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Inclusive Early Childhood Major Approved for 2016

2015/11/24

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OMAHA – Starting with the Fall 2016 semester, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) will offer a Bachelors of Science in Education with an Early Childhood Inclusive focus.

The degree program, which was approved last week by the [Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education \(CCPE\)](#) brings together faculty from UNO's [Teacher Education Department](#) and [Special Education and Communication Disorders Department](#) to prepare future educators to support a wide range of needs young learners may face during their formative years.

The program is required by the state for those who will be certified to teach anyone from ages 0-3 or age 3 through third grade.

As part of the program, faculty from the UNO [College of Education](#) will mentor students on the topics of early childhood education policy, social-cultural understanding and the wellbeing of infants and toddlers.

Kristine Swain, Ph.D., is chair of the Special Education and Communication Disorders Department and explains that research has shown the importance of early childhood intervention and the increasing likelihood that children will have unique needs as part of their school or childcare curriculum.

"The diversity of cultural, social and physical traits of today's students, no matter how young they are, is continually increasing and educators need to be prepared for that change," Swain says. "Those with skills to address these needs will be that much more likely to be successful in their careers."

Deborah Wisneki, Ph.D and John T. Langan Professor Early Childhood for the UNO College of Education, adds that a wide range of job opportunities are available for students who choose the Early Childhood Inclusive major, beyond teaching, including work as a childcare provider, an advisor for family-focused community organizations, a parental educator or an Early Intervention specialist.

"There continues to be a need in Omaha for highly qualified early childhood



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teachers," she says. "The skills learned in this major are becoming increasingly essential for anyone working in the field."

Topics discussed throughout the program, which will include six new courses, include the importance of education through play; curriculum building and assessment; social, emotional, cognitive and physical development; and early childhood policies.

As home to the University of Nebraska's [Buffett Early Childhood Institute](#), UNO is established nationally as a leader in early childhood education. The addition of this new degree continues to solidify the university's position as an innovator in the field.

Earlier this month, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute [hosted a conference](#) to address critical workforce needs across Nebraska featuring more than 120 higher education faculty and early childhood experts from across the state, including UNO.

Those interested in enrolling in the Early Childhood Inclusive Education program can begin doing so today by contacting advisors in the UNO College of Education at unocoeadvising@unomaha.edu or 402.554.2717.

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