November 10, 2009

Dr. Jon Anderson  
Associate Professor of Management  
University of West Georgia  
1601 Maple Street  
Carrollton, GA 30118

Dear Dr. Anderson:

Thank you for your letter of September 11, 2009, and the prospectus for an off-campus instructional site at which the Educational Specialist—Special Education degree program will be offered. Since 50% or more of the program is offered online and since the institution is approved to deliver 50% or more of a program’s credits electronically, we accept the notification and require no additional information from you.

I do hope to see you, President Sethna, and your colleagues at our annual meeting in Atlanta in December!

Best regards,

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.  
President

BSW/RER:mlm

cc: Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna, President  
Dr. Michael S. Johnson
September 11, 2009

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:  

In a letter dated March 23, 2009, we wrote to notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges that the University of West Georgia had begun offering programs at sites outside our main campus that would likely exceed 50% of degree requirements at certain locations.

The attached prospectus has been prepared for you to consider approving one such site for the delivery of an Ed.S. Degree in Special Education offered to a cohort of students in the Cherokee County School District. This cohort offering is proposed to fill a specific need identified by the school district that initiated the idea and requested that the University of West Georgia collaborate with them to fill this need. This process is described in the prospectus. 27 students are enrolled in the program. Classes began in the fall of 2008 with an anticipated graduation date of the first cohort in the spring of 2010.

As this program will use established courses, the curriculum is similar to what students would receive if they enrolled in this degree program on campus. The faculty teaching in the cohort program will be full-time members of the department with the exception of two adjunct members of the faculty with specific expertise.

The contact person for information about this prospectus is:

Dr. Michael Hazelko  
Department of Special Education and Speech Language Pathology  
University of West Georgia  
1601 Maple Street  
Carrollton, GA 30118  
Email: mhazelko@westga.edu  
Phone: 678-839-6567

Our records show that the following off campus/online programs have already received your approval: BSN in Nursing (Newman Center), MED in Early Childhood Education (Newman Center), MED in Special Education (Newman Center), MED in Educational Leadership (Newman Center), EDS in Educational Leadership (Newman Center), MED in Middle Grades Education
(Newnan Center), MBA (Newnan Center), BSN, (Georgia Highlands in Rome), BSN (Dalton), MED in Media (Online), EDS in Media (Online), MSN in Nursing (partially online), eCore (Online Collaboration), WebMBA (Online Collaboration), BSED in Early Childhood Education (Georgia Highlands in Rome), and our MED in Early Childhood Education (Georgia Highlands in Rome). These approvals have occurred either individually, or at the time of our 2003 reaffirmation review.

We look forward to receiving your review of this prospectus. Should you or your staff need any more information about the prospectus, we look forward to complying with your requests.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Jonathan R. Anderson
SACS Liaison
University of West Georgia
Carrollton, GA 30118
Phone 678-839-4826
Email: janderso@westga.edu
Abstract

The University of West Georgia Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology is proposing to offer its Specialist in Education – Special Education Degree (EdS- Special Education) program to Cherokee County Schools teachers in Cherokee County as a distance education program (i.e., at least 50% online) over a 2-year period. The program is being delivered online through Blackboard Learning System’s CourseDen. There are some face-to-face sessions. While most of the courses have been offered at Woodstock High School, 2010 Towne Lake Hills Drive, Woodstock, Georgia, 30189; the specific location of the face-to-face classes is determined semester by semester by the Cherokee County Schools and is dependent on space availability as determined by the schools. The proposed EdS degree provides an advanced, postmaster’s program that is offered 100% in Cherokee County to Cherokee County teachers only and contains the same course content as the EdS degree program offered on the UWG campus. While this program was designed for a single cohort, it is expected that additional cohorts would be offered if a need is determined. The initial cohort has 27 students who are teachers with Masters’ degrees in special education and speech-language pathology.

2. Background Information

The Specialist in Education (EdS) in Special Education degree program in the College of Education (COE) at UWG is housed in the Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology (SEDSL). The primary mission of the Department of SEDSL is to prepare special educators who understand and appropriately use specific critical information and who can demonstrate skills and competencies needed to work with diverse groups of children with special needs. The EdS graduate program in special education is designed to provide a further specialization for instructional service and enables students to acquire advanced knowledge, skills, dispositions, and competencies required of teachers and service providers for working with children and adults with disabilities. The program provides advanced study for qualified master educators so that they can (a) build upon work they completed at the master's level, (b) strengthen and extend their professional, pedagogical, and content knowledge, and (c) become architects of change and leaders in the professional community.

