

## REVIEW OF THE M.S., M.S.ED. IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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

### OVERVIEW

The M.S., M.S.Ed. 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 M.S., M.S.Ed. in Special Education program occurred in 2012-2013.

The Master’s programs in Special Education at Illinois State University have opportunities for students to collaborate with faculty on individual research, to learn from productive scholars, and to apply their learning directly to their practice as teachers. Most assignments are designed to make an immediate impact on the classroom and to change the outcomes in a classroom, as students learn from their professors and fellow students. While learning to use new technologies, students expand the accessibility of learning environments throughout the state. Faculty provide personalized instruction if a student needs support, and expert advisors help students navigate their programs to fit within the demands of a working professional. Various options in certification and in-depth learning allow students to explore their discipline on a deeper level than they did through their undergraduate program.

The M.S.Ed. program leads to an endorsement in special education for licensed general education teachers, but not an initial licensure. All LBS I and LBS II endorsements are governed by the Illinois State Board of Education.

**Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2012-2019**  
**M.S., M.S.Ed. in Special Education, Illinois State University**  
First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
M.S.	65	56	43	5	35	41	42	46
M.S.Ed.	--	--	--	34	20	25	32	23
Total	65	56	43	39	55	66	74	69
LBS II Behavior Intervention Specialist Graduate Certificate	1		2					
LBS II Curriculum Adaption Specialist Graduate Certificate				1				1
LBS II Secondary Transition Specialist Graduate Certificate	8	8		12	21			9
LBS II Multiple Disabilities Graduate Certificate		5	2	4	4	4	6	11
Early Intervention Vision Specialist Graduate Certificate	--	--	--	10	10	7	7	
Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Oral Specialist Graduate Certificate				12	11			

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. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing /Oral Specialist Graduate Certificate was offered through a series of development grants between 2010-2017. The Early Vision Specialist Graduate Certificate was offered through a personnel preparation grant between 2015-2019.

**Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Graduating Fiscal Year 2012-2019**

**M.S., M.S.Ed. in Special Education, Illinois State University**

First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
M.S. and M.S.Ed.	26	21	15	16	15	8	11	24
LBS II Behavior Intervention Specialist Graduate Certificate	4	2	2	10			2	9
LBS II Curriculum Adaption Specialist Graduate Certificate	4	1	2	8			0	8
LBS II Secondary Transition Specialist Graduate Certificate	11	1	11	1			9	0
LBS II Multiple Disabilities Graduate Certificate	1	0	0	0			0	8
Early Intervention Vision Specialist Graduate Certificate	--	--	--	--	--	10	10	7
Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Oral Specialist Graduate Certificate	0	12	8	20	12	11	13	--

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. Degree counts for the different LBS II Graduate Certificates for FY 2016 & 2017 were unavailable. In FY 2016 there were a total of 24 LBS II graduate certificates awarded and in FY 2017 there were LBS II 18 graduate certificates awarded. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing /Oral Specialist Graduate Certificate was offered through a series of development grants between 2010-2017. The Early Vision Specialist Graduate Certificate was offered through a personnel preparation grant between 2015-2019.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT**

**Program goals**

The Master of Science degree provides for advanced study in special education by practicing special education teachers who have prior training and licensure in special education. The program addresses teacher leadership and action research throughout coursework and provides in-depth study and application of advanced special education competencies as identified in the Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Preparation Standards. The program goals include:

- graduating world-class professional special educators
- seeking and challenging solutions to educational inequity
- engaging in unique, creative, and productive partnerships
- supporting cutting-edge scholarly endeavors
- developing a dynamic, comprehensive technological environment

**Students learning outcomes**

- Program completers demonstrate the ability to document their professional development through portfolios.
- Program completers meet professional knowledge and performance standards at a proficiency level, as identified in the Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Standards for Special Education Teachers. Advanced special education teachers demonstrate knowledge and skills in:

- Leadership and Policy
- Program Development & Organization
- Research & Inquiry
- Individual and Program Evaluation
- Professional Development & Ethical Practice
- Collaboration
- Program completers demonstrate the dispositions required of educators:
  - Collaboration: The ability to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort
  - Honesty/Integrity: The ability to demonstrate truthfulness to oneself and to others; demonstrate moral excellence and trustworthiness
  - Respect: The ability to honor, value, and demonstrate consideration and regard for oneself and others
  - Emotional Maturity: The ability to adjust one's emotional state to a suitable level of intensity in order to remain engaged with one's surroundings
  - Reflection: The ability to review, analyze, and evaluate the success of past decisions in an effort to make better decisions in the future
  - Flexibility: The willingness to accept and adapt to change
  - Responsibility: The ability to act independently, demonstrating accountability, reliability, and sound judgment
- Program completers bring about student learning in diverse settings with diverse learners.
- Program completers demonstrate the ability to positively impact the profession.
- Graduates maintain quality performance, bring about student learning, and contribute positively to the school/community learning environment.
- Graduates engage in continuous professional development.
- Program completers serve as mentors to new and pre-service teachers.

