



The University of Alabama

Proposal for a New Minor

Minor Degree Program Title: Educational Policy and Reform

Major Degree Program Title: Educational Leadership and Administration

CIP Code: 130401

Award Level: Bachelors

**1. Please provide a Description of the Minor.**

This minor will provide students with an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of educational policy. Employing interdisciplinary perspectives, students will analyze and evaluate the effects of key policies and reform movements in education on students, teachers, and society at large. Students will consider how educational policy reshapes the institution of schooling, affects teaching practices in the classrooms, regulates curriculum decision making, and manages diverse student populations in education. This minor will enable students to pursue graduate education for research and teaching and, subsequently, to participate in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) dedicated to educational policy, education policy think-tanks, as well as jobs in academia and leadership positions in NGOs, consultancies, and public service.

**2. Please provide a list of all courses in the Minor.**

This is a 15-hour minor with five required three-semester hour courses: PSC 370, American Public Policy; BEF 483, Educational Policy and Reform; BEF 484, Church, State and Education; BEF 485, Language and Politics; BEF 486, Designing Educational Policy Research. The course descriptions are listed below.

PSC 370, American Public Policy: This course provides a broad overview of public policy in the United States. In addition to learning about the policy process and policy analysis, we will examine the historical context and contemporary status of several policy issues.

BEF 483, Introduction to Educational Policy and Reform: This course introduces students to the fields of educational policy and reform in the United States by focusing on the relation of the public school to the state, on the principles of education, and on the possibilities for reform. Students will analyze contemporary policy debates and reform efforts in regard to philosophical perspectives, historical contingencies, and empirical support.

BEF 484, Church, State, and Education: This course provides students with a critical look at the role of religion in public education, the separation of church and state in American education, and educational policies emanating from debates about the separation of church and state.

March 29, 2017

BEF 485, Language, Politics, and Education. This course provides students a broad overview of language policy and planning. Drawing on international case studies, students will identify different foci of language planning, including status, corpus and acquisition planning, as well as the different linguistic and political views that inform policy, especially language in education policy.

BEF 486, Designing Educational Policy Research (Prerequisites: PSC 370, BEF 483, BEF 484, BEF 485. In limited cases, the instructor will make exceptions after discussion with individual students on a case-by-case basis). This is the capstone course for the Educational Policy Studies undergraduate minor. The purpose of this course is to have the students create a small research project that reflects on their learning from previous courses in the Educational Policy Studies undergraduate minor.

The BEF courses will be taught by faculty members (all with earned doctorates in the area of the identified course prefix) or advanced doctoral students (minimum of 18 hours of doctoral level coursework in the corresponding field) in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies. Faculty members initially involved in the program, in terms of instruction, are Drs. Philo Hutcheson (483), Natalie Adams (484), John Petrovic (485), Bryan Mann (486), and as assigned in Political Science (370).<sup>1</sup>

### **3. Please provide a rationale for the Minor to include staffing needs and student demand.**

Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped from over 719,000 students in 2008 to approximately 466,000 in 2013. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that 17% of students who do go into teaching quit the profession within five years.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising, then, that nearly every state has reported teacher shortages.<sup>3</sup> Such shortages are severe in different subject areas (science and math) and in different contexts (e.g. in rural areas, high poverty and high minority schools) shortages. Part of the explanation is simply the conditions for teaching; in this age of testing and accountability, teachers note that they have little autonomy, lack professional recognition, and face limits on advancement and reward.

One response to this shortage has been to open up new avenues for students to enter the field through alternative routes. These include more traditional professional preparation programs, such as the alternative certification Masters in the COE and non-professional routes such as Teach for America. While applications for programs such as TFA have increased dramatically, the five-year attrition rate is 70%. Even so, it is important to note that nearly 44% of TFAers remained in their initial, low-income placement school beyond their two-year obligation. Given the teacher shortage, the increase in alternative routes, and the number of non-professional teachers going into and, to some degree, remaining in schools, it is important to reach out to

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the Department Chair of Political Science, Joe Smith, is aware and supportive of the development of this proposal.

