Proposal for a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching  
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

A. Background

Need/rationale

Graduate programs typically help students to develop knowledge of a particular discipline. They seek student outcomes that are focused on acquisition of content, skills, and dispositions appropriate to a specific discipline or field. Rarely do they focus on helping students to develop knowledge of the institutions they will be working in, what it means to be a member of the professoriate, or specific knowledge of teaching such as knowledge of instructional strategies or student learning. Our proposal for a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching seeks to remedy this common deficit in graduate education. Filling this gap will have several benefits to the University of Alabama (UA) and to the graduate students who participate in the Certificate Program.

First, students who participate in the Graduate Certificate in College Teaching will be better instructors at UA. We anticipate that many of the students who enroll in this certificate will be working as Teaching Assistants, adjuncts, and instructors at UA. When they participate in this certificate, they will develop knowledge of and skills related to learning theory, course design and syllabus development, instructional methods, classroom facilitation and management, and modes of assessment and grading. Such knowledge and skills should help them improve their teaching while at the University, which will in turn improve the experiences, and likely the learning outcomes, of students taking their courses.

Second, we anticipate that students who participate in this certificate will have a competitive edge when applying for faculty positions in the future. Today’s job market is tighter than it ever has been. Fewer than 25% of faculty positions are tenure-line positions. In some fields, hundreds of applicants apply to a given job posting. Given the competition for faculty positions in today’s job market, students planning to go into academe need credentials that will help them stand out from the competition as having developed pedagogical knowledge. No longer does simply holding a master’s or doctoral degree in a given field guarantee that someone will gain a faculty position. Rather, graduate students seeking academic employment need qualifications that help set them apart from others.

Third, participation in the certificate program will help students navigate future faculty positions more successfully. Students who enter the professoriate need the knowledge and skills they will develop in the program in order to be successful in the faculty careers. In particular, they need pedagogical content knowledge in order to be successful faculty members, and they need knowledge of higher education organization and functioning in order to successfully navigate the promotion and tenure system. They will learn about both of these areas in the Certificate.
Fourth, we anticipate that having a Certificate in College Teaching will be a useful recruiting tool for prospective graduate students. This program will set our graduate school and thus specific graduate programs apart from other similar and nearby institutions. It provides a clear benefit to graduate students, by way of making them more successful in their roles as TAs and by improving their chances of employment upon completion of graduate school at UA.

Overview of the program

The Graduate Certificate in College Teaching is designed to help graduate students in a variety of professional settings and disciplines who seek to enhance their understanding of teaching and learning issues for adult learners, particularly at institutions of higher education. Students who participate in the certificate program will have exposure to theory, research, and practice related to the professoriate and to teaching and learning in higher education. The intent of the Graduate Certificate is to assist professionals in responding to the increasingly complex and diversifying social and cultural contexts for adult learners.

The University of Alabama’s College of Education has developed a rigorous sequence of courses related to college teaching that are taught by several faculty members with appropriate expertise. These courses range from ones directly related to college teaching to those concerned with academic programs and processes. In order to address student need to learn about teaching, to help credential them to better enable them to find good teaching positions, and to help those who do find faculty positions better navigate classroom processes, we propose a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching of 12 credit hours that focuses on the subject of college teaching based upon these courses. All courses required for the proposed certificate program are available through the Higher Education Administration program of the Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies (ELPTS) Department. Upon approval by the Program Director, students may choose a course related to college teaching offered by other programs at The University of Alabama as an elective in the Certificate Program. The course offerings facilitate an overall understanding of learning in adulthood and what implications this knowledge holds for helping adults learn in postsecondary institutions, organizations, and in the broader society.

Currently no certificate program in college teaching exists at universities in the State of Alabama. However, several of the leading universities in the field of Higher Education offer such a program. Michigan State University’s higher education program, for example, has a 9-hour certificate program in College Teaching. The University of Kentucky’s Student Development Program offers a 12-hour certificate in College Teaching. A similar 12-hour certificate is offered at the University of Iowa. Texas A&M’s Department of Educational Administration offers a 12-hour certificate in College Teaching. These are just a few examples of such certificate programs at other institutions.

