

**Comprehensive Program Review Self-Study
BSEd in Mental Retardation
Columbus State University
September 2005**

Executive Summary for the BSEd Mental Retardation Program

Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

Program Quality: Very Strong

In February 2005, a continuing approval review of the College of Education was conducted by a Board of Examiners (BOE) consisting of representatives from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The 2000 NCATE Standards and the Georgia 2000 Standards were used to assess the unit and its programs. The BOE judged all standards to be met for the unit and for all initial and advanced programs.

Overall, the B.S.Ed. Mental Retardation program is strong and prepares highly qualified special education teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students learn. The post-baccalaureate program leading to initial teacher certification in Mental Retardation has been an extremely strong part of the B.S.Ed. program but is not reflected in the numbers as the students in the post-baccalaureate program do not receive a bachelors degree. The post-baccalaureate program has been helpful in increasing and maintaining enrollment in the Mental Retardation program. This may change with the new requirements that all students graduating from the program be "highly qualified" under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This has resulted in a change in required coursework so that students will graduate highly qualified in Reading Education. We are monitoring this situation to see how it will impact admission and enrollment in the B.S.Ed. program.

Program Productivity: Satisfactory

Enrollment in the B.S.Ed. Mental Retardation program increased from 40 students in Fall 2001 to 54 students in Fall 2004 and ranks last in average enrollment among the B.S.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education. Courses are offered on a one-year cycle, and enrollment in required courses is good. The offering and providing of several sections of SPED 2256, which is a state required course for all teacher education students, helps to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. The program has a diverse group of majors (on average 84% female and 30% minority) from a wide range of age groups. Graduates of the program are in high demand.

The average number of B.S.Ed. Mental Retardation degrees conferred from 2001-2002 to 2004-2005 was 6.5. The program ranks second in average number of degrees conferred by the four B.S.Ed. programs in the Department of Teacher Education. It is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities. The statistics from other USG programs show that very few institutions offered a degree in Mental Retardation during the past four years.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality

The B.S.Ed. program in Special Education: Mental Retardation has been revised to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certification of mental retardation. The program for students seeking initial certification in Special Education –

General Curriculum has been revised so that all graduates will be considered to be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity

The special education program has recently been redesigned to train teachers in a content area thus making them “highly qualified” under the NCLB legislation. The Program Advisory Committee will continue to monitor enrollment patterns as the program changes are implemented to determine the impact on enrollment and retention in the special education program.

The program revisions may initially lead to a decrease in program admissions and decreased graduation rates as program requirements may lead students to question the value of pursuing a degree in special education, when they will be required to obtain an additional 15 semester hours of coursework in a teaching content area. Graduation rates may also be impacted as students may be required to delay their graduation until they have completed the additional coursework. However, after an initial drop-off in enrollment and graduation, enrollments should return to their current levels and subsequently so should graduation rates.

Beginning in the Fall 2006 semester, the State of Georgia will no longer require students to pass the Praxis II test for teacher licensure. In place of the Praxis series, the State of Georgia Assessment for Certification (GACE) which will reflect the required changes to special education teacher preparation curricula, will be required. All students graduating with a B.S.Ed. degree in Special Education: General Curriculum will be prepared for the new certification test through their course work and field-based practicum placements. The special education curriculum will be aligned with the content covered on the GACE.

Conclusion about the Program’s Viability at CSU

The B.S.Ed. Mental Retardation program at CSU is an extremely viable one. As indicated by the evaluation of the NCATE/PSC Board of Examiners in February 2005, the quality of the program is very strong. All NCATE/PSC standards were judged to be met for all initial and advanced programs.

The viability of the program is also ensured by the collaborative relationship that exists between the College of Education and P-12 teachers. Representatives from these groups work together to make improvements to the special education programs at CSU and to impact special education in our region.

Graduates of the B.S.Ed. program in Special Education: Mental Retardation are also a valuable resource for our special education programs. A substantial number of program graduates teach in systems served by CSU, especially Muscogee County. Our undergraduate programs in special education have helped to create a cadre of leaders within our Partner School Network. Graduates often serve CSU as pre-student teaching cooperating teachers and cooperating teachers for student teaching. They are an invaluable asset in assisting with the development of our undergraduates.

The number of B.S.Ed. degrees conferred by CSU in Special Education: Mental Retardation has been increasing fairly consistently over the past four years and is comparable to the number of

degrees conferred by other USG state universities. With the critical shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers, we need to provide every possible opportunity for teachers to grow professionally and enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching student with exceptional learning needs.