**Program curriculum** (2018-2019)

The M.S. in Special Education requires 39 credit hours. This includes 24 credit hours of core courses, 6 credit hours of area of concentration or approved sequence of elective courses, 9 credit hours of research or application project.

The M.S.Ed. in Special Education requires 39 credit hours. This includes 30 credit hours of core courses, 6 credit hours of area of concentration or approved sequence of elective courses, 3 credit hours of clinical capstone experience.

The Behavior Intervention Specialist Certificate requirements include: 15 credit hours of specific special education courses. Some courses require application of knowledge and skills with appropriate student populations. Students may be required to have concurrent enrollment in Professional Practice if not currently teaching in a setting that allows for application of these skills.

The Curriculum Adaptation Specialist Certificate requirements include: 12 credit hours of specific special education courses. Some courses require application of knowledge and skills with appropriate student populations. Students may be required to have concurrent enrollment in Professional Practice if not currently teaching in a setting that allows for application of these skills.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Listening and Spoken Language Professional Graduate Specialization Certificate requirements include: 12 credit hours of specific special education courses. Some courses require application of knowledge and skills with appropriate student populations; therefore, students will be required to enroll in 3-6 semester hours of Professional Practice unless this requirement is specifically waived by the department.

The Early Intervention Vision Specialist Certificate requirements include: 15 credit hours of specific special education courses and Professional Practice.

The Multiple Disabilities Specialist Certificate requirements include: 15 credit hours of specific special education courses and a minimum of one year or current experience teaching students with severe or multiple

disabilities. Some courses require application of knowledge and skills with appropriate student populations. Students may be required to have concurrent enrollment in Professional Practice if not currently teaching in a setting that allows for application of these skills.

The Transition Specialist Certificate requirements include: 12 credit hours of specific special education courses. All courses require application of knowledge and skills with appropriate student populations. Students may be required to have concurrent enrollment in Professional Practice if not currently teaching in a setting that allows for application of these skills.

### **Program delivery**

For the past seven years, the M.S., M.S.Ed. programs, and certificates were 78 percent to 88 percent on-line, with two to three traditional classes meeting at the university per semester. The M.S., M.S.Ed., and all certificate programs are now fully on-line, with the exception of the Transition Specialist Certificate Program, which will remain hybrid with two or three on-campus classes per semester. Currently, the on-line delivery format classes are only delivered two or three times synchronously and the rest of the time asynchronously. This format was always considered temporary, until the faculty could decide on a new format for on-line instruction. A trial format will begin in spring 2020, with a class meeting 50 percent synchronously and 50 percent asynchronously each week. Students who began prior to 2019 will stay in the current conception of the hybrid program until they graduate.

### **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 Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is the graduate accreditation body, and accreditation from this body will be pursued in the coming year, upon approval of the motion by the Council of Teacher Education (CTE). Up until recently, it was understood that graduate programs would be accredited along with accreditation efforts of undergraduate teacher education, although it was recently announced that graduate programs will need to pursue separate accreditation by CAEP.

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

#### *Factors Relevant to Program Demand and Format*

The most significant change in master's programs in Special Education nationally is a movement to 100 percent on-line format. While there remains demand at the undergraduate level for residential programs, there is an increased demand for flexibility in delivery format. At the start of the last self-study, a hybrid program was started. This program consisted of two to three on-campus meetings and asynchronous instruction.

There were several limitations to this delivery format: (1) Despite recruiting efforts, most students hail from the central Illinois region; (2) the three face-to-face meetings were not always a good match to a given course and challenged faculty to use them effectively; and (3) the skill sets and identity of the faculty did not match a dominant asynchronous program.

