

# **Initial Program Approval for New Program Sponsors Stage IV of the Initial Institutional Approval Process October 2023**

## **Overview**

This report consists of a recommendation for the Initial Program Approval of an educator preparation program which will be offered by Mills College at Northeastern University (MC:NU).

MC:NU is an institution of higher education currently in the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process which was granted Provisional Approval as a new program sponsor in California at the Commission's [June 2023](#) meeting. For context, Mills College, which offered educator preparation programs in California for decades, closed recently. Northeastern University has assumed many of the academic programs and the facilities of the Oakland, California campus and seeks to offer educator preparation in California. MC:NU, as part of Stage IV of the IIA process, now seeks Initial Program Approval from the Committee on Accreditation (COA) to offer a Preliminary Education Specialist: Early Childhood Special Education program. At a future COA meeting, MC:NU will be seeking Initial Program Approval for two additional programs (Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject). It bears noting that the proposed Preliminary Education Specialist: Early Childhood Special Education program under consideration in this item has demonstrated alignment to the new literacy standard and the Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject programs the institution proposes will also need to demonstrate alignment to the literacy standard.

## **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that after discussion with the program sponsor, review of the Board of Institutional Review (BIR) team members' feedback, and review of the Stage IV documentation, the COA grant Initial Program Approval to MC:NU's proposed ECSE program. Should the COA approve the program, the program may begin operating, and in accordance with Commission action to grant the institution Provisional Approval at the conclusion of IIA Stage III, a provisional site visit will be scheduled in three years from the date of COA approval.

## **Background**

The Commission requires that an institution seeking to offer new educator preparation program(s) must first be approved as a new program sponsor and must do so by satisfactorily completing all five stages of the Commission's IIA process. A chart detailing the five stages of the IIA process is provided at the end of this agenda item.

## **Mills College at Northeastern University**

MC:NU has completed the first three stages of the Initial Institutional Approval process as follows:

Stage	Date
Stage I: Prerequisites	March 2022 – Attended Accreditation 101
Stage II: Eligibility	<a href="#">February 2023</a> – Granted Eligibility
Stage III: Provisional Approval	<a href="#">June 2023</a> – Granted Provisional Approval

MC: NU’s responses to the Preliminary Education Specialist: Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program standards were reviewed by a team of BIR members who collaborated on the feedback and found all standards to be met. MC: NU’s responses to the Preliminary Education Specialist preconditions were reviewed by Commission staff and were determined to be aligned. The following hyperlink provide access to MC:NU’s complete [Stage IV submission](#), including program standards responses, preconditions responses, and reviewer feedback.

**Institution’s Summary**

MC: NU’s Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) preliminary credential program is designed to be a Commission-aligned, two-year program that will be an integral part of the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education. This program will prepare candidates to work in early intervention, preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten settings with infants and young children (ages birth through kindergarten) who experience a range of disabilities. The program's curriculum and pedagogy will synergize both theory and practice and emphasize a strengths-based and equity approach guided by social justice principles.

From the inception of their coursework, candidates will engage in a rigorous exploration of foundational theories and practices in early childhood education. The program will be distinct in its focus on anti-bias education and a strengths-based approach, elements deeply rooted in critical theories that question conventional power structures and biases. As candidates progress, they will be expected to continuously refine their educational philosophy and develop advanced instructional competencies.

Unique to this program will be its robust framework for experiential learning and fieldwork, which will be integrated across all semesters. In the first year, candidates will be mentored at the Mills College Children’s School where they will benefit from immediate feedback and reflective circles with experienced professionals. The second year will intensify this hands-on experience, with candidates engaging in teaching roles in early intervention and preschool-kindergarten settings in public schools and public institutions. These experiences will offer candidates opportunities for critical reflection on their practice, thereby fulfilling the program's commitment to develop reflective practitioners.

The ECSE program will establish community engagement and social justice as cornerstone elements. Candidates will be trained to collaborate meaningfully with families, caregivers, and communities, especially those who are part of marginalized groups. Grounded in Disability Studies and influenced by critical theory, candidates will interrogate how societal systems often limit opportunities based on 'othered' identities and examine how they can contribute to creating more equitable settings.

The program will maintain a comprehensive system for assessing and guiding candidate performance through both fieldwork and academic work. Evaluation mechanisms will be designed to offer candidates constructive feedback from field/clinical supervisors and program faculty. This will be particularly crucial in shaping their understanding of effective early intervention and preschool special education, aligning closely with Commission guidelines and expectations.

In addition to the core ECSE credentialing, the program will offer avenues for candidates to integrate their studies with other credential programs offered by MC:NU, including multiple subjects and administrative services.

If approved, the program will begin in Fall 2024, with the first cohort graduating in Spring 2026. It is envisioned as a transformative initiative that not only fills a critical gap in the state's educational landscape but also serves as a catalyst for broad societal change through its focus on equity and social justice.

### Five Stages of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

Mills College at Northeastern University is seeking initial program approval as indicated in the Stage IV column of the chart below.

IIA Process	Stage I - Prerequisites	Stage II – Eligibility Requirements	Stage III – Provisional Approval	Stage IV – Initial Program Approval	Stage V – Provisional Site Visit and Full Approval
<b>Purpose</b>	Ensures legal eligibility of institution in California  Ensures institution understands requirements of Commission’s accreditation system	Ensures that institution has capacity to sponsor effective programs	Ensures institution meets all Common Standards	Ensures all proposed programs meet all relevant program standards and program-specific preconditions	Program operates for 2-4 years and hosts a provisional accreditation site visit
<b>Institutional Requirements</b>	Must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have legal eligibility</li> <li>• Attend Accreditation 101 with institutional team</li> </ul>	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 Eligibility Criteria</li> <li>• Initial Program Preconditions</li> <li>• General Precondition #9</li> </ul>	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Standards</li> </ul>	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program-Specific Preconditions</li> <li>• Program Standards</li> </ul>	Must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data</li> <li>• Host provisional site visit</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Staff	Staff	BIR	<b>Preconditions: Staff</b> <b>Program Standards: BIR</b>	Site Visit Team & COA
<b>Authority</b>	Staff	Commission	Commission	COA	Commission
<b>Decision</b>	Determine Eligibility for Stage II	Eligibility: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grant</li> <li>2. Deny</li> </ol>	Provisional Approval: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grant</li> <li>2. Deny</li> </ol>	Program(s): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve</li> <li>2. Deny</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grant Full Approval</li> <li>2. Grant Full Approval &amp; Remand to COA to Address Stipulations</li> <li>3. Continue Provisional Status for 1 Year to Address Stipulations</li> <li>4. Deny Approval</li> </ol>
<b>IIA Status*</b>	Not Approved	Not Approved	Provisional Approval**	Provisional Approval***	Full Approval

\*At conclusion of stage

\*\*Institutionally approved but cannot offer programs

\*\*\*May begin offering approved program