The EdS program particularly supports the College of Education’s (COE) mission, which is to serve as “an impactful, exemplary, visible leader in the preparation of education, counseling, speech-language pathology, and sport management professionals.” The conceptual framework of the COE forms the basis on which programs, courses,
experiences, and outcomes are created. By incorporating the theme “Developing Educators for School Improvement,” the College assumes responsibility for preparing educators who can positively influence school improvement through altering classrooms, schools, and school systems (transformational systemic change). Ten descriptors (decision makers, leaders, lifelong learners, adaptive, collaborative, culturally sensitive, empathetic, knowledgeable, proactive and reflective) are integral components of the conceptual framework and provide the basis for developing educators who are prepared to improve schools through strategic change. National principles (INTASC), propositions (NBPTS), and standards (Learned Societies) also are incorporated as criteria against which special educators are measured.

The EdS program also supports the UWG’s Strategic Plan for 2010-2015, which establishes that “the fundamental effort of the University will be to provide ... array of high quality graduate and undergraduate programs in the liberal arts, business, and education that have as their distinctive mark the successful preparation for professional careers.” The program supports each of the four Strategic Guiding Principles, and is based on the premise that is a “quality academic program [that] blends the best of professionalized liberal education, experiential learning, and individual transformation.” In addition, the program helps the university meet the BOR mandate to expand the number of high quality teachers in Georgia.

The EdS program is based and assessed on the Council for Exceptional Children’s (CEC) recently developed standards for advanced roles in special education. The standards outline the knowledge and skills special educators who are experienced, seeking an advanced degree or certification, or going into administration or higher education should know. CEC’s advanced standards provide a benchmark to ensure experienced special education professionals are able to practice at an accomplished level of skill. They cover knowledge and skills in six different areas, which define what any special educator who is in an advanced role should know and be able to do. CEC’s Advanced Role Content Standards address six different areas: Leadership and Policy, Program Development and Organization, Research and Inquiry, Student and Program Evaluation, Professional Development and Ethical Practice, and Collaboration. The curriculum is developed, implemented, and revised to reflect clear statements of expected student learning outcomes that are consistent with CEC standards, NBPTS standards, and the College of Education’s Conceptual Framework, and congruent with the program’s mission, goals, and expected outcomes. The program curriculum plan evidences appropriate course sequencing.

The University of West Georgia began offering distance courses in 1995 using a two-way videoconferencing system, GSAMS (Georgia Statewide Academic and Medical Systems). This innovative telecommunications system could connect to approximately 250 other GSAMS sites in the state. One year later the Distance and Distributed Education Center was established. The Center has grown at a rapid pace and offers a variety of distance learning modes. Some courses utilize a combination of the technologies with the traditional class requiring students to travel to campus for several of the class sessions.
The Center is a university-wide function at UWG and serves to develop and enhance the university’s ability to deliver education at remote sites. Through intercampus sharing of resources, the Distance Education Center facilitates collaboration among university colleges and departments to deliver quality instruction, faculty and student services, and initiatives. They provide a wide variety of support services to faculty and students (http://www.westga.edu/~distance/aboutus.html). The Center has been highly successful in assisting instructors in the delivery of their courses. The Distance Center has become highly recognized as one of the distance leading centers in the region (http://westga.edu/~distance).

After examining the current capacity of the different sectors of higher education and the anticipated growth over the next decade, the University of West Georgia concluded that it must provide additional capacity to meet the needs for higher education. One of the solutions that was identified was the increased use of distance learning and instructional technologies.

The University of West Georgia’s mission involves distance learning and instructional technology. The plan states that UWG is committed to providing opportunities for intellectual and personal development through quality teaching, scholarly inquiry, creative endeavor, and service for the public good. UWG’s ability to provide greater access to educational opportunities and time to complete a degree is enhanced by the number and range of distance learning courses provided by the department. The University’s goals continue to stress the significance of technology throughout our entire curriculum. Incorporating information technology into academic programs and student services and becoming a leader in the use of asynchronous learning environments to support distance education and classroom instruction are two important directions UWG is taking.