For these reasons, along with a need to stay current with trends in Master's in special education program delivery, the special education format was shifted to 100 percent on-line format. A SED faculty master's task force was formed to address various concerns about the master's program. Currently the task force has decided to experiment on a trial basis with a delivery format in which a course is delivered for an hour and 15 minutes synchronously on-line each week, and for an hour and 15 minutes asynchronously each week. The hope is to provide students with an opportunity to interact with each other and professors each week, but also to allow flexibility through the benefits of asynchronous instruction.

A second change, that has only started to be implemented, is more ongoing evaluation in an effort to be responsive to student needs. The Master's program coordinator will implement more frequent surveys, exit surveys, and program evaluation. The goal will be to feed that information back to the master's task force and ultimately graduate faculty, so curriculum can be more responsive to student needs.

It is notable in the last self-study that there was a finding that the program size was adequate, given the limited resources. Since then, it has become necessary for the master's program to play a larger role in overall enrollment because of changing demographic trends in Illinois, resulting in fewer high school graduates and fewer students choosing education as a major. Hence, high quality graduate programs serve as an opportunity to recruit prospective students who may have chosen other universities for their undergraduate education. Having larger numbers at the graduate level can balance out losses in enrollment at the undergraduate level that may be difficult to mitigate because they are related to demographic trends in the state. It is true that, if the master's programs in Special Education increase enrollment, it will require more graduate faculty; however, if needed, those resources can be requested as long as they are justified. The program should not limit its size because resources are available when required for program growth.

#### *Changes Relevant to the Field: Developments in the practice of training of teachers*

Our M.S.Ed. program, designed for general educators who want Learning and Behavior Specialist (LBS I) endorsement in special education and a master's degree in special education, has a clinical capstone project. In order to enhance the clinical component, several features have been re-designed and new practices adopted. In the last self-study and for most of the seven-year period, the clinical capstone took an entire year for a student to complete. In 2018, the faculty decided to move both Clinical Capstone Courses into one semester to shorten the typical plan of study by a semester; SED 490 – Clinical Capstone I and SED 491 – Clinical Capstone II, are now eight weeks both in the same semester.

For the previous seven years, SED 490 – Clinical Capstone I and SED 491 – Clinical Capstone II, focused on traditional action planning based on three to five goals connected to the Council for Exceptional Children's Advanced Standards. While there were some merits to this approach, students had little time to focus on the clinical application of accommodations, interventions, and supports that are at the heart of special education practice. Both SED 490 and SED 491 have been redesigned and technology has been incorporated to give students a capstone experience more connected to the actual practice of teaching special education. New components include use of Vosaic software to receive feedback on a digital videotaped instructional lesson. The software allows the instructor to write comments as they happen in the video. The advantage of this software use is that the student can see exactly what the instructor is referring to when they review the video. Teacher behavior is matched directly to instructor comments using the application.

A new action planning format that focuses the student on reflective change based on their instruction was also introduced with the goal to move to a more dynamic model of instruction. In this model, students practice, reflect, receive feedback, implement change, and/or reinforce strengths in the next observed lesson, continuing this approach throughout the semester and, hopefully, throughout their careers. To better meet the needs of the field, writing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) has been added as part of the clinical experience, along with work with on-site mentors.

#### *Societal Need*

The need for highly competent committed special education teachers who either have an endorsement or certification remains high. The changes in the master's to 100 percent on-line format and increasing professor contact increased the program's flexibility and broadened its appeal, while holding high standards. The M.S.Ed. program provides much needed new special education teachers, and the MS program deepens a teacher's knowledge about special education with the goal of enhancing practice.

#### *Academic Discipline*

In the past seven years, the discipline has been focused on evidence-based practice, accountability, and increasing the number of special education teachers. In addition, there has been an increased emphasis on culturally responsive practices, universal design for learning, and technology applications in the field. Individual instructors have continued to emphasize all of these practices and develop methods of teaching evidence-based practices to advanced students within their courses. In addition, two elective courses have been developed to broaden students'

experiences, SED 426 – Evidence Based Practices in STEM for Learnings with Disabilities and SED 427 – Equitable and Accessible Educational Technology.

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

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in four recommendations.

1. *Master's Degree in Special Education Program will re-focus its efforts to attract graduate students and Graduate Faculty from ethnically diverse backgrounds and underrepresented populations.* There has been a variety of professional development efforts to enhance the cultural competence of faculty. However, where students typically come from (i.e. the central Illinois region) and a reliance on an undergraduate student body for master's students has limited success in creating a more diverse student body in the master's programs. Movement to a 100 percent on-line format will allow the program to recruit students from more diverse areas of the state systematically, as well as recruit students who may have attended other universities with diverse populations for their undergraduate education. This goal will remain in effect, but it will have more likelihood of success with concentrated effort and improved programing.
2. *Further implementation of the new program evaluation system and consistent response to the findings.* There was effort to align program evaluation with CAEP, the external accreditation agency; however, CAEP was inconsistent in providing information and frequently provided inaccurate information about graduate accreditation. For this reason, there were stops and starts, and ultimately no program evaluation data was implemented. CAEP will be retained as an external accreditation for graduate programs, as recently decided by the Council on Teacher Education (CTE). This recommendation will need to be retained with the goal of aligning the evaluation process with CAEP's requirements.
3. *Seeking means by which the program can recruit highly qualified practicing special and general education teachers to pursue master's Degrees in Special Education that will fortify them with skills and competencies necessary to serve as educational models and leaders in their educational settings and in the field of special education.* While there has been limited success in recruiting and graduating students from the M.S.Ed. program, in the future efforts will be made to develop a more robust program. While there seems to be a market for general educators seeking a master's degree and special education endorsement (LBS I), there were some limitations in the past seven years. First, the state requires fewer courses than the Department of Special Education feels necessary to develop the basic competencies to be a special education teacher. State requirements result in general education teachers only needing three to four courses (i.e. 9-12 credits) to obtain their LBS I post general education endorsement. There are many universities in the state that offer coursework for this endorsement over the summer. In fact, because of shortages of special education teachers in Illinois and nationally, districts are frequently desperate for an endorsed special education teacher to fill a vacancy and, therefore, recommend that general education teachers that are employed by them obtain their endorsement in one of these summer programs, rather than attend Illinois State. In contrast, obtaining a LBS I in the current M.S.Ed. program requires eight courses (i.e. 24 credits) and takes students about two years. This context has made it more difficult, but not impossible, to recruit teachers into the program.

A second factor that has influenced these trends was the hybrid nature of the program during this period. While coming to campus three times per semester on a Saturday was desirable for some students, the further the student was away from campus, the less acceptable they found this delivery model. This challenge limited the draw of students to the central Illinois region, decreasing the opportunity for greater numbers. As the program moves forward, attracting students from other geographical regions will remain a goal.

4. *Close monitoring of credit hours generated and costs associated with providing a high-quality master's Degree program.* The Master's Program Task Force and graduate faculty will evaluate the length of program, costs to students, and efficiency of delivery this year. Currently, it takes three years to complete the M.S. program in Special Education and two and one-half years to complete the M.S.Ed. program in Special Education. Both programs are 39 credit hours, and graduate faculty need to examine the overall efficiency and necessity of this design. As noted earlier, many competitor programs offer more efficient program delivery, sometimes with fewer credits.

### **Major findings**

1. After experimenting with a hybrid program, enrollment numbers stabilized; they did not, however, provide growth in key demographics from key parts of the state.

2. There may be a need for more concise, high quality programming to attract more students.
3. The societal need for licensed high-quality special education teachers remains strong, and the faculty need to evaluate the best curriculum to ensure they are producing as many high-quality special education teachers as possible.
4. There may be a need to explore new marketing methods to attract on-line students.
5. The Master's program needs to align internal and external evaluation process, collect data annually to report to faculty, and ensure the self-study process is more systematic in the future.
6. There is currently a substantial overlap between the M.S.Ed. and M.S. programs. The faculty need to evaluate if this is the best model for both programs (i.e. M.S.Ed. students may need more basic content and MS students may need more advanced and flexible content).
7. Recruiting a more diverse student body will require students from different regions (i.e. Chicago area in addition to the central Illinois) to apply and the program will need to expand into new markets beyond students from their undergraduate program (i.e. recruiting students who attended other universities for their initial license).
8. Creating programs that appeal to more diverse groups may require exploration of new programs that provide initial licensure at the graduate level.
9. Most LBS II programs have not been updated and are in need of revision and stakeholder input.
10. The current evaluation structure is inadequate and needs to be worked on annually until a robust program review process in place.

