

REVIEW OF THE ED.D. IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 13.1001
Special Education and Teaching, General

OVERVIEW

The Ed.D. in Special Education program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Special Education within the College of Education. At the undergraduate level the Department of Special education houses the B.S.Ed. in Special Education with three sequences: Learning and Behavior Specialist I (LBS), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), and Low Vision and Blindness (LVB). At the graduate level, the Department offers a Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.) and a Master of Science (M.S.) in Special Education. The Department also offers Advanced certificates in multiple areas including an LBS II Behavior Intervention Specialist, LBS II Curriculum Adaptation Specialist, LBS II Transition Specialist, LBS II Multiple Disabilities Specialist, and an Early Intervention Vision Specialist. These programs are typically completed as part of a M.S. degree program, combining core courses and electives. They can also be taken as a stand-alone non-degree program. The Department offers a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). Finally, as part of the Special Education Doctoral Program, students have the opportunity to take courses that can lead to the Director of Special Education (DOSE) endorsement, a Post-Master's Graduate Certificate. The last review of the Ed.D. in Special Education program occurred in 2012-2013.

The Doctoral Program in the Department of Special Education offers the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree for candidates seeking leadership positions in the field of Special Education. Throughout the doctoral program, students complete core and specialty courses related to professional experiences related to teacher preparation and program leadership; they also conduct research in the field of special education that culminates in completion of a doctoral dissertation. The primary goal of the Special Education Doctoral Program is to produce graduates who are prepared to serve as leaders in special education, either as higher education faculty members or as administrators in the field of special education. The Special Education Doctoral Program has two cohorts: one on-campus and one in Chicagoland. The on-campus cohort offers face-to-face courses with rolling admissions, and the Chicagoland cohort is offered in a hybrid format, running every three to four years.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2012-2019 **Ed.D. in Special Education, Illinois State University** First Majors Only

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Enrollments, fall census day | 19 | 20 | 25 | 27 | 41 | 29 | 21 | 20 |
| Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year | 3 | 2 | 4 | -- | 5 | 7 | 2 | 6 |

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Special Education is a degree offered by Illinois State University for persons seeking leadership positions in the field of special education. Doctoral students complete formal course work and professional experiences related to teacher preparation and program leadership and conduct research in the field of special education that culminates in completion of a doctoral dissertation. The primary goal of the SED doctoral program is to produce graduates who are prepared to serve as special education higher education faculty members or leaders or administrators in the field of special education.

Students learning outcomes

Student learning outcomes for the SED Ed.D. program align with the Advanced Content Standards identified by the Council for Exceptional Children.

- *Leadership and Policy.* Special educators in advanced programs learn to use their deep understanding of the history of special education, current legal and ethical standards, and emerging issues to provide leadership. Special educators promote high professional self-expectations and help others understand the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs. They advocate for educational policy based on solid evidence-based knowledge to support high quality education for individuals with exceptional learning needs. As appropriate to their role, they advocate for appropriate resources to ensure that all personnel involved have effective preparation. Special educators use their knowledge of the needs of different groups in a pluralistic society to promote evidence-based practices and challenging expectations for individuals with exceptional learning needs. They model respect for all individuals and ethical practice. They help to create positive and productive work environments and celebrate accomplishments with colleagues. They mentor others and promote high expectations for themselves, other professionals, and individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- *Program Development and Organization.* Special educators apply their knowledge of cognitive science, learning theory, and instructional technologies to improve instructional programs. They advocate for a continuum of program options and services to ensure the appropriate instructional supports for individuals with exceptional learning needs. They help design and deliver, as appropriate to their role, ongoing results-oriented professional development designed to support the use of evidenced-based practices at all relevant organizational levels. They use their understanding of the effects of cultural, social, and economic diversity and variations of individual development to inform their development of programs and services for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators continuously broaden and deepen their professional knowledge, and expand their expertise with instructional technologies, curriculum standards, effective teaching strategies, and assistive technologies to support access to learning. They use their deep understanding of how to coordinate educational standards to the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs to help all individuals with exceptional learning needs to access challenging curriculum standards.
- *Research and Inquiry.* Research and inquiry inform the decisions of special educators who have completed advanced programs in guiding professional practice. Special educators know models, theories, philosophies, and research methods that form the basis for evidence-based practices in special education. This knowledge includes information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies. Special educators evaluate the appropriateness of research methodologies in relation to practices presented in the literature. They use educational research to improve instructional techniques, intervention strategies, and curricular materials. They foster an environment supportive of continuous instructional improvement and engage in the design and implementation of action research. Special educators are able to use the literature to resolve issues of professional practice and help others to understand various evidence-based practices.
- *Student and Program Evaluation.* Evaluation is critical to advanced practice of special educators. Underlying evaluation is the knowledge of systems and theories of educational assessment and evaluation, along with skills in the implementation of evidence-based practices in assessment. Effective special educators design and implement research activities to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices and, as appropriate to their role, to assess progress toward the organizational vision, mission, and goals of their programs. It is critical in evaluation that nonbiased assessment procedures are used in the selection of assessment instruments, methods, and procedures for both programs and individuals. With respect to evaluation of individuals, special educators prepared at the advanced level are able to apply their knowledge and skill to all stages and purposes of evaluation including: prereferral and screening, preplacement for special education eligibility, monitoring and reporting learning progress in the general education curriculum and other individualized educational program goals.
- *Professional Development and Ethical Practice.* Special educators are guided by the professional ethics and practice standards. Special educators have responsibility for promoting the success of individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, and colleagues. They create supportive environments that safeguard the legal rights of students and their families. They model and promote ethical and professional practice. Special educators plan, present, and evaluate professional development, as appropriate to their roles, based on models that apply adult learning theories and focus on effective practice at all organizational levels. Special educators

