# **Philosophy**

**Families**

The ECSE program is based on the beliefs that families know their children best and families make a unique contribution to the family-professional partnership. Professionals work with families to access support, mobilize resources, and identify their existing strengths, concerns, and priorities toward meeting the developmental needs of the whole child. Importance is placed on the diverse strengths and abilities that all families bring to this process. Through this collaborative process, the competence and confidence of both families and professionals are enhanced.

**Children**

The ECSE training program views children within the context of their families and home culture. Children are active participants in their own learning. Play environments that support mutually pleasurable child-child and adult-child interactions are based on developmentally, culturally, and individually appropriate principles. Individual objectives are embedded within play and daily routines and are facilitated by observant, responsive adults.

**Teaming**

Children, families, and professionals benefit from the diverse knowledge and expertise that each team member shares. Services for young children with disabilities and their families are characterized by a spirit of collaboration in which team members operate interchangeably, to the extent possible, while continuing to function as resources to one another in relation to their own disciplinary expertise.

**Student Learning and Supervision**

Students preparing for careers in early childhood special education will integrate coursework, practicum experiences, interpersonal skills, and resources to become competent professionals. To support student growth, the ECSE training program uses a clinical model of supervision designed to foster reflective practice and the students’ ability and motivation to direct their own continued professional development.

**Professional Development**

The goal of the ECSE program is to develop independent, self-motivated, and competent professionals. The practicum experience serves as a central part of the program, and it represents an intensive experience designed to foster these qualities. Several aspects of the practicum experience are designed to support this overall goal:

1. Cooperating professionals are committed to their roles as trainers, and they play a significant part in fostering the development of students.
2. The experience is referred to as a “practicum" to convey that this is a period of practice and learning, not a period during which to show what is already known.
3. A clinical model of supervision is used to the extent possible by both the university supervisor and the cooperating professional; this model is designed to develop in students an attitude of open-minded inquiry, independent thinking, and self-motivated personal and professional growth.
4. The university supervisor is committed to supporting the student's development; while there are many general requirements, supervision will also be tailored to the individual student throughout this process of development.
5. The practicum placement(s) will be chosen as much as possible to meet the student's needs, as determined from their past experiences, future goals, and present skill needs.
6. Procedures for self-analysis are built into the practicum process at various checkpoints.

During the practicum, students are expected to take on as many of the roles of the cooperating professional as possible and to do so in an increasingly independent manner. The timing of this independence and the roles that the student will be able to assume will depend both on the student and on the policies of the practicum site. The process will be negotiated by the student, university supervisor, and cooperating professional, with the goal of achieving the maximum possible in that site. It is important to maintain an attitude of flexibility; not all sites provide the same experiences or have the same requirements. In addition, not all sites require the same dress or have the same vacation schedule. As a professional, the student is expected to adhere to the policies of the practicum site and, except for beginning and ending dates, to conform to its schedule, even when it is not the same as the University schedule.