### **Initiatives and plans**

In in the future, the M.S. and M.S.Ed. programs will carry out the following:

1. Examine the length of program and efficiency of content delivery in terms of the goals of both the M.S.Ed. and M.S. programs to determine whether the same or similar content could be delivered in fewer units.
2. Work with the marketing director in the college to attract students who are seeking 100 percent on-line programming and students from the Chicago region.
3. The Master's program coordinator will collaborate with the master's Program Task Force to align any external evaluation process and collect data annually to report to faculty and ensure that the self-study process is more systematic in the future.
4. Explore how to increase enrollment so the programs can provide more flexible and specialized curriculum for MS students and the opportunity to take more courses that focus specifically on initial endorsement in special education for M.S.Ed. students.
5. The graduate faculty will evaluate the master's capstone project, mentor assigning process, and thesis writing process, considering a redesign (e.g., one-chapter thesis, alternate experiences than an action research process, such as service-learning projects).
6. The Master's program task force will work to align the program with CAEP standards.
7. The Master's program task force work to change the trend of degrees conferred from decreasing to increasing.
8. Explore options for initial licensure at the graduate level.
9. Update LBS II programs and gather stakeholder input to support curriculum changes.
10. Consider structural changes to ensure that accreditation requirements are met and admission numbers are increased. For example, faculty will explore whether one committee should work on CAEP/Evaluation and another to work on recruitment, whether more release time for a coordinator is necessary, or whether there should be a delegation of tasks to other faculty members. They will also reassess the advisement structure and faculty needs, as student numbers increase.
11. Consider specific curricular changes that appeal to students from diverse backgrounds, as well as making efforts to make the program more efficient and affordable for these students.
12. Consider effective marketing strategies that target students from a variety of demographic groups.
13. Develop effective student support strategies to enhance retention of all students from all demographics.

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

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that high quality professional development opportunities for in-service teachers in the state are important for maintaining high quality educational programs. The committee also

recognizes the integral role Illinois State University has played in providing such professional development opportunities to in-service teachers in Illinois for many years. The Special Education Department houses two Master's programs: a Master of Science (MS) program designed for those students wishing for a deeper knowledge of special education and the M.S.Ed. in Special Education which prepares teachers to assume advanced roles that special educators are called upon to fill. The program is designed to offer professional development opportunities to full-time and part-time students seeking advanced knowledge, including current general education teachers seeking to expand the skills they need to teach students with diverse learning needs.

The committee thanks program faculty for their critical reflections about the current state of their program. The self-study reports that enrollment has been variable for the M.S.Ed. program, at times with small numbers in the introductory classes designed especially for these students. While the M.S. program has been more robust and stable in comparison most years having produced a cohort that was strong enough to have at least one class of about 17 students; at times the numbers have been relatively low. To address these enrollment challenges, the program is in the process of converting their delivery system from a hybrid program to a fully on-line program. The goal of the program faculty is to increase enrollment in both programs substantially within the next five years in order to: (1) to create a curriculum that is more responsive, flexible, and specialized to student needs; (2) to allow the M.S. program to have more options for students; (3) to allow the M.S.Ed. program to be more focused on the needs of a beginning special educator; and (4) to produce more new special education teachers to address state shortages.

While recognizing the M.S. and M.S.Ed. programs for their excellent contributions to education in Illinois, the committee is concerned about many aspects regarding the current state of the programs and several of these issues that were highlighted in the self-study. The committee recognizes that the program is in the midst of many transitions with respect to administration, accreditation, and curricular delivery models. The self-study report is candid in its recognition of the need to further evaluate the programs in light of these challenges as well as national and disciplinary trends in Special Education. The report cites the potential for the program to continue to succeed in its professional development mission. However, the report also cites the need to address many issues and re-energize the program. The committee recognizes that the program faculty are aware of these issues and have begun efforts to address them through the creation of a Master's Program Task Force. Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the M.S., M.S.Ed in Special Education programs for further review. The committee requests that the Department of Special Education take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

**Report 1: Due December 15, 2021**

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

**Develop a plan for recruitment and enrollment growth.** The program faculty report that the transition to a hybrid-course delivery model led to stabilized enrollments but did not lead to desired increases in number or key demographics from key parts of the State. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment. The committee asks the program faculty to develop and implement a plan for student recruitment and retention, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment by students from 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 through word-of-mouth, direct marketing through email, and recruitment at professional conferences. The program has already outlined plans to recruit a more diverse student body from different regions, to explore how to increase enrollment so the programs can provide more flexible and specialized curriculum for students, and the opportunity students to take more courses that focus specifically on initial endorsement in special education for M.S.Ed. students. The committee endorses these planned recruitment initiatives. The committee asks that the program work with University Marketing and Communications and their college marketing director to pursue marketing methods to attract students who are seeking online programing, and consider effective marketing strategies that target students from a variety of demographic groups. The committee ask 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 master's-level education.