model their own commitment to continuously improving their own professional practice by participating in professional development themselves.

- *Collaboration.* Special educators prepared at the advanced level have a deep understanding of the centrality and importance of consultation and collaboration to the roles within special education and use this deep understanding to integrate services for individuals with exceptional learning needs. They also understand the significance of the role of collaboration for both internal and external stakeholders, and apply their skill to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus among both internal and external stakeholders to provide services to individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. They possess current knowledge of research on stages and models in both collaboration and consultation and ethical and legal issues related to consultation and collaboration. Moreover, special educators prepared at the advanced level have a deep understanding of the possible interactions of language, diversity, culture and religion with contextual factors and how to use collaboration and consultation to enhance opportunities for individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

The Ed.D. in Special Education requires 75 credit hours. This includes 23 credit hours of core courses, 22 credit hours of specialized courses, 15 credit hours of electives, 15 credit hours of dissertation research and a doctoral examination.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus and in Chicago land cohorts.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2019)

19 tenure track faculty members (3 Professors, 6 Associate Professors, and 10 Assistant Professors)

41 non-tenure track faculty members (23 full-time, 28 part-time, totaling 29.40 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 16 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 41 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The Doctoral Program does not currently hold external accreditation, although it has been decided that advanced programs in the College of Education will seek accreditation from the Council on the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in near the future.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The disability movement has resulted in increased access to the general education curriculum among students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities remain a marginalized group who achieve lower levels of performance, compared to their peers without disabilities. Since the last program review, the field of special education continued to face high demands for highly skilled and culturally responsive college faculty, school administrators, and teacher leaders, with the following changes and challenges related to the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand:

1. The demand for special education tenure-track faculty members is especially high. Each year, there are between 25 and 50 tenure-track faculty position openings in the United States that seek candidates with a strong research agenda, college teaching experience, and exceptional verbal and written communication skills for faculty positions. Thus, it is critical that the special education doctoral program at Illinois State continue to maintain a rigorous program to equip program graduates to fulfill such demands in higher education.
2. With the inclusion movement and disability advocacy, society has challenged the historically minimum expectations for people with disabilities. Therefore, the doctoral program needs to prepare current and future leaders to model high expectations for teachers and teacher candidates, who can then hold high expectations for themselves and their students with disabilities. The doctoral program also needs to prepare leaders who are

critical consumers of research and can make instructional decisions to decrease the gaps between research and practice.

3. The academic discipline is in urgent need of rigorous and original research to strengthen the foundation of evidence-based practices that can be used to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities. Thus, this demand has challenged the faculty to maintain active research agendas, involving doctoral students in research projects and mentoring doctoral students in designing, conducting, and disseminating quality research.
4. Across the nation, there is an urgent call for culturally responsive pedagogy in K-12 and college classrooms. The issues of disproportionality in special education have resulted in minority students who are overrepresented among the populations of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The special education doctoral program shares the responsibility of preparing current and future teacher educators who can model culturally responsive pedagogy in college classrooms and prepare future K-12 teachers to be culturally responsive.
5. With the advancement of technology and emergence of fully online doctoral programs, there are increased demands for a program delivery model that addresses the need of working professionals while maintaining the academic rigor and allowing relationship-building among students and between students and faculty. In the upcoming year, the School of Education graduate faculty will explore and discuss delivery options for on-campus and Chicagoland cohorts.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in three recommendations.

