

Teach in Florida

There is a serious problem in Florida: a shortage of teachers. Nationwide, one-fifth of all new teachers leave the profession within three years, according to the US Department of Education. Increasing student enrollment, job turnover and teachers retiring also contribute to the problem. In Florida this problem is especially critical in the areas of math, science and foreign languages.

At UF, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and the College of Education (COE) are working together to address Florida's teacher shortage with a program called Pathways to Teaching. Students majoring in mathematics, science or certain foreign languages who successfully complete the program can teach grades K-12 without pursuing a master's degree in education.

CLAS Associate Dean Carol Murphy, who developed the program along with COE Dean Ben Nelms, calls Pathways to Teaching "innovative" and says it is designed to recruit teachers rapidly, yet responsibly. "We hope to encourage more of our students in CLAS to consider the rewards of teaching in the public school system. After four years at UF, graduates who enrolled in the program will be prepared to face the challenges awaiting them in the classroom."

UF School of Teaching and Learning Interim Director Dorene Ross says that although the state of Florida will grant temporary teaching certificates to students graduating with a bachelor's degree that covers an area in which teachers are needed, completion of the program will better prepare students for a teaching career. "Pathways to Teaching provides CLAS students with 24 credit hours of professional preparation in education. This preparation will enable graduates to enter classrooms with stronger preparation for teaching, approach teaching with more confidence and skill, enjoy teaching more and have a more positive impact on student achievement."

In the Pathways to Teaching program, students combine a CLAS major in mathematics, science or a foreign language (French, German, Latin or Spanish) with an expanded minor from COE. Students follow the regular sequence of courses in their major, but take an additional 24 credit hours of required education classes.

Graduates of the program who earn a 2.5 or higher GPA in their area of specialization are eligible for a three-year temporary teaching certificate in Florida. Ross adds that it is possible for Pathways to Teaching students eventually to become fully certified without taking additional college courses. "Provided they pass the College Level Academic Skills Test and the appropriate teacher certification exam, they will be eligible for full professional certification after two years of successful teaching."

Pathways to Teaching student Jennifer Orlando, a Spanish major, says at one time she planned to minor in secondary-school education. After learning about the program she decided that Pathways better suited her needs. "What really attracted me to the program is that I did not have to get a master's degree. You also get a lot of hands-on experience. With the Pathways program, I am K-12 certified, which means I can teach elementary school, middle school or high school."

Pathways participants gain classroom experience at the PK Yonge Developmental School in Gainesville. The school, which was established in 1934, is a full partner in the program. Orlando says that her experience at PK Yonge has been invaluable. "I do not think you can learn to teach somebody just from a book. Classroom experience will make me a better teacher and more comfortable in front of the kids."

PK Yonge Director Fran Vandiver says the PK Yonge experience will give prospective teachers a kind of balance. "Teaching is both an art and a science. The academic background is the 'science' and the practical application skills are the 'art'. In all my years of experience as a middle school principal, a high school principal and now at PK Yonge, I have found that beginning teachers who struggle generally struggle with the 'art' of teaching."

Vandiver also agrees the teacher shortage in Florida needs to be addressed and thinks that Pathways to Teaching and PK Yonge can be a significant part of the solution. "We are excited about the possibilities that exist within the program for PK Yonge faculty and CLAS students. It is very important that a teacher is well grounded in the knowledge base of the curriculum that he or she will teach. You cannot teach what you do not know—so the importance of a solid academic background cannot be overlooked."

Pathways to Teaching

A four-year program to
teaching in Florida's schools

—Patrick Hughes

Above:
Spanish major Jennifer
Orlando looks forward to
teaching in Florida's
public schools.



UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
College of Education

For more information, please contact:

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Glenn Kepic Academic Advising Center (352) 392-1521	College of Education Robin Rossie 134E Norman Hall (352) 392-0721 ext. 400
---	---