**Develop a plan of action to monitor and assess the impact of the transition to a fully on-line program.** The committee recognizes that the program's transition to an on-line program requires thoughtful planning and recommends that faculty members closely monitor and evaluate the impact of the transition to the fully online plan of study on student recruitment, retention, graduation, licensure, and job placement. 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 how 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 asks 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 during this transition. The committee also urges faculty to look to experiences of other public universities with delivery of online sequences. By studying those programs, faculty might identify practices that could be implemented in the M.S. and M.S.Ed. programs at Illinois State.

**Comparator and aspirational program analyses.** The self-study report provides a brief quantitative analysis of comparator institutions, however, no conclusions or actions are made regarding these comparisons. The report also states that "There was no formal group discussion of aspirational programs or exemplary initiatives with the graduate faculty. Therefore, actions have not been determined to improve the program, based on aspirational programs or exemplary initiatives." The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational programs in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee asks that the program to revisit these sections of the self-study and address this section through expanded analyses of comparator and aspirational programs, including aspirational programs nationwide, that could help to develop strategies for addressing priority initiatives for the programs. Program faculty may want to keep in mind that successful response to this analysis and interrelated changes could put the program on a footing to gain enrollment from a national rather than only a statewide cohort, if such is desired, given the department's national reputation for excellence. Such enrollments could also enhance the program's goals for diversity and inclusion.

**Conduct a full review and plan of action to revise the curriculum.** The self-study report states that "Currently, there is substantial overlap between the M.S.Ed. and M.S. programs. ... While this is efficient from a program standpoint, it may not be in the long-term interests of either program and could potentially be inadvertently limiting enrollment. ... It is likely that current programming does not completely meet the needs of either group." The committee found this statement of particular concern and asks that the program faculty conduct a full review of the curriculum of both programs and to develop a plan for curricular revision. The self-study report contains several initiatives that provide a start for this plan. The committee does not believe that the program can wait for enrollment growth before beginning to implement these changes. The report also states that the Technology Specialist Graduate Certificate has not been offered for several years. The committee asks the program faculty to review the demand for this graduate certificate and whether it should be discontinued.

**Develop and implement of assessment plans for all programs.** The self-study report indicates that there are "only program outcomes for the M.S.Ed. program" and that "there is no systematic data collection process for any of the Master's programs." The committee asks that the program faculty develop and implement assessment plans for all programs (including certificates) and to develop a system that enhances faculty involvement and shared responsibility to enhance data collection and feedback practices. The committee strongly recommends that the program work with University Assessment Services so that the plans provide meaningful information for faculty to use for program revisions. The committee also asks the faculty to implement the revised plan by collecting and analyzing data, utilizing findings to inform programmatic decisions, and documenting those decisions and the rationale for them.

**Develop a plan for alumni tracking and engagement.** The committee asks that the program faculty develop and implement a system for tracking program alumni and then use the system to enhance alumni networking. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program becomes fully online and the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students.

The committee asks the department to summarize the development of these plans and analyses regarding these matters in a report submitted to the committee via the Office of the Provost by December 15, 2021.

**Report 2: Due** October 1, 2023

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

The Academic Planning Committee asks the Department of Special Education to submit an update regarding actions that the faculty have taken in continuing to offer the M.S. and M.S.Ed. programs, either in their current forms or in modified forms, or actions faculty have taken to disestablish the programs. The committee asks the department to submit the report to the committee via the Office of the Provost by October 1, 2023.

The report should address:

- Recruitment and enrollment growth.
- What was learned and what actions have been planned as a result of the comparator and aspirational program analyses.
- Changes to the curriculum (including transition to online delivery) and impact of these changes.
- Development and implementation of assessment plans for the program.
- Alumni tracking and engagement

Based on the status of the program as reported in the October 1, 2023 report, the committee may request additional annual reports by the school until the programs are once again deemed by the committee to be in good standing, unless the programs have otherwise been disestablished. If the committee has not determined the programs to be good standing by June 30, 2024, and the program has not already been disestablished, IBHE may rescind the authority it granted to the University to offer the program and request that the University disestablish the program.