

# PROPOSAL FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY MINOR IN DISABILITY STUDIES

COLLEGE OF HEALTH, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE, AND  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## I. INTRODUCTION

This proposal requests the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Minor in Disability Studies. The proposed minor will offer undergraduate students content that examines the major perspectives (Medical, Social and Political) of disability and how disability is defined and represented via humanities and social sciences. The curriculum will offer students the opportunity to learn about the history of civil rights for people with disabilities and the influence of medical, social, and economic perspectives on the lives of individuals with disabilities. Students will be able to acquire a familiarity with federal and state laws against disability discrimination, the federal entitlement programs for people with disabilities, and the relationship between laws and social policy affecting people with disabilities. Students will have the opportunity to develop an understanding of disability policy development and change at both local and national levels.

This proposed minor in Disability Studies would take advantage of faculty and coursework already in place due to the creation of the Graduate Certificate in Disability Studies in the fall of 2007. The minor would be able to build upon the administrative infrastructure that has been developed for the Graduate Certificate, including the website, student advising and tracking, and maintenance of course listings. The creation of an interdisciplinary minor has the potential to attract students to courses in other departments that they might not otherwise take, thus enhancing student enrollment in these departments.

## II. NEED

There is an ever-increasing need for professionals in many fields to understand the concept of disability in communities, schools, workplaces, and homes. The minor in Disability Studies would meet the needs of students interested in disability from a personal, family, or community perspective, as well as students who wish to pursue careers in architecture, education, nursing, nutrition, occupational therapy, public health, public administration, recreation and sport-related professions, social work, tourism, and teaching. There is no other comparable minor offered through the University of Utah.

The Disability Studies minor at the University of Utah creates an interdisciplinary focus which takes advantage of the unique strengths of this institution and structures resources that are already available in many departments and programs. Examples of these unique strengths that fit in with a Disability Studies focus are the Exercise and Sports Science program, the Public Administration program, Social Work program, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Family and Consumer Studies, Urban Planning and Architecture, Special Education, Parks, Recreation and Tourism. This minor will also complement strengths in professional schools here at the University, such as the S.J. Quinney College of Law and the School of Medicine

The minor in Disability Studies will make the students conversant in disability-related issues such as school integration, accessibility and universal design, anti-discrimination policies, long term care, right-to-live and right-to-die ethics, media representation of disability, and others. The interdisciplinary nature of the minor in Disability Studies allows flexibility to choose a number of topics that are most applicable to the students' anticipated future professional endeavors, and encourages students to take courses across several departments.

### LABOR MARKET DEMAND

By providing a minor in Disability Studies, the University of Utah would be offering students an additional identifiable skill set that may make them more attractive to employers. Health and Social Service related professions are currently in demand and are projected to remain in demand through 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). We believe that students preparing for a wide variety of careers would benefit from the course content provided by this proposed minor. Besides "traditional" career choices in health and social service professions, many other fields can benefit from a minor in Disability Studies such as, architecture, urban planning, child development, employment counseling, human resources, law, nutrition, and teaching. The minor in Disability Studies would also prepare students to become well-informed citizens, and prepare them to be empathic friends, co-workers, neighbors and family members of people with disabilities.

### STUDENT DEMAND

The existing Graduate Interdisciplinary Disability Studies Certificate has attracted the interest of undergraduate students wishing to take courses with a focus on disability studies. The lack of a formal undergraduate disability studies program has prompted students to design programs in the University Studies Program. To provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to pursue their academic interests in Disability Studies the present undergraduate minor is being proposed. Within the Colleges that have partnered for the Graduate Certificate in Disability Studies, there are numerous course offerings that would be appropriate for an undergraduate minor in Disability Studies. Therefore an interdisciplinary approach to a minor makes good academic and fiscal sense.

## SIMILAR PROGRAMS

An Internet search in March of 2009 produced a listing of 16 colleges or universities in the US and Canada that have undergraduate minors in Disability Studies.

