Mission Statement

It is the goal of the certificate in Children in Contemporary Society to instruct undergraduates in the interdisciplinary empirical study of issues facing today’s children and families. Specifically, we seek to:

1) construct a course of study where students can draw on the expertise and knowledge of Duke faculty from across the university to analyze systematically and rigorously the issues facing children, families, and the society responsible for their development;

2) equip students with the necessary analytical skills to study these issues with empirical rigor and provide an extended research opportunity in which to do so; and

3) provide a context in which students can engage in research that informs policy and practice. The accomplishment of these three goals will allow Duke undergraduates to pursue a cohesive set of interdisciplinary courses that informs their knowledge of child and family issues while simultaneously stimulating their intellectual and academic development.

Learning Goals

Goal 1: Students will possess an understanding of the fundamental issues facing children.

Students in the certificate will understand and be able to delineate the major developmental stages of childhood, as well as understand how the following domains influence child development: parenting/family life, schools, and neighborhoods and communities.

Goal 2: Students will gain the knowledge and understanding of at least one complex problem facing today’s children and families.

As students progress through the certificate, they will be exposed to a number of issues facing children and families. By the end of the certificate, the students will understand the substantive and disciplinary issues involved in studying one of these problems.
Goal 3: Students will understand and be able to apply the necessary methodological tools to study current issues facing children and families

Students will be equipped with the necessary methodological tools to empirically address a problem facing children and families. The actual methods will vary, based on the student’s particular research interests and needs.

Goal 4: Students will have an appreciation for, and increased exposure to, other disciplines.

Students will understand how different disciplines inform the development of children. Psychology is central to understanding how children develop over the life course. Sociology provides instruction on the importance of family relations, and how children and family function within the larger construct of society. Education instructs students on the best methods and practices that optimize a child’s learning potential. Finally, public policy analysis examines how research is turned into practice, and the best method for integrating and implementing collective knowledge into the public discourse.

Goal 5: Career preparation.

Students will develop the requisite skill set to enable them to pursue one or more of the following post baccalaureate paths. Students who wish to move on to graduate programs will have increased exposure to research projects and methodologies. Students who move into the work force will gain a broader understanding of the intersection between children and society. Last but not least, students who go on to become parents will gain additional knowledge about the developmental challenges facing children.

Assessment Plan

Knowledge of Child Development and Family Issues
Student knowledge of child development and family issues will be assessed by indirectly and directly. As an indirect assessment, students will complete course evaluations for CCS 150 (the cornerstone course) and CCS 191S (the capstone course). Specifically, the certificate director will compile the course evaluations to evaluate the students’ perceptions of what they have learned in the courses. These evaluations will be shared with the CCS board, and if necessary, recommendations will be made to the teachers of these two courses as to how to improve the course content.

As a direct assessment, each student will be required to complete a short assignment in which they identify the most pressing problem facing today’s children’s and families. Students will be asked to identify the root causes of the problem, and provide an indication of how that problem might be solved. This assessment will take place at beginning of CCS 150. At the beginning of CCS 191S, students will be asked to repeat the assignment, using the same issue they
identified in CCS 150. Once the second assignment has been completed, the Center
director will conduct within-student analyses by comparing the two writing
assignments. The director will evaluate, using a 1 to 10 scale, if the student’s
sophistication of thought and understanding of the issue has increased. Specifically,
the director will see if the student has a deeper grasp of the issue and is able to
inform their discussion with materials presented in the CCS certificate program.

**Research Project**
Upon completion of the certificate, the student will have completed an original,
rigorous, and empirically-sound research project of their choosing. The project will
require that the student develop hypotheses, test their hypothesis using the
appropriate methodology, and then draw conclusions to be discussed in the context
of a scholarly piece. Satisfactory completion of these goals will be evaluated
primarily by the student’s mentor. The student’s mentor will assess the originality
of the work, the quality of the research being conducted, and appropriateness of
the conclusions being drawn. Additionally, the mentor will be required to complete a
short (less than one page) summary of how well the student has grasped the
complexity of the issue under consideration, and the appropriateness of the
methodology used. The mentor will be asked to rate each student on a 1 to 10
metric, with higher numbers indicating more competency. The certificate director
will compile these ratings annually, and if a cohort of students is falling below a 7 in
either area, the director will work with the instructors of the certificate courses to
strengthen the curriculum.

**Exposure to Other Disciplines**
The primary exposure to other disciplines will come through the student’s
participation in the CCS 150 and CCS 191S class. These classes will draw on
students from various disciplines, and through class room discussion, students will
be exposed to different disciplinary perspectives. To ensure adequate disciplinary
representation, the certificate director will annually compile a list of students
participating in these two classes, and will tabulate the number of disciplines
represented. The director will assess both the number of disciplines represented,
and the proportion of students from each discipline. These numbers will be shared
with the certificate board. If the director or the board feels that a discipline is
underrepresented, then the director will make specific overtures to that discipline to
encourage participation in the certificate.

**Relevance for Future Goals**
With assistance from Duke’s alumni office, the certificate director will contact each
graduate of the certificate approximately 5 years after graduation. The director will
ask the graduate about their current profession. Graduates will be asked to rate, on
a 1 to 10 scale, how useful the certificate has been in informing their professional
and/or personal development. These ratings will be compiled and shared with the
certificate board, with a goal of achieving 7 or above for the majority of certificate
graduates.
Multi-year Assessment Plan

Fall, year 1:
- Have students complete assignment in CCS 150 regarding the most important issue facing children and families today.
- Compile CCS 150 course evaluations.
- Evaluate the number of disciplines represented in CCS 150.

Spring, year 1:
- Identify if there are underrepresented disciplines in the CCS 150 course; target those departments for CCS recruitment.
- Provide feedback to CCS 150 instructor regarding course evaluations; make recommendations for strengthening class.

Fall, year 2:
- Assess the number of disciplines represented by students enrolled in certificate program.
- Identify disciplines that are underrepresented and target those disciplines for additional recruitment.

Fall, year 3:
- Compile mentor’s rating of students performance in research project.
- Based on feedback, identify possible content areas in CCS 150 that could be added/strengthened to better students for research project.

Spring, year 3
- Have students complete assignment in CCS 191S regarding the most important issue facing children and families today.
- Compare those assignments with those written in CCS 150.
- Compile CCS 191S course evaluations.
- Evaluate the number of disciplines represented in CCS 191S; identify underrepresented disciplines.

Fall, year 7
- Contact the alumni office to evaluate the relevance of the certificate program to the professional development of graduates four years after they have graduated from Duke.

Note: All evaluation activities will be repeated for each incoming cohort of certificate students. As an example, the activities identified in Year 1 will be repeated in Year 2, except for a different cohort of students. Therefore, the certificate director will be assessing cohorts in multiple stages of the process.