Demand (Enrollment Projections 1-5/years/projected completion in first 5 years)

In the first sections of this document, we have articulated a need for the Certificate that we are proposing based on the idea that it benefit the University by improving undergraduate teaching and by helping us to recruit graduate students. We also have articulated the need for the
Certificate based upon helping the participants in the future by making them stand out as competitive in job searches and by preparing them for careers in the professoriate. These are factors that will create demand for the Certificate. In addition to these factors, we anticipate a high demand for the Graduate Certificate in College Teaching for several additional reasons.

First, past interest in our teaching-related courses by students not enrolled in the Higher Education program support our expectations. Recent previous enrollments in, for example AHE 603 (College and University Teaching), are encouraging. In Spring 2012 there were 20 students, 10 of whom were not Higher Education students; in Spring 2013 there were 13 students, 4 of whom were not Higher Education students. These students came from a range of disciplines and fields including biology, communications, public administration, business, and other fields in education. Thus, a growing number of students from other fields have begun to take these courses, hearing about them through informal channels, in part to develop knowledge and skills that will help them in their chosen careers and in part to help them develop credentials through course-credit.

Second, many disciplines and fields at UA purposefully seek to prepare students to assume positions in the professoriate, thus creating the target audience for the Certificate Program. Indeed, we expect that most students seeking this certificate would come from outside of the ELPT Department and instead be enrolled in other Colleges, such as Arts and Sciences (e.g., English, biology, mathematics) and Communications and Information Sciences (i.e. those Colleges that produce the highest number of graduate students entering professorial positions) yet also including other Colleges. A survey of the College Deans, with three questions (see Appendix A), resulted in strong support from the five Deans who responded.

Third, overall enrollment at UA graduate programs suggests a strong pool of candidates for the certificate program from which to draw. With 4997 current graduate students in 9 colleges, schools, or programs at The University of Alabama, if only one half of a percent of them desire academic/professorial positions and elect to enroll in this program, that is 25 students per year.

Fourth, similar programs have proved highly successful at other institutions. A 2010 Inside Higher Education article anticipated enrollment of 1044 students across 30 institutions surveyed (averaging 34 per program with the implication that enrollments were expected to rise). The article also noted that the director of the program at MIT was “floored” when 90 students enrolled in the first offering of such a program.\(^1\) Given that the program at UA is comparable in credit hours and coursework, it is anticipated that we should have good success with enrollments.

**Projected enrollments**

We expect that it will take time to announce the certificate and share information with the relevant program areas to gain buy in and student interested. We also anticipate greater interest in program areas that intentionally aim to produce faculty members, such as Arts and Sciences, and Communication. It is expected, then, that enrollment in the certificate program will consist of 25 students within the first five years of certificate implementation. As the table below indicates, we anticipate some attrition but also expect that some students may take extra time to
complete the Certificate; hence the progression of completers is not simply a reflection of the size of each year’s entering class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Projected Total Enrollments</th>
<th>Projected Total Completions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delivery Format: Campus only

Semester of Expected Implementation: Spring 2014

Resources:

No additional personnel or resources are needed. Course requirements and options for the Certificate Program are currently offered and represented in three-year course planning.

Statement of Support by the College and Provost:

This program has the support of the College of Education. It has received formal votes of support from the Department of Educational Leadership, Technology, and Policy Studies, and the College of Education Academic Issues Committee, and the College of Education Leadership Council. It has received a statement of support from the Dean of the College, Peter Hlebowitsh. The President of the University, Judy Bonner, also supports the program; early versions of the proposal were shared with her while she was Provost of the University, and she gave the program her support and encouraged its completion and submission.

