

UNIVERSITY SENATE

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Introduced by: Undergraduate Academic Council

Date: May 4, 2009

**GPA Requirement for Admission to the School of Education Minor**

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the following language be added to the University Bulletin, and that the restrictions become effective for students with an admit date of Fall, 2009 and thereafter.
2. That this proposal be forwarded to President George M. Philip for approval.

Educational Studies Minor (restricted admission)

The Educational Studies minor provides undergraduate students with coursework in the field of education. Students are required to complete a minimum of 18 credits of course work offered by the School of Education, including a minimum of 12 credits at or above the 300 level. At least 3 credits of EEDU 390 (Community Service) or the ECPY Middle Earth Sequence are required. No more than 6 credits may be fulfilled through EDU 390. To declare this minor, students must apply to the School of Education through the Pathways Into Education Center (ED 127) and must have at least sophomore status at UAlbany with a UAlbany cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

Rationale provided by the School of Education

The School of Education is a graduate school offering an exploratory undergraduate minor. The Educational Studies minor allows undergraduates to investigate various career options in the field of education in anticipation of graduate study. Our graduate programs, in turn, can prepare students to meet New York State requirements for initial certification and to meet the State requirement of completion of a master's degree for professional teacher certification. Unlike most other minors at the University at Albany, courses in the Educational Studies minor were developed primarily for the minor and are not simultaneously integrated into any degree program or major. Adjuncts and teaching assistants are the principal faculty for the

minor.

Although the Educational Studies minor can be viewed as a significant success in providing an exploratory opportunity across fields in education, its growth has become a resource issue. In total number of students, the Educational Studies minor is the second largest minor at the University for the spring 2009 semester—the School of Business has 1,990 enrolled students and the School of Education has 866 (as reported for March 2009). The rate of student selection to the Educational Studies minor increased by 226 percent from fall 2000 to fall 2008. The School of Education does not possess sufficient resources to support this growth and to maintain the quality of course offerings for the minor. In addition, as students who have completed the Educational Studies minor apply to graduate schools, including UAlbany, they are disappointed to discover that a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 is commonly required for admission. Third, the Education Studies minor requires students to engage in a Community Service course, where they are sent into local schools, tutoring and after-school facilities, and other education-related social institutions. It is imperative for the effective learning of the students and the reputation of the University and School that students be well prepared academically for these assignments.

The Educational Studies minor can be compared in some ways to the Financial Market Regulation (FMR) minor, which requires a 3.2 overall GPA for admission. The GPA requirement for each minor is intended to bring into the program students who will have to complete more advanced work in the field in order to prepare for a related career. FMR minors must have a 3.2 GPA to be accepted into the undergraduate major in the same area. Similarly, at the University at Albany, as well as most other highly ranked universities such as the University at Buffalo, students would be expected to hold a 3.0 cumulative GPA to be accepted into a graduate program in education. It is important, therefore, to admit to the minor only students who have high level academic credentials and interests. This high level of academic achievement is also necessary as students are placed in Community Service assignments in local educational settings.

In order to “right-size” enrollments in the Educational Studies minor in an orderly way, to preserve the quality of the undergraduate courses, to best serve those students most likely to continue in education, and to preserve the integrity of our Community Service activities, we propose that selection of this minor be limited to students who have *at least sophomore status at UAlbany with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better or transfer students who have completed at least one semester at UAlbany with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better*. Review of applications to this restricted minor will be completed within the School of Education and will be signed by a representative of the School of Education. We request that, when accepted, the change go into effect immediately, with students who have already

selected the Educational Studies minor being permitted to complete the minor without this GPA requirement.

## **Background Information**

In spring 2003, 403 students selected the Educational Studies minor. This increased to 502 in spring 2004, and to 834 at the beginning of the spring 2009 semester, with a high of 898 in spring 2008 (see Figure 1). In fall 2008, 799 students had declared an Educational Studies minor, the highest number in any fall semester since 2000, when fall semester data was first collected. While the numbers have increased, the academic strength of these students has not. The percent of Educational Studies minor students having GPAs at 3.0 or above has fallen from 48.4 percent in fall 2007 to 46.5 percent in fall 2008.

