

## **REVIEW OF THE POST-BACCALAUREATE LIBRARY INFORMATION SPECIALIST CERTIFICATE**

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 25.0101  
Library and Information Science

### **OVERVIEW**

The Post-Baccalaureate Library Information Specialist Certificate program (hereinafter, the “Library Information Specialist program”) at Illinois State University is housed in the School of Teaching and Learning within the College of Education. The school also offers an undergraduate minor in Bilingual Education; a B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education; a B.S., B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education; a B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Teacher Education; an M.S.Ed. in Reading; an M.S. in Teaching and Learning; and an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning.

The Library Information Specialist program was established by Illinois State University and recognized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in 2008. The program serves elementary and secondary school districts of Illinois by preparing qualified candidates for their school library or school media center positions. The program enrolls licensed in-service teachers seeking Library Information Specialist endorsement from the Illinois State Board of Education to qualify for those positions, typically in their own school or school district. For the convenience of in-service teachers, the program is designed to be completed fully online. Since its inception, the program has graduated more than 80 students qualified for the Library Information Specialist endorsement.

Through 2015-2016, the Library Information Specialist program was delivered jointly by Milner Library and the School of Teaching and Learning. The library administered the program, which involved providing oversight of the curriculum for its adherence to state standards, recruiting students, scheduling courses and instructors, and assisting instructors with the technologies used to teach the courses. Since the library does not offer credit-bearing courses, library information specialist courses were offered through the School of Teaching and Learning, which also conferred certificates to students completing the program. Beginning in 2016-2017, by agreement of both parties, the program was streamlined by transitioning all aspects of its administration and delivery to the School of Teaching and Learning.

#### **Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2011-2018 Post-Baccalaureate Library Information Specialist Certificate, Illinois State University**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment, fall census day	22	24	23	22	22	17	17	18
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	4	11	12	11	8	10	15	7

Table note:  
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**

To prepare library information professionals who are ...

- Information literate and familiar with best practices for information literacy instruction and models of information literacy.
- Competent in the basics of school library management, including planning, marketing, publicity, and the management of school library funds.
- Able collection developers who create dynamic, evolving school library collections that support the curriculum and student interests.
- Avid readers familiar with age appropriate literature and the use of literature for classroom instruction.
- Pursuers of lifelong learning and professional growth and development.

### **Students learning outcomes**

- The library information specialist provides equitable intellectual and physical access to information and ideas in support of the curriculum for a diverse community of learners.
- The library information specialist plans and implements the access to and delivery of a full range of information resources and services through the library media program.
- The library information specialist demonstrates knowledge and mastery of information literacy standards for student learning by creating and maintaining a program for a broad learning community.
- The library information specialist encourages and engages students in reading, viewing, and listening for understanding and enjoyment. The collection and functions of the library media program respond to various developmental levels, physical and intellectual disabilities, special gifts and talents, diverse cultural backgrounds, and different styles of accessing and processing information.
- The library information specialist plans and provides instruction in the five cross-disciplinary abilities as they apply to the Illinois Learning Standards.
- The library information specialist is knowledgeable about information, instruction, and production-based technologies that enhance learning and teaching. He or she is knowledgeable about both the access to information and the operation of the devices that deliver, produce, and manage that information.
- The library information specialist demonstrates leadership in curricular planning and assessment.
- The library information specialist communicates effectively with students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and the community.
- The library information specialist uses active listening skills to assist learners in locating, evaluating, and using information.
- The library information specialist plans instruction collaboratively with teachers and other members of the learning community.
- The library information specialist serves as an educational leader and as a catalyst for improving the learning community.
- The library information specialist plans and efficiently administers a program that makes a significant contribution to students' learning. He or she leads, collaborates, and applies technology skills in designing and managing a program that is integrated into the schools' curriculum and supports the development of effective users and communicators of ideas and information within a lifelong, independent learning process.

### **Program curriculum** (2018-2019)

Graduation requirements:

Eight courses totaling 24 credit hours. Seven of the eight courses are prescribed. Students select their eighth course from a list including technology courses offered by the School of Teaching and Learning and children's literature courses offered by the Department of English.

### **Program delivery**

The program is designed to be completed online. All seven library science courses are offered online through synchronous communication. Three of the elective courses are offered online, through asynchronous communication.

### **School faculty** (Fall 2018)

41 tenure track faculty members (6 Professors, 18 Associate Professors, and 17 Assistant Professors)

66 non-tenure track faculty members (10 full-time and 56 part-time, totaling 33.19 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 22.5 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 38.2 to 1

Instructors teaching in the Library Information Specialist program are part-time, non-tenure track faculty members with experience in school librarianship.

