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Education program gets e'special'ly high credit

■ **EXPERIENCE:** An all-faculty teaching core gives students hands-on, real-world practice

By Laura Kepshire
Higher Education Reporter

For special education teacher Frances Wherry, finding the right masters program in her field was not a problem.

In a period of one year, she was not only able to get a masters in special education, but she also received two different teaching licenses and found a teaching position before she graduated.

What kind of program can make all this possible?

University students don't have to look much farther than their own campus for the answer thanks to a unique special education program for masters and doctoral students at the College of Education.

"The program is geared toward real life experiences."

— Frances Wherry
Special Education Teacher

The program was rated fifth in the nation by U.S. News & World Report magazine out of more than 200 programs at American colleges and universities.

The college's special education program has a number of different elements that make it exceptional compared to other special education programs, said Martin Kaufman, dean of the College of Education.

One program in particular, called life-span comprehensiveness, allows graduate students to pick which age group of mentally disabled children or adults they want to work with. Programs involving children

include infants and toddlers, preschool, and elementary and secondary education.

In addition, the special education program offers two transitional programs for disabled adults — one for those in transition from school to work and one for disabled adults who are living on their own and supporting themselves.

"Other universities have one, maybe two or three of those programs, but not all of them," Kaufman said.

Another unique trait at the College of Education is that all classes are taught only by the faculty, said Mary Gleason, associate professor of special education.

Graduate students do not teach undergraduate students in the college. This helps benefit the students because all the faculty members are involved in outside research, which they can bring into the classroom, Gleason said.

"We do research in programs involving real work settings," Kaufman said. "It is the real life application of these programs that improves our practices and [this is] where we find the effectiveness that has gained the national recognition of our faculty."

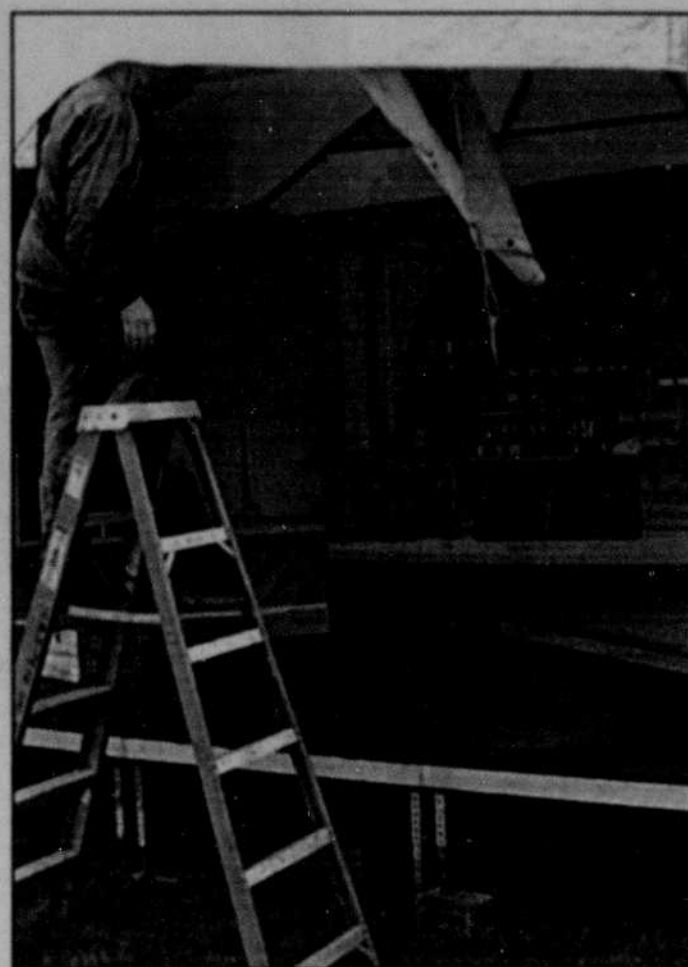
Federal and state funding for the College of Education is higher than the funding for most colleges of its kind.

It receives more than \$15 million in grants each year and the college was ranked third out of 50 top American colleges and universities by U.S. News and World Report.

More than \$12 million of this money goes toward research by the special education faculty, developing model programs and toward training of faculty and teachers, she said.

"The reason we have so much national recognition is that the faculty has written and received so many grants for our programs," Gleason said.

Where's Paul?



ANDREW BRACKENSHICK/Emerald

Through rain and cold, Donald Scobie protects a mock-up set of the David Letterman show from the rain on Sunday. Scobie is with the CBS college tour, which will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday, on the EMU South Lawn.

The College of Education has also developed a new undergraduate curriculum for special education that will give students more hands-on experience in that area.

"This is pretty unique. Not many universities have this kind of a program," Gleason said.

Hawthorne Elementary School in Sweet Home hired Wherry before she graduated, and she has been teaching there for the past two years.

She was given the teacher of

the year award her first year there for her ability to collaborate with the other teachers and for her creative teaching.

Wherry said she believes the special education program at the University is excellent because of the hands-on teaching experience given to graduate students.

"The program is geared toward real life experiences," she said. "The experience is really practical and the course work is applicable."

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