

Request for Change in Delivery of Graduate Certificate

The Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute – A University Center for Excellence at the University of Kentucky, began offering a Graduate Certificate in Developmental Disabilities in the Fall Semester, 2001. The purpose of this Graduate Certificate is to prepare professionals from a broad range of disciplines to play a leadership role in providing services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. The curriculum emphasizes a life span and interdisciplinary perspective. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a practicum and learn directly from individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The certificate is now preparing to expand the audience to professionals working throughout the state of Kentucky who would benefit from further training in the area of developmental disability, but aren't able to attend class on campus. We have obtained approval from the Graduate School for each of the courses to be delivered via distance learning, and are now seeking approval for the certificate as a whole.

Offering the Certificate via distance learning will allow the flexibility necessary to expand the reach of the certificate to working professionals both within Kentucky and around the nation. The need and interest in academic recognition for continuing education in developmental disabilities is great. Directors of agencies that provide community services for individuals with developmental disabilities in Kentucky must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. Leadership of the Kentucky Department of Mental Health/Substance Abuse & Mental Retardation are highly supportive of this effort (see Commissioner's letter of support). Additionally, employees of Kentucky Protection & Advocacy, Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Kentucky Office for the Blind, and Kentucky Department of Education all serve people with developmental disabilities. These networks exist in every state in the country, along with University Centers on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. If the change in delivery is approved, Kentucky will be the only state offering this Certificate via distance education.

As with the on-campus delivery of the Certificate, ten or eleven credit hours, depending on the elective chosen by the individual student, will be required for the Certificate. The courses will be modified for accessible online delivery through blackboard using video of content experts and a corresponding

powerpoint presentation. The students of the certificate will access the materials through the Blackboard website. There will be weekly requirements for posting responses to the material on the Blackboard discussion boards. This interactive feature allows an interaction with classmates and instructors regarding the weekly content. In addition, instructors will work with students to develop practicum experiences at their agency which will enhance their learning and be individualized to meet relevant work needs.

The following courses are required for the Certificate:

- HDI 600-Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Needs of Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs
- HDI 602-Interdisciplinary Supports
- HDI 604-Interdisciplinary Leadership Seminar
- HDI 603-Interdisciplinary Supports Practicum

Certificate faculty will work with students individually to determine appropriate practicum settings for HDI-603, Interdisciplinary Supports Practicum. Field sites will be established in the student's geographic vicinity. Optimally, a practicum may be established within the student's current work setting, in which additional learning experiences are developed as part of course requirements, similar to the Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling which is offered via distance education. Additionally, the University's access to Wimba, an online conferencing tool, will enable students to participate in synchronous learning opportunities with faculty and students. In addition to the HDI courses, two or three hours of elective coursework will also be required: either HDI 601-Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Needs of Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs: Practicum, HDI 605 or an elective from outside of HDI-listed courses. A complete list of acceptable distance learning electives will be kept on file in the Certificate director's office. Additionally, students preferring to take a class not offered via distance learning will be allowed to request that an on-campus course fulfill the elective requirement.

The certificate director has experience developing and delivering coursework through distance learning for the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. In addition, the preservice distance learning coordinator has technology experience to enable efficient conversion of

existing HDI courses to Blackboard. All participating faculty will receive training and information for the appropriate delivery of the course content and information. Materials will be reviewed to ensure that materials being used are applicable and relevant. Collaboration with Teaching and Academic Support Center (TASC) to upload content and provide technical assistance will enable a smooth pathway to online learning for students taking Certificate coursework via Blackboard.

Students will be provided with technical support as needed. They will be responsible for attaining admission to the University of Kentucky in a post-baccalaureate status. This student status will allow them access to the university library and its resources.

Affiliate Faculty

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Background

The Graduate Certificate in Developmental Disabilities was created in 2001 to address several pressing needs.

The Human Development Institute, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service, focuses its efforts on improving lifelong opportunities and services for individuals with disabilities, their families and the community. A major component of this effort is on preservice training. The Graduate Certificate in Developmental Disabilities is our primary means of accomplishing this goal. Additionally, this Certificate enables HDI to adhere to the teaching mission of the University.

The Developmental disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (P.L. 106-402) defines the purpose of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service, like HDI, to "Provide interdisciplinary preservice preparation of students and fellows, continuing education for individuals who support or assist individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, community and family education, technical assistance, and model demonstration activities; to conduct applied research and policy analysis; disseminate information and research findings, and policy analyses."

The Graduate Certificate in Developmental Disabilities provides a graduate level, interdisciplinary education for those individuals who wish to enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of developmental disabilities. Most important, the Graduate Certificate provides a truly unique opportunity for graduate students from a variety of academic disciplines to pursue advanced education and research in this important field of study and professional practice.

Since 2001, we have had 59 graduate students at the University participate in our Certificate coursework. We have secured federal funding to provide student stipends for students who participate in the Certificate.