The purpose of West Georgia is to provide opportunities for intellectual and personal development through quality teaching, scholarly inquiry, creative endeavor, and service for the public good. Distance learning opportunities are “creative endeavors” utilizing innovative types of technologies for students’ intellectual development and a “service for the public good”. Offering an EdS program through distance technology and to an off-campus location exemplifies the University’s mission, providing educational opportunities for students off campus. The Department’s rationale for delivering courses in this mode is to reach out to students seeking an advanced degree in special education and to provide an opportunity for them to receive an education that would not have been possible due to distance and time constraints. This distance program was designed principally to better meet student needs rather than increase the revenue for the institution.

3. **Assessment of Need and Program Planning/Approval**

In February 2008, Dr. Michael Hazlkorn, chair of the Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology was approached by teachers in the Cherokee County
School District who had obtained their undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of West Georgia about the possibility of offering a cohort program for the Specialist in Education degree. The District conducted a survey to gauge teacher interest in the degree program. Approximately 60 teachers indicated an interest in the EdS graduate degree. Although Cherokee County had explored other collaborative relationships (e.g., Kennesaw State, Piedmont College), it decided to collaborate with UWG because of our reputation. Dr. Hynes, UWG Vice President for Academic Affairs, contacted Kennesaw State University, which agreed that UWG’s offering of a Specialist program did not conflict with KSU offerings or plans.

Dr. Hazelkorn had numerous phone calls and emails with District personnel and met with Dr. Sue Zinkel, Director of Special Education; Ms. Jackie Miller, Supervisor for Professional Development; and Mr. Mike McGowan, Director, Public Information, Communications and Partnerships on March 19, 2007, to discuss the program. A memorandum of understanding between the District and UWG was written, signed on June 30, 2008, by UWG President Sethna and approved by the Cherokee County School Board. On April 29, 2008, Dr. Michael Hazelkorn drove to the District’s Central Office Building Auditorium and presented information about the degree program, course descriptions, timeline for delivery and completion of the degree program, program entrance requirements, college and program applications and necessary documentation for completion by prospective students, financial aid opportunity information, deadline date and place for application return, and contact person information. It was decided to start the cohort in Fall 2008. Dr. Hazelkorn also recruited teachers for the cohort at the Cherokee County School District’s Camp Cherokee, a 2-week induction program for newly hired classroom teachers. The cohort was limited to the first 30 people who registered to ensure the quality of the program and the experience for the students.

This program was reviewed and approved by all the necessary College of Education and University governing committees. After a review, the College of Education’s Faculty Governance Council approved the program on August 25, 2008. On September 5, 2008, the University Teacher Education Advisory Committee approved the program. On September 16, 2008, the University Committee on Graduate Studies approved the program. And, the program was approved by the University Senate on September 26, 2008.

4. **Description of the Change**

The difference between the proposed Specialist in Education – Special Education degree program and the existing on-campus program is that the Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology proposes to teach its already approved on-campus program at a remote site location, i.e., totally off campus in Cherokee county through distance education instructional technology for at least 50% of the program. The existing EdS program has been modified to remove the electives and to dictate which courses students will take and when. The proposed EdS degree provides an advanced, postmaster’s program that will enable special education teachers and speech-language pathologists to become active leaders in their programs.
The learning outcomes and objectives for the program are the same as the on-campus program. The learning outcome for special educators in the graduate program is the mastery of the standards and will be demonstrated by successful completion of assignments. Assignments are submitted electronically and are aligned to CEC standards. EdS students demonstrate their mastery of knowledge, skills, and dispositions through the mastery of the CEC Knowledge and Skills Standards. The CEC standards are as follows:

- Leadership and Policy – Students advocate for legal and ethical policy that supports high quality education for individuals with exceptional learning needs, and provide leadership to create procedures that respect all individuals and positive and productive work environments.

- Program Development and Organization – Students improve instructional programs at the school and system levels; develop procedures to improve management systems; design professional development to support the use of evidence-based practices; coordinate educational standards with the needs of children with exceptionalities to access challenging curriculum standards; use understanding of the effects of cultural social, and economic diversity and variations of individual development to help develop programs and services for individuals with exceptional needs.

