board at a special meeting on April 8. Regents are committed to students who deserve a certain path to licensure as teachers from an accredited and approved program.

### **Will UAA School of Education Students be able to get teaching certificates/licenses?**

Yes. The three universities in the University of Alaska system are working closely together—and with the State Board of Education and Early Development—to ensure that students have a path to licensure either at UAA, or through accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS. Here are some things to consider in weighing options.

#### ***For Seniors Graduating in Spring or Summer 2019:***

On Monday, Feb. 4, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) moved to formally "...approve the (1) recommended process to address the University of Alaska Anchorage's CAEP revocation notification received on January 11, 2019; and (2) the department's acceptance of program verifications from the University of Alaska Anchorage for teacher candidates completing their preparation program during the spring semester and summer term of 2019, based on the fact that the program was accredited and approved through December 31, 2018. Under this motion, graduates of the University of Alaska Anchorage initial teacher preparation programs in the spring semester and summer term of 2019 will be considered to have graduated from a state-approved program."

This action by DEED is good news and establishes a path to licensure in Alaska for Spring and Summer 2019 graduates. At the same time, it is difficult to predict all possible impacts of loss of CAEP accreditation and related issues on employability or reciprocity for teaching in other states. UAA students planning to graduate in Spring or Summer 2019 have the option to transfer to a fully-accredited and approved program that will allow them to remain on the UAA campus to complete their courses. UAF and UAS's

programs are viable options within UA, are currently accredited and approved by the Alaska Board of Education. For those students who elect to transfer to UAF or UAS but complete coursework on the UAA campus, UA will waive associated deadlines and fees, reimburse students for any costs and fees associated with transfer, and otherwise do whatever is necessary to minimize impacts on you. Since time to make this decision is short, we will be contacting seniors who have not previously indicated a desire to transfer to make sure that they are aware of their options.

***Non-Seniors:***

At present the UAA initial teacher preparation programs do not provide a clear path to licensure after August 2019. That said, we recommend that students who are on track to graduate from UAA's initial teacher preparation programs after August 2019 complete this semester at UAA, then consider a transfer to UAF or UAS effective at the end of the semester. In the coming weeks we will have a clearer idea as to whether there is a path to licensure via programs at UAA, and we will be better able to assist you with a transfer that enables you to take UAF or UAS courses on the UAA campus.

In any case, if students elect to transfer now or at the end of the semester, UA will facilitate transfers to accredited programs offered through UAF, make accommodations for place-bound students in Anchorage, and hold students harmless from costs and fees associated with transfers. We will ensure that students have a path to licensure either at UAA, or through accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS.

***Reciprocity/Recognition by Other States:***

Interstate reciprocity is much more complex than we initially appreciated and we apologize for the confusion. The following is based on our review of information provided by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) <https://www.nasdtec.net/page/InterstateAgreements>

Under the Interstate Agreement for Educator Licensure, an "approved program" is "*a planned program of study leading to licensure in the appropriate Member Jurisdiction...*" Under that definition, the UAA program would be considered "state approved" for interstate licensure purposes for spring and summer 2019 graduates. *Please note that each state is free to adopt, amend, and interpret its own standards, and that those standards also may change over time.*

"State approval" of a teacher preparation program is an important, but not the only, consideration for interstate licensure. Some states appear to offer no reciprocity. Other states have requirements such as specific training, testing, or experience in addition to a license granted by a member state. Only one state, Kentucky, specifically requires "program accreditation," such as NCATE or CAEP accreditation. However, other states indicate that state approval is based on national standards or that approval must be "substantially similar to the state's standards." **While you can get a sense of how interstate reciprocity works by careful review of the NASDTEC site, for detailed**

**information regarding a specific state, you should contact the appropriate state office or visit that state's website.**

If you apply for and receive your teaching certificate in Alaska, you should be eligible for reciprocity in states that simply require licensure by another state. Please note that other states have additional or more nuanced requirements, each state is free to adopt, amend, and interpret its own standards, and those standards also may change over time. Whatever your decision, UA will do its best to reduce the impact on you.

**Are all programs in the School of Education affected by the CAEP decision?**

No. The only programs that lost accreditation are the following:

- Early Childhood Bachelor of Arts
- Early Childhood Post-Baccalaureate Certification
- Elementary Bachelor of Arts
- Elementary Post-Baccalaureate Certification
- Master of Arts in Teaching Certification Program
- Special Education Initial Certification
- Early Childhood Special Education Initial Certification

**Who should an impacted student call if they have questions or need help?**

To minimize the number of calls an impacted student has to make or offices they have to visit, UAA has created the **School of Education Student Assistance Line, (907) 786-6200** as a single point of contact. Staff are available on the Assistance Line to help find answers to questions impacted students may have, as well as research solutions to continuing difficulties a student may be experiencing. For matters that may require further research, the Assistance Line staff will create a research ticket and a content specialist will return a call directly to the student. The Assistance Line is staffed 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**Will I be reimbursed for tuition, fees, books and other expenses if I choose to withdraw from UAA's School of Education?**

