

Missouri Scholarship and Loan Foundation Grant Proposal: FY2022-23**OVERVIEW**

The University of Central Missouri (UCM) seeks funding to improve and expand the UCM Early Childhood Certificate Program; an education-to-employment program designed to strengthen the capacities and credentials of early childhood educators, particularly educators facing barriers to enter and complete higher education.

Key personnel from the University of Central Missouri College of Education and Office of Online Learning and Engagement work collaboratively with members of Mid-America Regional Council's (MARC) Department of Early Learning, and their program/school-based LEA partners (i.e., Guadalupe Centers Early Learning, Kansas City Public Schools, Earlystart, formerly United Inner City Services St. Mark). Leaders on this project include: Laurel Hogue, Ed.D., UCM Vice Provost for Online Learning and Engagement, Ann McCoy, Ph.D., Dean UCM College of Education, and Karrie Snider, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Early Childhood & Elementary Education, and Jovanna Rohs, Ph.D., Director, MARC's Department of Early Learning.

Dr. Karrie Snider will serve as the Project Director for the MSLF grant.

What is the program? The University of Central Missouri's (UCM) Early Childhood Certificate (ECC) program, an education-to-employment innovation, comprises three professional certificates to enable incremental learning and career development for diverse adult teachers-as-learners. The pilot began in Fall 2018.

The ECC was developed to:

- 1) reduce or remove tuition costs;
- 2) make teacher education available to full-time experienced educators through online learning;
- 3) enable a pathway for experienced early childhood educators to earn college credit hours towards a degree in Early Childhood Education with Missouri State Teaching Certification through stackable certificates; and,
- 4) establish commitment and engagement from stakeholders.

During the pilot phase, courses were connected to the context of the adult learners and were implemented within a range of 6-12 weeks to determine best fit. Courses utilize high quality materials and connect to national preparation standards. Course tuition costs are paid for through the UCM's 50% tuition reduction and through a variety of funding streams identified by MARC. This program utilizes employer documentation to provide teachers experience-for-credit, circumventing enrollment in practica-based courses and student teaching; saving program participants time and enrollment costs for 18+ credit hours.

Who are the current cohort members? Members of the pilot cohort (n=11-18 participants across multiple semesters) are lead teachers, assistants and/or educational managers of early learning

programs in the Greater Metropolitan Kansas City area who represent diverse backgrounds, as teachers' race was majority Black (14) and ethnicities included Hispanic backgrounds (3).

To enter the program, teachers:

- 1) held a current lead or assistant teaching position in a MARC Head Start or center-based program;
- 2) held an associate's degree or bachelor's degree in related/unrelated field; and,
- 3) completed FAFSA financial aid and employment funding applications.

What are the investments? Substantial investments from MARC and UCM support educators' ongoing enrollment. A Memorandum of Understanding establishes the coordination activities between the UCM and MARC in delivering approved courses for initial teacher certification. Reduced tuition rates of 50%, offered by UCM for this program, enable MARC's financial contribution for each certificate. From 2018 to 2021, MARC contributed \$19,960 for certificate I courses, with 10 participants, \$21,870 for certificate II (12-15), \$17,820 for certificate III (13), and approximately \$18,000 (10) for the last grouping of courses. With the 50% reduced rate offered, UCM essentially matches these contributions. The partnerships continue to work to identify additional ways that this program may be funded to support future and larger cohorts.

PILOT PROGRESS REPORT

The pilot cohort completes teacher education coursework during the Summer 2022 semester, which represents the completion, on average, of 66 credit hours per learner. Individual participants may require additional coursework for completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree. Some participants will be ready to complete the state certification exam.

What have we learned? During the ongoing pilot, attempts were made to reduce barriers related to traditional coursework, such as tuition assistance and the redesign of course offerings as online and hybrid learning experiences. Challenges remain for fully funding the program and for ensuring diverse adult learners have adequate support during and after coursework completion.

Based on the pilot phase, we have learned adult learners faced additional barriers:

- Lacked time to engage in learning
- Transportation (our first course was hybrid)
- Needed support beyond the online class to immediately apply new knowledge and skills
- Needed support to be successful in learning online (navigating learning management systems, processing information, producing written communication)
- Needed reliable, consistent technology support (i.e., hardware, software, wifi connection)
- Required individual support for success with skills related to college readiness
- Faced unique challenges: Some teachers faced personal challenges such as caretaking of ill or declining family members, parenting their own young children and youth or helping to care for children of extended family members (i.e., grandchildren, nieces, nephews),

being employed in a second job to support to supplement income and addressing health issues.

