Hello Dons!

Hello Early Childhood Education majors!

My name is Jim Beard, and I am your advisor for the School of Education now that you have entered the Professional Education portion of your program. Congratulations, by the way, for reaching this milestone.

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Entering Professional Education means you have achieved several accomplishments, including successfully completing at least 60 credits toward your bachelor’s degree and have at least a 2.70 GPA. You also have completed all of your pre-professional education courses and program signature assessments.

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These accomplishments have come with a lot of sacrifice on your part, and in most cases, on the part of your family as well. Again, congratulations on making it to this point. You are past the half-way mark and can now begin to see the goal of completing your degree.

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I am going to be sharing with you over the next few minutes some important information regarding the steps you need to take to complete your degree. These include academic requirements, criminal history reports, licensure testing for those who are enrolled in our preschool – grade 3 programs, and student teaching or practicums.

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Let me begin by talking about Academic Requirements. As a reminder, you must achieve a 3.00 GPA overall in order to graduate. Also remember that no grade below a C- is permitted toward your degree. If you get a C- or worse in a required course, you must repeat or replace that course.

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Next is Criminal History Reports. If you have not obtained a recent CHR (during or just prior to last semester) please order a new report today. You can get information on how to order a report from my office and from your professor.

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There are two types of Criminal History Reports that early childhood majors must obtain. The first type is a fingerprint report from a company called MorphoTrust. This report cost about $40 and is good for 3 years. You will need to go to their website to register and select a location to get the fingerprint scan. Most locations are at police stations. Also, it is very important that you keep the receipt of payment for this report for all three years. It is the only proof you will have that your report is complete. So, don’t lose it.

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The second type of report is from a company called Safe Hiring Solutions. These reports are only good for one year, so you will need to renew it each year in our program. The cost of these reports is about $25. Note that the Safe Hiring Solutions report is a 2-step process: 1. Complete the Safe Hiring Solutions (SHS) report. You will receive 2 emails from SHS after you apply. 2. Complete the Department of Child Services (DCS). You will receive 2 emails from KidTraks@dcs.in.gov. Fill out the request after you receive the 2nd email. These emails will come a few days after you complete the Safe Hiring Solutions portion of the report.

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This is a good point for me to share with you the importance of who you represent as a student and as a teacher. As you go out into your schools to complete your field experiences, practicums, and student teaching, please understand that the teaching profession is a very honorable one and is also very public. You will get recognized in public at grocery stores, restaurants, malls, etc. from your students and their parents. Those are fun moments when a little one comes up to you and gives you a big hug.

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But also understand that as a teacher, you have to make good choices in life. We see regularly on the news another story, a tragedy, where a local teacher made some bad decisions in life, and now his or her life is ruined because the public knows what happened. Don’t be that teacher. Make good decisions. Recognize that your decisions as a teacher, both in your professional and private life, can have public consequences.

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Now, moving on to the next topic, let’s discuss licensing tests. If you are in one of our P-3 programs planning to obtain a teaching license, the State of Indiana (and all other states for that matter) require you to pass certain licensing exams. Indiana currently uses a testing company called Educational Testing Services (ETS Praxis).

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There are two types of exams: Content Exams (in Humanities Language Arts and Social Studies, and STEM in Science and Math) and a Pedagogy (or education) exam. Purdue Fort Wayne requires that you take the content exams no later than a few weeks prior to the start of your student teaching. The pedagogy exam may be put off until later. You can graduate without passing these exams, but you cannot get a license to teach without passing them. Information about these exams along with study preparation materials can be obtained in my office.

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Speaking of Student Teaching, please be aware that you must apply for student teaching one year in advance of the semester you plan to student teach. For instance, if you plan to student teach a year from this semester, you need to apply now. The application can be found on our School of Education website. When you fill out your application, please be sure to proofread it.

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I will go over your application with you during your appointment, but the appointment goes a lot faster if we do not have to spend time correcting mistakes. Once you have proofread the application, send it to my office via the email address on the application.

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You can make the student teaching appointment with me by calling my office at 260-481-6449 or stopping by my office located in Neff Hall 243.

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Finally, those of you who are seeking a P-3 degree will complete two different types of student teaching placements. One will be 10 weeks in an elementary school in a K-3 classroom and the other will be 6 weeks in a preschool or Head Start setting for a total of 16 weeks. Those of you seeking a degree in Birth to Age 5 will only be completing a practicum in a preschool or Head Start classroom. This practicum lasts approximately 9 weeks. You will need to contact Professor Teri Hogg the semester prior to the practicum to set up your placement.

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This concludes my presentation to you for today. Again, congratulations on making it to this point in your academic career. I look forward to meeting you if we have not met already, and I wish you the best moving forward in your education and in your career as an educator. Go Dons!