Program Improvement Plan

In response to the findings of the Comprehensive Program Review, the faculty members and administrators of the B.S.Ed. in Special Education propose the strategies outlined below to improve the quality, productivity and viability of the program. These strategies will be facilitated by the Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC).

<i>Departmental Plans and Priorities</i>	<i>CPR Indicator</i>	<i>Projected Timeline</i>
1. Connect the content of the Special Education courses to the P-12 curriculum	Quality	2006-Ongoing
2. Continue to develop the adaptive and assistive technology classroom that will be used to model innovative teaching and materials	Quality	2005-Ongoing
3. Monitor program enrollment trends to enable appropriate planning for all aspects of the program including recruitment, scheduling of courses and securing faculty positions	Productivity Viability	2006-Ongoing

The resources needed to accomplish these priorities should be minimal. Departmental resources will be allocated as necessary to accomplish these plans. The Special Education Program Coordinator will be provided one course release time each academic year to provide leadership to these activities. The Department will contribute to the development of the model classroom by providing funds for supplies and materials. The Program Coordinator will communicate additional resource requests as needed to the appropriate administrator within the College of Education at Columbus State University.

Summary Recommendation and Supporting Rationale

Recommendation: *Maintain the Program at the Current Level*

The program quality is very strong. There are factors beyond our control that have an impact on the B.S.Ed. program. Since teachers need to be “highly qualified” in a content area subject beginning with the Fall 2006 semester, many are starting to reconsider the need for a degree in special education when they can get a degree in any content field and be considered highly qualified. Some of the special education teachers in our service region are considering the pursuit of an undergraduate degree in an area other than special education, but are returning for the M.Ed. in Special Education at a later date.

As previously mentioned, CSU will continue to work to improve the current B.S.Ed. Program in special education by responding to new initiatives (e.g., Georgia Performance Standards, No Child Left Behind Act), improving the curriculum, providing better support and resources for students, and intensifying recruitment efforts. By enhancing the quality of the program, we hope to attract more potential students.

I. Program Overview

The undergraduate program in Mental Retardation prepares highly qualified special education teachers who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to promote high levels of learning for all P-12 students. In special education content courses, special education pedagogy courses, professional courses, and field experiences, candidates have multiple opportunities to demonstrate excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professionalism. Creating opportunities for candidates to demonstrate excellence in these three areas is consistent with the College of Education (COE) Conceptual Framework and is reflected in the broad goals of the special education program. These goals are briefly summarized as:

1. knowledge of the characteristics of students with exceptional learning needs, including important definitional criteria for each area of exceptionality (scholarship);
2. competence in instructional planning, strategies, and techniques (teaching);
3. competence in classroom management (teaching);
4. knowledge and skills in the administration of assessments (teaching);
5. using research in making decisions about effective teaching (scholarship);
6. competence in communication and consultation (professionalism).

The goals of the initial program in Special Education reflects the belief that candidates should display *appropriate knowledge* before they enter the classroom and should develop and demonstrate *competence* as they complete their programs. For this reason, program goals are similar for candidates in initial and advanced programs, with the difference lying in the expected level of performance.

The Mental Retardation program in Special Education helps CSU to accomplish its mission of serving the educational needs of a diverse region. By preparing highly-qualified teachers in a critical needs area, the program helps to improve the quality of education and the quality of life in the institution's service area.

II. Summary Findings of the Program's Overall Quality

In February 2005, a continuing approval review of the College of Education was conducted by a Board of Examiners (BOE) consisting of representatives from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The 2000 NCATE Standards were used to assess the unit and its programs. The BOE judged all standards to be met for the unit and for all initial and advanced programs. Following is a summary of the findings taken from the BOE final report.

Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Assessment data from Praxis I, Praxis II, GPA's, MAP evaluations, exit examinations, and national licensing exams indicate that teacher candidates know their subject matter and candidates for other school roles know their fields, both of which are aligned with professional, state, and institutional standards. MAP evaluations and the Disposition Evaluation Form give evidence that candidates and other school personnel know how to teach their subject matter and can deliver information in a clear and meaningful way so that all students learn.

Areas for Improvement: Candidates in Art Education, Biology, Chemistry, and French do not demonstrate content mastery.

Rationale: While overall more than 80 percent of the candidates in the unit have passed their respective content licensure exams, fewer than 80 percent of candidates in Art Education, Biology, Chemistry, and French passed their respective content licensure exams. Note: Chemistry and French had only one program completer each over the past three years.

Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation

The unit maintains a comprehensive assessment system for the initial and advanced levels to ensure the systematic collection of data, providing opportunities for the unit to analyze, evaluate, and improve the quality of programs, unit operations, and candidate performance. The assessment systems reflect the conceptual framework and are aligned with INTASC and NBPTS standards as well as specialty professional associations. The unit utilizes information technologies to effectively collect and aggregate data for candidate, program, and unit improvement.

Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

All of the unit's programs which prepare candidates to become teachers or fill other roles as members of the education profession include field work/clinical practice as an integral part. Use of the MAP Evaluation Instrument and the Dispositions Evaluations which connects with the Conceptual Framework supports the work of the unit and provides scaffolding so that candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by those who are in professional education roles. Candidates are also surrounded by experienced, caring, competent professionals representing both the University and P-12 partners. Innovations such as the use of information technology for scheduling and tracking candidate progress in a very flexible and comprehensive database, the STEADY new teacher mentoring program, and the refinement of the Partner School Network enhance to quality of the program and its graduates.

Standard 4: Diversity

The unit has clearly defined its candidate dispositions related to diversity, and these dispositions are assessed throughout required coursework in the initial and advanced programs. Three of the 32 unit faculty represent diversity. The diversity of candidates in unit programs roughly mirrors that of the university and service area as a whole. Because of the racial and ethnic diversity in the university's service area, initial and advanced candidates also work with a broadly diverse population of P-12 students.

Areas for Improvement: The college has not been successful in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

Rationale: Even though efforts have been made to recruit additional minority faculty, currently there are three minority faculty in the unit. While this constitutes a slight improvement from 1998, a significant impact has not been made to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to work with diverse faculty.

Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development

Unit faculty have extensive academic backgrounds. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the full-time faculty, and seventeen percent (17%) of the part-time faculty hold terminal degrees while the remaining faculty either are working to complete doctoral studies or have master's degrees. Unit faculty are effective teachers who model best teaching practices in their areas of specialty. Most faculty have been engaged in scholarly activities and service activities to the local, state, regional, national, and international communities. All full-time tenured and non-tenured faculty are systematically and annually evaluated by their department chair, personnel committee, unit dean, and throughout the university input system. The faculty serve on committees and boards at the university and in the local community. They are also involved in local, state, and national professional associations. The unit has an expectation of professional growth/development of both full-time and part-time faculty, and faculty concur with the expectation by attending workshops and conferences, reading journals, and conducting research.

Areas for Improvement: Part-time faculty are not systematically evaluated.

Rationale: There is no systematic process for evaluating part-time faculty across the unit.

Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources

The unit has the responsibility for authority for the delivery of the preparation of all professional educators. Systems and processes are in place to ensure that all constituencies are represented in the design, delivery and assessment of unit programs. Facilities, personnel and budget are adequate to meet the needs of candidates, faculty and programs. The unit does not require part-time faculty who teach or supervise student teachers to attend an orientation/training session on the conceptual framework or the use of the disposition or MAP rubrics.

Areas for Improvement: Not all part-time faculty are adequately trained on assessments used to evaluate candidates.

Rationale: The unit cannot ensure that part-time faculty have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assess candidates.

III. Summary Findings of the Program’s Overall Productivity

Enrollment in the Special Education – Mental Retardation program increased by 35% in the period from Fall 2001 to Fall 2004 and ranks sixth in average enrollment among the ten undergraduate programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education. Courses are offered on a one- year cycle, and enrollment in required courses is good. This helps to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. The program has a diverse group of majors (on average 64% female and 30% minority) from a wide range of age groups. Graduates of the program are in high demand.

The number of Special Education – Mental Retardation degrees conferred by CSU is small but has been fairly consistent over the past four years and is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities.

The Special Education Program redesign has been completed and recruiting efforts can begin with the support of the College of Education.

III A. Enrollment of Students in the Program

The enrollment pattern for the Mental Retardation program in Special Education is shown in Table 3.1.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time	22	20	23	23
Part-Time	18	25	26	31
<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>54</i>

Table 3.1 Number of Total Declared Majors in Mental Retardation - Special Education – Fall Semester

- The majority of students in the Mental Retardation program are part-time students. Enrollment increased in the period from Fall 2001 to Fall 2004 by 35%. This increase may be due to a complete redesign of the program and new course offering that were begun in 2001 and offered beginning Fall 2002.
- The number of declared majors is not an accurate figure to use when assessing the actual number of students in the Special Education-Mental Retardation program as many students claim special education as their major early in their education careers but in reality they will not be able to meet the requirements to enter teacher education by the time they reach their junior year.

