Accelerated Master's Program in Early Childhood Special Education

The Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) in **Early Childhood** Special Education allows high-achieving students to pursue the Bachelor's of Arts in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE BA) and Master's of Arts in Special Education (SPED MA) degrees in an accelerated manner. AMP is a combination of these two existing programs, allowing for 12 credits of graduate credits to count toward the requirements of both degrees. The program is essentially a recruiting tool that motivates students to pursue their MA at UCCS, which is beneficial to both the Department of Teaching and Learning and the overall career development of the student.

Program Requirements

Requirements for the combined AMP are the composite of the IECE BA and SPED MA degrees. Specifically, 12 credit hours of graduate-level courses count towards the special education endorsement requirements of the IECE BA degree, while also counting toward the requirements of the SPED MA degree. Below is the program plan:

AMP Courses (12 Credits):

- SPED 5004: Transition and Self-Determination (Fall)
  - Replaces **IECE 4500 – UDL for Learning and Individualized Supports**
- SPED 5020 – Significant Support Needs (Spring)
  - Replaces **IELM 3250 – Complex Support Needs**
- SPED 5021 – Positive Classroom Environments (Fall)
  - Replaces **IECE 4020 – Positive Classroom Communities**
- SPED 5022 – Consultation and Collaboration (Spring
  - Replaces **IECE 3600 – Culturally Responsive Leadership and Practices in Early Childhood**

Additional Courses Needed for SPED MA (18 Credits):

- LEAD 5700: Introduction to Research and Statistics
- SPED 5000: Disability Studies in Education
- SPED 5001: Foundations of Special Education
- CURR 5090: Applied Research Project
- IECE 5010: Diversity and Child Development
- SPED 5303: Designing Trauma Informed Supports in the Classroom

Total Credit Hours: 30

Program Justification

The proposed AMP is a common pathway in teacher preparation programs across the country. For example, the University of Colorado Denver has a similar program, called the BA to MA program (BAMA) in Education and Human Development, with 9 credits of shared elementary and special education undergraduate to graduate coursework. Similar programs are offered by other universities throughout the Mountain West, ranging from 9 credits to 18 credits, with 12 credit hours of shared coursework being the most common.

AMP encourages students to continue their education beyond the IECE BA (they are already 40% of the way toward completion of the SPED MA with the same number of credits as IECE BA-only students), which makes students much more marketable for employment as educators within local school districts. Additionally, AMP will allow students to begin their teaching career at a higher pay scale, as well as serve as a steppingstone to advanced degrees, such as an EdD, PhD, or administrative certification program.

Program Costs

There are no additional courses, faculty, or costs needed to implement this program. Rather, it is an arrangement of existing courses and programs to encourage students to pursue the SPED MA while still working on their IECE BA. The special education graduate courses currently have capacity for the anticipated additional students, so additional sections will not need to be offered.

Program Admission and Administration

Students may apply for AMP after they have:

- Completed at least 30 credit hours at UCCS
- Completed at least 15 credit hours in the IECE BA program
- Earned Junior class standing or higher
- Maintained a cumulative UCCS GPA of at least 3.00
- Interviewed with a SPED MA faculty member
- Completed an Intent Application

After the application is accepted, the student may take up to 12 credit hours of graduate classes as an IECE BA student. The 12 credit hours of graduate coursework will be applied toward special education endorsement requirements for the IECE BA, as well as toward course requirements for the SPED MA.

Continuous enrollment (Fall and Spring semesters) from IECE BA to SPED MA is needed for courses to double count towards both degrees. Further, while students are in AMP, they must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA throughout the program. Lastly, if admission to another UCCS Master's or Doctoral program is sought, admission must follow completion of the IECE BA to SPED MA AMP.