We learned the partnership members experienced challenges related to:

- gaps in available funding, causing a one semester gap in progress
- communication about what teachers were learning about and how that was being applied in classrooms
- curriculum development--one dedicated faculty member redesigned the curriculum and online modules each semester as the cohort continued
- recruitment--to recruit additional cohorts, substantial funding is required
- student supports--instructors served a dual role as teachers and providing student success supports traditionally offered by other campus services
- Wanting a more accelerated program but observed participants were challenged in completing accelerated courses or more than 6 credit hours per traditional semester

What now? With the pilot cohort completing their coursework in Summer 2022, cohort members will be ready for required exams and tests. We anticipate support may be needed for test preparation. We also anticipate that some will be working towards degree completion and need to take courses outside of the program courses, which may include general education classes or graduate level courses depending on each individual's needs.

We seek to develop an expanded program that includes:

- supports to address barriers from lessons learned,
- comprehensive financial support to adult learners,
- systematic recruitment and infrastructure/human resources to support application of learning for improved early education outcomes (i.e., classroom teaching and improved care and education for children and families).

Participants in future cohorts will reflect similar demographics and teaching placements as the pilot cohort such as MARC Head Start, community-based and non-Head Start programs, and meet the entry criteria. The long-term vision of our team is to expand cohorts into rural, suburban and urban sectors and utilize ongoing lessons learned to inform the development of this program to serve as a model for Missouri's Office of Childhood professional development system.

FUNDING REQUEST

While leveraging the established partnership, there is a need to leverage additional funding to expand and grow from the initial phase. The MSLF program would make significant contributions to current and future participants, as well as to the development of new opportunities within the program. An expanded program will comprehensively address the needs of early childhood educators-as-learners; assisting more educators in advancing their career while simultaneously strengthening the early learning workforce.

The MSLF funding will specifically be used to achieve the following goals.

Goal 1: Ensure completion for first cohort.

A. Ensure readiness for required exams:

- a. Provide funding for test preparation materials and exam costs (Missouri General Education Assessment and Missouri Content Assessment certification exam)
- b. Provide funding to participants' programs for substitute pay for participants' attendance at test prep tutoring and study sessions
- c. Provide stipend to a mentor-tutor for test preparation

B. Degree completion:

- a. Provide tuition assistance for additional courses (courses outside of those covered by the program) for degree completion

C. Participant support costs for ancillary services:

- a. Provide stipends/reimbursements to teacher-participants:
Stipends/reimbursements for additional needs, such as, transportation costs, child care, for time to plan, learn and implement coursework within workday, for textbook fees, technology hardware and software, membership fees to professional organizations and additional professional development supports

Goal 2: Develop a new cohort.

A. Certificate 1 funding: Provide start-up funding for tuition costs associated with Fall 2022--Summer 2023 enrollment for ten students in a new cohort for two of the five courses in Certificate I: Understanding the Child.

B. Textbook fees: Provide funding to the new cohort to purchase textbooks.

Please see the estimated budget on the following page.

ESTIMATED BUDGET for MSLF Funding

| Activity | Description | Estimated Costs |
|--|---|--|
| Goal 1: Ensure completion for first cohort | | |
| A. Ensure readiness for required exams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test prep materials, exam costs, substitute pay • stipend for tutoring | Exams: \$2500 Tutor: \$1000 |
| B. Degree Completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition scholarships for courses outside of program | ª\$10,300 |
| C. Participant Support Costs for Ancillary Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding to offset financial challenges for participating in the program (see item 3 above) | \$7,000 |
| Subtotal | | \$20,800 |
| Goal 2: Develop a new cohort | | |
| A. Certificate I funding | Funding to enroll, orient and launch a new cohort | ª\$8,100 (funds the 2 of 5 courses in Certificate I) |
| B. Textbook fees | Funding for participants to purchase required texts | ª\$1,000 |
| Subtotal | | \$9,200 |
| Total from Goal 1 and 2 | | \$30,000 |

Note: Program participants will complete FAFSA applications to assess federal aid opportunities ªBased on undergraduate and graduate tuition rates

ªCost based on estimates of 11 participants

ªCertificate I total cost: \$17,550 (represents tuition only for 10 new cohort members enrolled in 13 credit hours at 50% tuition reduction)

Teacher shortages exist in Missouri and across the United States. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri is facing a teacher shortage in all areas, especially in the high needs areas of math, science, elementary education, and special education.