Table 3.2 shows the total enrollment in all BS.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education at CSU. In the period 2001-2005, enrollment in the BS.Ed. Special Education program has been one of the smallest compared to the other education programs. While all other teacher education programs have seen a substantial increase in enrollment since 2004 Special Education has grown at a slightly slower rate.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	300	370	417	473
Health & Physical Education	58	65	74	71
Middle Grades Education	53	65	84	80
Special Education – Mental Retardation	40	45	49	54

Table 3.2 Number of Declared Majors in BS.Ed. Programs – Fall Semester

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the BS.Ed. program in Special Education and works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. Currently, we are redesigning the entire Special Education program and we will be eliminating all programs in Mental Retardation in order to become compliant with the new Georgia Professional Standards Commission directive to eliminate categorical programs and offer only generic Special Education degree programs. The program redesign should increase the number of full-time students in the Special Education undergraduate degree program.

III B. Annual Degree Productivity of the Program

As indicated in Table 3.3, the number of BS.Ed. degrees conferred each year in Special Education is small and has actually decreased since 2001-2002. In contrast, the number of degrees conferred in Early Childhood and Middle Grades has increased.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	34	52	44	52
Health & Physical Education	7	8	6	3
Middle Grades Education	5	5	6	7
Special Education – Mental Retardation	10	8	2	6

Table 3.3 Number of Degrees Conferred – Fiscal Year

There may be several factors contributing to the small number of degrees conferred each year.

1. Students may take more than four years to complete the program.
2. Students are very confused about the No Child Left Behind Act and its requirements, and this has led to students looking towards other majors.

The “Highly Qualified” provision of the NCLB requires that teacher candidates seeking initial certification and/or a BS.Ed. degree in Special Education be highly qualified in the content areas they are to teach if they will be serving as the teacher of record for students with special needs. This can be considered to be the largest variable leading to the increase in the length of time needed to complete the program and the confusion that is initially seen with changes in program requirements. The current statewide trend to use an inclusion model to teach all special education students has in many cases caused special education teachers to be concerned about the additional requirements of being “highly qualified”.

In its current form, the NCLB requires all students to be educated by a teacher who has been deemed “highly qualified.” The special education program has recently been redesigned to

train teachers in a content area thus making them “highly qualified”. The Program Advisory Committee will continue to monitor enrollment patterns as these changes are implemented to determine the impact on enrollment in the special education program.

III C. Program Completion Efficiency & Graduation Rate

Table 3.4 shows the graduation rates for all BS.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education at CSU.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	11%	14%	11%	11%
Health & Physical Education	12%	12%	8%	4%
Middle Grades Education	13%	8%	7%	9%
Special Education – Mental Retardation	25%	18%	4%	11%

Table 3.4 Graduation Rate

Graduation rates tend to fluctuate as students complete their programs of study at different rates. The graduation rates for the BS.Ed. Special Education program tend to be higher than the rates for most other BS.Ed. programs. This may be due in part to the following factors:

1. Some students take several years to complete the program because of teaching schedules and other obligations.
2. Students in the special education program are often students who were dissatisfied with job opportunities in the fields represented by the other educational programs and are seeking quicker employment.
3. The graduation rate figure is in reality a meaningless measure of the mental retardation programs productivity. The numbers used to calculate the graduation percentage are inaccurate and do not reflect actual special education majors. This leads to meaningless results on this measure.

Providing a quality program in Special Education is the primary concern of special education faculty. We will continue to make every effort to provide meaningful and relevant coursework that prepares teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students with special education needs learn. Ongoing efforts to offer additional support and resources to teachers as they work on their BS.Ed. degree should ensure that most students who enroll in the program are able to complete it.

III D. Efficiency & Clarity of the Program’s Course Requirements

The BS.Ed. Program in Special Education Mental Retardation requires foundations of education core (7 credits), a special education core (36credits), a reading instruction core (5 credits), a student teaching knowledge core (5 credits) and a field-based student teaching placement (10 credits). Course requirements are listed below.

Area: Foundation of Education Core (7 hrs.)

EDUF 2215 American Educational Experience (3)
EDUF 2116 Human Development Motivation and Learning (3)
EDCI 2105 Diversity in Education (1)

Area: Special Education Core (36 hrs.)

