



## Testimony for Informational Hearing: Early Learning Workforce Pathways

March 14, 2017

Dear Members of House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Support,

My name is Dr. Younghee Kim, I am the coordinator of Early Childhood Development program at Southern Oregon University. It is my honor to testify today on behalf of Southern Oregon University's online Early Childhood Development Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.

The unique needs of early learning workers, challenges of place based study and the need for high quality early childhood education in rural areas motivated SOU to pioneer Oregon's first completely online Bachelor's and Master's degree in Early Childhood Development. Most early learning workers start their training at community colleges with a 15 credit hour certificate and can culminate in a 2 year associates degree. SOU's program uses these courses as the foundation of the pathway and offers an additional 60 credit hours of instruction to complete the Bachelor's degree requirements. Currently in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, the online major has grown to include 11 articulation agreements with community colleges around the state, many of them rural.

To make advancements in education both affordable and accessible, SOU accepts all the credits earned at the partner community colleges. This creates a seamless pathway from a Childhood Development certificate (CDA) and associate degree to a Bachelor's and Master's in Early Childhood Development. Additionally, students are able to attend courses completely online from their hometown and have access to optional weekend workshops for hands on training. Since students are most often working in early learning during the day, online education allows them to do schoolwork on their own schedule. When workers can learn from their current location, child care providers, students and families all benefit.

We have approximately 100 students who have successfully completed the Bachelor's program and 10 master's degree graduates. Because the program reaches into the communities where students live, graduates are making immediate impacts in their hometown. The majority of our students live in rural areas; SOU is proud to be a part of moving the dial on the rural/urban divide. Graduates are currently employed in local Head Start programs, community child care centers, preschools, or their own home child care programs.

Early learning years are a critical phase of children's development. Providing a safe, loving, and high quality education environment is incredibly important. It's an honor for SOU to empower and support the workers who are devoted to Oregon's children.

### School of Education

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