B. Application, Admission, and General Requirements

An applicant to the Graduate Certificate in College Teaching must have completed a bachelor’s degree. In addition, the student must complete at least 18 semester hours in a teaching discipline or professional field to ensure meeting SACS requirements in regard to content knowledge; these hours may be earned concurrently but must be documented in order for the certificate to be awarded. The applicant will select the Graduate Certificate in College Teaching when applying for the certificate through the Graduate School’s online “Graduate Application Center.” The application will include the requested materials, including a Statement of Purpose focusing on the student’s goals in pursuing a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching.

Students must have a mentor in their content knowledge program as well as a mentor in the AHE faculty when they enroll in AHE 688 in order to earn the Graduate Certificate in College Teaching, notifying the Educational Leadership, Policy and Technology Studies department head by e-mail once the mentoring relationship is in place.
General Requirements

- A bachelor’s degree and 18 graduate semester hours in a teaching discipline or professional field (the latter may be earned concurrently with the Certificate)
- Acceptance to the certificate program by the Graduate School and department faculty
- Minimum Required Hours: 12

Required course sequence:

- Spring: AHE 603 College and University Teaching
- Fall: AHE 602 Problems in Higher Education (The United States Professoriate)
- Spring: AHE 688 Mentored Teaching in Higher Education
- Fall: AHE Elective (not a teaching internship)

Transfer of credit: None

Hours That May Be Applied if Later Admitted to a Degree Program in the College of Education:

In this proposed certificate, students enrolled in any degree program in the College of Education, including Higher Education Administration, could also earn a College Teaching Certificate. For example, a PhD student in Educational Research might well wish to become a college faculty member and thus would benefit by completing the Certificate Program. It is our expectation that most Higher Education Administration graduate students would not choose to enroll in this certificate because most of them seek positions in administration in higher education (in student affairs, institutional research, business services, etc), although a small minority of students who wish to become higher education faculty members or who wish to enter positions in academic affairs (e.g., director of faculty development) may choose to participate.

We propose students who choose to enroll in the program be limited in the number of courses they can count toward the degree programs in which they are enrolled. Upon approval of a student’s program of study committee, we recommend that the number of courses that can apply toward the degree as electives be limited to 2.

Certificate completion requirements:

To fulfill the requirements of this graduate certificate, students must complete a total of twelve (12) credit hours, which is equivalent to four (4) courses. All students are required to take the following three courses:

**AHE 603 College and University Teaching.**
An intensive graduate seminar that provides an overview of the issues, principles, and practices associated with effective college teaching. Topics include learning and diversity; teaching models and strategies including assessment; teacher and student
behaviors and learning outcomes; and instructional improvement strategies. [This description will be updated for the Catalog.]

- **AHE 602 Problems in Higher Education: The United States Professoriatte**
  Seminar studying the current issues and trends related to higher education. Students will examine the history of the professoriatte and then focus on recent trends in regard to such matters as expectations about teaching and research, the growth of non-tenure track lines, diversity, and the various institutional types and forms of public and private control.

- **AHE 688 Mentored Teaching in Higher Education**
  This course provides students with a mentored experiential learning opportunity to develop competency and mastery in course construction and delivery in the higher education environment.

Students will select an elective from the remaining courses from one of the following three options.*

- **AHE 507: Student Development Theory I.**
  Introduction to the theoretical bases for understanding how students learn, develop, and grow as a result of both curricular and co-curricular college experiences. Focused largely on the key processes of cognitive and identity development, special emphasis is placed on examining how these psychologically derived models explain the experiences and outcomes of students from diverse backgrounds (e.g., racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, ability). [This description will be updated for the Catalog.]

- **AHE 602 Problems in Higher Education: Diversity in Higher Education.**
  A comprehensive overview of topics related to diversity in American higher education. Included are examinations of evolving student, faculty, and staff demographics; key legal rulings related to shifting philosophies on diversity; social justice concepts and critical theory; policy perspectives; and issues related to specific diversity subgroups across categories of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religious preference, and internationalism.