SPED 2256 Introduction to Exceptional Students in the General Education Classroom (3)
SPED 4225 Collaboration and Consultation (3)
SPED 3215 Assessment and Prescription in Special Education (3)
SPED 3155 Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Students with Mental Retardation (3)
SPED 3405 Program Practicum in Mental Retardation (1)
SPED 3275 Classroom Behavior Management (3)
SPED 4215 Teaching Students with Mental Retardation Mild and Moderate (3)
SPED 4405 Teaching Practicum in Mental Retardation (1)
SPED 2255 Communication Arts and Language Development for Children with Disabilities (3)
SPED 3225 Teaching Math in Special Education (3)
SPED 5225 Introduction to Severe Impairments (3)
SPED 4158 Teaching Students with Mental Retardation Severe and Profound (3)
SPED 3406 Classroom Practicum in Special Education (1)
SPED 4105 Technological Adaptations for Exceptional Learners (3)

Area: Reading Education Core (5 hrs.)

EDRG 3115 Basic Preparation for Teaching Reading (2)
EDRG 4219 Diagnostic and Prescriptive Reading Instruction (3)

Area: Student Teaching Knowledge Core (5 hrs.)

EDUF 4115 Classroom Management (3)
EDUF 4000 Integrating Technology (2)

Area: Student Teaching Practicum Course (10 hrs.)

SPED 4485 Student Teaching or Internship (10)

These requirements are communicated online and through the CSU Catalog.

III E. Frequency and Sequencing of Course Offerings Required for Program Completion

As shown in Table 3.5, courses required in the BS.Ed. Special Education – Mental Retardation program are offered on a regular basis. Courses may be taken in any order.

Number of Sections Per Semester													
	F 01	Sp 02	Su 02	F 02	Sp 03	Su 03	F 03	Sp 04	Su 04	F 04	Sp 05	Su 05	F 05
EDUF 2215	4	5	2	5	5	2	6	6	1	8	8	3	8
EDUF 2116	4	5	2	5	5	3	6	6	3	5	7	3	5
EDCI 2105										2	3	1	6
SPED 2256	3	4	2	2	4	2	3	3	1	3	3	1	4
SPED 3116											1		1
SPED 3215		2	1		1			2			1		
SPED 4225	2			1			1			1			1
SPED 3155	1			1			2			1			1
SPED 3275			1		1			1			2		
SPED 4215		1	1		1			1			1		
SPED 2255	1						1			1			1
SPED 3225		1	1		1			1			1		
SPED 5225	1		1	1		1	1		1			1	1
SPED 4105										1			1
SPED 4158					1			1			1		
SPED 4156							1			1			1
SPED 4157				1			1			1			1
EDRG 3115	2	2		4	2		2	2	1	2	2	1	2
EDRG 4219	1	1		1	2		2	1	1	1	1	1	1
SPED 3406				1	1		1	1		1	1		
SPED 3405				1	1		1	1		1	0		1
SPED 4405				0	0		0	1		1	1		

Table 3.5 Frequency of Course Offerings

III F. Enrollment in the Program's Required Courses

Table 3.6 shows the average enrollment per section for required courses in the BS.Ed. Mental Retardation program. All BS.Ed. students must take EDUF 2215, EDUF 2116, and EDCI 2105, so average enrollments in these courses are higher. Enrollments in SPED 3155, SPED 4215, SPED 3215, SPED 4225 and SPED 5225 are the best indicators of enrollment trends in the special education program. Enrollment in these courses has remained fairly consistent during the period from 2001 to 2005, with an average enrollment of **18.8**.

Average Course Enrollment Fall Semester				
Course Level	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005
2000 Level Courses	16.0	7.0	8.0	22.0
3000 Level Course	10.6	15.8	19.9	9.3
4000 Level Courses	11.2	12.2	9.4	7.5
5000 Level Courses	1.0	0.0	14.0	6.0

Table 3.6 Average Enrollment in the Program's Required Courses

By offering the required SPED courses on a one year cycle, enrollment is high enough that the courses do not have to be cancelled. Courses enrollment levels have been increasing due to a redesign of the program and the courses themselves. All individual student programs have been standardized so that they have the same required courses in them. The 5000 level courses have been eliminated as they led to confusion on the part of students as to whether or not they were graduate or undergraduate courses. The decrease in 3000 and 4000 level course enrollments can be explained by the overall enrollment patterns of the undergraduate program since the redesign.

