
Disability Services in Higher Education (MS)

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THE PROGRAM

The Master of Science in Disability Services in Higher Education (MS) is the first program of its kind in the country and will equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to provide legally mandated accommodations to students with disabilities in higher education settings. The coursework includes theoretical, conceptual, and practical information that will provide students with sound philosophical grounding in addition to building skills that they will apply in the field.

The curriculum for the degree was developed with the participation of disability service office directors, lawyers familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADA/AA) as it applies to colleges and universities, assistive technology specialists, and educators to ensure that graduates will be prepared to assume significant responsibility in providing accommodations to post-secondary students with disabilities.

As a student in this program, you will learn enhance your knowledge and skills to successfully:

- Advocate for equal access for students with disabilities in college settings
- Develop policies and guidelines for provision of services to students with disabilities
- Support students with learning, sensory, and psychiatric disabilities; veterans with service-related disabilities, and those on the autism spectrum
- Arrange access in dormitories, libraries, computer labs, and public college events
- Enter or advance in a career as a Disability Service specialist

Career Prospects

The Master's Degree in Disability Services in Higher Education is ideal for disability services office staff in colleges and universities, student services staff members or higher education administrators. Accommodations specialists working in institutions serving the public such as sports arenas, libraries, parks, churches or social service offices will also find the coursework very valuable.

Admission Criteria

In addition to the admission criteria for graduate degree programs, experience in providing disability services is valuable but not essential. Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Program Requirements

Thirty credits are required for the Master's Degree in Disability Services in Higher Education.

Students must complete 18 credits in the following courses:

- DSAB 601 - Psychosocial, Cultural and Political Aspects of Disability
- DSSV 604 - Legal Aspects of Disability Services
- DSSV 606 - Assistive Technology in Higher Education
- DSSV 607 - Higher Education Disability Service Administration
- DSSV 608 - Neurodiverse Students in College
- DSSV 699 - Disability Services Capstone Course

Students must also complete 12 credits from among the following courses:

- DSSV 617 - Universal Design in Higher Education
- DSSV 618 - Emerging Populations
- DSSV 619 - Accommodations Outside the Classroom
- DSSV 625 - Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities

- DSAB 605 - Disability and Diversity
- DSSV 651 - Special Topics in Disability Services
- DSSV 649 - Independent Study in Disability Services

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DSAB 601 Psychosocial, Cultural and Political Aspects of Disability 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course is an introduction to the emerging multidisciplinary field of Disability Studies. Students will engage disability in a variety of sociopolitical and cultural contexts, including their own personal values and beliefs as they relate to disability and society. Students will be introduced to Disability Studies theory, vocabulary and the models that frame disability discourse. Students will examine Disability Studies as it emerged from the Disability Rights Movement, explore disability in art and literature, investigate and critique current systems of care as they relate to self-determination and inclusion, analyze the role of poverty and work, explore disability as it intersects with race and gender, and learn about disability in a global context.

DSAB 605 Disability and Diversity 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on disability as a category of diversity and identity in comparison with other categories of diversity and identity, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity, as well as on diversity within disability. It also critically examines different strategies that may be used to increase the freedom or liberty of people with disabilities. Disability as culture will be explored, as will systems of exclusion or disadvantage as they intersect with disability and other categories of diversity.

DSSV 604 Legal Aspects of Disability Service 3 Credits

Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601

This course will review the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act as interpreted by the Office of Civil Rights, IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Additional issues related to FERPA, HIPAA and the right to privacy are also explored and analyzed, and specific case examples will be offered.

DSSV 606 Assistive Technology in Higher Education 3 Credits

Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601

This course examines assistive technology (AT) in higher education for students with disabilities, including hardware and software for students with learning, visual, sensory and physical disabilities. Students will learn about the use of screen readers, captioning, interpreting services, audio description, voice recognition software, eBooks, alternative formats, accommodations for STEM coursework, and emerging resources. Students will become familiar with a variety of assistive supports and the uses and drawbacks of each.

DSSV 607 Higher Education Disability Service Administration 3 Credits

Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601

This course examines key issues related to college disability services program administration and the critical role that these programs play in allowing students with disabilities to fully participate in all aspects of college and university life. The course will cover the history of Disability Services in Higher Education, testing, evaluating documentation and determining appropriate accommodations, recordkeeping, dealing with foreign languages, assessing equipment and office needs, budgeting, building relationships with faculty and administration, training college faculty and staff, working with affiliated programs, governmental agencies, external constituents, and related organizations, program development and evaluation.

DSSV 608 Neurodiverse Students in College 3 Credits

Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601

Many students requesting accommodations in higher education settings have learning disabilities, while increasing numbers have attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, traumatic brain injury, or autism spectrum disorders. This course will emphasize supporting students with learning disabilities, but will also enable course participants to explore a variety of issues related to students who have difficulty learning in traditional classrooms and formats. Topics will include the transition experience of students with learning disorders, interpreting educational assessments, understanding the spectrum of learning disabilities and the need for accommodations, and collaborating with faculty to support student success.

- DSSV 617 Universal Design in Higher Education 3 Credits**
Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601
 This course introduces basic concepts, issues, approaches, strategies, beneficiaries, and resources with regard to the universal design of instruction, technology, physical spaces and student services for the purpose of making educational products and environments accessible to all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- DSSV 618 Emerging Populations 3 Credits**
Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601
 This course will explore issues related to the needs of new groups of students needing support, including students on the autism spectrum, veterans, international students with disabilities, students with traumatic brain injury, and students with developmental disabilities, including learning disabilities.
- DSSV 619 Accommodations Outside the Classroom 3 Credits**
Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601
 When students with disabilities apply to college their first concern is to make sure they receive the necessary accommodations for their academic classes. Secondary to the academic accommodations are the out of classroom accommodations which may be just as important in order to provide access campus wide. This course will cover issues related to providing accommodations in a variety of on-campus venues and co-curricular activities.
- DSSV 625 Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities 3 Credits**
Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601
 This course will explore the definitions of psychiatric disabilities and explore the stigma associated with mental health issues. Also included will be commonly used medications, determining needed accommodations, threat assessment and campus violence, working with other campus offices, substance abuse, student conduct, student wellness and residential issues and transitioning students into successful employment.
- DSSV 649 Independent Study in Disability Services 3 Credits**
Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director
 The Independent Study will be taken under the supervision of an instructor. The student will develop a proposal and rationale for the Independent Study, which must be approved in advance by the instructor. The instructor and the student will develop a set of guidelines for the course, including the scope of reading and writing assignments. These guidelines will be submitted to the Academic Director in the form of a course proposal and plan. Students will be limited to one independent study in fulfillment of the elective requirement.
- DSSV 651 Special Topics in Disability Services 3 Credits**
Prerequisite/Corequisite: DSAB 601
 This course will offer the opportunity to study special topics within the scope of Disability Services in Higher Education. Topics may vary from semester to semester and could include in-depth study of the needs of one population of students with disabilities; in-depth study of one facet of Disability Service provision; case studies of student experiences with accommodations; or other topics related to the degree.
- DSSV 699 Disability Services Capstone Course 3 Credits**
Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director
 All students will complete a capstone project under the direction of a faculty mentor to enable students to apply and integrate their learning throughout the degree program. The capstone experience could include an internship or field practicum, research project or the development of an ePortfolio.