- CUNY-College of Staten Island Undergraduate minor-Interdisciplinary approach
- Hofstra University-Undergraduate minor-Interdisciplinary approach
- Ohio State University-Undergraduate minor-Interdisciplinary
- Pacific University-Undergraduate minor-Interdisciplinary
- Ryerson University (Toronto Canada) Bachelor of Arts in Disability Studies-School of Disability Studies
- State University of New York (SUNY) Stony brook-Disabilities Studies Concentration-degree is Bachelor of Science in Health Science
- University of California at Berkeley-Undergraduate Minor-Interdisciplinary
- UCLA-Undergraduate Minor-Interdisciplinary
- University of Delaware-Undergraduate Minor-Education Department
- University of Maine-Undergraduate Core Curriculum in Disability Studies-Disability Studies program
- University of Massachusetts Lowell-Undergraduate Minor-College of Arts and Sciences
- University of Toledo-Undergraduate Minor-College of Arts and Sciences
- University of Washington-Minor-College of Laws, Societies, and Justice
- University of Wyoming-Undergraduate Minor-College of Health Sciences
- Washington State University-Undergraduate Minor in Disability Studies-Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences

The committee that prepared this proposal reviewed the curricula of seven of these programs for ideas about program content and structure. The current proposal reflects these ideas.

## BENEFITS

The University of Utah will benefit by offering a minor in Disability Studies because it responds to the needs of our undergraduate student population. The Disability Services Office reports having over 1,000 students voluntarily registered with that office as needing accommodations to access educational services. The University benefits when it is able to support a diverse student body. Disability Studies will attract students who have disabilities as well as those who are currently able-bodied and want to increase their understanding of the issues. By re-packaging existing courses as part of a Disability Studies minor, there is the potential to attract students to those courses who might not otherwise have considered them, thereby enhancing enrollment in existing courses.

### III. PROGRAM OF STUDY

Proposed areas of minor study would include: acquiring an understanding of the major perspectives of disability (medical, social, political), of the history and origins of independent living and self advocacy movements, and how disability is defined and represented via social sciences, humanities and the arts. The curriculum would offer course options through participating departments in demographic trends in aging of the population, cultural construction of disability in media and popular culture, and barriers to inclusion created by the social and built environments. In addition the curriculum will offer students opportunities to learn strategies to promote full participation of people with disabilities, the history and current status of laws and public policies concerning employment, education (pre-school, K-12 and post secondary), service systems (public, private non-profit and for-profit), public health, technology (communication, information and assistive), wellness and recreation issues.

The program of study draws entirely from existing course offerings in over eight departments or programs spread across four colleges.

Students must complete a minimum of 18 credit hours including 2 core courses (3 credit Human Exceptionality and 3 credit Interdisciplinary Course in Disability Studies). The remaining 12 credits must be taken from at least two of the three focus areas of Practice, Policy, and Culture Studies. Only one course may be from the student's major department. Courses for the minor must be at the 3000 level or higher, and must be distributed among at least three departments. All courses taken to fulfill the minor requirement must be passed with at least a C- grade, with a minimum GPA of 2.0 over all courses in the minor. The credit/no credit option may not be elected for any course used to fulfill the degree requirements for a minor in Disability Studies.

The following list represents a sample of courses that have been taught on a regular basis and would be deemed appropriate as courses for the Disability Studies minor. In order for a course to be considered for a Disability Studies minor, the Disability Studies Advisory Committee will review the syllabus and judge its consistency with the course criteria below. One of the important administrative tasks inherent in the new minor requires surveying courses and updating the existing list of courses every year.

Requirements for a minor in Disability Studies: 18 credits

### Core courses – total 6 credits

- Interdisciplinary Course in Disability Studies (3 credits) PADMN 6350 – POLS 6350 – OCTH 6350 - Service Learning

The course explores theories and models that examine health, educational, economic, social, political, and cultural factors that define disability and influence personal and collective responses to disability. It is currently a 6000 level course co-taught by faculty from the College of Health and College of Social and Behavioral Science. Responsibility for teaching the course may be shared and/or alternated by the three sponsoring colleges. An undergraduate 5000 level course would meet with the current course until enrollment numbers justify separate sections. Course requirements would be modified for undergraduate students.