Implementation of a 3.0 cumulative GPA requirement to select the Educational Studies minor would return the number of students to a level similar to that in 2002-03. The number of fall 2002 education minors (396) is comparable to fall 2008 education minors with GPAs of at least 3.0 (335) (see Figure 2). If the GPA admission requirement had been in effect for spring 2009, the number of students meeting the requirements to select the Educational Studies minor would have been 383, rather than 834 (see Figure 3).

## **Effects of Limiting Selection of the Education Studies Minor**

- The resources supporting adjuncts and teaching assistants for the Educational Studies minor will be diminished due to University-wide budget reductions. Fewer undergraduate course offerings, as well as larger classes, are virtually inevitable over the next two academic years. Without a reduction in the number of students seeking classes for the minor, overcrowded classes, unavailable options, and inability to complete the minor requirements in a timely way will understandably frustrate and hamper our undergraduates. Instituting an admission requirement would provide a reasoned approach to managing demand.
- Since 2006, Educational Studies minors have been required to complete at least 3 credits of EDU 390, Community Service. The majority of EDU 390 Community Service placements are in classroom settings where UAlbany students provide academic tutoring for elementary and secondary school students. While orientations for working with students in an academic tutoring setting are provided, it is critical that the UAlbany tutors have solid academic backgrounds to draw on when providing tutoring services. Lack of appropriate academic preparation not only leads to an unsuccessful experience for the UAlbany tutors and their tutees, but it damages the reputation of the University in the local educational

community. The requirement of a 3.0 cumulative GPA would help ensure that we are sending academically qualified students as representatives of UAlbany to assist P-12 students in academic areas.

- EDU 390 Community Service placements are arranged and supervised through the SOE Undergraduate Advisor, who is funded by a graduate assistantship. In the fall of 2004, 56 undergraduate students were placed in educational settings, and in the current semester (Spring 2009), more than twice that number (123) were placed. The increase in the number of students seeking Community Service placements has made it increasingly difficult to find meaningful locations for the students and to monitor the quality of the students' experiences. A "right-sized" Educational Studies minor would reduce the number of placements needed, allowing for more careful consideration, selection, preparation, monitoring, and support for those placements.
- There are two identifiable groups within the Educational Studies minor who are included because of their special roles at the University—Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program students and students who work for Residential Life. Students within each of these groups are required to take specific education courses to prepare them for roles in their target areas.

During fall 2008, 22 of 82 students (27%) in the Middle Earth program and 7 of 14 students (50%) in the Residential Life program had GPAs below 3.0. If these students had not been permitted to select the Educational Studies minor, it would have had a minimal impact on these options, since the students could still be permitted to take the specific courses needed.

Both Dolores Cimini, Director of the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program, and Holly Barker-Flynn, Quadrangle Coordinator for Residential Life, support our request for the 3.0 cumulative GPA admission requirement with the understanding that students who have already selected the Educational Studies minor will be allowed to complete their programs.

