Introduction and Rationale

Public Act 90-548 authorizes colleges and universities in partnership with one or more not-for-profit organizations that support excellence in teaching to create and implement alternative certification programs. Under this legislation, institutions with approved programs may establish an alternative certification program for teachers of any subject area or grade level.

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) in partnership with the Golden Apple Foundation (GAF), and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has submitted a proposal for an alternative certification program that incorporates the legislative requirements. The program of study is designed as a graduate-level elementary certification program that incorporates the components of UIC’s approved traditional elementary teacher preparation program. UIC/GAF’s proposal incorporates an emphasis on preparing teachers with the knowledge and skills and commitment needed to teach in diverse urban settings.

The program is designed to increase the supply of qualified elementary teachers in Chicago. Currently, the Chicago Public Schools are projecting a need for 2000 elementary teachers for the 2001-2002 academic year. Furthermore, the data indicate that approximately 80% of the experienced teaching staff will be eligible for retirement within the next ten years. The Golden Apple Foundation and Chicago Public Schools have agreed to work in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago to recruit, prepare and provide continuing support for educators committed to teaching in the city.

The University has been a leader in urban education, and the GAF has supported excellence in teaching since its inception. The Foundation also has provided three years of alternative teaching certification programming in Chicago. Building upon this history of success, the UIC/GAF program, in collaboration with the Chicago Public Schools, will increase the number of educators needed by the school system.

The University’s administration, faculty, and staff will work collaboratively with the GAF mentors, supervisors, and staff to recruit quality candidates, develop curriculum and assessments, deliver instruction, provide mentoring and supervision of candidates, conduct assessments, provide needed resources, and conduct follow-up activities. The Chicago Public Schools will contribute $3500 to offset the cost of preparing each candidate, provide facilities for professional education classes, ensure placements for clinical experiences and the yearlong internships, provide mentors for the candidates, and facilitate employment in the district.
The initial goal of the program is to admit in Summer 2001 15 candidates who possess a strong knowledge base and come from a variety of personal, professional, and educational backgrounds.

Program Overview

The proposed alternative route to elementary teacher certification at the University of Illinois at Chicago offers an intensive course of study that leads to initial alternative certification, as well as coursework that may be applied towards a Master's degree. The ten tenets of UIC’s conceptual framework, “Exploring Questions that Connect Theory and Practice,” and UIC’s Elementary Education Principles that guide the traditional elementary teacher preparation program provide the foundation for the design of the program, assessment system, and the program’s evaluation. The proposal includes a matrix (Table 3) that indicates how the UIC/GAF program goals align with these expectations, as well as the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. Consistent with the law, the proposed alternative certification option reflects the content and expectations of the institution’s approved traditional program.

The program includes an eight-week summer session that requires the completion of coursework and intensive clinical experiences in Chicago elementary schools. Haines Elementary School, that serves kindergarten through grade 8, be the initial summer session clinical site. During Phase One, the candidates will observe and work with experienced certified teachers who have been selected by GAF and CPS. Full-time UIC faculty and GAF educators, who have been hired as adjunct faculty, will teach and supervise the candidates during all phases of the program. As part of the performance assessment expectations, candidates will initiate the development of a portfolio based on the UIC Elementary Education Principles to document their growth and competency in content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and performance. This assessment is also expected of candidates in the institution’s traditional program.

Candidates, who successfully complete the initial intensive course of study in education theory, instructional methods, and practice teaching, pass the Illinois Test of Basic Skills and the Illinois Elementary certification test, and meet the performance assessment expectations, will be recommended for the nonrenewable one-year provisional alternative teaching certificate.

During Phase Two, candidates will be placed in full-time teaching positions in Chicago elementary school classrooms. GAF and CPS teachers, as well as UIC faculty, will serve as mentors and supervisors. Bi-weekly seminars will be held throughout the academic year to provide additional instruction in child development, learning theory, and teaching strategies, as well as provide opportunities for candidates to share ideas and reflect upon their experiences.

Full-time UIC faculty, part-time UIC/GAF faculty/coordinators, GAF mentors, and CPS Mentoring and Induction of New Teachers (MINT) mentors will offer on-site mentoring and supervision of the candidates. The GAF mentors will observe the candidates on a weekly basis, and the GAF coordinators will work with candidates at least three times each week. CPS mentors will meet with the candidates on a regular basis, and the UIC faculty will observe the candidates once each month. These professionals will work collaboratively to observe, provide support and assistance, and participate in the performance assessment of the candidates.
Mentors hired by GAF and UIC will receive training prior to serving candidates. This training will include use of the program’s observation instrument. The CPS teachers associated with the MINT program are trained through a collaborative effort involving the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center.

The second phase of the program will culminate with a two-week classroom session. The first week will focus on the candidates’ reflections about their internship experience and the program. The second week will consist of focused workshops on curriculum and instruction to prepare candidates for the next academic year. There will also be time for candidates to finalize their portfolios for presentation to the Assessment Committee.

The final phase of the program is a comprehensive assessment of the candidate’s teaching performance by the Assessment Committee. This assessment will include a review of the GAF, UIC, and CPS observation records, written assessments results, reports from the CPS administration, and the candidate’s portfolio. Successful completion of these will allow the University of Illinois at Chicago to recommend certification to the State Board.

