

2003-2004 Program Review
Dean's Review

Department: Special Education
Degree: B.S.Ed. in Special Education

General Comments: The Department of Special Education does an excellent job in the program provided to students obtaining the B.S.Ed. in Special Education degree. This program is known throughout Illinois and beyond as one of the premier programs in special education. The Chair and faculty have made very strong efforts to assure that the program is up to date and meets current standards at a time of major change dictated by judicial order. There is a large and growing job market available to the graduates of this program. The shortage of quality special educators is often described as being at the crisis level. Enrollment in this program has been strong and consistent over the past several years with 325 majors in the Fall of 1994 and 334 majors during the Fall of 2003. The Department's innovative outreach efforts are well known and respected throughout the state for providing opportunities for professionals in a shortage field in geographically underserved areas. The Department was awarded a non-competitive grant from ISBE this year to expand this exciting program. Information obtained from current students, alumni and employers indicate strong satisfaction with and support for the program. The alumni survey indicated an impressive 93% who are currently employed in the special education field. The program has obtained accreditation approval from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the Illinois State Board of Education. The Department carefully and consistently reviews information and data on current efforts and uses this information to plan for program improvements.

Program Strengths:

- 1) Department has a strong, committed faculty who work collaboratively to assure positive experiences for students. The Department and its faculty are considered by many as the premier in their field in the state.
- 2) Department conducts a consistent review of curriculum and program requirements to assure alignment with national and state standards and with the expectations of the field.
- 3) Program has a positive reputation of providing a strong, up-to-date educational opportunity for future special educators.
- 4) Department has significant outreach efforts to provide opportunities for professionals in a shortage field in geographically underserved areas.
- 5) A strong relationship with the field of work is maintained.
- 6) The program has an exceptional reputation with alumni and practitioners.
- 7) Department has been successful in obtaining grant funds to support a variety of projects.

Areas of Focus:

- 1) Staffing levels continue to be a concern as has been the case for several years. Most faculty are not only at the upper level of assignment but are regularly into overload.
- 2) Efforts need to continue to review current curriculum and program requirements for alignment with state and national standards and expectations of the field. This will be an important goal as CEC announces new standards or as state-wide standards continue to change.

Recommendations for Internal or External Reallocation:

- 1) Within budgetary restrictions, attempts should be made to address staffing level concerns. The current search, if successful, will help to address this need.
- 2) Recent budgetary restrictions have resulted in a reduced operating budget in the Department. Attempts should be made to address limitations that impact support in the areas of materials, equipment, and faculty travel.
- 3) The Department and College have been very aggressive in attempts to find funding to support the priority of providing up-to-date technology support for faculty and students. These efforts need to be continued.