1. *Continue efforts to recruit students and faculty from underrepresented groups.* From 2011 to 2018, the department has undergone several faculty searches and resulted in successful hires of eight underrepresented tenure-track new faculty members (i.e. two Asians, two African Americans, three Latinos, and one male). In addition, there are increased enrollments of minority students in the doctoral program. As discussed in the actions taken for student diversity, the special education department has hosted professional development workshops to enhance faculty's cultural competency. One challenge in recruiting students from underrepresented groups are finance supports available at the university. Currently, there are some limited scholarships available for minority graduate students who want to pursue doctoral studies.
2. *Continue to monitor demand for on-campus and cohort programs.* During annual advisory council meetings and alumni events, the department continued to monitor the demand for on-campus and off-campus cohorts. On a regular basis, the doctoral coordinator receives inquiries for program information from both on- and off-campus prospective doctoral students. In the upcoming year, the faculty will evaluate and discuss the need for more flexible delivery models, while maintaining the rigor of the program.
3. *Continue to monitor time-to-degree.* The program coordinator has continued to monitor the progress of doctoral students with regular email communication and program updates. From 2011 to 2018, there were 31 doctoral graduates and 25 (i.e. 80 percent) students graduated within the eight years of timeframe. Recently, a Doc Buddy, a peer partner system that connects Chicagoland and on-campus doctoral students with periodic check-ins, was created, but there is a need to continue to assess the needs of the students.

Major findings

1. Enrollment and the numbers of degree conferred in the special education doctoral program have remained steady over the past several years. However, there is a need to increase the enrollment for the Chicagoland cohort and student diversity overall, possibly with targeted recruitment approaches to reach out to school districts with diverse student and teacher populations. Also, the program needs to explore and assess different delivery models for on-campus and off-campus cohorts to better address the needs of working professionals.
2. Overall, current doctoral students and alumni are satisfied with the program in terms of program outcomes, its delivery models, the School's courses, faculty mentorship, and scholarship opportunities. There is a need to facilitate stronger mentorship among faculty and students with more scholarship opportunities and to support more purposefully students who reach to the final stages of the research proposal and culminating dissertation.
3. To continue to offer a competitive, rigorous, and high-quality program that prepares future higher education faculty for culturally responsive pedagogy, there is a need for the School's graduate faculty to review the curriculum and degree requirements and to discuss ways to infuse diversity and writing requirements within and across the curriculum.

Initiatives and plans

1. Continue to maintain a strong and rigorous special education doctoral program with high expectations for students.

This plan will position graduates for higher education and other leadership positions, and for contributing to the field through research, practice, and advocacy. To do so, the School's graduate faculty will need to review the curriculum, degree requirements, and program outcomes. They will also need to investigate possible revisions to the curriculum and offer focused areas of doctoral study, as well as ways to infuse diversity and writing competency within and across the curriculum.

2. Continue to increase student and faculty diversity.

This plan aligns with the Vision and Core Values of Educate • Connect • Elevate (ECE): Illinois State— the Strategic Plan for Illinois' First Public University 2018-2023 (ECE IA. III.A). The program needs to identify ways to recruit and retain minority doctoral students with targeted recruitment in diverse school districts. It will also need to determine means of providing mentoring, financial support, and potential partnerships with the INTO center to recruit international students. The department should also continue to recruit minority faculty during faculty searches and provide support to equip faculty with strategies to infuse diversity within and across the doctoral curriculum (ECE III.A.C.).

3. Assess the need to change delivery models and explore options to better meet the needs of working professionals while maintaining high program standards.

The program should continue to systematically assess student progress and collect specific feedback on the current delivery models. Most doctoral students are older adults who are full-time working professionals, who value the direct interactions with faculty and their fellow students. The program needs to reassess delivery models for on-campus and/or off-campus cohorts and explore different delivery options that can maintain program rigor and facilitate meaningful relationships between students and faculty.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the Ed.D. in Special Education to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the program for a concise and critical self-study report. The Ed.D. in Special Education prepares individuals in the areas of teacher education, program design and management, and research and evaluation for careers in higher education as well as for leadership roles in human service programs that focus on children and adults with disabilities. Each student's program includes formal coursework, professional practice experiences, and a dissertation. The Ed.D. program also offers the opportunity for students to pursue the Director of Special Education (DOSE) Post-Master's Certificate, an approved Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) program leading to an endorsement in special education administration for the Professional Educator License. The review process for this self-study involved gathering, analyzing, and implementing changes based on feedback from key stakeholders.