- Research and Inquiry – Students use educational research to improve instructional and intervention techniques and materials, foster an environment that supports instructional improvement, and engage in action research.

- Student and Program Evaluation – Students design and implement research to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices and program goals, and apply knowledge and skill at all stages of the evaluation process for student learning of the general education curriculum and individualized IEP goals.

- Professional Development and Ethical Practice – Students safeguard the legal rights of students, families, and personnel; plan, present, and evaluate professional development that focuses on effective practice; continuously broaden personal professional knowledge, including expertise to support student access to learning through effective teaching strategies, curriculum standards, and assistive technology

- Collaboration – Students understand the importance of collaboration and foster the integration of services for individuals with exceptionalities; understand the role of collaboration for internal and external stakeholders to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus to provide services to these students and their families; and understand the interactions of language, diversity, culture, and religion and use collaboration to enhance opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities.

In consultation with the Cherokee County School District, the Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology proposes to offer its Specialist in Education – Special Education degree program more than 50% online and at an off-campus site where students will obtain 50% or more of their credits toward the program. The entire 9 course, 27 credit program, consisting of existing academic offerings, will be offered at a site within the Cherokee County School District. While most of the courses have been offered at Woodstock High School, 2010 Towne Lake Hills Drive, Woodstock, Georgia, 30189; the specific location of the face-to-face classes is determined semester by semester by the
Cherokee County Schools and is dependent on space availability as determined by the schools.

Courses will be offered as partial and full distance courses. Courses will be offered in the following sequence: Fall 2008 – 2 courses, Spring 2009 – 1 course, Summer 2009 – 3 courses, Fall 2009 – 2 courses, and Spring 2010 – 1 course. Courses will be offered in the following sequence: Fall 2008: SPED 7767, Strategies for Challenging Behavior and SPED 8704, Issues in Special Education; Spring 2009: SPED 8701, Individual Appraisal of Exceptional Children; Summer 2009: EDLE 7324, Special Education Law; SPED 7702, Technology in Special Education; and SPED 8771, Curriculum Design and Implementation; Fall 2009: SPED 7701, Program Planning and Evaluation, SPED 8783, Research Project; and Spring 2010: SPED 8784, Research Seminar.

The Department will retain control and administrative oversight over all academic matters including (but not limited to) course selection and scheduling, curriculum, faculty hiring and evaluation, and student admission, evaluation, and graduation requirements. This will ensure the quality of the program to be offered. No distinctions have been made in the basic processes and policies for admitting and retaining students, developing curricula, and/or scheduling and staffing. Policies regarding transcripts are the same as for on-campus courses. No distinctions have been made in the requirements and expectations of the degree program.

5. Faculty

The courses in the proposed EdS program will be taught by the same faculty who teach on campus, so there are no different qualifications for distance learning faculty. The faculty who develop and teach distance-learning courses, including part-time faculty, must meet all criteria related to faculty. Faculty members are academically and experientially qualified to accomplish the mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the plan. The faculty roles in teaching, professional growth and development (includes scholarship), service, and practice are identified clearly and are congruent with the mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the program. All faculty have terminal degrees (see Appendix for Faculty Roster form.)

All the full-time faculty teaching in the proposed EdS program have full teaching and advising loads in the department. The course the full-time faculty will teach in the proposed program will be taught as an overload. Each of the five faculty members are to teach one course. Two part-time faculty will teach three cohort courses. The last class, SPED 8784, Research Seminar, will be co-taught by the five full-time faculty will be directing the student research. Full-time faculty may be able to generate a scholarly product regarding the experience (e.g., how they balanced professional scholarship with an “overload” of teaching). Scholarship on the program, courses, or instruction provided in this unique program will be integrated into the expected activities of the program instructors. The combination of the full-time and part-time faculty are adequate to support the program.
As with all the academic programs in the College of Education and Department, processes are in place to ensure that students have access to faculty. Faculty offer their students a variety of communication options, including University of West Georgia email addresses and phone consultation as communication options. All faculty offer students access to voice mail as well. Email addresses and phone numbers are provided to students on the course syllabi. In addition, students have access to faculty through CourseDen asynchronous email and discussion boards, and synchronous sessions and the Who's Online tool. Students also can arrange consultation by phone, e-mail, or online as appropriate or visits to campus to meet with the instructor personally.

