Name of the proposed new unit:
Disability Studies and Counseling

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List of the current units (including the academic programs) that will be reorganized/consolidated.

Programs within Special Education, Rehabilitation, and School Psychology:

• Rehabilitation:
  Bachelor of Science, B.S.
  Master of Arts, M.A.
  Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.

• School Psychology:
  Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.
  Educational Specialist, Ed.S.

• Special Education:
  Bachelor of Science, B.S.
  Master of Arts, M.A.
  Educational Specialist, Ed.S.
  Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.

Programs within Educational Psychology:
• School Counseling
  Master of Education, M.Ed.
Three-Page Justification

- Explanation of how the reorganization or consolidation will strengthen the unit’s teaching, service, and research, or creative activities, and thereby advance the University in accordance with the UA Strategic Plan, 2009-2013

**Background:** The proposed unit transforms the current Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and School Psychology (SERP), which is currently a multidisciplinary unit that includes programs in Special Education, Rehabilitation, School Psychology, and Interpreter Training/Deaf Studies. It is worth noting that this is already a consolidated unit, composed of several programs that have been joined because of common goals and interests. Graduates of the Department qualify for 10 different professional licensures or certifications, depending on their area of specialization and/or degree program. Consequently, the curriculum is determined by requirements of certification, accreditation, and licensure in each area. In each of the professional fields represented in the Department, there are documented shortages of professionals in the state and nation. Several programs include specializations that provide the only education and training of professionals in their respective areas within the State of Arizona (e.g., deaf and hard of hearing, visual impairment, and rehabilitation counseling). In addition, all but a few graduates are employed within their respective area of preparation or are pursuing advanced degrees.

The Department includes 17 tenured and tenure-eligible faculty and 14 adjunct faculty who are employed at .50 FTE or above. Faculty members are highly productive with regard to research and related scholarly activities. In addition, faculty have been very successful in funding their research, having generated approximately $2.5 million in grant and contract funding during the 2007-2008 academic year. The initiative to reorganize the University and the College has provided SERP with the opportunity to establish new funding initiatives and related goals through the establishment of a new structural unit within the College of Education that emphasizes special education, rehabilitation, school psychology, disability culture, and counseling. Through research and related scholarship, the focus of this new unit will be on improving education, employment, and the quality of life of people of all ages who have unique needs related to physical, cognitive, developmental, and/or emotional disability or other individual variations.

**Requested Action:** The development of the new structural unit, Disability Studies and Counseling (DSC), will involve three changes: (1) transfer of the existing School Counseling program into DSC, (2) replacement of the current undergraduate rehabilitation program with a new undergraduate program in Disability Studies, and (3) consolidation of three or four Departmental courses to serve several programs through on-line delivery.

1. **Transfer of School Counseling:** Affiliation of the School Counseling program with this unit would provide a logical link between schools and adult settings. Co-locating the School Counseling program with the other DSC degree programs will provide an opportunity for faculty to pursue future academic program development and common research in the mental health field. The expanded focus on mental health that will be realized through inclusion of school counseling will expand access to research funding agencies other than those currently being accessed by SERP (e.g., NIMH, NSF).
2. Implementation of Undergraduate Disability Studies Programs: Co-locating all units that emphasize disability topics within DSC will facilitate the future implementation of a more progressive Disability Studies undergraduate degree to replace the current undergraduate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. This is a natural transition for the unit as an undergraduate degree in Disability Studies was included in the University’s 2009 strategic plan and was approved by the Board of Regents last summer. Although additional resources will be required to realize this transformation, the unit will be well-positioned to move forward with establishment of this progressive program as those resources are generated. Collaboration on research projects by faculty both within and outside of this unit will be greatly facilitated by broadening the focus of the undergraduate program to Disability Studies.

3. Consolidation of Courses: The DSC faculty will review current courses and select parallel courses that are common to several DSC degree programs. These courses will be consolidated to create courses that could serve several programs. On initial review, it appears that three to four priority courses will meet the needs of students from more than one DSC degree program. The consolidated courses will be offered through the Outreach College (distance education) to provide flexibility in time and location; they will be taught by qualified instructors whose salaries will be provided through student tuition income. This process will help to alleviate the shortfall of instructors that is currently experienced by the recent reduction of faculty positions in the Department and will also enable faculty to expand their collaborative research initiatives and achieve academic excellence through progressive curriculum redesign.

Key Elements

Timetable: Planning for the changes will begin in Spring 2009. Two activities will take place: (a) Identification of the common courses that could be offered through distance education and implementation of curriculum redesign, where necessary and (b) curriculum development and APR approval for the undergraduate Disability Studies program. During the Fall of 2009, development of on-line delivery for at least one course (possibly SERP 556) will take place, with the goal of offering the course in an on-line format in Spring 2010. The first courses in the Disability Studies undergraduate program will be offered in Fall 2009. The School Counseling program will join the unit in Fall 2009, with initial on-line courses to be offered during that semester. In Spring 2010, additional common courses will be developed for a distance delivery format.

Impact of changes: The consolidation of courses will enable the DSC to pursue research projects that will increase national visibility and generate external funding to support research projects. Distance education courses will increase Departmental income that can be used to pay qualified instructors and provide specialized funding for Departmental needs that include research-related expenses. The transfer of School Counseling will facilitate collaborative research and allow for shared resources in professional preparation programs that have similar structures and activities.

Potentially affected faculty members: An associate professor and a .60 FTE nontenure-eligible adjunct faculty member in School Counseling will move from the Department of Educational Psychology into the newly formed DSC unit. Faculty will take on the responsibility of designing
and teaching several new courses in the new undergraduate Disability Studies degree program. Staff and faculty from the Disability Resources Center have agreed to assume instructional responsibilities for several additional new courses in the Disability Studies program.

**Course and curricular changes:** The undergraduate program in Rehabilitation will be discontinued and replaced with a major in Disability Studies. Courses in School Counseling will be reestablished with codes and numbers from the new unit. Consolidated Departmental courses that are developed for on-line delivery will be established through Outreach College.

**Costs and benefits:**

Costs may include the need for additional instructional time for courses in the undergraduate major of Disability Studies and time to prepare on-line versions of Departmental courses.

Benefits of the changes include

- greater efficiency of delivery through distance education courses,
- increased opportunities to develop collaborative research in common topics such as mental health through inclusion of School Counseling,
- additional income from courses offered through Credit Outreach, and
- additional faculty time to address specialized research-related projects due to consolidated course offerings