III G. Diversity of the Program’s Majors and Graduates

Table 3.7 shows the gender and ethnic origin of students in the BS.Ed. Mental Retardation program. Overall, the student enrollment by gender has been 81% female and 19% male. These figures are comparable to the institution’s enrollment percentages by gender.

On average, 69% of the program’s majors since Fall 2001 have been white, 26.5% have been black, and 4.5% have belonged to other ethnic groups. There have been no international students in the program during this time period. The percentage of black students in the M.Ed. Special Education program is smaller than the overall percentage of black students in other teacher education programs at CSU. This is consistent with national figures on enrollment of minority students into special education programs. Studies conducted nationally have determined that there is less of an interest in special education programs of study by students from minority groups due to the lack of prestige and lower earning power compared with a business curriculum. Studies have also suggested that the higher admission requirements of teacher education programs has a remarkable impact on minority student enrollments.

Gender	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Female	32 (80%)	38 (84%)	43 (88%)	45 (83%)
Male	8 (20%)	7 (16%)	6 (12%)	9(17%)
Ethnicity				
Asian	0	0	1 (2%)	0
Black	10 (25%)	13 (29%)	14 (29%)	12 (23%)
Hispanic	3 (8%)	0	1 (2%)	3(7%)
Multi-Racial	0	0	0	1
White	27 (67%)	32 (71%)	33 (67%)	38 (70%)

Table 3.7 Ethnic and gender diversity among BS.Ed. Mental Retardation majors

Students in the BS.Ed. program in Mental Retardation are from diverse age groups. The majority of students are between 21 and 25 years of age. Table 3.1 shows the age composition of all BS.Ed. students in the Mental Retardation program since 2001.

Age	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Under 21	3	8	9	7
21-25	13	11	14	14
26-30	3	5	5	8
31-40	12	10	12	15
41-50	7	7	9	10
51-60	2	4	0	0
Over 60	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	40	45	49	54
<i>Average</i>	31.7	31.5	29.2	31.1

Table 3.11: Age diversity among BS.Ed. Mental Retardation students

Though the trend indicates that undergraduate students tend to be younger, there was an increase in 2004 in the number of students in the 31-40 age range. This suggests that more students are entering the BS.Ed. program from another major or career field.

III H. Cost-Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery in the Program's Home Department

As shown below in Tables 3.12 and 3.13, the budget for the Department of Teacher Education represented approximately 13% of the total instructional costs for Columbus State University (CSU) from 2001 to 2004. During this time period, over \$1,000,000 of the department budget came from grant funds that, for the most part, supported the work of the Centers of Excellence (see note in Table 3.12). In 2004-2005, the department budget represented 8% of the total instructional costs at CSU. Considering that, in Fall 2004, 1340 (19%) of the 7224 students enrolled at CSU were majoring in a program offered through the Department of Teacher Education, instructional delivery in the department is very cost-effective.

For the special education programs, the cost per major has decreased by approximately 54% since 2001. In 2004-2005, the cost per credit was \$206.00 compared to \$162.15 for the institution. The higher cost per credit is due to the smaller number of students enrolled in special education courses.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Department Budget*	\$3,116,951	\$3,176,287	\$3,143,501	\$2,032,092
Cost Per Major (BS.Ed., & M.Ed. Special Education majors) <i>(Pro-Rated Expenditures/Number of Declared Majors)</i>	\$5,732	\$3,754	\$4,578	\$2,610
Credit Hours Taught Fall and Spring (BS.Ed. & M.Ed. Special Education majors)	1,684	1,632	1,463	1,383
Cost per Credit (BS.Ed. & M.Ed. Special Education majors)	\$296	\$253	\$344	\$206
* Note: Centers of Excellence units (ETTC, CRMC, Child Care R&R and Oxbow Meadows removed from academic departments in FY 2005).				

Table 3.12 Instructional Costs for Department of Teacher Education and Graduate Special Education Programs

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Instructional Costs	\$23,311,457.76	\$23,963,598.65	\$23,784,544.59	\$25,240,030.43
Total Credit Hours	116,543	133,777	148,797	155,654
Cost per Credit	\$200.02	\$179.13	\$159.85	\$162.15

Table 3.13 Total Instructional Costs at CSU

By offering the required special education courses in the BS.Ed. Mental Retardation program on a one- year cycle, the number of students enrolled in these courses is high enough to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. In addition, the program requires some of the same courses (e.g., Human Development, American Educational Experience, Diversity Issues, etc.) that are required in other BS.Ed. programs. These courses have higher enrollments and thus help to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. The special education department also teaches at least three and often five sections of SPED 2256 for all education majors. This course is offered at a 2000 level which insures high enrollments in the course sections. Currently these courses are capped at a maximum enrollment of 30 and they often have an overload of students enrolled in them. This helps contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the program.

