New Academic Degree Program
Full Proposal Application
South Dakota Board of Regents
Academic Affairs Forms

Internal Ticket ID: 31511
Created: 12/19/2025
Modified: 5/10/2026

Use this form to propose a new degree program. The Board of Regents, Executive Director, and/or their designees may request additional information about the proposal. After the university President approves the proposal, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer (through the online submission process).

Note: Within the proposal, all references to external sources should be documented with a footnote (including web addresses where applicable).

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	
Planned CIP Code	13.1210	
WICHE WRRGP Eligibility		

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.

2. Does the university request any exceptions to any Board policy for this program?
Explain any requests for exceptions to Board Policy. If not requesting any exceptions, indicate "None."

Yes, BOR Policy 2.3.2; Section D 1.2.2.2.2; The proposed program has over 80% of the curriculum in common with an existing Bachelor's program approved for BHSU; therefore, we are requesting exemption from Intent to Plan.

Strategic Impact

3. 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

4. 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

5. 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.

There is a shortage of early childhood professionals and daycare providers in South Dakota. 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.

Additionally, BHSU 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.

6. 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

7. 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.

8. What are the student learning outcomes for this program?

Student Learning Outcomes include:
Analysis and understanding of the history and philosophical underpinnings of American education.
Demonstrate knowledge of child development from birth through adolescence.
Apply developmentally-appropriate strategies to facilitate learning in early learning environments.
Construct physical and intellectual spaces for early learning environments.

9. For associate's and bachelor's degree proposals, identify the 3-5 AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes that have been selected for this program.

Use the chart below to indicate the student learning outcomes that align to the selected ELOs (See BOR Policy 2.11 and Guideline 8.5).

Essential Learning Outcomes (AAC&U)	Student Learning Outcomes
Inquiry and Analysis	Analysis and understanding of the history and philosophical underpinnings of American education.
Critical and Creative Thinking	Demonstrate knowledge of child development from birth through adolescence.
Information Literacy	
Teamwork	
Problem Solving	Apply developmentally-appropriate strategies to facilitate learning in early learning environments.
Civic Knowledge and Engagement	
Intercultural Knowledge	
Ethical Reasoning	
Foundational Lifelong Learning Skills	
Integrative Learning	Construct physical and intellectual spaces for early learning environments.

10. Enter the number of credit hours required to graduate

Credit Hours	60

11.Complete the following tables to provide a degree program curriculum summary.

A. Table 1 –Total Program Degree Credit Hours

	Credit Hours In Program	
	Hours Per Requirement	%Total Hours
System General Education Requirements	24	
Subtotal - Gen Ed Requirements	24	%
Program Requirements		
Required Support Courses		
Major Requirements	30	
Major Electives		
Subtotal - Program Requirements	30	%
Free Electives		
Subtotal - Free Electives	6	%
Degree Total	60	%

**Board Policy 2:29 requires each baccalaureate level degree program to require 120 credit hours and each associate degree program to require 60 credit hours. Exceptions to this policy require documentation that programs must comply with specific standards established by external accreditation, licensure, or regulatory bodies or for other compelling reasons, and must receive approval by the Executive Director in consultation with the President of the Board of Regents.*

B. Table 2 – Insert Required Program Support Courses Impacting Other Programs (outside department). Do not include General Education courses.

*The individual curriculum tables should be included as a word document **attached** to the TDX ticket.*

C. Table 3 – Insert Major Requirements (within department)

*The individual curriculum tables should be included as a word document **attached** to the TDX ticket.*

D. Table 4 – Insert Major Electives

*The individual curriculum tables should be included as a word document **attached** to the TDX ticket.*

12. New Course Approval

New courses required to implement the new degree program may receive approval in conjunction with program approval or receive approval separately. Please check the appropriate statement:

No

Academic Quality

13. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program?

Peer Institution: Regional and Competitive institutions. 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.

14. What program accreditation is available, if any?

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

15. 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.

16. Did the university engage any developmental consultants to assist with the development of the curriculum? Did the university consult any professional or accrediting associations during the development of the curriculum? What were the contributions of the consultants and associations to the development of the curriculum?

Developmental consultants are experts in the discipline hired by the university to assist with the development of a new program, including content, courses, and experiences, etc. Universities are encouraged to discuss the selection of developmental consultants with Board staff.

No

17. Inclusion of High Impact Practices (HIP) across all undergraduate programs is a strategic priority of the Board of Regents to enhance academic quality and increase student engagement. For associate's and bachelor's degree proposals, which HIPs will faculty embed into the program?

Mark all that apply. To be considered as a HIP program, two or more should be selected and required in the program.

High Impact Practices	Included
Capstone courses and projects	No
Collaborative assignments and projects	Yes
Common intellectual experiences	Yes
Diversity/global learning	No
ePortfolios	No
First year experiences	No
Internships	No
Learning communities	Yes
Service learning, community-based learning	Yes

High Impact Practices	Included
Writing intensive courses	No
Undergraduate research	No

18. For associate's and bachelor's degree proposals, discuss how HIPs will be embedded into the program
Your discussion should provide examples and include whether the HIP is required or an optional component. It should also indicate at what point the experience is offered or required. (eg "students will be required to participate in an internship during their third year of enrollment in order to develop skills in... ").

The AS in Early Childhood Education has three main objectives: the understanding of child development from birth through adolescence, the application of developmentally-appropriate strategies for facilitating learning in birth through Pre-K environments, and the partnering of student, university faculty, and professional practitioners to meet student learning objectives.

The following High-Impact practices permeate the program: learning communities, collaborative assignments and projects, community-based learning, and common intellectual experiences. The main focus of the early curriculum will be Foundations of American Education (EDFN 338), an introduction to persons with exceptionalities (SPED 100), educational psychology (EPSY 303), and child and adolescent development (EPSY 428). These courses provide a common intellectual experience and serve as the base of knowledge for the remaining courses. Each of these courses is designed and sequenced to establish a base and then build on prior knowledge through collaborative experiences and assignments with faculty and peers.

The next two phases of the curriculum sequencing are parallel and provide the experiential learning upon which the program is built. Through three early childhood courses (ECE 411, ECE 413, and ECE 417) and one Special Education course (SPED 460), students are given the opportunity to apply their knowledge of child development to pedagogical practice, instructional strategies, and lesson planning. Then, students will be required to observe and participate in 220 hours of practical experience (ECE 328L, ECE 495 Early Intervention, ECE 495 Pre-school practicum, ECE 495 Kindergarten practicum) in local daycares, early learning centers, and pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms under the supervision of university supervisors and clinical partners.

Learning communities, community-based learning, and experiential learning are embedded in the progression from foundational knowledge to a focus on child development to the application and hands-on practical experience.

Student Success

This section outlines the university's plan to assess student achievement of the program learning outcomes.

19. Complete the table below to provide evidence of a preliminary assessment plan. Place an asterisk next to assessments that are national or state-level instruments.

Note: It is only necessary to indicate the summative assessment for each outcome, not the formative assessments used throughout the program.

Program Learning Outcome	Course	Summative Assessment
Analysis and understanding of the history and philosophical underpinnings of American education.	EDFN 338, SPED 100	Papers
Demonstrate knowledge of child development from birth through adolescence.	EPSY 302, EPSY 428, ECE 328, ECE 411, ECE 413, SPED 460	Lesson plans, papers
Apply developmentally-appropriate strategies to facilitate learning in early learning environments.	ECE 413, SPED 460, ECE 328L, ECE 417, ECE 495 (3 experiences)	Experiential learning/synthesis paper, reflective projects
Construct physical and intellectual spaces for early learning environments.	ECE 328L, ECE 417, ECE 417, ECE 495 (3 experiences)	Papers, projects in field-based placements

20. How will outcomes for graduates of the program be assessed?

Outcomes may include employment and placement rates, licensure examination pass rates, acceptance rates to graduate school, student or employer surveys, or other assessments of graduate outcomes.

AS in Early Childhood Education graduates will be assessed in the following ways:

-AS graduates who enroll in Bachelor's programs at BHSU and other institutions.

-Employment rates for graduates who enter into early learning roles and other educational environments.

-Exit Surveys for completers to assess the program and their future goals.

-Alumni tracking will be utilized to add a measure of satisfaction with the program.

Duplication and Competition

21. 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 will start to address local needs in early learning.

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

Yes

22. 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

23. 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.

24. 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.

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

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

26. 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

27. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.
Peer Institution: Regional and Competitive institutions. 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

28. 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

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

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.

30. Complete the enrollment worksheet to provide an enrollment projection for the next six academic years

Worksheet Completed	Yes

31. What is the minimum number of students required in this program to break even, with respect to the budget?

Budget neutral; All Education courses in this program are already offered on a set rotation, and will run regardless of if this program exists

32. Discuss the assumptions informing your enrollment estimates.
(e.g. current enrollment and trends in similar programs, IPEDS data, recruitment strategies, partnerships)

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 a projected 20% increase in students in the program for 3 years and then leveling off in years 4-6.

33. If projected program enrollment is not realized in year two, what actions is the university prepared to take?

If enrollment is not realized in year two, BHSU will engage with local early learning centers and Early Childhood Connections in Rapid City to disseminate information and address targeted marketing. Additionally, the COE will engage with area high school CTE programs to work with students in the Human Development pathway to raise awareness of the ECE certificate, the opportunity to transfer hours for those who have attained the CDA credential, and career prospects for students interested in ECE.

34. Discuss the marketing and recruitment plan for the program
Include information on partnerships and pipelines (e.g. articulation agreements with BOTE, collaboration with partner university, community partnerships).

The marketing and recruiting plan will focus on high school juniors and seniors as well as students who enter BHSU through the fast-track admission program. Students in exploratory programs at BHSU will also be recruited. We will market this program to high school counselors as well as directly to the same groups identified above.

Financial Health

35. Complete the budget worksheet to provide a budget projection for the next six academic years.

Worksheet Completed	Yes

Financial Health Summary						
	1st FYxx	2nd FYxx	3rd FYxx	4th FYxx	5th FYxx	6th FYxx
Tuition & Fee Revenues	15507	38768	46522	50399	54276	58152
Program Expenses	21417	21417	21417	27844	27644	27644
NET	-5910	17351	25105	22555	26632	30508
Other Supporting Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0
NET (Other)	-5910	17351	25105	22555	26632	30508

36.Explain the amount and source(s) of any one-time and continuing investments in personnel, professional development, release time, time redirected from other assignments, instructional technology and software, other operation and maintenance expenses, facilities, etc., needed to implement the proposed major.
Address off-campus or distance delivery separately.

No new one-time or continuing resources are needed to launch the degree

37. If new faculty are not requested, describe how existing faculty will be utilized and indicate whether this action will impact other existing programs.

The courses in this proposed program are already offered at least once a year, and each course can accommodate the projected enrollment in this program.

38. Is the university requesting or intending to request permission for a new fee or to attach an existing fee to the program?.

Requesting Permission for Fee?	No
Explanation	No new fees will be requested; any fees already authorized will be assessed.

39. Use the table below to describe potential risks to the program's implementation over the next four years.
For each risk, identify the severity (low, medium, high), probability of occurrence (low, medium, high) and the institution's mitigation strategy for each risk.

Risk	Severity	Probability	Mitigation Strategy
Not meeting enrollment targets	Medium	Medium	Work with Enrollment Management and high school counselors, work with the COE Advisory Council and Educators Rising chapters.
Retention rates for Associate degrees	Medium	Medium	Increase mentorship and professional advising, and increase awareness of pathways into teaching and educational support positions.

External Review

40. If this proposal is for a graduate program, provide information below for at least five potential consultants who may be considered to conduct the external review.

Reviewer Name	Title	Institution
/		
/		
/		
/		
/		

Additional Information

41. (Optional) Use this space to provide pertinent information not requested above that may assist the Board in understanding the proposal.

Approvals

University Approval

To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: *I certify that I have read this proposal, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.*

President of the University	Date
	1/1/1970

Academic Affairs, Provost	Date
	1/1/1970

Finance and Administration, Vice President	Date
	5/10/2026

Kathy Johnson

Enrollment Management, Vice President	Date
	5/6/2026

John D Allred

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS

Proposed Curriculum Summary

UNIVERSITY:	BHSU
PROPOSED PROGRAM:	**AS in Early Childhood Education**

Required General Education Courses Specific to Major
(Please list if any general education courses are required for the proposed major. If not, leave blank.)

Prefix	Number	Course Title *(add or delete rows as needed)*	General Education Goal
HIST	151/152	US History I or US History II	Goal 3
PSYC	101	General Psychology	Goal 3

Required Support Courses Outside the Major
(Not general education requirements)

Prefix	Number	Course Title *(add or delete rows as needed)*	Credit Hours	New (yes, no)
		Subtotal		

Major Requirements

Prefix	Number	Course Title *(add or delete rows as needed)*	Credit Hours	New (yes, no)
EDFN	338	Foundations of American Education	2	No
EPSY	302	Educational Psychology	3	No
EPSY	428	Child and Adolescent Development	3	No
SPED	100	Intro to Persons with Exceptionalities	3	No
SPED	460	Family Systems and Professional Collaboration	3	No
ECE	328	Guidance with Young Children	2	No
ECE	328L	Guidance with Young Children Lab	1	No
ECE	411	Social Development in Early Childhood	3	No
ECE	413	Early Childhood Curriculum	3	No
ECE	417	Methods of Early Childhood Education	3	No
ECE	495	Pre-School Practicum	2	No
ECE	495	Kindergarten Practicum	1	No
ECE	495	Early Intervention Practicum	1	No
		Subtotal	30	

Major Electives: List courses available as electives in the program. Indicate any proposed new courses added specifically for the major.

Prefix	Number	Course Title *(add or delete rows as needed)*	Credit Hours	New (yes, no)
				Choose an item.
				Choose an item.
				Choose an item.
				Choose an item.
		Subtotal		