If you were in one of the programs denied re-accreditation by CAEP, and you plan to withdraw from UAA to attend UAF, UAS or another university, you will be reimbursed for the following that you have paid for the spring 2019 semester:

- Tuition and mandatory fees
- Required books and course materials
- Parking permits (prorated for annual)
- UAA residence hall room and board

### **What is accreditation and why does it matter?**

There are two types of accreditation at UAA. The first is institutional, which accredits UAA as a whole. Institutional accreditation recognizes institutional quality, effectiveness and sustainability in meeting the whole institution's mission. UAA has been accredited by the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities since 1974 and recently received notice that it successfully passed re-accreditation review.

The other type of accreditation is programmatic, or “specialized” accreditation. Only certain programs at UAA seek or need programmatic accreditation, a process by which programs are evaluated based on discipline or profession-based standards. The School of Education initial licensure programs were seeking reaffirmation of programmatic accreditation with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which is a relatively new accrediting body. The programs were formerly accredited by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The State of Alaska requires that educator preparation providers be approved by the State Board of Education and Early Development, based on substantial compliance with CAEP accreditation standards.

### **Did CAEP’s revocation of initial licensure programs in UAA’s School of Education affect other UAA programs?**

No. Only the initial licensure programs in the School of Education were involved in the CAEP accreditation decision.

### **What can Alaska’s state board of education do in this instance? Does it step in to help ensure students can be licensed?**

In February of 2019 the Alaska State Dept. of Education and Early Development (DEED) voted to accept UAA’s teacher licensure recommendations for students completing UAA’s initial licensure programs during spring and summer terms of 2019. Please note that after the summer 2019 term, UAA teacher preparation programs do not presently provide a path to licensure. Further work with DEED on whether it is feasible to apply to the State Board of Education is necessary to provide ongoing approval of UAA’s initial teacher preparation program in the absence of programmatic accreditation from CAEP. This action by DEED is good news and establishes a path to licensure in Alaska for Spring and Summer 2019 graduates. However, please see the answer to the question above titled **“Will UAA School of Education Students be able to get teaching certificates/licenses?”** for a discussion of the impact of this decision.

### **Can the State Board simply approve the program despite CAEP’s accreditation decision?**

To grant interim approval, the State Board of Education likely would need to find that UAA has made the necessary changes to substantially comply with quality standards set

by CAEP. Because the State Board of Education does not generally conduct program evaluations itself, and because it is unclear whether sufficient documentation of changes is yet available, it's not clear whether that can be done.

### **Why did these programs in UAA's School of Education lose accreditation?**

The initial licensure programs in the School of Education lost accreditation due to a number of deficiencies, including: ineffective evaluation of initial teacher preparation programs; inconsistent processes to ensure that we were effectively serving students and the public; and, inability to demonstrate adequate quality assurance to the accreditor. We also failed to act transparently when it became apparent in December 2017 that accreditation was in jeopardy.

### **What steps are the Board of Regents taking on this issue?**

The Board of Regents is scheduled to meet again on April 8, 2019 to assess an expedited program review ordered by President Johnsen. The board could render a decision at that time about whether to allow the process of re-accreditation by CAEP to move forward in 2020.

### **What is UAA doing about the loss of accreditation to SoEd's initial licensure programs?**

The three universities in the University of Alaska system are working closely together—and also with the State Board of Education and Early Development—to ensure UAA students have a path to licensure.

### **What are UAA's next steps?**

UAA continues to make progress with internal program improvements, such as its implementation of edTPA, case-study methodologies and assessments of classroom impacts. UAA has allocated resources to improve data collection, analysis and reporting as a basis for continuous improvement, and will continue its work with DEED to provide new graduates support via programs such as the Alaska School Development Network, K-12 Outreach, and mentoring programs.

### **What is edTPA and why is it important?**

UAA's School of Education has adopted edTPA. EdTPA is a performance-based, subject-specific assessment and support system developed by Stanford University. This system is widely regarded nationally as the gold standard in assessment of education programs. All UAA SoEd initial licensure programs now use this assessment system, and its adoption addresses many of the improvements that CAEP requires, including using common key assessments across programs, rather than isolated program-based data. This is important because CAEP's revocation of programmatic accreditation rested

largely on inadequate collection, reporting, and use of data prior to adoption of the edTPA system.

**How many students are currently affected by the accreditation issue in the UAA School of Education?**

As of January 2019, there were approximately 330 students enrolled in affected programs this spring semester. The number of students at other stages in the programs impacted by the accreditation revocation is larger, approximately 410.

**Does this accreditation issue have anything to do with the creation of UA's College of Education in Juneau?**

No, this decision is unrelated to the creation of the University of Alaska's College of Education at UAS. UAA is one of three schools of education in Alaska, and all three operate independently, though with support from the Alaska College of Education. For example, UAF's School of Education recently was reviewed by CAEP for accreditation, and it was approved.

