Intent to Plan for a New Program
South Dakota Board of Regents
Academic Affairs Forms

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Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related full proposal request for a new program. The Executive Director and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer through the proper process. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director, System Academic Officer or designee. This form is meant to capture critical elements for stakeholders to review prior to a full proposal.

University	BHSU - Black Hills State University
Degree	AS : Associate of Science
Name of Major	BECE : Early Childhood Education **Early Childhood Education**
Specialization Required?	No *Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.*
College/Department	6D : BHSU College of Education/BSCE : School of Education
Intended Date of Full Proposal	Fall 2026
Planned CIP Code	13.1210

Program Description

1. Provide the working program description that may appear in the university catalog.

The AS in Early Childhood Education prepares candidates to work with children in preschool and childcare programs. This two-year degree program focuses on foundations of early learning and developmentally-appropriate learning environments. Transition to 4-year Bachelor's programs is available for graduates of this program.

Strategic Impact

2. Describe how the program fits in with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities.

Part of BHSU's institutional mission is to meet regional workforce demands and this degree will help our local partners meet the sustained demand for early childhood professionals. This program will align with the SD DSS Child Development Associate Project.
This degree request aligns with Goal 1, Objective 5 of the BHSU Strategic Plan, by improving student readiness for job searches and career planning. Additionally, the program aligns with Goal 2, Objective 3, aligning curriculum with emerging workforce needs in western South Dakota.

The program aligns with BHSU's existing program array by utilizing existing pre-professional education courses and can be paired with the Gateway to Teacher Education certificate. Further, it opens opportunities for potential students who may enter BHSU through the Fast Track admission program.

Additionally, it aligns with BHSU academic priorities by opening multiple pathways for students who may need to work while they attend school and maintain a path to a BSED degree at BHSU.

If the program does not align to the strategic plan, provide a compelling rationale for the institution to offer the program.

NA

3. How does the program connect to the Board of Regent's Strategic Plan?

This program connects with Goal 4, Part I of the BOR Strategic Plan related to workforce alignment by targeting high needs areas and providing an affordable path to entering the workforce sooner while also keeping options open to full Bachelor's programs in certifiable areas.

Program Summary

4. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

This question refers to the type of degree, not the program. For example, if your university has authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science and the program requested is a Bachelor of Science, then the request is not for a new degree.

NA

5. What modality/modalities will be used to offer the new program?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date
On Campus	Yes	Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off Campus Location	No		

	Yes/No	Delivery Method(s)	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery	Yes	Online Asynchronous	Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Identify Institutions
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	Yes	Northern State University

6. If the program will be offered through distance delivery, identify the planned instructional modality:

Asynchronous : Students are not required to attend the course at a specific time or location.

Academic Quality

7. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program? Include links to at least 3 comparable programs at peer institutions and links to national or accreditation standards, if any.

-Northern State University: https://northern.edu/degrees/early-childhood-education-associate-degree
-Colorado Mesa University: https://catalog.coloradomesa.edu/areas-study/education-early-childhood/early-childhood-education-liberal-arts-aa/#requirementstext
-Weber State University: https://catalog.weber.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=24&poid=12187&returnto=9149&_gl=1*1wriq5w*_gcl_au*MTg2OTg4Njg2NC4xNzY2NDE5NDgw
Standards:
Though the AS in Education will not result in state teaching certification, all courses in this program are approved for accredited programs and follow both the InTASC standards and CAEP Initial Certification Standards. BHSU is also in collaboration with the SD DSS to articulate ECE hours for individuals who have completed the Child Development Associate credential.

8. What program accreditation is available, if any?

The AS in Early Childhood Education will not result in teacher certification, so no accreditation is available.

9. Will the proposed program pursue accreditation or certifications?

No

If no, why has the department elected not to pursue accreditation for the program?

The AS in Early Childhood Education will not result in teacher certification, so no accreditation is available.

Duplication and Competition

10. Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?