- Human Exceptionality (3 credits) SPED 5010 - Service Learning

The course promotes understanding of people with learning, behavior, sensory, and physical differences. Emphasis is on examining the effects of culture and societal values on the inclusion of people with disabilities in home, school, and community settings. This course is offered in a service learning format.

### Electives – total 12 credits

Students must select remaining courses for the minor from at least two of the three focus areas of Practice, Policy, and Culture Studies. Courses for the minor (including the Core courses) must be from at least three different departments. Only one course toward the minor may be from the student's major department.

## PRACTICE FOCUS

Courses in this list are focused on interventions at the individual and community level:

- ESS 4400 Instructional Strategies in Special Physical Education (3)
- ESS 4430 Assessment and Curriculum Development in Special Physical Education (3)
- GERON 3050 Aging: Self, Family and Society (3)
- GERON 3220 Caregiving and Aging Families (3)
- GERON 5320 Death, Dying, and Bereavement (3)
- FCS 3215 Development in Infancy and Childhood (3)
- OC TH 3000 Introduction to Occupational Therapy (3)
- PSY 3620 Environment and Behavior (3)
- SPED 5011 Inclusive Early Childhood and Elementary Classrooms
- SPED 5012 Inclusive Secondary Classrooms
- SPED 5022 Principles of Instruction & Behavioral Support (3)
- SPED 5030 Functional Communication and Language Development (3)
- PSY 3250 Abnormal Child Psychology (3)
- PRT 3310 Leisure Behavior and Human Diversity

PRT 5325, Disabilities, Adaptation and Accessibility in Therapeutic Recreation (3)  
UGS 3690 Gender and Contemporary Issues (3) Cross listed as GNDR 3690.

## POLICY FOCUS

Courses in this list are focused on policy:

CSD 5300 Issues in Deaf Culture  
COMM 5420 Contemporary Social Movements (3)  
COMM 5490 Communication and Social Justice  
ECS 4111 School and Society (3)  
ECS 6641 Social Inequality in U.S. Higher Education  
FCS 3600 Introduction to Consumer and Community Policy (3)  
FCS 3620 Environment and Behavior (3)  
FCS 5450 Nonprofit Community Organizations (3)  
FCS 5520 Retirement and Benefits Planning for Families (3)  
FCS 5600 Environments and Human Behavior (3)  
FCS 5430 Families, Consumers, and Health (3)  
GERON 5001 Introduction to Gerontology (3)  
GERON 3001 Experiences of Aging: Challenges and Promise (3)  
SPED 5040 Legal & Policy Foundations of Special Education (3)  
SPED 3020 Special Education Globalization and International Perspectives (3)  
PSY 5480 Psychology and Law  
URBPL 3240 Ethics in Shaping Communities (3)  
URBPL 5300 Housing and Community Development (3)  
POLS 3170 Interest Group Politics (3)  
POLS 5550 Nonprofit sector and organizations  
POLS 5570 Management of nonprofit organizations  
History 4090 Perspectives on World Health (3)

## CULTURE STUDIES FOCUS

Courses in this list are focused on American Sign Language and the cultural representation of disability:

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE - ASL 1010 Beginning American Sign Language I (4)  
ASL 1020 Beginning American Sign Language II (4)  
ASL 2010 Intermediate American Sign Language I (4)  
ASL 2020 Intermediate American Sign Language II (4)  
ECS 6614 The Culture Wars and Educational Policy (3)  
ECS 6627 Race, Culture, & Representation and Education (3)  
ECS 6651 Education and Identity (3)

GERON 3005 Race, Ethnicity, and Aging (3)  
History 4095 The Body and State in Modern Britain (3)  
History 4370 History of American Social Movements (3)  
GNDR 5745 Gender and Horror: Fiction, film, and gendered "disabilities" (3)  
Prerequisite: GNDR 3900 and GNDR 5080 or 5090.

## Administration of Minor

Instruction for the Introductory Course may be taught by faculty from any of the three colleges. The College of Health will be the permanent administrative home for the minor. The Disability Studies Advisory Committee will advise the College of Health regarding administration of the minor. Faculty membership on the five member Disability Studies Advisory Committee will be volunteer in nature and will rotate among faculty from a variety of disciplines. Final selection of committee members will be the responsibility of the Deans of the College of Health, Education, and Social and Behavioral Science. Each faculty member will serve a three year term, with the option of completing a second term. New terms will begin in August. Initially members will be appointed for terms of varying duration so that there will always be returning members on the committee. The chair of the Disability Studies Advisory Committee will be selected by the members of the committee with the option of serving consecutive terms as chair.

