

UW-Stout: New online early childhood education program offers working adults flexible access to teaching degree

Posted on Tuesday, May 17, 2022

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Menomonie, Wis. – With the current statewide and national teacher shortage in mind, University of Wisconsin-Stout Professor Lindsay Barnhart understood there was a need to support working adults in obtaining licensure to teach.

As program director for early childhood education in the [School of Education](#), Barnhart received several inquiries from working adults who were hoping for an online degree option.

“Our traditional face-to-face, four-year program didn’t meet the needs of these individuals,” she said. “UW-Stout’s new [online early childhood education degree](#) was created specifically for working adults with an associate degree, coursework completed at another institution, a degree in another field or currently licensed teachers in another area.”

The program was approved by the Provost’s Office on March 4. [Applications are open](#), and classes begin this fall semester.

Online option allows adults flexibility

As online ECE students work toward certification to teach birth through third grade in regular education and special education in Wisconsin, their coursework is the same as on-campus students.

However, classes are synchronous and asynchronous, allowing students to connect with their peers as they engage in content while giving them the flexibility to study around their work or home schedule.

Barnhart and faculty work with online students to build a personalized learning plan based on their previous coursework or degree.

“Each student will need 120 credits to graduate. However, their plan is based on the credits that they transfer in,” she explained. “A specific course offering is scheduled, and students may follow it as closely as desired to graduate as soon as possible.”

A field experience and student teaching are required and may be completed near students’ homes.

“A common message we hear from alumni and school administrators is how well our graduates are prepared to teach. It speaks to the quality of the program and the faculty,” said Deanna Schultz, interim associate dean of the [College of Education, Hospitality, Health and Human Sciences](#).

The School of Education offers nine undergraduate programs, as well as five [Graduate School](#) programs, numerous education certificates and [add-on teaching certifications](#).

UW-Stout is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes.