Valley City State University (VCSU) announced availability of a new concentration in English Language Learners (ELL) for the university’s online Master of Education program. The concentration meets the additional educational requirements of teachers in North Dakota and across the nation that must comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for students with limited proficiency in English. The program will also help meet the increasing demand for graduate credentials for career and salary advancement.

Steve Shirley, VCSU president, said, “The number of non-English-speaking students entering public education systems is rapidly increasing, and this has created a pressing need for qualified ELL teachers both in North Dakota and nationwide. Providing these students with a quality education requires that the teacher be well-prepared to address their unique needs, and that is exactly what our ELL program does. We are very proud to add this concentration in ELL as the latest extension of our world class program in undergraduate and graduate teacher education.”

Approximately 80% of the ELL teachers in North Dakota have completed or are pursuing their endorsement through VCSU. The university’s first offering in ELL was an undergraduate endorsement that was approved by the North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board in 1997. In 2003, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education approved VCSU’s undergraduate minor degree program in ELL, and the program was made available fully online.

VCSU’s M.Ed. ELL concentration requires 20 credits among 8 courses, and the first of these courses became available during Fall Semester 2009. The program meets the requirements for ELL endorsement in North Dakota and, through reciprocity agreements, the 19 other states in the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium. The program also closely aligns with the requirements of 22 other states that have teacher standards for ELL instruction. More information is available at www.vcsu.edu/graduate.