## Advising and Admission into the Minor

The Disability Studies Minor will be an open enrollment program. Materials describing program requirements, sample Academic Program Completion forms, course schedules, and faculty interested in advising Disability Studies minors will be maintained and be available to students on the Disability Studies website ([www.disabilitystudies.utah.edu](http://www.disabilitystudies.utah.edu)). Students desirous of enrolling in the program will file a completed Disability Studies Minor Program form as posted on the Disability Studies website. Advice and guidance concerning course selection and appropriate/relevant project selection should be discussed with university faculty. Faculty listed on the Disability Studies website as Interested Faculty will serve this role of advisor.

## Submitting new courses for the List of Electives

In order for a course to be approved for the minor, a course syllabus shall be reviewed and approved by at least two members of the Disability Studies Advisory Committee. Approval will be based on the course meeting the following criteria:

1. The examination of disability-related topics/issues is a focus of the course;
2. The focus is on reducing social and environmental barriers to enhance participation in activities at home, community and the workplace, and/or illuminating or analyzing

social, environmental, institutional, political, medical, and/or cultural constructions of disability; and

3. The course is listed with a 3000 course number or higher.

Students requesting a transfer of credits and courses taken in other institutions will have to provide a syllabus for each course along with the biographical references. To be accepted, courses taught at other higher education institutions must fit the academic mission of a Liberal Arts curriculum as defined by a research-one state university.

A list of courses approved in advance will be posted on the Disability Studies website ([www.disabilitystudies.utah.edu](http://www.disabilitystudies.utah.edu)) before the beginning of each semester. These lists will be archived on the website by semester and year for the use of both the Program and students. Every effort will be made before the beginning of each semester to contact instructors of courses where course content may vary considerably from semester to semester in order to determine if the scheduled course meets the Disability Studies criteria. Students may also petition the Disability Studies Advisory Committee for approval of a course not on the list. Students will need to submit the course syllabus with their petitions. They will be encouraged to do so at the beginning of the course, but they may do so at any time afterwards with the caveat that not all such petitions will be approved.

### Institutional Impact

We expect that students taking the minor would be those who have a special interest in disability studies, and would be adding a specialization that would make them more appealing in the job market. As such, in addition to the requirements for their major program of study, students completing the minor may have to take three to four elective courses that have been approved for the disability studies minor. If students are free to take electives outside of their program, taking the minor may result in the student taking fewer electives inside of their major program. If the major program requires that students complete electives within the program, there would be no impact at all on the program. Because of the interdisciplinary focus of the disability studies minor, it will draw students from a variety of disciplines; therefore, the impact on any single program would be minimal. This is a unique minor and does not compete with other existing minors.

### Finances

It is anticipated that no additional costs will be incurred with the addition of the minor to the existing Graduate Certificate Program in Disability Studies. The Core Course is currently being co-taught by Pollie Price and Cathy Chambless. Initially, an undergraduate section will meet with the graduate section until enrollment numbers justify creating a separate section. The instructors will adapt course requirements appropriate for undergraduate students. The addition of minor students will modestly increase student credit hours.

There will be no financial impact on library resources because the minor draws from existing courses.

## Selected Faculty by Departments

Faculty members listed below do not necessarily teach classes for the disability studies minor; however, every person listed on this proposal has agreed to support the development of such a program on this campus.

Angela Smith	English/Gender Studies
Bruce Quaglia	Music
Pollie Price	Occupational Therapy
Cathy Nelson	Special Education
Andrea McDonnell	Special Education
Hester Henderson	Exercise and Sports Science
Reiko Hayashi	Social Work
Leslie Francis	Philosophy/Law
Patricia Eisenman	Exercise and Sports Science
Cathy Chambless	Public Administration
Barbara Brown	Family and Consumer Studies
Don Bloswick	Mechanical Engineering
Nancy Basinger	Public Administration