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UGA PROJECT OFFERS ONLINE SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

ATHENS, Ga. – A group of UGA College of Education researchers has received a \$2.4 million federal grant to develop a Web-based program that will help undergraduate students, paraprofessionals, and mid-career professionals become certified special education teachers.

Special Education Training on the Web: Certification, Undergraduate, and Mentoring (SPECTRUM), is a five-year “Transition to Teach” grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The purpose of the project is to encourage individuals from other fields to become special education teachers in high-need school systems. The program is designed to work well for paraprofessionals already working in classrooms, mid-career professionals, and recent college graduates who wish to earn their certification while working full-time.

By incorporating online coursework, field supervision, networking and support opportunities, SPECTRUM blends technology innovations with traditional teaching approaches.

While supervision of student teachers has been a challenge in the past for teacher certification programs delivered via distance education, SPECTRUM incorporates the use of Webcam supervision, providing frequent feedback to students in distant districts regarding their teaching skills.

Students also have access to virtual conference rooms, which link to mentor teachers, university personnel, student teachers and novice teachers for problem solving and informal support.

SPECTRUM caters to the needs of three distinct groups of aspiring teachers in Georgia. The first group consists of paraprofessionals already working in school systems, most of whom have completed two years of college credit. The second group focuses on mid-career professionals who hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in a field unrelated to education. The third group is recent college graduates who would like to become certified special education teachers.

SPECTRUM Undergraduate is a BSEd program for paraprofessionals already working in special education classrooms. SPECTRUM Certification is a certification-only program for individuals who hold bachelor’s degrees and are pursuing certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Both programs accept students annually for fall start.

The application deadline for SPECTRUM Undergraduate is April 1, and the deadline for SPECTRUM Certification is May 1. See the SPECTRUM website at www.coe.uga.edu/spectrum for program details and the application.

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