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the BS.Ed. program in Mental Retardation and works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. Currently, we are aligning coursework with the new Georgia Professional Standards Commission mandates for Special Education – General Curriculum in an effort to help prepare “highly qualified” teachers to teach with the new standards. By responding to current initiatives and mandates, we hope to recruit more teachers into the BS.Ed. program to make it more cost-effective.

III I. Program’s Responsiveness to State Needs and Employer Demand for Program Graduates

Statistics show that all of the students enrolled into the Mental Retardation program are employed by the local school districts immediately after their graduation from the program. The local school districts have called requesting the availability of graduates from the program every semester. They are told that there are no graduates available as they are all currently employed.

In 2002, the Special Education program was awarded a State Improvement Grant for \$20,000 to create and begin offering a 3 semester hour course Introduction to the Exceptional Learner in the General Education Classroom. This course was created and taught for four semesters using collaboration with a member of the faculty from Reading Education and a special education faculty member. This course is still being offered in the special education program as SPED 2256 but it is no longer taught collaboratively due to financial considerations.

The Special Education program continues to respond to the needs of the State and employers by actively recruiting additional undergraduate students through the efforts of the program coordinator and the faculty. These efforts have resulted in the enrollment of students into the undergraduate program in mental retardation at a rate that has increased over the past few years.

Additional recruitment efforts have not been conducted even though the need for special education teachers has remained at a critical level due to the low number of faculty in the special education program. Previously, there were only two full-time faculty members employed in special education to teach the courses needed at the graduate and undergraduate level. The addition of a faculty member in Fall 2005 should make it possible for faculty members to spend more time on recruitment efforts.

The program is currently undergoing a revision of program requirements to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certification of mental retardation. The program for students seeking an undergraduate degree in special education through the mental retardation program has been revised so that all graduates will be considered to be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education.

The special education program revisions have been reviewed and approved and became available for the semester beginning Fall 2005, one year earlier than the deadline required by the Georgia PSC. New courses and a new undergraduate degree checksheet have passed the College of Education curriculum committee and the university curriculum committee. Currently, all undergraduate students in the special education program are required to complete a 15 hour concentration in reading education.

The Special Education undergraduate program will begin recruitment efforts in the near future to increase the enrollment into the program, pending support from the College of Education.

III J. Position of the Program’s Annual Degree Productivity among Comparable USG Programs

Institution	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
University of West Georgia	16	18	20	29
Columbus State University	9	10	8	2
Albany State University	6	0	8	0
Augusta State University	8	1	1	0
University of Georgia	0	0	0	1
Georgia Southwestern State University	1	0	0	0
North Georgia College & State University	0	0	0	0
Armstrong Atlantic State University	0	0	0	0
Georgia Southern University	0	0	0	0
Georgia State University	0	0	0	0

BS.Ed. Mental Retardation Degrees Conferred by Institution

The BS.Ed. programs in Special Education are currently being revised to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in

Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certifications of mental retardation, behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. The program for students seeking initial certification and a graduate degree in special education through the Accelerated Masters Degree program has been revised so that all graduates will be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education. Most programs in Georgia do not offer a degree in Mental Retardation but in another category of Special Education.

The impact of these program revisions may initially lead to a decrease in program admissions and decreased graduation rates as program requirements may lead students to question the value of pursuing a degree in special education, when they will be required to obtain additional coursework in a teaching content area of 15 semester hours. Graduation rates may also be impacted as students may be required to delay their graduation until they have completed the additional coursework. However, after an initial drop-off in both admission and graduation, enrollments should return to their current levels and subsequently so should graduation rates.

Beginning in the Fall 2005 semester, the State of Georgia will no longer require students to pass the Praxis II test for teacher licensure. In place of the Praxis series the State of Georgia Assessment for Certification (GACE) which will reflect the required changes to special education teacher preparation curricula, will be required. This should also cause initial concern on the part of graduate students considering admission to the M.Ed. program in Special Education, thereby impacting enrollment numbers.

At a recent meeting of Special Education program coordinators and faculty in Georgia, it was discussed that many higher education institutions are considering dropping their undergraduate preparation programs in special education because of additional requirements and decreased enrollments due to the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act.

