April 14, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr. Dorothy Cavender, Asst. Provost, Undergraduate Studies; Dr. Joe Pittman, Interim Dean, Graduate School

FROM: Dr. Nancy Barry, Professor and Head, Department of Curriculum and Teaching

SUBJECT: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Distance Education Curricula Request

1) Justification for adding a few distance education ESOL graduate level courses prior to approval of a distance education program.

The need for highly-trained ESOL teachers is urgent given the rapidly changing demographics in Alabama. The state of Alabama now reports serving over 15,000 English Language Learners each year. This number has doubled in only 5 years! Alabama ranks 6th in the country for non-traditional ESOL states providing ESOL services. The trend is for the number of ELLs needing professional educational services through our public schools to increase on an annual basis. Therefore, ESOL distance education courses need to be available as soon as possible. Approving a few courses at a time would allow us to begin to provide this training to these ESOL and mainstream classroom teachers. Throughout Alabama ELLs are typically included/integrated into the mainstream classrooms yet mainstream teachers have little or no training to serve this population. These teachers have little access to ESOL training and often little or no access to ESOL teachers. ELL test scores are counted toward school overall test scores and schools need mainstream and ESOL teachers who are prepared to help ELLs reach AYP.

With substantial initial costs (rooms, equipment, etc.) of setting up an entire distance education program and a faculty of only one person for the entire program, it would be more feasible to develop the distance education component of the ESOL program course by course, building upon the success of each course and using the equipment and facilities that are already available. Approval of these ESOL distance education courses would be a precursor to a proposed
TESOL certificate that is to be proposed after a definition of “graduate certificate” has been finalized and to the ESOL master’s degree program.

2) Delivery
Distance education students will participate in every scheduled class meeting through synchronous “live” classroom, streaming video, shared computer, and chat formats. The combination of these formats will enable students to participate along with campus based students in an interactive classroom setting. Class meetings will be archived and available for review by students. This delivery system (synchronous) will provide a learning experience more superior and engaging than an “online” (asynchronous) course.

3) Target Population
There has been a crucial need for years to have ESOL graduate courses available via distance education for Alabama teachers serving English language learners (ELL). ELL populations are not only in the larger cities of Alabama but are scattered throughout the rural communities of the state. In-service teachers (both ESOL and mainstream) that serve ELLs in these rural communities do not have access to higher education facilities that provide teacher training in ESOL. Auburn University would be the first and presently the only institution of Higher Education in Alabama to offer these core courses via distance education to these ESOL and mainstream teachers. There is only one other institution of higher education in Alabama that offers an ESOL program and they have no distance education component and do not anticipate to develop one in the future.

The Auburn ESOL distance education courses would not only provide Alabama ESOL and mainstream teachers access to training that will better their teaching practices, they would prepare these teachers to pass the Praxis II -ESOL examination and attain the "highly qualified" status that is required by ALSDE to serve the ELL population in Alabama.

4) Fee
Graduate School Application Fee $25
Course Fee per credit hour $283 (3-credit hour course = $849)