

I. Description

A. Title, Degree, and Certificate Level

With federal funding received from the US Department of Education, Grambling State University (GSU) seeks to address the growing need for highly qualified teachers by implementing a new alternate route to teacher certification. Grambling State University aims to convert the current state approved, certification only, practitioner teacher programs (Teach GSU) to Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree programs as an alternate route to teacher certification. The proposed MAT degree program shall be called the Alternative Teacher Certification Project (ATCP). GSU hopes to secure approval of the program during early spring 2012, facilitating candidate recruitment for an initial cohort to begin in summer 2012.

Building on the success of the Teach GSU program, the development of the MAT degree program is the natural progression and expansion in preparing highly qualified teachers. The Masters of Arts in Teaching degree programs for alternate certification in the areas of General-Special Education Mild/Moderate: An Integrated to Merged Approach for Grades 1-5 and 6-12 (English, Math, Biology, Physics and Chemistry) are designed to train and develop highly qualified teachers by providing activities and field-based experiences, utilizing research, technology and professional associations for enrichment, and by encouraging active participation in partnership schools, agencies and professional development opportunities. The integrated to merged programs will target teacher certification in STEM disciplines (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math) as well as English and Special Education. Upon successful completion of program requirements, students will earn a Master degree and be eligible for Level I Louisiana teacher certification.

Program Objectives

The principal goals of the new degree programs are to:

- provide degree candidates with comprehensive, research - based education, training and support to address the critical need for highly qualified English, math, science and special education teachers and;
- increase the number of traditionally underrepresented groups in STEM teaching disciplines.

With federal funding, Grambling State University will be able to recruit participants from the pool of recent college graduates, mid – career changers and highly qualified paraprofessionals. The primary foci of recruitment will be:

1. The recruitment of STEM majors and graduates;
2. The recruitment of populations that are traditionally underrepresented in the STEM disciplines.

Teachers of math, science and English in all grades must have much deeper content knowledge to teach those subjects effectively and that content preparation needs to be tied closely with pedagogical training (Luce, 2011). As such, a unique feature of the proposed program is the integration of pedagogical instruction with on-going and sustained professional development that has been made possible with the federal Transition to Teaching grant. Professional development activities and courses are designed to produce well-prepared teachers who have mastered, at a minimum, the Common Core standards for their chosen certification areas. Response to Intervention (RtI) and other best practices research will be incorporated into all courses to provide teachers with the tools necessary to maximize learning opportunities for all students. Additionally, Grambling State University will offer pre-entry supports such as PRAXIS test preparation. These types of supports and encouragement are vital to new teachers and will lead to retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools in high needs schools districts.