

## **INTENT TO PLAN SPECIAL EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT MULTI-CATEGORICAL**

Dr. DeRochi will present this proposal fully to the Committee.

### **Section I: Overall Concept of Program**

Shepherd University's School of Education seeks approval to develop an Endorsement in Special Education (multi-categorical) in direct response to requests from county school systems in West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Special Education continues year after year to be a high need area for teacher positions at all levels PK-12, with many school systems filling positions in Special Education with long-term substitutes and others that are not highly qualified for the position. Currently, Shepherd University does not offer an option for Special Education teacher licensure. The proposed endorsement, which requires three new courses that will be rotated with existing offerings to minimize instructional cost, will fill this high need area, and will be an addition/option to ALL education majors at Shepherd at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

### Program Objectives

1. *Knowledge and Understanding of Disability Categories.*  
Students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the various disability categories, including learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and other health impairments, to effectively assess and teach students with diverse needs.
2. *Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development and Implementation*  
Students will gain the skills necessary to create, implement, and monitor effective Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that align with federal, state, and local regulations, ensuring that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
3. *Behavior Management and Positive Support Strategies*  
Students will learn and apply evidence-based strategies for managing classroom behaviors, promoting positive behaviors, and supporting social-emotional learning in a diverse classroom setting.
4. *Collaborative Practices with Families and Professionals*

Students will develop effective communication skills and collaborative strategies to work with families, related service providers, and other educators to create inclusive learning environments that support the academic and social success of students with disabilities.

5. *Assessment and Differentiated Instruction*

Students will gain proficiency in using formal and informal assessment tools to identify students' strengths and needs and will learn to differentiate instruction to support diverse learning styles and abilities in the general education curriculum.

6. *Assistive Technology and Adaptive Tools*

Students will be able to incorporate assistive technologies and adaptive tools into their teaching practices, ensuring students with disabilities can access and engage with the curriculum.

7. *Legal and Ethical Foundations of Special Education*

Students will develop a thorough understanding of the legal and ethical guidelines governing special education services, including IDEA, Section 504, and ADA, to advocate for the rights and needs of students with disabilities.

### Student Learning Outcomes

#### **Upon completion of the program, students will be able to:**

1. *Identify and Address Diverse Learning Needs*  
Demonstrate the ability to identify and assess the diverse learning and behavioral needs of students with various disabilities, using both formal and informal assessment methods.
2. *Develop Effective IEPs*  
Design, implement, and monitor high-quality IEPs that are tailored to individual students' needs, ensuring they meet legal and educational standards.
3. *Utilize Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies*  
Implement evidence-based instructional practices that support academic and social-emotional development for students with disabilities, ensuring they are engaged and able to achieve their full potential.
4. *Promote Inclusive Education*  
Apply inclusive teaching practices that foster a sense of belonging for students with disabilities in general education classrooms, providing them with meaningful access to the curriculum.
5. *Collaborate with Stakeholders*  
Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with families, colleagues, and other professionals to create an effective support network for students with disabilities.
6. *Manage Classroom Behaviors Effectively*  
Use positive behavioral interventions and support strategies to create a safe and productive learning environment for students with disabilities.
7. *Apply Assistive Technologies*  
Integrate appropriate assistive technologies and other adaptive resources to support students' learning, engagement, and independence in the classroom.
8. *Advocate for Students' Rights*  
Advocate for students with disabilities in educational and community settings,

- ensuring they receive the services and support necessary for their success.
9. *Maintain Ethical and Professional Standards*  
Adhere to ethical and legal standards in the provision of special education services, including confidentiality, professional conduct, and compliance with relevant laws.
  10. *Engage in Continuous Professional Development*  
Commit to lifelong learning and professional development, staying current with best practices, legal requirements, and new research in the field of special education.

## Section II: Market Analysis & Financial Pro Forma

The proposed Special Education endorsement is not a new, complete degree program; rather, it is an effective *add-on credential* that better prepares Shepherd education students for the current marketplace. The proposal in Multi-Categorical Special Education will be an added option to the existing teacher licensure pathways, providing all Shepherd University School of Education students the valuable opportunity to expand their professional expertise and enhance their ability to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

*Please see Lightcast market research (submitted separately) to illustrate the growing need for special education teachers in our region. These data are proprietary to Lightcast, and program specific data will therefore be sent to the Shepherd University Board of Governors separately and outside the public documents.*

### About Lightcast

Lightcast is a labor market analytics firm that is passionate about providing meaningful data for colleges and their students.

