MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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The School of Education offers two tracks in the Master of Science in Special Education program. One leads to cross-endorsement Connecticut #165, Comprehensive K-12 Special Education for those already holding an initial endorsement, and the second track is for anyone in a related field who is interested in doing research in special education.

Program Description

The field of special education requires an in-depth understanding of the laws that frame it, particularly the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The program provides certified teachers with opportunities to better understand the purposes and protections of these laws, as well as their implications for teaching and working with students with special needs and their families. Through these lenses, program candidates will understand how students identified with special needs learn, and how their particular special needs impact their lives inside and outside of school academically, socially and emotionally. The knowledge and understanding developed through the program will enable graduates to design individual programs of learning for students, with supports that allow all identified students to access the curriculum together with their non-disabled peers in inclusive settings.

The program will provide graduate candidates with two options to achieve their professional goals. Teachers who already have a valid teaching certificate will be able to pursue a cross-endorsement in comprehensive special education along with their master of science in special education in accordance with the requirements and regulations of the Connecticut State Department of Education. Graduate candidates who are in a related field, but still desire an MS in Special Education will complete a similar course of study culminating in a research-centered capstone experience.

MS in Special Education Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 545</td>
<td>Introduction to the Exceptional Child</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 565</td>
<td>Specific Learning Disabilities: Identification, Instruction and Assessment (LD)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 566</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 571</td>
<td>Emotional and Behavioral Disorder Identification, Management, and Assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 574</td>
<td>Understanding and Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 576</td>
<td>Designing and Utilizing Assistive Learning Technologies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 578</td>
<td>Practicum in Special Education I</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 580</td>
<td>Practicum in Special Education II</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Coursework</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 575</td>
<td>Working with Gifted and Talented Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 576</td>
<td>Designing and Utilizing Assistive Learning Technologies</td>
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Total Credits: 36

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Master of Science in Special Education, graduates will understand and be able to:

1. Demonstrate a working knowledge of federal and state laws and guidelines that govern eligibility, protections and services for students with special needs.
2. Administer, score and interpret a wide range of criterion-referenced, norm-referenced and curriculum-based measurements.
3. Utilize Scientifically-Based Research Interventions (SBRI) to identify the presence of specific learning disabilities in school-age children.
4. **Collaborate with other professionals** in related services to provide the supports necessary for students with special needs to access the curriculum in inclusive settings with their non-disabled peers wherever possible.

5. **Assume leadership positions** in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings by advocating for the social, emotional and academic needs of students in order to design an appropriate Individual Education Program (or IEP) for each identified student.

6. **Identify and apply** interventions and strategies to meet the unique educational needs of exceptional learners and their families, including but not limited to preparing young adults to self-advocate and develop the life skills necessary for independent living as they transition into adulthood and their respective careers.

**Admission**

Applications for the online Master of Science in Special Education program are considered on a rolling basis. Students may apply to enter during the fall or spring semester. We encourage candidates to submit applications as early as possible to ensure consideration for the semester desired.

To qualify for admission to the program, students must have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a preferred minimum GPA of 3.0. Candidates must submit:

1. completed application form
2. resume
3. letter of intent
4. official transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work completed
5. two letters of recommendation (professional and/or academic)

**Foundations**

The 18 credits of foundation courses are designed to provide an in-depth study of the characteristics and outcomes of four of the areas identified under IDEA. The remaining 12 credits include coursework in special education law, policy and ethics; assessment, program planning and evaluation; and evaluation and instruction in reading disorders. Those seeking the cross-endorsement are required to take a 3-credit course in educating young children with special needs.

**Capstone Experience**

Candidates following the cross-endorsement track are required to successfully complete the capstone project consisting of two 3-credit practicums, each in a different area of special education. Those completing the master's-only track will complete a 3-credit thesis based on research in special education as their capstone project.

**Optional Courses**

Although candidates pursuing the cross-endorsement may add these electives to their program, these electives are primarily for those in the MS only program.

- SPED 572 Educating Young Children with Special Needs
- SPED 575 Working with Gifted and Talented Students
- SPED 576 Designing and utilizing Assistive Learning Technologies

**Retention**

To remain in the program, a student must maintain a GPA of 3.0. A student who receives a grade of C+ or below in a course may be asked to retake the course to earn a minimum grade of B-. Students who fail to maintain the minimum GPA in any semester may be allowed to remain in the program with probationary status at the discretion of the dean of the School of Education; however, granting of probationary status is subject to the dean’s approval and is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

The School of Education is fully accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The U.S. Department of Education recognizes NCATE as a specialized accrediting body for schools, colleges and departments of education.