### **Specialized accreditation**

The Library Information Specialist program is not affiliated with a specialized accreditation association.

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

Since the Library Information Specialist program was established in 2008, the number of school library or school media center positions in Illinois has decreased as school districts have sought to reduce costs. Some districts have consolidated libraries or transitioned from having a librarian in every school library to appointing a librarian to serve multiple school libraries on a rotating basis. Despite the reduction in the number of positions, a need persists for qualified library information specialists to serve the elementary and secondary schools of the state. The Illinois State Board of Education reports that between 10 and 25 school library positions have remained unfilled in the state during each of the last 10 years. The Library Information Specialist program continues to receive inquiries from school districts seeking qualified candidates for their school library or school media center positions. By doubling the number of graduates each year, the Library Information Specialist program could help meet that unmet demand. A challenge in recruiting students to the program is overcoming the misperception among many in-service teachers that job opportunities in the state for teachers with the library information specialist endorsement no longer exist.

### **Responses to previous program review recommendations**

Not applicable. This is the first review of the Library Information Specialist program on the eight-year program review cycle.

### **Major findings**

The Library Information Specialist program continues to be an educator preparation asset for the state that needs to be experienced by more students. Program alumni, some of whom now teach in the program, express satisfaction with the experiences they gained from the program and continue to express pride in it. Two of the strongest aspects of the program are the practicality and purposefulness of the coursework and the focus of every library science course on school librarianship (compared to other school librarianship programs that include content appropriate for public librarianship and academic librarianship as well). Small class size, while sometimes creating challenges for program funding and delivery, has also been a program asset as it makes individualized attention to students possible and fosters networking among students and faculty, which often results in professional relationships that continue long after students have completed the program. Other program strengths include the ability of students to complete the program online, the singular focus of the program on preparing students for the library information specialist endorsement rather than for the endorsement and a master's degree, and instructors who are active on state committees involved in updating school library standards.

The two primary opportunities for program improvement identified during the program review self-study process are recruiting a program coordinator who has content expertise and increasing enrollment. The current program

coordinator is an administrator in the School of Teaching and Learning with extensive experience in elementary and secondary education but not in school librarianship. A program coordinator with that expertise would be better equipped to maintain a curriculum that is current and relevant, promote coherence across the curriculum, and keep instructors updated regarding program changes, challenges, and opportunities. The latter is particularly important, since instructors in the program typically teach only one course each year and do so from off-campus locations. Increasing program enrollment would help the program address the unmet demand for school librarians across the state. In addition, enrolling more students could lead to increased financial support for the program and its students, increased diversity of thought in course discussions, and increased student diversity.

### **Initiatives and plans**

#### **Program coordination**

- Investigate hiring a program coordinator with content area expertise.
- Create a virtual space to house shared documents and provide a platform for faculty collaboration.
- Host virtual meetings each semester to discuss the program curriculum and course content.
- Host an annual faculty retreat/workshop to focus on curriculum and course changes.
- Determine professional development needs (e.g., pedagogy in the online environment, technology changes) and implement professional development programming.

#### **Student recruitment**

- Work with the College of Education Director of Enrollment and Transition Services to develop a recruitment strategy.
- Work with University Marketing and Communications and the College of Education to develop new marketing materials.
- Target larger school districts with more diverse populations when recruiting students.
- Attend and present at state- and national-level teacher conferences to promote the program.

### **PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the Post-Baccalaureate Library Information Specialist Certificate program for submission of its first self-study report on the eight-year program review cycle. The only prior report submitted by the program was a three-year progress report submitted to the Office of the Provost in 2014 and subsequently to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) in summer 2015. The program was determined to be in good standing at that time.

The Library Information Specialist program was established in 2008 to prepare in-service elementary and secondary teachers for endorsement by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to serve as library information specialists in Illinois schools. Initially, students in the Library Information Specialist program chose between working toward an endorsement to serve on the elementary school level or to serve on the secondary school level. Endorsement rules have since been changed by ISBE to provide for a single library information specialist endorsement that covers pre-kindergarten through Grade 12. The Library Information Specialist program is the sole endorsement-only program in the state that qualifies teachers to serve as library information specialists. Comparator plans of study offered at other institutions in the state are part of master's degree programs, either in library science or instructional technology. Thus, the Library Information Specialist program at Illinois State serves in-service teachers who seek to work as a library information specialist but who do not seek a master's degree in the field.