The committee commends the program on maintaining a strong and competitive program for doctoral-level special education training in the State of Illinois. The program has two cohorts, one on-campus and one in Chicagoland. The on-campus cohort offers face-to-face courses with rolling admissions, and the Chicagoland cohort is offered in a hybrid format, running every three to four years. To accommodate the schedule of working professionals, on-campus cohort courses are scheduled to meet one to two evenings, and the off-campus cohort courses are scheduled to meet one evening per week. By virtue of these two cohorts, the enrollments in the program have remained above the minimum target of 20 students. This has allowed the program to maintain small class sizes for doctoral courses and to provide each doctoral student with individualized faculty support and guidance. The committee also recognizes the use of the scholarships available through the Graduate School and Alumni Association in recruiting minority students.

The committee commends faculty efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness through their varied activities related to diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching. We commend the program faculty for their development and participation in the GROWTH peer-to-peer mentoring program and for allowing doctoral student participation in this professional development opportunity. The committee applauds the program's multifaceted plans to increase and support both student and faculty diversity and strongly encourages the faculty to pursue the self-identified areas of improvement. The committee notes the leadership role that many of the faculty have taken with the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference held at Illinois State University.

The committee commends the close working relationship the department has with its subject liaison librarian and the department's willingness to embed library resources more closely into the department and curriculum through providing office space in close physical proximity to the department, integrating a variety of library instruction options (e.g., video modules), and creating a journal wish list as a way to identify potential journals that Milner Library can purchase. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, the committee encourages the department and library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among special education faculty and students.

The committee notes that while there have not been major changes to the doctoral curriculum, the program faculty have engaged in ongoing assessment procedures and used information from these efforts to guide revisions to the program requirements. The committee commends the program faculty on their efforts to infuse topics related to diversity into and across the curriculum. We support the program faculty in pursuing accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. The committee also notes that the program is on schedule for ISBE reauthorization. We further commend the program for the excellent pass rates of Illinois State DOSE candidates who completed the state licensure examination.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the Ed.D. in Special Education program for the opportunity to provide input regarding special educator preparation at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with Special Education faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2027, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan to monitor and assess the impact of having different delivery systems for the two cohorts in the program. The committee recommends that faculty members closely monitor and evaluate the impacts of the online and hybrid courses on student recruitment, retention, and graduation. Comparability of program requirements across delivery modes is required and programs are monitored by the university, the state, and the Higher Learning Commission (the University's regional accreditation body) for compliance with this and other policies. The committee suggests that faculty consider also how the different delivery formats and the on-campus and off-campus cohorts may impact program and student success. The plan should also assess the ability to deliver the program online to meet student needs without sacrificing program quality, and the extent and strength of relations with program alumni. Findings from the implementation of this plan and student learning outcomes assessment processes embedded in the program can aid faculty in conducting its analyses and identifying the need for subsequent curriculum revisions. The committee suggests that the program broaden the scope of their planning to include feedback from additional key stakeholders beyond alumni (e.g., students, districts that employ their graduates) for guidance.

Continue to evaluate program curriculum, degree requirements, and program outcomes. The committee notes that the program requires more hours than other special education doctoral programs in the state. Although the self-study report indicated Illinois State faculty's reasons for the greater number of credit hours, such as requiring courses that are focused on postsecondary-level teaching and teacher preparation, we recommend that the program faculty examine how that requirement may impact recruitment, retention, and time-to-degree for students.

Continue to refine your plan for recruitment and enrollment growth. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment during the next program review cycle. The committee encourages the program to develop and implement a plan for student recruitment and retention, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment by students from gender, racial, and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the

program and discipline. Some elements of a recruitment plan have already been identified by faculty in its self-study report, including advertising at state-level teacher conferences, sending emails to alumni, distributing recruitment flyers, and using internal and external networks. The committee recommends that the program work with University Marketing and Communications to pursue additional methods of recruiting. The committee urges the program faculty to evaluate the effects of recruitment efforts on enrollment and, in turn, on the ability of the college to provide high-quality doctoral-level education.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. As indicated in the self-study report, the committee encourages the program to pursue its goals related to further developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends you work with the department's subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to special education to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. We also recommend you work with your subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the department, align those outcomes to the curriculum, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee notes that the current assessment plan is dated 2010. We recommend that the program faculty include revisions of their assessment plan as part of their preparation for CAEP accreditation. After the program has revised its existing plan, the committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.