**Admission Requirements**

**Admission Criteria**

- Bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher learning
- 3.5/5.0 GPA grade point average for undergraduate study
- Submission of a complete application packet including: resume, required essays, letters of recommendations, and official transcripts
- Acceptance of transcripts by UIC
- Successful scoring on the essays and application as determined by UIC and GAF
- Successful completion of the Illinois Test of Basic Skills
- Passing score on the Haberman Star Teacher interview form

To meet CPS requirements for professional participation in the schools, candidates will also be required to consent to a criminal background check and provide evidence of a health screening.

Applicants will submit their applications to the Golden Apple Foundation. The Screening Committee will review the applicants and assist with the interview and selection process. The committee will include the UIC Dean of the School of Education and selected UIC faculty and staff, and the Director of Teacher Preparation and the Director of Alternative Certification will represent GAF.

These selection techniques are similar to those used by the Northwestern University and Golden Apple Foundation partnership program (GATE). Since the inception of the GATE program in 1998, 58 of the 71 selected candidates have completed the program. Of this number, 51 GATE educators are still teaching in the city. The results suggest that the selection process is effective.
Curricular Framework

The proposed UIC/GAF Alternative Elementary Education Certification program includes an intensive course of study and field experiences that address the components of the traditional program. The graduate-level program has three components:

- Study in educational theory, instructional methods, and practice teaching
- Year-long internship, including bi-weekly seminars, and a two-week culminating course
- Comprehensive performance assessment

The program includes coursework that will be completed through classroom-based instruction and extensive field experiences in the Chicago elementary schools. The candidates will work in teams of two with an experienced GAF teacher during the initial phase of the program. The instructional components and experiences are detailed in the program proposal. The candidates will enroll as UIC graduate-level students and will complete six courses that may be applied to a Master’s degree in Education.

[Note: This program proposal is similar to UIC’s alternative route to elementary certification program that was approved in April 2001 and to the Northwestern/GATE program that was approved in 1998.]

Internship

Candidates will be placed in a full-time teaching position in grades K-8 during their internship in the Chicago Public Schools. They will be treated as regularly certified teachers for purposes of compensation, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment with the Chicago Public Schools.

Interns will be mentored by GAF trained mentors and CPS MINT mentors. In addition, UIC/GAF part-time coordinators and full-time UIC faculty will provide on-site supervision and work directly with the mentors and candidates. To ensure continuity in the observations of candidates, the Teacher Candidate Assessment Form and Candidate Observation Report will be used. The GAF mentors and CPS mentors will work with the candidates on a weekly basis. The UIC/GAF coordinators will observe and assist candidates at least three times each week, and UIC faculty will supervise and observe candidates on-site once a month during the yearlong internship.

Candidates will be supported and evaluated throughout their experience through the use of informal and formal evaluation instruments that reflect the goals of the program. The UIC Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Portfolio (Appendix A) and the Candidate Observation Report form (Appendix B) are examples of the formal evaluations that will be used by UIC and GAF during the observations and assessments of candidates. The portfolio guidelines detail the content of the professional portfolio that will be developed by candidates and used as part of the final comprehensive performance assessment.

Assessment

Candidates will be assessed throughout the program. A comprehensive assessment of the candidate’s progress will be implemented and monitored by the Assessment
Committee that will consist of faculty and staff of UIC and GAF. The committee will meet on a regular basis to review the progress of each candidate and determine continuation in the program. The committee will make recommendations for remediation if a candidate demonstrates a commitment to the program but a need for academic assistance or support services. UIC will provide remediation services through established campus-based programs.

The assessments in Phase I will serve as a determinant of a candidate’s readiness for the yearlong teaching assignment. These will include successful completion of the intensive course of study, satisfactory progress on the development of the candidate’s portfolio, positive observation reports, coursework tests and assignment results, successful completion of the Illinois Test of Basic Skills and the Illinois Elementary certification test, and recommendations by the Assessment Committee. Successful completion of the Phase I assessments will result in UIC recommending to ISBE that the candidate be issued a nonrenewable provisional alternative teaching certificate.

During Phase II, the assessments of candidates will incorporate the results of the yearlong internship observations and coursework assignments completed during the seminars. The UIC faculty, UIC/GAF coordinators, GAF mentors, and MINT mentors will conduct formative evaluations of the candidates during regular observations of teaching and related practices. This phase will also include an evaluation by the CPS principal overseeing the candidate. Candidates will present their portfolios and requested assignments for review at regular intervals during the year.

Phase III will include a summative evaluation of the candidates’ progress. This final evaluation will incorporate all of the assessment components. The Assessment Committee will review the performance evidence, including the reflective portfolio and verify satisfaction of the program’s performance outcomes. UIC will make the formal recommendation for entitlement to the State Board.

Following completion of the program, the UIC/GAF newly certified teachers will be encouraged to complete a Masters of Arts in Elementary Teaching at UIC and/or meet the requirements for a middle grades content-area endorsement. Following certification, the teachers will be supported through GAF workshops and bi-annual seminars for program completers. They will be encouraged to participate in ongoing GAF programs such as the summer storytelling and science workshops.

**Systematic Reporting to STCB**

An annual report of the UIC/GAF Alternative Elementary Certification program will be submitted to the State Teacher Certification Board annually after the program is approved (e.g., May 2002, May 2003, etc.). The five evaluation components of the report will detail the admission rate, the progress rate, the completion rate, and data regarding placement of individuals who complete the program.

In addition, GAF and UIC will track completers, provide information on the number/percent passing state certification examinations, and, where feasible, report on ISAT scores for classes or classrooms in which alternatively prepared teachers are assigned.