

**Docket Item:**

Community College Approval: Southwestern Oregon Community College, Associate of Applied Science Degree in Infant and Toddler Development, within 13.1210, Early Childhood Education and Teaching.

**Summary:**

Southwestern Oregon Community College proposes a new Associate of Applied Science Degree in Infant and Toddler Development. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the degree as proposed.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following degree: AAS in Infant and Toddler Development.



**Southwestern Oregon Community College seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's approval to offer an instructional program leading to an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Infant and Toddler Development.**

**Program Summary**

The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Infant and Toddler Development degree prepares students to work in a variety of educational and childcare settings, including preschools, public schools, private schools, Head Start, Relief Nurseries, and family home settings that serve infants and toddlers. This degree offers students the opportunity to gain enhanced practical experience through practicum and student teaching courses. This degree program is fully articulated with Southern Oregon University's early childhood development program. Students who transfer to Southern Oregon University, and are accepted into the program, should be able to complete requirements for the bachelor's degree.

All coursework specific to childhood education and family studies degrees and certificates is offered online through Southwestern. Transfer courses that meet Southwestern's course outcomes are readily accepted into the program.

SWOCC's AAS Preschool Child Development, AAS Infant and Toddler Development, and AS CE/FS Preschool are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation program.

**1. *Describe the need for this program by providing clear evidence.***

Oregon is experiencing a true crisis in infant and toddler child care. The state lacks a supply of quality child care options for our youngest children. There are many barriers that Oregon families experience such as: long wait lists, limited choices of providers and few that meet families' needs or expectations, and costs of care that rival the cost of college tuition.

Oregon is currently facing a childcare crisis; all but one county in the state have been designated "childcare deserts" based on the lack of adequate availability of care. This crisis is particularly severe in our region; in both Coos and Curry Counties, there are only 12 visible slots per 100 children, less than half the number typically required to meet demand. This number falls dramatically when we look at infant and toddler slots, as many of our small communities have no or very few infant and toddler slots. In Coos and Curry Counties, less than 10% of our zero to three year olds have access to a regulated childcare slot. The severe lack of quality early care and education leaves parents with no option but to seek care with unlicensed and unmonitored providers. The impacts of a lack of quality early care and education are wide-ranging; parents leave the workforce, professionals leave the region, and children without early learning experiences are less likely to graduate from high school, enter college, and are more likely to have low incomes as adults.

Currently, many early educators, and particularly centers, struggle with sustainability, often lacking a background in business practices. Thus, these educators are likely to be daunted by the prospect of much needed capacity expansion. Additionally, because many families in our community are lower income and unable to pay even at the state average for care (around \$14,000 per year for infants in certified centers), the high ratio required to provide infant and toddler care (one adult to every four infants or five toddlers) means that infant care doesn't pay. It also brings increased liability. Finally, we see that because we have fewer early educators than the market demands, they are not incentivized to improve quality through parental pressure; most of our programs are full most of the time, meaning that parents are relieved simply to find a slot, and are unequipped to critically evaluate the early care and education experiences for their children. Public awareness of the lack of safe care is beginning to grow, but we do not yet see a clear understanding of the role of the early years in brain development in our region.

To complement the quality strategies that exist in communities currently, to stabilize and increase quality of existing care, and to help expand family choice, the Early Learning Division is piloting a set of supply and quality building strategies. The infant-toddler quality initiative will utilize Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds to provide an opportunity for Oregon to launch a pilot of quality infant-toddler early education programs. This infant-toddler initiative is targeted to serve low income families in communities struggling to find and keep high quality care for infants and toddlers.

Only one other AAS degree with a focus on infants and toddlers that is accredited by the National Association for the Education for Young Children exists in the United States (Truckee Meadows CC in Nevada). Southwestern Oregon Community College seeks to create a degree pathway for teachers and providers seeking to earn a degree in early care and learning can do so. Given the lacks listed above the college believes that providing this pipeline will encourage potential students to seek a degree with a focus on infants and toddlers.

2. ***Does the community college utilize systemic methods for meaningful and ongoing involvement of the appropriate constituencies?***

SWOCC's Childhood Education and Family Studies department is highly active with national and regional industry partners. This degree will be one of only two infant and toddler focused programs that is accredited by the National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC) in the United States. This degree was developed in collaboration of an Advisory Committee compiled of local and regional teachers, education administrators, childcare providers, workforce development professionals, parenting and family support professionals, and child health professionals. The faculty in this department have a comprehensive plan to expand the reach of this program and its graduates by continuously implementing community involvement strategies.

3. ***Is the community college program aligned with appropriate education, workforce development, and economic development programs?***

The Childhood Education and Family studies Infant Toddler program was developed with business and industry support and was designed to meet NAEYC accreditation standards. All program outcomes speak specifically to NAEYC requirements. Upon completion students will be eligible to obtain Child Development Associate (CDA), an industry recognized national credential. They will also be on the path to obtain credentials from the Oregon Infant Mental Health Association (ORMHA) if they continue on to a Master's or Bachelors degree.

4. ***Does the community college program lead to student achievement of academic and technical knowledge, skills, and related proficiencies?***

The AAS Childhood Education and Family Studies Infant and Toddler degree is a 90 credit, two year program. SWOCC seeks to create a degree pathway for teachers and providers seeking to earn a degree in early care and learning. The college believes that providing this pipeline will encourage potential students to seek a degree with a focus on infants and toddlers. This AAS degree will contain a Career Pathway Certificate of Completion in Infant/Toddler Development. Completion of this degree will provide the opportunity to obtain industry credentials and work in a field with a demonstrated need.

5. ***Does the community college identify and have the resources to develop, implement, and sustain the program?***

SWOCC already has a Childhood Education and Family Studies AAS. All courses within the Infant Toddler AAS degree are already being offered within the currently operating AAS. The program's faculty, staff, budgets are fully general funded. The Childhood Education and Family Studies department is always pursuing outside funding sources for their projects to enhance the experience of students in the program and bring their services to our traditionally low-income population. The Childhood Education and Family Studies programs at SWOCC have a well-established and strong partnership with state and local business and industry.

***Assurances***

Southwestern Oregon Community College has met or will meet the four institutional assurances required for program application.

1. ***Access.*** The college and program will affirmatively provide access, accommodations, flexibility, and additional/supplemental services for special populations and protected classes of students.
2. ***Continuous Improvement.*** The college has assessment, evaluation, feedback, and continuous improvement processes or systems in place. For the proposed program, there will be opportunities for input from and concerning the instructor(s), students, employers, and other partners/stakeholders. Program need and labor market information will be periodically re-evaluated and changes will be requested as needed.
3. ***Adverse impact and detrimental duplication.*** The college will follow all current laws, rules, and procedures and has made good faith efforts to avoid or resolve adverse *intersegmental* and *intra*segmental impact and detrimental duplication problems with other relevant programs or institutions.

4. *Program records maintenance and congruence.* The college acknowledges that the records concerning the program title, curriculum, CIP code, credit hours, etc. maintained by the Office are the official records and it is the college's responsibility to keep their records aligned with those of the Office. The college will not make changes to the program without informing and/or receiving approval from the Office.