A list of existing programs is available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, indicate ***none.***

Yes

A. If yes, defend the need for an additional program within the state, Include IPEDS enrollment data and additional data as needed.

The other existing AS in ECE is at Northern State. This proposed program will not directly compete with Northern's program. Aberdeen is over 300 miles from Spearfish, and we will target existing BHSU students as well as the local population in the Black Hills for this program. Additionally, the shortage of and need for early learning teachers and daycares is statewide, and we plan to address the local childcare needs first and foremost. The First Five Years Fund (www.ffyf.org) reports 72% of children under 5 in SD have all available parents/guardians in the workforce and the SD economy loses $329M annually to childcare challenges. This program would start to address local needs in early learning.

B. If yes, would this program be a candidate for Regental system collaboration?

Yes

11. Do any related programs exist at any non-Regental college or university within 150 miles of the university?

List those programs here:

No

A. If yes, use IPEDS to identify the enrollment in those programs.

NA

B. What evidence suggests there is unmet student demand for the proposed program, or that the proposed program would attract students away from the existing program?

NA

Market Demand

This section establishes the market demand for the proposed program (eg Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need). Use the following sources for your data:

- South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation
- O-Net
- US Department of Labor Projections Central
- SDBOR Workforce and Degree Gap Analysis Report

12. What is the expected growth of the industry or occupation in South Dakota and nationally?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The SD Department of Labor short-term (2023-2025) projections indicate 107 new openings for childcare workers and 859 annual openings. The long-term (2022-2032) projections estimate 159 new openings and 849 annual openings for childcare workers. According to ONet, the projected growth in South Dakota for preschool teachers will be 9% with annual openings of 200 from 2022-2032.

13. What evidence, if any, suggests there are unfilled openings in South Dakota or nationally?

The childcare shortage in South Dakota is well documented. For example, the First Five Years Fund (www.ffyf.org) has myriad resources and supporting documentation of the lack of daycare and pre-school opportunities in the nation and South Dakota.
ONet reports 61,400 openings in preschool nationally, and projects 200 openings in South Dakota annually.

14. What salaries can program graduates expect to earn in South Dakota and nationally?

According to ONet, the median wages for pre-school teacher nationally is $37,120 and in South Dakota, the average annual wage is $33,350.

15. Optional: Provide any additional evidence of regional demand for the program.

e.g. prospective student interest survey data, letters of support from employers, community needs...

Student Demand

16. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.

Choose programs not already listed in question 11. Use the most recent year available.

University Name	State	Program Name	Number of Degrees Conferred in Program	Total Number of Conferrals at Level (Undergrad or Grad)
Ogala Lakota College	SD : South Dakota	AA Education	9	97
Sheridan College	WY : Wyoming	AA Early Childhood Education	1	459
Casper College	WY : Wyoming	AA Elementary Education and Teaching	6	549

17. What evidence suggests there is interest from prospective students for this program at the university?

This program would lend itself to increased demand for dual-credit pathway courses with local P-12 school districts. Rapid City Area Schools has inquired about opportunities in Early Childhood Education and indicated interest in working with us on developing this pathway and program. Additionally, our professional advisors have reported increased interest in Early Childhood Education opportunities at BHSU from prospective students and families. From 2023-2025, our ECE/SPED program has increased from 14 students to 19 students and we currently have 17 students in our ECE minor.

Enrollment

18. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from existing programs at the university?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The expectation is to recruit from high school dual-credit and CTE pathway programs as well as recruit from individuals who have earned the SD Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. This program will also serve as an off-ramp/alternative for students who are not ready or do not desire a 4-year degree and the stackable nature of the program will allow seamless transition to our ECE/SPED Bachelor's program.

19. Narrative Description of the preliminary estimates on annual enrollment in this program by year six

Include all students within the program, not just those new to the program.

The major assumptions in the enrollment estimates are that the Rapid City/Black Hills region have roughly 46% of the openings in ECE positions and that BHSU will work with 25% of applicants for these positions. The increases are based on projected 20% increase in students in the program for 3 years and then leveling off in years 4-6.