Recent data suggests the pandemic has only worsened the situation. Barriers to enter higher education and the teaching profession also contribute to the teacher shortage. Additionally, Missouri's teacher workforce is predominantly white and female; the state plan to address teacher diversity includes outreach to include racially diverse and male candidates. The University of Central Missouri College of Education faculty are engaging in collaborative efforts with our PreK-12 school district partners in order to develop and sustain a strong teacher pipeline. Our innovative approach requires this partnership with PreK-12 in order to accurately assess the employment landscape and identify shortage areas, openings, and forecasts, and advise students accordingly.

Our innovative solution: The College of Education at UCM is exploring a variety of strategies to address the teacher shortage through our Grow Your Own Future Program. One such innovative solution is to build upon existing partnerships and create new ones to develop intentional pathways to certification for para educators who show potential as effective educators. Para educators are employed in PreK-12 school districts as instructional/teaching assistants, providing direct support to students. Para educators bring a wealth of experience, a deep understanding of the context of the schools in which they work, and a strong desire to better the lives of the children they serve.

Para educators are often more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than the certified teachers in the building and this may benefit students from minority populations (Fortner et al., 2015). Research has indicated that para educators, who tend to be older and more mature, are more likely to remain in the schools in which they work (Fortner et al., 2015). Gist et al. (2018) stated that Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, like the one we have developed, provide pathways for diversification which enhance student learning opportunities by building career path opportunities for non-traditional students. These GYO programs provide a viable solution for increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers while also addressing teacher shortages.

Our mission is to invite para educators to the teaching profession and then provide support on their journey to becoming a teacher. Our UCM GYO programs are designed to recruit diverse adult learners and remove or reduce barriers while maintaining rigorous teacher educator preparation. Removing barriers include the manner of format, timing and location of classes, connecting students to academic support services and resources for funding, utilizing work experience for practicum hours, and exploring creative options for required field experiences. The UCM GYO program involves two unique but similar programs with both currently serving their first cohort of students:

1. Paraprofessional to Certified Teacher programs assists paraprofessionals in obtaining certification in elementary or special education; and

2. The Early Childhood Certificate program is a set of stackable credentials in early childhood education that provides both professional development and a path to teacher certification for early childhood educators.

Our current cohort members are primarily females who are ten to fifteen years older than traditional students. They are a racially diverse group representing the students, school districts, and communities they serve. Many of our para educators have children and, as the sole support of these children, are living at or near the poverty level. It is not an option for these individuals to leave employment to pursue a degree in a traditional manner. Our program creates a pathway for these individuals to continue working while completing their college degree and earning teaching certification which will enable them to move to a teaching position and a higher salary.

Our current para educator students bring a wealth of experience working with students in schools however have themselves not been students for many years and may need academic support. Data from our current students engaged in our two programs indicates that time away from academic settings is best addressed with academic support focused on current coursework and in preparation for standardized tests that many times present a barrier. These adult learners may also lack recent experience navigating educational institution structures and benefit from mentoring and support.

Some members of our current cohort have demonstrated difficulties with successful completion of required math courses and passing the math portion of state required tests. Some members have demonstrated challenges with academic writing. Candidates have experienced success with additional time and support. We are committed to continue to expand options such as virtual study halls, tutoring, and creating online tutorials and a bank of resources for students to access and use independently. These supports will increase opportunities for collaboration and peer learning and improve academic outcomes.

The funding we are requesting would provide support to the second cohort of students in our two GYO programs for para educators with the goal of recruiting 30 para educators. We also plan to extend these successful resources to future cohorts. Further, we will disseminate our findings to the larger statewide Grow Your Own consortium, advancing teacher recruitment efforts statewide and enhancing our current partnerships with our colleagues at the Missouri Department of Education, statewide peers in Teacher Preparation Programs, and regional Professional Development Centers. Below is a description of the categories of support we will seek with a corresponding budget plan that provides additional detail.

- **Personnel/Mentoring** - A program mentor will receive a stipend to provide logistical, academic, financial, and emotional support as cohort members complete the program. The program mentor will serve as lead communicator, providing information, resources, and encouragement. Para educators will be provided individualized plans of study and advising from an academic advisor and the program mentor. The program mentor will connect students with resources for financial aid and all available learning

supports, including tutoring. The program mentor will ensure celebrations of success throughout the journey for cohort members.

Additionally, graduates of our first cohorts will be paid a stipend to serve as mentors to new cohort members. The graduates will assist new cohort members in the transition to being a student as an adult learner and how to balance work-school-home life.

