

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Mission:

NIU's teacher certification programs exemplify the central mission of the university: the transmission, expansion, and application of knowledge through teaching, research and artistry, and public service. In fulfilling that mission, Northern Illinois University meets the needs of students for liberal, professional, technical, and lifelong education. Mindful of the changing needs of the society it serves, the university reviews its programs at regular intervals, assesses their quality and their capacity to fulfill their objectives, and expressly commits itself to their continuing development or redirection when appropriate.

Teacher Preparation Programs:

NIU offers 27 initial teacher certification programs and nine advanced programs. In the university's structure of shared governance for teacher certification four of the instructional colleges (Education, Health and Human Sciences, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts) administer certification programs. The Vice Provost, working with the university's Committee on Initial Teacher Certification, the Committee on Advanced Program Certification, and the University Office of Teacher Certification, provides coordination and support for the teacher preparation programs. Both undergraduate and graduate level students are admitted to certification programs, which are often combined with degree programs at the baccalaureate, masters, or education specialist level. Approximately 4,000 students are currently enrolled at NIU for the primary purpose of being certified to teach.

Student Characteristics:

Northern Illinois University serves over 25,000 students from 92 Illinois counties, 51 other U.S. states or possessions, and 100 nations. The university has approximately 6,000 residents in on-campus housing, with the remainder living and working either in or near DeKalb. During the Fall 2006 semester, 28.0% of undergraduates were new to the university; 17.2% were new first-time freshmen while 10.7% were new transfer students. The ACT Composite score for new first-time freshmen has averaged 22 for the past several years. For Fall 2006, 25.9% of all undergraduates were minority students.

Admissions Requirements:

Admission to Teacher Education Program: Candidates for regular admission to Northern Illinois University as freshmen must have either (a) graduated in the top half of their high school class with an ACT Composite of at least 19; or (b) graduated in the upper two thirds of their high school class with an ACT Composite of at least 23. In addition, they must have completed 15 units of college preparatory courses in high school, including four units of English and three units each of mathematics, science, and social studies. NIU students who wish to apply for admission to a teacher certification program must have an overall GPA of 2.50 or above, and must have passed a basic skills test administered by the Illinois Certification Testing System. Individual programs may have other requirements and/or a higher GPA requirement.

Admission to Student Teaching: Candidates for student teaching must have successfully completed NIU's general education requirements, an approved multicultural experience, and a structured sequence of approved clinical experiences (approximately 800 clock hours).

Accreditation:

Northern Illinois University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The institution's teacher certification program is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Individual certification programs are approved by the State Teacher Certification Board and the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition, many of the individual programs have been accredited by their national professional organizations (for example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics).

Teacher Education Vision:

The NIU community of learners builds on knowledge, practice, and reflection to produce exemplary educators. The community encompasses scholars, education professionals, and preservice teachers in an interaction that develops the strengths that embody excellence in education. These strengths include creative and critical thinking, scholarship, and caring. Application of these strengths emerges through the collaborative efforts of a diverse community which supports life-long learning.

The goal of individual programs is to develop exemplary educators who have a broad general education, relevant disciplinary knowledge, and experience in and knowledge of contemporary best practices. The continuing professional effectiveness of our graduates is rooted in their life-long learning and reflective practice. This cornerstone of NIU's Conceptual Framework prepares students to deal with the diverse interests of the communities in which they will teach based on the understanding that, as professional educators, they will be part of that community of learners. NIU is committed to life-long learning and to the effective use of critical thinking skills in diverse and collaborative settings.

Research indicates that student learning is profoundly affected by experience. Students interact with the community of learners comprised of faculty, field professionals, and peers. The professional development of a prospective educator within this community of learners incorporates classroom instruction and diverse field-based experiences that promote engagement in inquiry, collaboration, and reflection; development and refinement of effective teaching practices; and a commitment to life-long learning. Northern Illinois University's programs support the efforts of the Illinois State Board of Education to develop strong learning communities, as delineated in *Preparing Educators for the 21st Century* (1997).

Best Practices:

NIU has established formal partnerships with urban, suburban, and rural schools in northern Illinois, creating opportunities for extended placement of student teachers and the professional development of classroom teachers and other school personnel. NIU and the DeKalb school district maintain a K-5 partnership school, which integrates the arts and technology across the curriculum in ways that enable students with diverse learning needs to succeed. NIU faculty and students from four different colleges participate in this partnership.

Four partnership schools in Rockford participate in a \$5 million federal grant. The project addresses the achievement gap and teacher quality problems at four low producing, high-risk schools. Collaborative field experiences exist in elementary and special education to improve preparation of future teachers to work in inclusive settings. A collaborative project with local schools and community colleges provides for off-campus baccalaureate and masters degree completion for those teaching ESL/bilingual classes with a temporary certificate and wishing to acquire elementary teaching credentials. A baccalaureate completion program in elementary education is being offered in Rockford.

Notable Features and Accomplishments:

A substantial portion of all public school superintendents in the state of Illinois have at least one degree from Northern Illinois University.

Nearly 80% of elementary education students have jobs in their field or are attending graduate school within a year after graduation.

NIU awarded more doctorate degrees in education to African-Americans than any other public university in the nation.

Art and Music Education graduates enjoy 100% employment.

The Family and Consumer Sciences teacher certification program at NIU prepares more new teachers than the other five programs in the state combined.

Program Information for Northern Illinois University 2005-2006	
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S.1 Total number of students admitted into teacher preparation, all specializations, in academic year 2005-2006	2171
S.2 Number of candidates in supervised student teaching in academic year 2005-2006	712
S.3 Number of faculty members who supervised student teachers:	
➤ S.3A Full-time faculty in professional education	4
➤ S.3B Part-time faculty in professional education but full-time in the institution	8
➤ S.3C Part-time faculty in professional education, not otherwise employed by the institution	95
S.4 Total faculty student teaching supervisors	107
S.5 Student teacher/faculty ratio (Divide total given in S.2 by the number given in S.4)	1:7
S.6A The average number of student teaching hours per week	40
S.6B The total number of weeks of supervised student teaching required	13-16
S.7 Average total number of hours required	640