III K. This Program’s Contribution to Achieving CSU’s Mission

The BS.Ed. program in Mental Retardation helps CSU to accomplish its mission of serving the educational needs of a diverse region. By preparing certified teachers in a critical needs area, the program helps to improve the quality of education and the quality of life in the institution’s service area.

The COE mission of *guiding* candidates is consistent with the philosophy of special education learning and teaching present in the current national guidelines. In harmony with these ideas, the advanced programs emphasize growth toward skillful “whole” performance rather than incremental mastery of discrete skills. The programs emphasize that candidates move through stages to become professionals who demonstrate *excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professionalism*. The program’s goals reflect the belief that candidates should display *proficiency* before they enter advanced study and should develop and demonstrate *expertise* (M.Ed.) as they complete their programs. For this reason, program outcomes are similar for candidates in initial and advanced programs, with the difference lying in the expected level of performance.

The program also reflects a respect for and valuing of *individuals*; thus, special education faculty treat individual differences among candidates such as age, career experiences and aspirations,

and ethnicity as a resource. New teachers and veterans work with one another throughout the program, with the perspective of each group enriching that of the other.

The undergraduate program in Mental Retardation is undergoing a transformation from a categorical program to a generalist program. This transformation is a response to the mandate issued by the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission for all special education teacher education programs to become Special Education – General Curriculum programs, to allow the State to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. All programs leading to categorical certification and licensure have been terminated and the new generic special education program was begun in the Fall 2005 semester.

The completed revisions were approved by the Georgia PSC prior to implementation. The revisions required the creation of three new courses in Mild and Moderate Disabilities, two courses in Gifted Education, and one course in teaching Social Studies and Science. The courses are being taught by the current special education program faculty.

IV. Conclusion about the Program's Viability at CSU

The BS.Ed. Mental Retardation will terminate with the graduation of the few students left in the program in the 2005/2006 academic year. The new Special Education – General Curriculum should be an extremely viable one. As indicated by the evaluation of the NCATE/PSC Board of Examiners in February 2005, the quality of the program is very strong. All NCATE/PSC standards were judged to be met for all initial and advanced programs. In addition, program quality is enhanced by special opportunities available at CSU.

The viability of the program is also ensured by the collaborative relationship that exists between the College of Education and P-12 teachers. Representatives from these groups work together to make improvements to the special education programs at CSU and to impact special education in our region. The BS.Ed. program in special education-general curriculum is a valuable resource for teachers in our region who want to grow professionally and gain expertise in the field of special education. Students in the BS.Ed. program take what they learn and apply it in their own classrooms to help their students learn.

The number of BS.Ed. Mental Retardation degrees conferred by CSU has been fairly consistent over the past four years and is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities. With the critical shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers, we need to provide every possible opportunity for teachers to grow professionally and enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching students with special education needs.

V. Program Improvement Plan

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversaw the continuous efforts to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers in the undergraduate program in Special Education while it underwent the transformation from a categorical program to a generalist program. This transformation is a response to the mandate issued by the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission for all special education teacher education

programs to become Special Education – General Curriculum programs, to allow the State to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. All programs leading to categorical certification and licensure have been terminated and the new generic special education program was begun in the Fall 2005 semester. The revisions were approved by the College and University Curriculum committees in a timely manner so that the revised course of study could begin by Fall 2005.

The revisions were approved by the Georgia PSC prior to implementation. The revisions required the creation of three new courses in Mild and Moderate Disabilities, two courses in Gifted Education, and one course in teaching Social Studies and Science. The courses will be taught by the current special education program faculty.

VI. Summary Recommendation

Recommendation: Maintain the Program at the Current Level

The program quality is very strong. There are factors beyond our control that have an impact on the BS.Ed. program. Since teachers need to be “highly qualified” in a content area subject beginning with the Fall 2005 semester many are starting to reconsider the need for a degree in special education when they can get a degree in any content field and be considered highly qualified, in fact, some of the special education teachers candidates our program are considering the pursuit of a undergraduate degree in an area other than special education and then returning for a master’s degree in special education at a later date.

As previously mentioned, CSU will continue to work to improve the current BS.Ed. program in special education by responding to new initiatives (e.g., Georgia Performance Standards, No Child Left Behind Act), improving the curriculum, providing better support and resources for students, and intensifying recruitment efforts. By enhancing the quality of the program, we hope to attract more potential students.