

Students for Ed Reform



Mobilizing a new
generation of leaders

Developing an Education Minor Toolkit

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NARRATIVE PROFILE

SFER UNC's Academic Advocacy Efforts: Developing an Education Minor

Before SFER UNC was recognized, they existed on their campus as a special committee of student government. They undertook a project evaluating the role of their University in state education in order to create and strengthen advocacy and conversation about educational issues on campus. The Minor in Education was somewhat of a personal wish to SFER UNC, as they hoped that outside majors could have more interaction with the School of Education (SOE). At UNC, undergraduates could only take SOE courses if they committed to majoring in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or Middle Grades Education, and the students committed to one of those majors were not encouraged to pursue others outside of the SOE.

Taking the knowledge that many members were not education majors, yet still held an interest in education, along with other statistics (such as Teach for America being the leading employer of UNC graduates the past two years), SFER UNC knew there was a population on campus that would benefit from and embrace a minor in education. Excitement generated in SFER UNC's leadership because they knew the education minor project would impact a new academic offering in the University, and the group's involvement in the endeavor allowed members to embrace the opportunity to leave their mark for future students.

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QUOTES

“I am very excited about the enthusiasm and initiative of these students and believe we will all benefit from working with them. Thanks for your efforts on behalf of the School of Education.”

– Dean of the School of Education

“Your thoughts, experiences and enthusiasm are invaluable as we continue on this development path. Thanks so much for your help and any input.”

– Assistant Dean of the School of Education

“For me, the creation of the education minor was an academic recognition of the current energy and excitement around education issues made by the university. Our work gave students at UNC with a range of interests and majors a chance to pursue their interest in education without having to commit four years of their undergraduate study. Additionally, it allowed collaboration with the School of Education giving TFA-hopefuls and education reform-minded students an opportunity for formal coursework and training. We can now pursue the extracurricular activities we get so excited about in a classroom setting.”

– a SFER Member working with the Minor Development Committee

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WORKPLAN

SFER UNC's work in the creation of the minor is applicable to all schools, but must be tailored to your individual school. In order to better apply SFER UNC's work to your own chapter's pursuit of a minor, ask questions such as:

- Which departments control the development of new minors?
- Is the control within each school (like the School of Education), or the University as a whole?
- Who would supporters of a minor be, and how could you gain their support?

And also,

1. Brainstorm your visions and expectations for a minor.
2. Research other peer institutions that have, or have implemented, a minor.
3. Reach out to members of the faculty in your Education school, including Faculty Committee Chari, Assistant Dean, and the Dean of the School (UNC was finally able to solidify their connection with SOE by approaching the Dean after an education panel event).

UNC's Workplan

Background work: The two co-chairs had the responsibility of making contacts at the SOE, while other members were given tasks to research policies and information from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and other universities in order to be informed during the process.

Contact with SOE: SFER UNC initially approached individuals who's job it was to hear students with their interest in becoming involved with the education minor, but once progress had stalled down through those initial channels, they approached the Dean, who jumpstarted it. SFER UNC had already built a great ground-up relationship with the necessary channels, and the Dean was happy to help them.

At the first meeting with the Assistant Dean, an invitation was extended to all SFER UNC group members. When two members were able to attend the meeting, four of them became the main contacts for the faculty group at the SOE.

At the initial meeting with the Assistant Dean, SFER UNC members expressed their diverse backgrounds and articulated why they wanted a minor. Unfortunately, she was unable to share the draft of the Faculty Committee's plan for the minor.

From that point on, SFER UNC was included in the Minor Development Committee and worked with their proposal document to give feedback from the other SFER members. Many of their suggestions were incorporated into the final Proposal Document and their involvement included SFER talking the initiative to suggest ideas and follow up on the status of the proposal.

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Results: The Minor of Education Proposal was approved by the Administrative Board of the College of Arts and Sciences in April 2011. They hope to start offering minor classes in this coming school year to phase in the Minor. SFER continues to be in touch to provide further student input as the process proceeds.