Our data is trusted by a breadth of users including researchers at colleges and universities, economic development organizations, and Fortune 500 companies.

Lightcast data offers a three-pronged approach to labor market information:

1. Our traditional LMI combines dozens of government sources from agencies like the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau, and Bureau of Labor Statistics into one dataset that details industries, occupations, demographics, academic programs, and more.
2. Lightcast's job posting analytics give a real-time look into the needs of employers in today's labor market. Each month, millions of postings are scraped from employer sites and job boards, de-duplicated, and compiled into an actionable dataset.
3. Lightcast also leverages workforce profiles—an innovative database of more than 100 million resumés and professional profiles that are aggregated from the open web. These profiles unify information for workers—such as education, employment history, skills, and more—to reveal robust detail on what is happening in today's workforce.

Together, these data related to labor market demand, relevant skills, and the competitive landscape help colleges and universities make informed decisions about their program offerings.

## Financial Pro Forma

Given the targeted focus and scale of this proposed endorsement (5 courses total; 3 new courses), a comprehensive financial pro forma has not been provided.

However, in terms of financial considerations, the Special Education Endorsement will be fundamentally cost neutral, as the additional coursework will be offered in alignment with our current SOE curricula and will be required to meet Shepherd University minimum course enrollments.

We anticipate a modest increase in net tuition by

- 1) Making our current degree programs even more attractive due to the advantages of offering this endorsement; and
- 2) Offering these courses on a rotating schedule including summer, which will increase net tuition for that term.

As a result, the inclusion of these specialized courses enhances the educational experience and professional development of our students and generates additional net tuition revenue, contributing to the sustainability and growth of the School of Education.

## Section III: Timeline & Contingency Planning

### Timeline for Implementation

September 2025	Submit Intent to Plan to BOG
October 2025	Curricular development through the faculty governance processes
November 2025	Development of marketing plan and materials (Admissions, University Communications)
December/January 2026	Submit Intent to Plan Letter to WVDE
February 2026	Submit full program submission to WVDE
May 2026	Receive Decision from WVDE
May 2026	Launch marketing and enrollment campaign; Course development for first-year courses.
May/June 2026	Final approvals; program added to university catalog; courses included in Fall 2026 schedule
August 2026	Offer Courses for the Endorsement
December 2026	Assess student outcomes; Continued enrollment drive
January 2027	Offer Courses for Endorsement
May 2027	First Education Majors to graduate with the Special Education Endorsement added to their initial licensure

## *Contingency Planning*

Should the proposed Special Education endorsement grow and exceed expectations, Shepherd University's School of Education is committed to ensuring that the quality of the program, student support services, and accreditation standards remain intact as the program grows.

The following are strategies can be employed:

1. Ensure faculty-to-student ratios remain manageable.
2. Allocate additional resources to maintain an exceptional learning experience.
3. Hire additional qualified faculty to support program growth.

The School of Education will regularly assess the program's effectiveness by:

- Gathering feedback from students, faculty, and employers
- Ensuring the endorsement meets the evolving needs of students and adheres to state and national accreditation standards.

Enrollments for the new courses developed as part of this Endorsement will be reviewed over the next three academic years. At that time, if these new courses fail to meet minimum course enrollment requirements, the School of Education will take proactive steps to ensure the responsible use of institutional resources. The School of Education will first evaluate the program to identify any potential enrollment barriers, such as course structure, marketing strategies, or student demand. Based on the findings, adjustments may be made to better align the program with student needs and market trends. These adjustments could include refining course offerings, enhancing recruitment efforts, or modifying the program's delivery format to increase accessibility and appeal.

Additionally, the School of Education will consider reducing faculty staffing or course offerings to match enrollment numbers, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently without compromising the quality of education. The School of Education will also explore partnerships with local school districts and community organizations to increase awareness and interest in the endorsement. Finally, the School of Education will work closely with students and alumni to gather feedback and improve program components, ensuring that the endorsement remains relevant and meets the evolving needs of educators and the communities they serve. By taking these measured steps, the School of Education will responsibly manage resources while maintaining its commitment to offering high-quality, impactful programs.

The following resolution is recommended for adoption by the Board:

**RESOLVED**, That the Shepherd University Board of Governors approves the Intent to Plan for Endorsement in Special Education (multi-categorical) and directs the Provost to oversee completion of the program development for final Board approval.