- **Participant Support** -Teacher candidates in Missouri must pass two standardized tests to earn teacher certification in addition to completion of required coursework. Cohort members will receive a stipend to help cover costs of becoming certified teachers (coursework, required standardized testing, textbooks, etc.). Current cohort members have experienced difficulties in passing standardized tests on the first attempt and with support and additional time have successfully completed the tests. We will create study modules for cohort members to access to prepare for these tests and provide additional assistance to students who are not successful on their first attempt. Support provided to students will focus on building necessary skills and to identify and teach missing skills and also increasing student belief in their capabilities, celebrating success at every opportunity.

Additional academic assistance will be provided through the hiring of tutors who will support our cohort members in mathematics and writing, two areas of demonstrated need for our current students. We will identify current preservice educators in the UCM College of Education as potential tutors and invite them to apply. The students would participate in training and serve as paid tutors; this experience will benefit the tutor in terms of application of teaching strategies and gaining teaching experience. These tutors would lead virtual study halls and provide individual tutoring as needed. Funding for this aspect of our project is not included in this grant proposal. Students selected as tutors would be paid as student workers through work-study opportunities. The program mentor will assist in scheduling and connecting tutors and cohort members.

References:

- Fortner, C. K., Kershaw, D. C., Bastian, K. C., & Lynn, H. H. (2015). Learning by doing: The characteristics, effectiveness, and persistence of teachers who were teaching assistants first. *Teachers College Record*, 177: Teachers College.
- Gist, C., Bianco, M., & Lynn, M. (2018). Examining grow your own programs across the teacher development continuum: Mining Research on teachers of color and nontraditional educator pipelines. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 1–13.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, December 2020. Teacher Shortage Report and 2019 Teacher Workforce Outreach Plan. <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/2020TeacherShortageReport.pdf>
<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/OutreachPlanUpdateSeptember2019.pdf>

| Timeline | Activity |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Site Visit (Early 2022) | Braitmayer Foundation visit to UCM |
| July 2022 | On-going and continued recruitment for para educators for 2nd cohort Recruitment of new cohort members includes evaluating transcripts, completing individualized plans of study for each potential student, meeting with each potential candidate to communicate all aspects of the program and answer questions, meeting with school district administrators to ensure clear communication and support of candidates, and disseminating information to school districts in order to reach potential candidates and meet the needs of our school district partners |
| July 2022 | Identify potential mentors, begin process of selection and training and mentoring of graduates from cohort to serve as mentor to new candidates |
| July 2022 | Program mentor to coordinate and lead program: provide outreach to potential candidates and school district partners, coordinate with school district HR departments to understand personnel and hiring needs, communicate with potential students to provide program information and answer questions, connect students with resources, communicate with academic advisors and faculty to ensure smooth enrollment and coursework process, share information about required standardized tests and appropriate timeline for taking tests and providing resources for test preparation, provide encouragement to students and celebrate successes |
| August 2022 | Assess the level of support needed for each participant and create an initial plan of support. |
| August 2022 | Identify potential tutors, begin process of selection and training of tutors |
| August 2022 | Hold meeting with cohort members to share information regarding program (tests, costs, study materials, supports and resources) |
| August 2022 and monthly thereafter | Hold monthly meetings with cohort members for support, bonding, information, celebrations |
| August 2022 | Disperse funding to candidates for use on textbooks, tuition, testing fees |
| August 2022 | Begin to create study modules for required certification exams |
| September 2022 | Tutors begin providing services to cohort members including virtual study halls, individual meetings, regular check-ins |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| September 2022 | Study modules completed and become available to cohort members |
| October 2022 | Collaborative partner reflection and planning for the future: Gather input from cohort members Gather input from school district partners |
| October 2022 | Mid-term assessment of student needs; plan intervention for students as needed. |
| November 2022 | Prepare for final exams Ensure enrollment in appropriate courses for Spring 2023 |
| December 2022 | Provide qualitative surveys to participants to determine how well students' needs are being met. |
| January 2023 | Make necessary modifications based on participant survey results. |
| February 2023 | Prepare students for upcoming state required testing such as the MoGEA. |
| March 2023 | Collaborative partner reflection and planning for the future: Gather input from cohort members Gather input from school district partners |
| April 2023 | Prepare for final exams Ensure enrollment in appropriate courses for Summer and/or Fall 2023 |
| May 2023 | Provide qualitative surveys to participants to determine how well students' needs are being met. |
| June 2023 | Make necessary modifications based on participant survey results. |
| May 2023 | Celebration of candidate success - including mentors from previous cohort and goal of continuing the mentor relationship into the first years of new candidates teaching career |
| June 2023 and beyond | Disseminate success and lessons learned to larger statewide GYO consortium |
| Ongoing throughout grant cycle | Data collection |
| June 2023 | Complete data collection and analysis |

