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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heritage University Answers Urgent Need for More Teachers, Launches Second Cohort of Accelerated Teacher Training Program

Toppenish, Wash. – In response to the critical teacher shortage in Washington State, Heritage University is answering the call by launching a second cohort of HUAccelerate, its fast track teacher preparation program. HUAccelerate helps schools in need of teachers by placing candidates in classrooms as full-time teachers while they earn their certification through this intensive training program.

Under HUAccelerate, students will be hired as teachers with conditional certification pending the successful completion of the three-semester program. The candidates will complete a year of full-time employment as a teacher while attending classes every weekend. Then, next summer, students will attend an intensive five-week institute. This rigorous schedule allows candidates to earn their Master in Teaching degree in three semesters instead of the typical five-semester schedule.

Merrilou Harrison, the dean of the College of Education and Psychology at Heritage says HUAccelerate is a winning solution for both school districts suffering from teacher shortages and people who want to make the switch to teaching as soon as possible. "HUAccelerate students are filling the gap as full-time teachers, and the students become highly qualified teachers with endorsements in English as a Second Language (ESL) or in Special Education." says Harrison.

Ric Pilgrim, the assistant superintendent for Educational Services at Educational Service District (ESD) 105, appreciates the efforts by Heritage University to provide a solution to the challenges of filling classrooms with highly qualified instructors. "The teacher shortage in central Washington is no longer theoretical and in the future. It is here and now and presents a genuine problem for local school districts," says Pilgrim. "Our children deserve the best and the brightest to learn from. Our region's challenge is to proactively fill that need."

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The allure of quickly earning a Master in Teaching while working full-time in a classroom drew a group of exceptional students who make up the first cohort of HUAccelerate. Peng-Hsu Huang already holds two masters degrees and speaks four languages; Matthew Manni was enrolled in medical school but decided he'd rather be a teacher than a doctor; and Rosa Aviles, who has three bachelor's degrees in other fields but wants to teach. "HUAccelerate allowed me to pursue this new-found love for teaching much faster. I love that, even though I am a student myself, I can make a living while making an impact on young lives," says Aviles.

To qualify, candidates must already hold a bachelor's degree and be recommended to the program through Heritage University or by school district partners. Classes for the second cohort of HUAccelerate begin September 18. Interested candidates should contact Joanie Monroy, chair of the Teacher Preparation Program at (509) 865-0448 or monroy_j@heritage.edu, or Michelle Story at (509) 865-8549 or story_m@heritage.edu.

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