

WSU Curriculum Proposal Form – New Requirement

General Information

RO Intake Number	1037
Working Name	Transition from K-12 to Adulthood Graduate Certificate
Date Submitted	09/12/25
CSC Number	
Status	College Approved
Department	Department of Teaching and Learning
Dept Chair Email	tsalsbury@wsu.edu
Dean Email	takmal@wsu.edu
New Requirement Type	Add GRADUATE Certificate

Program Information

Certificate Title	Transition from K-12 to Adulthood Graduate Certificate
Program (Grad Degree)	
Plan Title (Optional)	
CIP Code	13.1001
Campus	Global
Effective Date	Fall 2026
Catalog Copy	

Contacts and Approvals

Dept POC	Josh Taylor
POC Email	josh.taylor@wsu.edu
POC Phone	+1 (509) 800-7441

Dept Chair Approval	Approved
Chair Date	10/02/25
Dept Dean Approval	Approved
Dean Date	10/02/25
CSC Approved	
Community Review Complete	
Committee Approved	
Faculty Senate Approved	

Graduate Certificate in “Transition from K-12 to Adulthood” Rationale Statement

The currently proposed graduate certificate in “Transition from K-12 to Adulthood” addresses a critical need within the field of special education both in Washington state, the Northwest region, nationally, and internationally. The purpose of this certificate program is to prepare K-12 and non-traditional education professionals (e.g., vocational rehabilitation personnel, postsecondary education career specialists) to improve postschool outcomes for youth with disabilities through advanced and applied training in evidence-based practices in transition education. The transition certificate proposal is aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children’s Division on Career Development and Transition’s (CEC-DCDT) Advanced Transition Specialty Set of standards, and the proposed graduate certificate is under concurrent review for national accreditation by CEC-DCDT. Approval of the proposal would make Washington State University (WSU) the sixth such program in the county and the first program in the Northwest region to receive national accreditation through CEC-DCDT (DCDT National Certificate in Transition, n.d.).

Despite decades of research and policy focused on improving services for youth with disabilities, post-school outcomes in employment and postsecondary education remain dire (Poppen et al., 2017; Wehman et al., 2018). This has led to persistent postschool disparities--including lower rates of competitive integrated employment (CIE), postsecondary education (PSE) enrollment, and independent living (Taylor et al., 2023). In Washington state, among working age adults (ages 18-64) only about 41% of those with disabilities are employed, compared to 78% of the overall state sample. Outcomes are worse in rural and underserved communities where shortages of transition education specialists are acute (Scheef et al., 2023). Washington state lags behind many states in applying research-validated practices within transition programming (Whittenburg et al., 2024).

Our proposed certificate is organized into a four-course (12 credit) sequence that includes and builds on the foundation of our single currently offered transition-related course in special education (Spec Ed 503: Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities). The three additional courses provide a comprehensive transition education in career development, PSE pathways, self-determination, policy and legislation, and other research-based practices in promoting successful postschool outcomes, to include:

- Spec Ed 503: Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities
- Spec Ed 531: Self-Determination, Family Involvement, and Independent Living
- Spec Ed 532: Career Development and Employment of Individuals with Disabilities
- Spec Ed 533: College and Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities

The proposed certificate is designed for both degree seeking and non-degree seeking pre-service and in-service professionals, including K-12 educators and professionals from other fields (e.g., adult disability service providers). Courses will be delivered asynchronously through the WSU Global Campus, similarly to all of our existing special education endorsement and Master’s of Education (Ed.M.) courses, making it accessible to rural and working professionals across the state and country. Spec Ed 503 will serve as the entry point and prerequisite for the certificate program, however concurrent enrollment of this prerequisite with other certificate courses is allowed.

The impact on special education program faculty will be highly beneficial. The current WSU CESHs special education faculty has a unique and shared expertise in transition. This collective expertise has led to over \$20 million in collaborative competitive grant applications over the last five years among program faculty, with over \$6 million secured thus far. However, to date, WSU only offers a single class (Spec Ed 503) in transition. This certificate would leverage our nationally-recognized special education faculty in their area of focus and offer the potential to recruit students statewide, regionally, and nationally. No new tenure-track or professional lines would be needed to support the proposed certificate, and the certificate program will be sustained financially by revenue generated through tuition. The proposed certificate has been reviewed and was unanimously endorsed in a vote by all members of the WSU special education program faculty across all campuses. In alignment with the Special Education program handbook, the new certificate courses may be applied toward elective credit requirements for existing graduate degrees and may also count towards the Special Education endorsement, where applicable..

Data on our current special education programs show stable enrollment (e.g., M.A., Ed.M., Ph.D.) across the last five years. The proposed certificate program represents a “stackable credential” that would offer pathways to WSU graduates and others alike. Additionally, transition-focused credentials would not only attract special education professionals, but also rehabilitation counseling, social work, public health, and other disciplines.

The communication and recruitment plan for the proposed graduate certificate in transition will build on current WSU CESHs faculty’s strong relationship and networks at the regional and state level with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (WA-DVR), the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and other state and local partners. Prospective students will learn about the certificate program through targeted recruitment efforts both within and beyond our current endorsement program. This will include internal marketing and communication (e.g., website), as well as more targeted marketing and communication to local, statewide, and regional partners (e.g., school districts, ESDs, OPSI, state adult disability service agencies and organizations, regional and national partners). Additionally, Dr. Taylor currently serves on the national CEC-DCDT board. Dr. Poppen has extensive state and regional connections as a former principal investigator of the Washington Transition Program. Dr. Whittenburg has worked extensively at regional, state, national, and international levels related to the topic of transition. Faculty engaged with the proposed certificate proposal will leverage these relationships to ensure that coursework aligns with partner aims and that graduates exit with high-demand skills. The effectiveness of the certificate program will be evaluated through ongoing student feedback, course-level performance assessments, and certificate completion data, ensuring continuous improvement aligned with partner and accreditation standards.

In line with WSU’s land-grant mission and strategic plan, this proposed certificate promotes the preparation of highly qualified professionals who can address workforce and PSE participation disparities for individuals with disabilities across Washington and beyond. Graduates will be better equipped to compete for leadership roles in schools, state leadership, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and community organizations, and to influence policy and practice while advancing WSU’s leadership in transition and workforce development.

References

- DCDT National Certificate in Transition (n.d.). List of Approved National Certification in Transition Services Programs. <https://tinyurl.com/s3a7j6s2>
- Poppen, M., Lindstrom, L., Unruh, D., Khurana, A., & Bullis, M. (2017). Preparing youth with disabilities for employment: An analysis of vocational rehabilitation case services data. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 46*(2), 209–224. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-160857>
- Scheef, A. R., Bruno, L., & Whittenburg, H. N. (2023). Supporting Positive Post-School Outcomes for Students With Disabilities in Rural Locations. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 48*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/87568705231214809>
- Taylor, J., Thoma, C., Scott, L., Broda, M., Wehman, P., & Whittenburg, H. (2023). Inclusive educational and vocational predictors of postsecondary education for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 29*(6), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2225503>
- Wehman, P., Taylor, J., Brooke, V., Avellone, L., Whittenburg, H., Ham, W., Brooke, A. M., & Carr, S. (2018). Toward competitive employment for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities: What progress have we made and where do we need to go. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 43*(3), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796918777730>
- Whittenburg, H. N., Rooney-Kron, M., Carlson, S. R., Malouf, E. T., & Taylor, J. P. (2024). Use of Research-Based Transition Recommendations for Youth With Disabilities in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plans. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 67*(4), 283–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00343552231155218>