Partnerships - UCM faculty are involved in collaborative partnerships with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in statewide Grow Your Own Teacher efforts with PreK-12 school district partners. The collaboration extends to Missouri's Regional Professional Development Centers in order to reach every school district; urban, rural, and suburban. UCM faculty work with our PreK-12 school district partners to create and strengthen GYO efforts with middle school and high school students and with para educators. We continue to work to invite students and para educators to consider the teaching profession and provide opportunities for them to see themselves as college students and as teachers. We provide opportunities to learn from, and be inspired, by current practicing teachers and UCM faculty and students, both on campus and virtually.

[Partner school districts and student population: Blue Springs 14,500, Fort Osage 1,500, Guadalupe Center Charter School 1,100, Harrisonville 2,500, Independence 14,600, Kansas City 14,100, Lee's Summit 18,200, Moniteau 1,400, North Kansas City 21,000, Raymore-Peculiar 6,000, Raytown 8,500, Pleasant Hill 2,200, Warrensburg 3,500. The Mid-America Regional Council is a partner, serving as a funding source for para educators completing early childhood certificates.]

Evaluation

| Goal | Measure | Data Collection |
|---|---|---|
| Candidates will complete the program they are pursuing. (certificates, degree, certification) | Percent of candidates completing program. | Each semester monitor and track progression and completion of candidates throughout program. |
| Candidates will pass required exams (MoGEA and MOCA) within 2 attempts | Number of candidates passing certification exams. | Track scores received on certification exams. |
| Candidates will obtain teaching certification | Number of state teaching certification awarded | Each semester monitor and track applications for and awarding of teaching certification as candidates complete program. |
| Candidates will successfully complete mathematics coursework. | Number of candidates who participate in tutoring; | Each semester monitor and track number of candidates participating in tutoring each semester. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>Number of candidates utilizing support modules.</p> <p>Grades in required mathematics courses</p> <p>Mid-semester assessment of performance.</p> | <p>Each semester monitor and track candidates completing support modules each semester.</p> <p>At the end of each semester, record grades received in required mathematics courses. Compare grades with participation in support measures.</p> <p>Monitor mid-semester grades submitted.</p> |
| <p>The academic writing of candidates will improve.</p> | <p>Number of candidates who participate in tutoring;</p> <p>Number of candidates utilizing support modules.</p> <p>Performance and grades in required writing intensive courses</p> | <p>Each semester monitor and track number of candidates participating in tutoring each semester.</p> <p>Each semester monitor and track candidates completing support modules each semester.</p> <p>Each semester collect writing samples from candidates from writing intensive courses. Use writing assessment rubric to assess.</p> <p>At the end of each semester, record grades received in required writing intensive courses. Compare grades with participation in support measures.</p> |
| <p>Candidates will identify support services that were of help</p> | <p>Qualitative survey to participants</p> | <p>December 2022</p> <p>May 2023</p> |
| <p>Previous completers will report enhanced confidence linked to work as mentors.</p> | <p>Qualitative survey to completers serving as mentors</p> | <p>May 2023</p> |

Budget and Justification
Grow Your Own Future: Paraprofessional to Certified Teacher

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Personnel | \$16,000.00 |
| <i>Program Mentor (.50 FTE against grant)</i> | <i>\$10,000.00</i> |
| <p>Program Mentor: \$18,518.52 wages + \$1,481.48 fringe benefits (College of Education will cover 50% of this line during the life of this project, which is \$9,259.26 in wages + \$740.74 in fringe benefits, and will be a full-time faculty position.)</p> | |
| <i>Teacher Mentors</i> | <i>\$6,000.00</i> |
| <p>Each mentor will receive \$200 x 30 participants = \$6,000</p> | |
| Participant Support Costs | \$18,999.90 |
| <i>Course Stipends</i> | <i>\$9,750.00</i> |
| <p>\$325 per participant to help cover course costs x 30 = \$9,750</p> | |
| <i>Testing</i> | <i>\$4,020.00</i> |
| <p>Testing costs for participants include the Missouri General Education Test at \$59 + the Missouri Teaching Requirements Test at \$75 = \$134 x 30 students = \$4,020</p> | |
| <i>Textbooks</i> | <i>\$5,229.90</i> |
| <p>Participants will receive support of \$174.33 for their textbooks x 30 = \$5,229.90</p> | |
| Total Grant Costs: | \$34,999.90 |