Departmental faculty are actively engaged in scholarship and research (see vitae) and all have experience directing the EdS thesis.

6. **Library and Learning Resources**

This off-campus program does not include on-campus experiences. Library resources are adequate as students will be able to access the library electronically. Distance Learning Library Services provides a full range of support to ensure that students enrolled in courses at any of the University's remote sites receive the same level of library support as those at the UWG campus (http://www.westga.edu/~library/depts/offcampus). Standard services include database searches, selection of materials and free delivery of materials to either the student's home. Fax and courier service provide timely delivery to these sites. Reserve reading materials can be transferred to a University System of Georgia library near the class site. The learning resources available to the distant student are brought to the students' attention the first night of class.

UWG has policies concerning the ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses or other media products that faculty must follow.

Early in their programs (SPED 8704) and prior to beginning their research coursework, students gain experience with the online reference materials available in the Galileo system.

7. **Physical Resources**

The facilities at Woodstock High School are adequate to support the EdS degree program. Since the classes are offered after the school day, classroom space is not a problem. In addition to classroom space, a state of the art technology classroom also is available. Current technology is adequate as are the library holdings and internet access.

8. **Financial Support**

To ensure the success of the proposed program, substantial state financial resources will not be necessary in the early stage of the program. Financial support, other than faculty salaries and travel expenses, will not be necessary for start-up and for the remainder of
the cohort. It is estimated that 756 graduate credits will be generated from Fall 2008 through Spring 2010. Approximately $112,900 in student tuition and fees will be generated over the course of the program at a cost of approximately $42,237. (See attached Budget and Budget Justification.)

9. Evaluation and Assessment

The following evaluation and assessment processes have been used in the past and will be continue to be used in the future to assess the program’s effectiveness in achieving its mission:

- Faculty meet regularly as a group to talk about the program, courses, students, assessment. The program, courses, etc. are discussed at regular department meetings. In addition, time is set aside for smaller curricular committees to deal with specific issues related to the program.
- All course syllabi are on file with notations on how NBPTS standards, CEC standards, and COE Conceptual Framework descriptors are met. As syllabi are updated, they undergo a rigorous process through which they are checked and approved by department faculty and the various governance structures throughout the College and the University. Syllabi are posted on the Department website every semester.
- Classroom assignments in various courses. The department has identified common core assessments that will be used to document candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The department will be able to track the EdS students individually as well as in cohort groups or by other factors, including demographics, admission scores, school system, etc. EdS students’ progress will be monitored based on standards and competencies. In addition, the EdS students are required to use technology in their courses.
- Course content examinations and assignments (utilizing authentic assessment approaches) are conducted by faculty for formative and summative assessments. Faculty are responsible for monitoring their own courses to ensure that the EdS students are being effectively evaluated.
- Faculty include documentation of varied methods for improving instruction in annual reports. Department Chair meets with individual faculty members for their annual review.
- Faculty peer reviews of instruction are conducted to determine effectiveness of teaching and learning. Department Chair meets with individual faculty members for their annual review.
- Surveys and other data sources are used to collect information about EdS students, alumni, and employer satisfaction and demonstrated achievements of graduates. EdS students’ outcome data include, but are not limited to, graduation rates, GACE pass rates, and job placement rates, as appropriate. Data are collected by the COE Dean’s Office.
- Faculty advisor surveys are made available to the EdS students per advisor session. Advisors are evaluated by the EdS students, which also is part of the Chair’s annual review with faculty.
• Course Evaluations per semester, per course (both academic and clinical) are completed by the EdS students. Department chair checks the course evaluations forms before returning them to faculty. He meets with individual faculty members for their annual review.

• Faculty Annual Performance Evaluations are conducted by the Department Chair. The Chair writes a summary of the each faculty member’s accomplishments. The Chair also recommends a course of action for the following year.

• The department meets periodically with its Advisor Council for feedback on the program and to discuss new initiatives.

UWG continues to improve its development and delivery of distance learning classes. It is constantly assessing its procedures, technologies, and how they impact the teaching/learning environment. Evaluation instruments that have been delivered to distance students and assessed have been used to make improvements in the program.