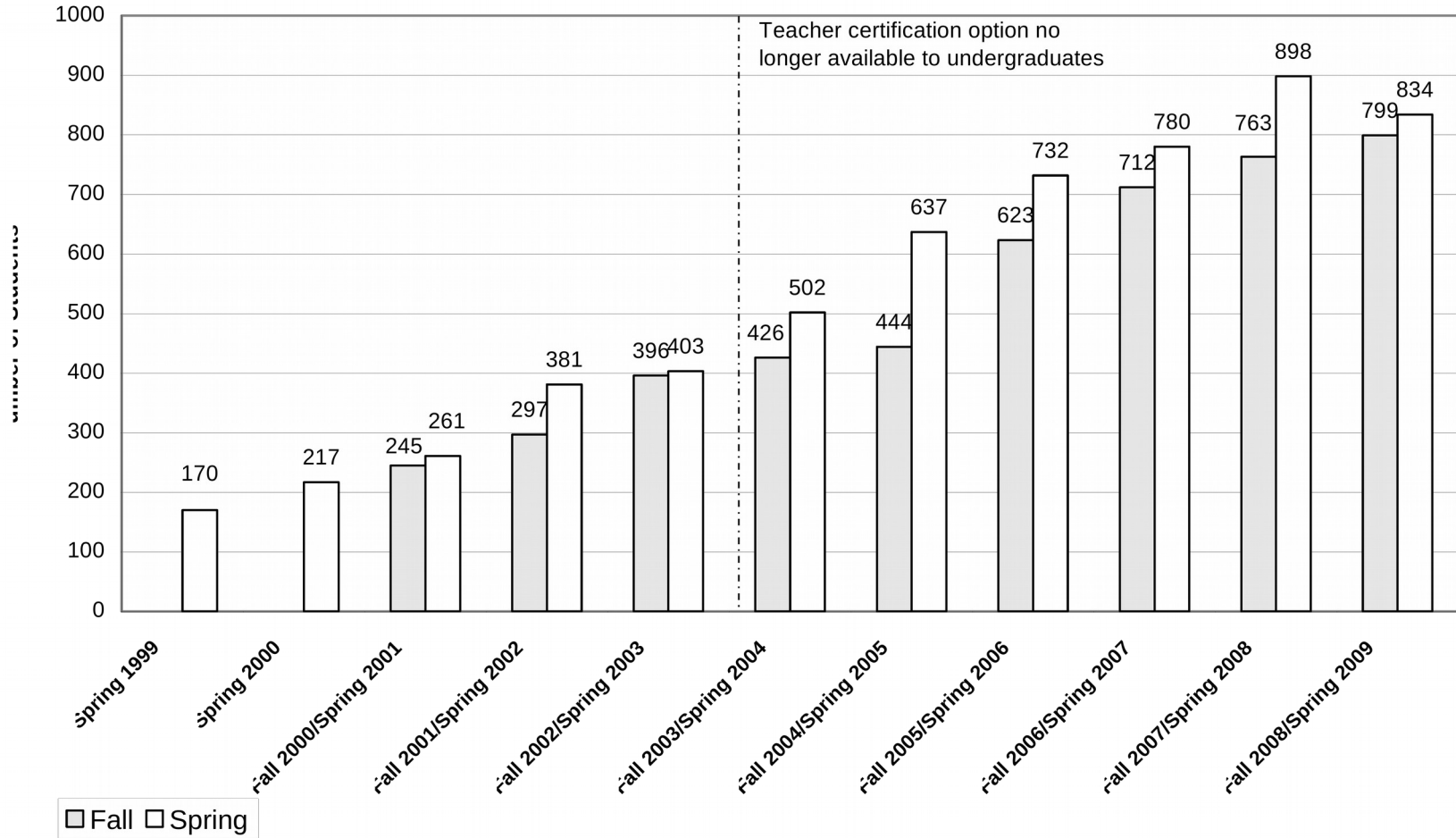
### **Bulletin Copy—Educational Studies Minor**

