

Overview of PLAD

PLAD is a 3-year doctoral leadership grant at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, designed to prepare dynamic, visionary leaders in the field of special education with expertise in empowering teachers to help students with disabilities access the general curriculum. This new program involves:

- collaboration among nationally recognized faculty in the departments of special education and curriculum and instruction,
- involvement of school personnel, parents of children with disabilities, and individuals with disabilities in delivering coursework, and
- linkages with the University's Department of Disability Resources and Educational Services.

Participants will actively join in research, teaching, and service activities with faculty and community collaborators who are engaged in issues related to access to the general curriculum.

PLAD is organized around five key competency areas. All participants will address access to the general curriculum as it relates to these competency areas.

Assistantships

Doctoral students participate in assistantships with at least one in each of the five competency areas. Types of assistantships include:

- Teaching assistants for undergraduate or graduate course
- Research assistants with individual faculty or as part of a funded project
- Assistantships with faculty in another department (e.g., Curriculum and Instruction)
- Completing service learning projects in the field
- Supervising student teachers

Competency Areas

Disability Policy and Law – Knowledge of both legal aspects of disability policy (e.g., IDEA, NCLB, ADA) and traditional barriers to full implementation. Future leaders must understand how policies enhance the educational opportunities of people with disabilities.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD) – Knowledge of a) cultural differences in how disability is viewed, b) literacy and the impact of CLD on its acquisition, c) specific linguistic variations associated with dialect differences, and d) approaches to differentiating language difference versus disability. Knowledge in CLD must be used in teaching, supervision, and research activities.

Collaborative Practices Between General and Special Educators in Inclusive Environments – Expertise in a) methods for effectively collaborating with general educators, parents, and other key personnel, b) effective teamwork practices, c) differentiated instruction, and d) approaches that maximize the success of inclusive education. Participants use this expertise to conduct meaningful research that cuts across traditional boundaries of general and special education.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Strategies to Enhance Student Outcomes – Based on the premise that when instructional settings are designed from the outset to meet the needs of all students, adaptations of the curriculum are less frequently necessary for specific students. Participants learn how to universally design inclusive classrooms to increase access, participation, and achievement of all students.

Service Learning – Service learning involves applying what one learns in the classroom to solve a real need in the community. Participants learn methods for incorporating service learning in inclusive settings, embedding service learning within teacher preparation, and evaluating the impact of these efforts.

Unique Features of the Program

- This program is designed for individuals with interest in diverse areas of special education (e.g., high incidence disabilities, low incidence disabilities, problem behavior, inclusive education, curriculum development, literacy, gifted education, differentiated instruction, disability policy, language development, social skill acquisition).
- Students formulate an individualized plan of study.
- Leadership Concentration courses are offered each semester allowing students to pursue highly specialized study.
- Students engage in scholarly dialogue about access to the general curriculum during a bi-monthly Access Seminar.
- Seminars and courses involve nationally recognized experts in each of the five competency areas.
- A UDL Technology library allows students to gain hands-on experience with materials that promote access to the general curriculum.
- Opportunities for engaging in research and teaching with faculty members.

Financial Benefits Provided to Program Participants

- Tuition waiver
- A monthly stipend (\$16,500 annually)
- Stipends to attend and present at professional conferences
- Stipends to conduct research

The Department of Special Education

The Department of Special Education is consistently ranked among the top programs in the nation. Faculty members address issues that face special and general education in the U.S. and in international education. From its inception, the department has emphasized the interdependence of research and teacher education. Many alumni hold key positions in American and foreign universities and governments related to disability research, teaching, and policy.

The University of Illinois

Since its founding in 1867, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has earned a reputation as an institution of international stature. Its distinguished faculty, outstanding resources, breadth of academic programs and research disciplines, and large and diverse student body constitute an educational community ideally suited for scholarship and research. Talented and highly respected faculty members are recognized both nationally and internationally for their achievements in the physical, biological, and social sciences; education; engineering; agriculture; business; and the humanities. The work of more than 9,000 graduate and professional students in more than 100 disciplines complement these efforts. The University also was the first barrier-free, accessible campus in the nation.

The University of Illinois Library

Among the campus's most significant resources for graduate study is the University Library, which houses the third largest academic collection in the nation, surpassed only by Harvard and Yale. The Library's computerized cataloging system was the first in the world to serve as the primary access to a large academic library. Education and Social Sciences is one of 38 campus libraries.

Department of Special Education Project Faculty

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STACY DYMOND, Assistant Professor
JANET GAFFNEY, Associate Professor
JAMES HALLE, Professor
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Collaborating Faculty

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Preparing Leaders in Access by Design (PLAD)

*A Doctoral Leadership
Program
Focused on Access to the
General Curriculum*

*University of Illinois
at
Urbana-Champaign*