TIPS

Research and know your information. Having a grasp of what already exists and what is needed at your school will allow you to better articulate your desires, visions, and expected outcomes.

Project professionalism. When working with administrators, ask how they like to be contacted and find a point of contact to maintain communication with a group of faculty members. Always be professional and respectful in your communication with all involved. In emails and all other forms of contact with those you communicate with, always remember that you are representing your campus and SFER National.

Garner support for your ideas. If you have been trying to go up the line of command but have been shut down, do not be afraid to reach higher up in the university administration to garner support for your ideas.

Offer to put things in writing (such as feedback on a proposal). Ask for meeting minutes, action steps, etc. to ensure your point was adequately presented and received.

Be prepared to clearly articulate your experiences and expectations. Do not assume everyone will understand things you may take for granted.

Take the initiative to stay engaged and follow through (always respectfully) as you work with longer time frames.

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EMAIL TEMPLATES

Below are emails that were used to contact the Dean, Committee Chairs, and faculty members involved in the proposal. Editing the emails to your school, contacts, and intent is a must, but also keep the tone – a formal and uniform language *should be* used to describe the proposal, SFER, and any follow-up communications you have with those involved.

Email: Follow Up from Verbal Conversation with the Dean of the School of Education

Dear Dean of School of Education,

I am extremely glad that some members of Students For Education Reform (SFER) were able to speak briefly with you after the Education Panel Discussion this afternoon. Our committee on the University's Role in State Education is eager to learn more about the proposed minor and to have a role in whatever way we can, such as to give input from a student's perspective.

Please let us know how we can get involved in the project. We are extremely excited by this potential opportunity and look forward to working with you soon!

Best,

Signature

Email: Announcing a Meeting with the School of Education

Dear Committee Members,

We have arranged a meeting with Dr. Eaker-Rich, the Assistant Dean, Quality Assurance Leader, and Director of Graduate Studies at the School of Education, to discuss the Education minor on Thursday, November 4 at 10:00am. The meeting will take place in her office at 101F Peabody Hall. If you are interested in attending, please reply to this email. We will be meeting beforehand in the main lobby of Peabody at 9:50am. If you are able to attend the meeting please reply to this email to let me know.

Best,

Signature

Email: Thank You/Follow Up from Initial Meeting

Dear Assistant Dean,

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Thank you for meeting with us today! It was great to hear details of the minor and SFER is definitely interested in helping with its development by giving feedback, suggestions, or anything else that would help. Feel free to pass along our names to the committee so we can have further contact.

Thank you again for taking the time to discuss the minor with us.

Sincerely,

Signature

Email: Setting up Personal Meetings within SFER to Discuss the Minor Proposal

Dear SFER Committee Member,

We are collecting feedback about the Education Minor, and since you are unable to attend the meeting, let's plan a time to get together to talk further about the proposal and any feedback you have. Let me know if you are available to meet briefly during any of the following times: 2:30pm, 4:00pm, or 7:15pm,

I have attached a copy of the proposal that we'll be discussing at the meeting. I am looking forward to hearing your reactions and suggestions!

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Email: Providing Student Feedback to a Proposal Document

Dear (Your contact in the School of Education),

Members of SFER's Education Minor committee met recently, and I have attached the Minor Proposal with comments from our meeting. The comments are the result of much discussion and feedback from the members of our group. We are all excited to continue working with the Minor Proposal and would be glad to meet to clarify or develop any of our comments on the proposal.

Sincerely,

Signature

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Email: Following Up after Student Feedback

Dear (Your contact in the School of Education),

I am emailing to touch base again regarding the status of the Minor Proposal. SFER is very open to taking on a larger role and more responsibilities to continue progress on the proposal. Please

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do not hesitate to give SFER additional tasks to work on; we are committed to the proposal's success!

It would be appreciated if a few members of SFER could meet or talk with the committee soon.

Thank you,

Signature

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