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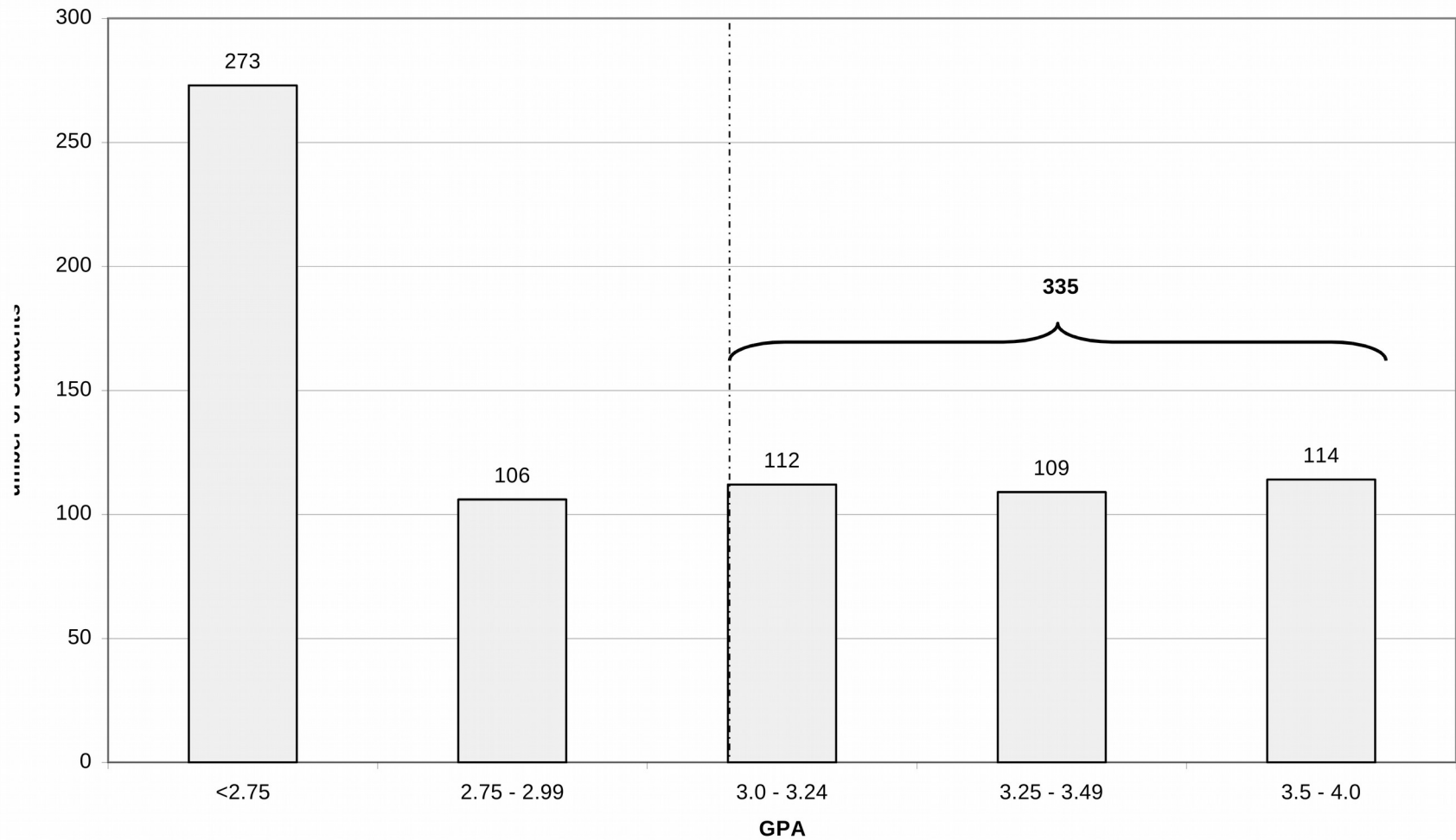
## **Summary**

The Educational Studies minor exists apart from any undergraduate program or degree and from the School of Education's graduate programs, with teaching resources provided primarily by adjuncts and teaching assistants. The Educational Studies minor has grown explosively in recent years, in part because of the care and resources we have committed to the program. Even without the looming University-wide budget reductions, we would not be able to maintain the same quality of coursework and community service experiences with the growing number of students. The current fiscal situation makes it even more imperative that we preserve the best aspects of the Educational Studies minor rather than let it diminish in quality as a result of less academically prepared students entering the program. If undergraduate students were to pursue careers in teaching, they would face a common standard of 3.0 GPA for graduate study. Acceptance of this proposal that there be a 3.0 cumulative GPA requirement for students selecting the Educational Studies minor would "right-size" the Educational Studies minor so that we can continue to successfully serve those students most likely to pursue and thrive in education careers.

**Figure 1: Education Minors, Spring 1999 - Spring 2009**



**Figure 2: GPAs of Fall 2008 Education Studies Minors**  
**N = 714\***



\*85 freshmen or transfer students with no GPA are not included

**Figure 3: GPAs of Spring 2009 Educational Studies Minors**  
**N = 834**