<sup>2</sup> Education Commission of the States, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Heim, 2016

students early to attract them to the teaching profession while also giving them a thorough sense of what schools are like, how and why they function as they do, and the policies that drive these things. It is also important that these students -- in the interest of addressing the attrition rate regardless of the preparation program-- have a realistic understanding of the diversity of students they will meet and the policies and societal structures in place that increase or attenuate their educational opportunities. Teachers who have a deeper understanding of such issues may enter the profession with their eyes open and may, therefore, stay. It is important to note that equal educational opportunity is the pre-requisite to equal opportunity generally. The more that college students understand about education and the relationship to society, the more likely we are to see positive change in education, and the attitudes, policies, and structures that jeopardize the profession. Finally, there are additional employment opportunities in education-related fields such as organizations that seek to influence education, including NGOs and government agencies.

Toward these ends, this minor offers students the opportunity to develop a clear understanding of educational policy and reform, what drives policy reform and what should drive it, and how policy affects schools, curriculum, and instruction. Students will gain an understanding of the philosophical, sociological, and historical underpinnings of educational policy and reform. The Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies offers an array of specific areas of policy interest.

The demand for this program could be quite high as all undergraduate students in Arts & Sciences and Communications must pursue a minor. While we cannot predict precise numbers, informal polling among current students as well as faculty members in New College, Political Science, and the Honors College indicates there will be sufficient interest to justify establishing the minor.

Furthermore, as the faculty of the Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies Department has increased in size and the Gadsden Center shuts down, there are opportunities to increase the number of course offerings in some programs such BEF 483, BEF 484, and BEF 486. The three instructors for those courses will be able to offer them on a two-year rotation. In one case, the instructor is already teaching the slash-listed course, BEF 585/485.

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Department Chair:

Claire Mayor  
(Print name)

*[Signature]*  
(Sign)

10-16-17  
(Date)

College Dean:

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(Print name)

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(Sign)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Provost:

March 29, 2017

## Faculty

*Faculty members with degrees in policy studies:*

Bryan Mann, PhD, The Pennsylvania State University, Educational Theory and Policy

*Faculty with related degrees:*

Natalie Adams, PhD, LSU, Curriculum and Instruction.

Dr. Adams' interest for years has been in gender policies, particularly how the gender equity policies of the 1990s affected school policies and practices. Her dissertation looked, in part, at how the macro politics of gender equity reform in the 1990s was impacting school practices and politics as manifested in policies about fighting. More recently she has become very interested in the discourse of "choice" as related to school policy since the very first "choice" policies (freedom of choice) during desegregation were intentionally meant to limit the contact White students had with Black students. The last chapter of a book she is completing addresses current policies in Mississippi, including charter schools, tuition vouchers for children with disabilities, and a constitutional amendment to force the state to fund public education at the level approved in the 1980s.

Philo Hutcheson, PhD, The University of Chicago, Education

Dr. Hutcheson taught a required introductory doctoral course on educational policy for five years at Georgia State University. He has a longstanding interest in educational policy issues in the United States, and he has publications directly addressing some of those issues: "In The National Interest: The College and University in the United States in the Post-World War II Era," *Higher Education: The Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. John C. Smart and Michael B. Paulson, (New York City, NY: Springer, 2011), 221-264; "Writing through the Past: Federal Higher Education Policy," in *The History of United States Higher Education: Methods for Understanding the Past*, ed. Marybeth Gasman (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2010), 172-186; "Shared Goals, Different Politics, and Differing Outcomes: The Truman Commission and the Dewey Commission," in *SUNY and the Promise of Public Higher Education: Sixty Years On*, eds. John B. Clark, W. Bruce Leslie, and Kenneth P. O'Brien (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2010), 3-15. He is also writing a manuscript examining the 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education, the first ever federal commission on higher education and one that is widely recognized for having substantial effect on U.S. educational policy.