- **AHE 610 Academic Cultures and Learning in Academe.**
  An intensive examination of the student, faculty, and administrative cultures in higher education environments. The impact of various internal and external factors on institutional culture and behavior will also be studied, particularly as they relate to teaching, learning, research, and service.

- **AHE 644 Academic Program Development and Evaluation in Higher Education.**
  Design and management of academic programs; study of institutional structures for
academic affairs; practice in program review for instructional improvement; and overview of graduate programs (general and liberal education, as well as occupational and professional education).

*Alternately, upon approval by the program director of the Teaching Certificate program, a student may substitute a college-teaching related course offered by another program at The University of Alabama. In order for approval as a substitution, the course would require a clear focus on college teaching and likely be focused on teaching within a specific discipline (for example PY 695 Teaching of Psychology Practicum, BER 672 Teaching Educational Research, and BEP 672 Teaching Educational Psychology, would be acceptable substitutions for the elective).

_Time limit:_ 4 years

C. **Evaluation**

Outcomes will be addressed at two levels: learning and program.

**Learning outcomes:**

Outcomes for individuals who complete the Certificate include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Measured by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts as well as the values and beliefs that inform different approaches to adult learning and development</td>
<td>Completion of final research paper in one of the three electives in certificate program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of teaching and learning in various settings and what strategies are most appropriate in which contexts</td>
<td>Completion of final research paper in AHE 603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate skill in designing and implementing adult learning opportunities within various philosophical and organizational contexts</td>
<td>Completion of teaching, observed and scored by rubric, in AHE 688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate the values, beliefs, experiences, and ideas that shape one's philosophical/theoretical approach to teaching and learning</td>
<td>Completion of a teaching philosophy in AHE 603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the contexts in which the professoriate operates in terms of performance, annual review, promotion review, tenure, especially in terms of institutional types</td>
<td>Completion of AHE 602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize knowledge and skills developed from participation</td>
<td>Completion of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Certificate Program</td>
<td>portfolio in AHE 688</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate the benefits of the program to participants in teaching at The University of Alabama</td>
<td>Completion of on-going interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express opinions about the merits of the program</td>
<td>Completion of exit interviews program completers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use knowledge and skills developed in Certificate Program in future employment</td>
<td>Completion of survey of graduates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following **rubric** will be used to evaluate student-learning outcomes (score of 3 or better is required to pass each outcome.

| 5 | Excellent | All points are fully answered with full documentation |
| 4 | Good | All points are answered, with minor errors |
| 3 | Adequate | All points are treated but at a minimal level; some errors |
| 2 | Inadequate | Some points are answered, and major errors exist |
| 1 | Unacceptable | Few points are answered, the answer does not address the question, and a deficiency in communication skills is evident. |

**Program Outcomes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program outcomes</th>
<th>Measured by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment of desired number of students in first five years</td>
<td>Enrollment figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of desired number of certificates in first five years</td>
<td>Certificate completion figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student satisfaction</td>
<td>End of course evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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i The Inside Higher Education article and is available at the following URL: [http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/10/15/mit](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/10/15/mit)
Appendix A

October 2013 Survey of UA College Deans

First, could a Certificate in College Teaching improve the preparation of graduate students in your College for future careers in the professoriate?

Nursing: Yes (although the College already has a Nurse Educator doctorate)
Law: Yes (although only a few of the graduates go into teaching)
Medicine: Yes
Social Work: Yes
Education: Yes

Second, could a Certificate in College Teaching improve graduate students' (including graduate teaching assistants) knowledge and skills in the area of college teaching?

Nursing: Yes
Law: There are no graduate teaching assistants in the School of Law
Medicine: Yes
Social Work: Yes
Education: Yes

Third, in your review of candidates for a faculty position in your College, would an applicant holding a similar Certificate have an advantage over other candidates?

Nursing: Yes
Law: No (but it probably should)
Medicine: Yes
Social Work: Yes
Education: Yes