

Frequently Asked Questions about the Crisis in the College of Education & Social Services at the University of Vermont:

The College of Education and Social Services (CESS) offers the only nationally accredited teacher education program in the state of Vermont. It is the flagship institution for undergraduate programs in elementary, middle, and secondary education and helps fulfill UVM's land grant mission of service to the people of Vermont. President Fogel, who has affirmed his commitment to the college's future at UVM, has praised it. There are approximately 450 students enrolled in its undergraduate teacher education programs.

What is at issue?

Despite their importance to the quality of public education throughout the state of Vermont, teacher training programs offered by the Department of Education in CESS are being threatened by UVM's administration which plans, over a two-year period, to cut 76 course sections by letting go of essential faculty members who teach courses in curriculum and methods, supervise student interns, and provide professional support for educators throughout Vermont's public schools.

On December 15, 2005, five senior lecturers and one lecturer in the Department of Education received letters of non-reappointment. CESS leadership has also stated that it plans not to reappoint any of the remaining full time lecturers and senior lecturers nor any of the part time lecturers in the Department of Education. By the end of 2006-2007, it is estimated that 12 lecturers and senior lecturers and another 8-10 part time faculty will not be reappointed.

None of the recent letters of non-reappointment include reasons for this decision, though the administration has indicated that these cuts are a means of addressing a budget crisis. In a meeting with Department of Education faculty, the CESS administration has indicated that the shortfall is in the range of \$300,000. This amount is less than 1% of the University of Vermont's annual salary expenditure — a drop in the bucket at an economically healthy institution like UVM.

The administration acknowledges that this deficit has been accruing over a period of years. However, it has chosen this moment to propose a planning process that is turned upside down. Instead of working with the faculty of the Department of Education to plan for the future of teacher education at UVM, the CESS administration began by cutting essential teaching positions and courses. Now, it is asking faculty, including those not reappointed, to craft plans to reorganize these teacher education programs. The Department of Education faculty has unanimously asked the administration to reconsider its approach and has proposed a more gradual process to address any budgetary concerns without damaging programs and doing harm to the educational experience of UVM students and to the quality of Vermont's schools. The CESS leadership has not responded positively to this request.

Who are the faculty members who have been affected by the initial round of cuts?

All are women, and five were promoted to the rank of senior lecturer — which requires a rigorous performance assessment — two years ago. The youngest is 50 years old, while the oldest is 60 years old; several are only months shy of eligibility for retirement benefits. They have given 85 professional years to UVM. Several returned to graduate school within the past decade to obtain doctoral degrees.

They are the face of UVM's land grant mission in many local Vermont schools. They teach courses in curriculum and methods, perform an essential role serving our student interns, and provide professional support for our colleagues throughout Vermont's public schools. In terms of outreach to Vermont schools, they are among the most experienced faculty in CESS.

What will be the effect of these cuts?

If all of these cuts become a reality, UVM will lose many of the faculty who supervise student internships, teach methods and curriculum courses, and provide essential guidance to undergraduates exploring teaching as a career. The quality of the undergraduate licensure programs will, in the short run, seriously and unnecessarily suffer. Some of the effects would include:

- Loss of experienced clinical faculty with extensive experience teaching in public schools.
- Loss of opportunities field work in the schools for first year students and an increase in faculty/student supervision ratios for second and third year courses from 1:9 to 1:19 in the elementary program.
- Loss of 51% of the course sections in the secondary program and an increase in faculty/student ratios to 1:40.
- Increased enrollments in some instructional methods courses from 40% - 100%, eliminating opportunities for necessary individual attention and feedback.
- Climbing faculty-student ratios in all practica (courses designed for the preparation of teachers which involve supervised practical application of educational theory), which will result in far fewer opportunities (other than student teaching internships) for the sort of mentoring required in a professional program.
- Increased dependence on graduate teaching assistants to perform work presently done by faculty.
- Partnerships with local schools will be harmed by the withdrawal of our professional development support.

What could UVM do differently?

The University could provide the necessary resources to fund these vital programs and affirm its commitment to its land grant mission of service to the people of the state of Vermont. These are not "fat" programs that waste money and resources. They are nationally accredited, efficient teacher education programs. Given the nature of the process of budgeting, what the administration is calling a shortfall could be considered the consequence of long-term under-funding of a vital program instead.

The Department of Education had begun working on a reasonable plan to address budget issues before this academic year and ought to be empowered to continue to craft an appropriate departmental response before drastic measures which damage the quality of UVM's teacher preparation programs are enacted.

In addition, there are funds in the College of Education and Social Services that could be made available to the Department of Education in the short run to address part of the budget shortfall. Unfortunately, the CESS leadership has told the Department that it cannot use these resources to maintain the quality of the programs while the faculty makes revisions over the next couple of years to respond to the budget problem. This attitude needs to change.

What can I do?

Write and call UVM President Fogel, CESS Dean Miller, and UVM Board of Trustees Chair Carl Lisman and let them know that UVM's Teacher Preparation programs are important to you and to the state of Vermont.

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