The Library Information Specialist program was designed to be delivered online for the convenience of in-service teachers unable to attend classes on campus, with courses scheduled at times convenient for full-time elementary and secondary school teachers or delivered asynchronously. Online program delivery has been accomplished through the combined efforts of the program coordinator and teaching faculty. Those efforts have included planning for online delivery as new courses are designed and converting courses traditionally delivered face-to-face to online instruction (as has been the case with at least one children's literature course that is taught by faculty in the Department of English and that serves as an elective course for the Library Information Specialist program).

Enrollment in the Library Information Specialist program has been strong relative to other certificate programs at the University, which are typically designed to serve smaller numbers of students. Fall census day enrollment in the Library Information Specialist program averaged 19 students between 2010 and 2018. During that period the program graduated 82 students eligible for library information specialist endorsement. Those new specialists have, in turn, partnered with their classroom teachers to advance literacy in their schools. The self-study report evidences alumni satisfaction with the Library Information Specialist program, particularly its convenience and the expertise of its instructors (most of whom have served as school librarians). Contributing to the success of the program in preparing students for endorsement are ongoing efforts by Milner Library faculty and staff to build and maintain a library and information science collection relevant to the program and accessible to students online. The committee commends library faculty for guest lecturing in the program upon request.

The committee recognizes that the Library Information Specialist program has been in transition with respect to its administration since at least 2017. The committee further recognizes that the administrative changes have significant ramifications regarding compliance with accreditation standards and university policies. When first offered in spring 2009, the Library Information Specialist program was administered by Milner Library. A tenure-line library faculty member who had previously served as a high school librarian coordinated and taught in the program. Since fall 2017 the program has been administered by the School of Teaching and Learning within the College of Education. Despite school efforts to hire a tenure-line faculty member credentialed to teach both in educator preparation programs offered by the school and in the Library Information Specialist program, the school has thus far been unsuccessful in doing so. Indeed, there are no faculty members in the school credentialed to teach or coordinate the program. The self-study report identifies the hiring of an appropriately-credentialed program coordinator as an immediate need and priority for the program. The committee concurs.

In its delivery of academic programs, the University is expected to follow assumed practices promulgated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the body that accredits the University. Those practices provide that each faculty member associated with an academic program should possess an academic degree relevant to the program and at least one level higher than the level of the program. HLC allows for exceptions when an instructor lacks the appropriate academic degree but possesses equivalent experience, so long as the institution has a policy regarding equivalent experience for the program and use of the policy is an exception rather than commonplace. Consistent with that HLC expectation, it is the policy of Illinois State University that its graduate programs are taught by graduate faculty members. To qualify for graduate faculty status, a faculty member must be a tenure-line faculty member with the terminal degree in the field.

Since at least 2015, the practice observed by the Library Information Specialist program has been to hire adjunct instructors to teach courses in the program (i.e., instructors who are not members of the graduate faculty at Illinois State). The highest degree attained by every adjunct faculty member who has taught in the program since 2015 has been either a master's degree or a certificate of advanced study (i.e., a post-master's certificate). In addition, since 2017 the program has lacked a coordinator with library science credentials. As a result, the Library Information Specialist program has not been and is not currently in compliance with HLC assumed practices or with university policies.

Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the Post-Baccalaureate Library Information Specialist Certificate program for further review. The committee requests that the School of Teaching and Learning take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

**Report 1: Due December 15, 2019**

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

The Academic Planning Committee asks the School of Teaching and Learning to investigate options for bringing the Library Information Specialist program into full compliance with HLC assumed practices and university policies regarding the credentials of faculty members teaching at the graduate level. The committee further asks the school to develop a plan of action for doing so based on its investigations. The committee asks the school to submit a follow-up report to the committee via the Office of the Provost by December 15, 2019, setting forth the plan of action. The plan should provide a general rationale for the approach selected by the school, detailed actions, and a timeframe for their implementation.

**Report 2: Due October 1, 2020**

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

The Academic Planning Committee asks the school to implement its plan of action for bringing the Library Information Specialist program into full compliance with HLC assumed practices and university policies. The Academic Planning Committee asks the school to report the status of that implementation in a report submitted to the committee by October 1, 2020 via the Office of the Provost. The committee recognizes that full implementation of the plan might not be complete by the submission date.

Based on the status of plan implementation and on review by the committee of the report due October 1, 2020, the committee may request additional annual reports by the school until full compliance has been achieved by the school, unless the program has otherwise been disestablished. If full compliance has not been achieved by June 30, 2024, and the program has not already been disestablished, IBHE may rescind the authority it granted to the University in 2008 to offer the program and request that the University disestablish the program.