**Where can students get information/guidance as it pertains to their personal situation at UAA's SoEd?**

School of Education Students in programs impacted by the accreditation situation can **call 907-786-6200** from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM weekdays as a single point of contact for any questions they have. Staff are available to research solutions to unique continuing difficulties students may be experiencing.

**How long would it take for the School of Education to earn accreditation again?**

UAA's School of Education may apply for accreditation on January 11, 2020—exactly one year from the date it received the letter of notification. CAEP's process would start again at that point and could take up to three years to complete.

**Will UAA be closing its School of Education?**

As of March 1, the school is not accepting applications for admission to initial licensure programs. Teacher education will continue to be provided at UAA, either through a UAA program approved by the State Board of Education, or through accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS at UAA.

**Should students show up for their education classes moving forward?**

Yes! Please do not simply stop attending. Consider the information on licensure and reciprocity in this FAQ, consult with advisors and make an informed decision on whether

to stay, transfer to a program offered through UAF or UAS, or a different program at UAA.

**How does this affect SoEd faculty?**

There are no plans to change the status of current faculty or administration within the School of Education at this time.

**Will this affect UA's annual funding from the State of Alaska?**

We have no reason at this time to believe funding will be impacted by this accreditation issue.

**Will students be given a tuition discount if they continue in UAA's initial licensure program?**

We are evaluating all options to provide students with paths that enable them to successfully acquire a degree in education from UAA that enables licensure. In any case, if students elect to transfer, either now or at the end of the semester, UA will facilitate transfers to accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS, make accommodations for place-bound students in Anchorage, and hold students harmless from costs and fees associated with transfers.

**How does revocation of accreditation of SoEd programs impact any scholarships that are or will be awarded to students?**

Revocation of *program* accreditation such as CAEP does not impact how financial aid is awarded to students. Regional accreditation (also known as institutional accreditation) is what affects financial aid. UAA reaffirmed its regional accreditation with NWCCU in January of 2019.

**I am attending UAA in one of the School of Education programs that are no longer accredited by CAEP. I'm paying for school with my VA benefits, which stipulate I can only attend an accredited school. What am I going to do now?**

The VA requires that you attend a regionally accredited institution, not specifically one with a programmatic accreditation. UAA is regionally accredited institution-wide by NWCCU. Your standing with the VA is not affected by the revocation of program-level accreditation of programs within UAA's School of Education.

**Does this have any impact on the value of the degrees that UAA alumni have previously earned from UAA's College or School of Education?**

No. The School was accredited through December 31, 2018. In addition, DEED will accept UAA's teacher licensure recommendations for students completing UAA's initial

licensure programs during spring and summer 2019. All students in the program will be provided a path to licensure. See information on licensure and reciprocity in this FAQ.

**How will this impact UA's ability to improve the number of teachers it graduates to serve our state?**

Teacher education will continue to be provided at UAA, either through a UAA program approved by the State Board of Education, or through accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS. Those students currently in the program will be provided a path to licensure. UA remains committed to and confident in its ability to increase the number of its Alaska trained teachers.

**Why wasn't UAA transparent about the risk of losing accreditation at the School of Education? Why weren't we informed of problems with the accreditation process?**

Even though interim feedback was negative, UAA administration and faculty worked hard to respond to deficiencies identified by CAEP. In retrospect, the former leadership of UAA and the UAA School of Education should have worked closely with our sister universities and the system to address the issues raised by CAEP's interim feedback, and should have brought students into that conversation.

**I feel like I did not get what I paid for. Should I get the money I've paid for tuition, books and parking back?**

Your work has tremendous value. Your credits are from an accredited institution and will apply to licensure paths through UAA, UAF or UAS, or to other programs if you so choose. Students have the option of pursuing licensure at UAA, or transferring their credits to accredited programs offered through UAF or UAS. If you elect to transfer, either now or at the end of the semester, UA will facilitate transfers, make accommodations for place-bound students, and hold students harmless from costs and fees associated with transfers.

**If these programs in the School of Education achieve re-accreditation, will our cohort's degrees be retroactively recognized as coming from an accredited program?**

No, but state licensure is typically the most important consideration (see discussion on reciprocity in this FAQ. UAA remains institutionally (regionally) accredited.

**Will school districts still pay graduates the Master's rate if the program does not hold CAEP accreditation?**

While employers can set and interpret their own policies, additional pay for advanced degrees is generally based on the degree being from a regionally accredited institution like UAA.

**Is it possible to transfer my credits from UAA to either UAF or UAS to complete my education degree?**

Yes, but please work with your academic or faculty advisor to determine what is specifically necessary to transfer UAA education degree credits to either UAF or UAS. UA is committed to holding affected students harmless from costs and fees associated with transfers.

**Will degree requirements change as a result of the loss of accreditation?**

Degree requirements are unaffected by loss of program accreditation. No changes are planned.

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