

# UCEDD Tip Sheets



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ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES  
THE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & RESEARCH NETWORK



## Interdisciplinary Pre-Service Preparation

### What is Addressed in this Tip Sheet?

This tip sheet addresses interdisciplinary pre-service preparation. According to the UCEDD logic model, interdisciplinary pre-service preparation is an instructional program offered by the UCEDD that:

1. integrates knowledge and methods from two or more distinct disciplines
2. integrates direct contributions to the field made by people with disabilities and family members
3. examines and advances professional practice, scholarship and policy that impacts the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families;
4. is designed to advance an individual's academic or professional credentials; and
5. takes place in an academic setting or program.

It may:

1. lead to the award of an initial academic degree, professional certificate, or advanced academic credential; and
1. contribute to a discipline-specific course of study offered by the UCEDD or by another academic department.

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## Why is this Important?

Pre-service preparation is a UCEDD core function, according to the DD Act:

H.R. 4920 – 106th Congress: Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. www.GovTrack.us. 2000. June 12, 2018 <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/106/hr4920>

1. to provide interdisciplinary pre-service preparation and continuing education of students and fellows, which may include the preparation and continuing education of leadership, direct service, clinical, or other personnel to strengthen and increase the capacity of States and communities to achieve the purpose of this title

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## How have other UCEDDs structured their pre-service prep programs?

The following examples were implemented in universities without a LEND or training program. To address the pre-service core function, these UCEDDs designed programs that were interdisciplinary, sustainable, and which extended or enriched university curriculum, but did not supplant it.

### ***FLORIDA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES (FCIC) UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA (USF)***

FCIC offers a Graduate Certificate in Positive Behavior Support, which is offered online. The Center enrolls between 20-30 students a year from disciplines such as public health, early childhood education, school psychology, and child and adolescent behavioral health. A few students are non-degree seekers who want to earn their certificate because they work in a setting, usually a school or district, where the skills learned from such a certificate would be helpful.

Of the four-person faculty, two are supported by the UCEDD grant. One faculty member was recruited from their Positive Behavior Training and Technical Assistance Grant and teaches as part of their university service without receiving additional funding through the UCEDD grant. The fourth is an adjunct position, supported by the department.

The program is 12 credit hours, which translates to 4 courses. 3 courses are required, after which students may choose 1 elective class which 1) must be approved, 2) must be in a different area but complimentary to positive behavior support and 3) must be focused on developmental disabilities.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is embedded within all the courses. Students are required to complete a project within a school, community (such as a group home), or an early childhood setting.

The University of South Florida offers an MS in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, and in 2015, the FCIC began offering a concentration in developmental disabilities as part of this departmentwide program. Five students per year have enrolled, supported by 3 UCEDD-funded faculty, department faculty from child and family studies, as well as 7 UCEDD faculty who function as advisors and are funded at 0.08 FTE for field experience supervision. This MS program is 39 credit hours, roughly divided into the following requirements:

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- 4 core courses for the department (12 credit hours in behavioral health)
- 4 required courses for a DD concentration (12 credit hours for developmental disabilities and behavioral health)
- 3 electives, or 9 credit hours which must be approved
- 6 credit hours of applied field experience

The applied field experience component addresses the interdisciplinary requirement for pre-service prep. With the guidance of her advisor, a student identifies a project idea addressing an issue in developmental disability, then finds an organization and a site supervisor within that organization. The project takes two semesters to complete. Examples of past projects include a learning academy which prepares young autistic adults for college, a schoolwide bullying prevention program, and a program addressing competitive employment for people with developmental disabilities.

In 2017, FCIC began offering a specialization within USF's Ph.D. in Behavioral & Community Sciences. Students working with FCIC faculty design a specialization program in the areas of developmental disabilities and positive behavior interventions & support. Students are funded either through assistantships that come from the college or through department funding; faculty advisors get 0.1 FTE for advising.

The Ph.D. requires:

- 18 core hours in behavioral and community science
  - These core courses include evidence-based practices, biological basis of behavior, community-based research
  - Each course builds in an interdisciplinary perspective
- Courses in a specialization area
  - Developmental disabilities
  - Early childhood
  - Positive behavior support
- Research and Dissertation
  - Completed in community settings working with other disciplines including: Schools, community childcare, behavioral health programs, etc.

In 2010, the USF opened the Interdisciplinary Center for Evaluation and Intervention, a specialized multidisciplinary clinic. The clinic conducts evidence-based evaluations and interventions. The process is structured and involves grad students and faculty from disciplines such as pediatrics, social work, and psychiatry. Under faculty supervision, grad students summarize evaluation results and develop plans of support. Students do their theses and dissertations within the clinic.

**Successes from the USF model include:**

- MS and Ph.D. are embedded in the department and college, respectively; and
- USF has obtained college support for their program development, as well as college and department support for the PBS Grad Certificate students and Ph.D. students

**Challenges include:**

- Faculty are supported by grants; finding sources of funding for both students and faculty is a constant challenge;
- Course development is unpaid, which can lead to faculty burnout; and
- Advising takes up a lot of faculty time, so the programs must continually find a balance between the number of students and the overall faculty load.

## **INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (IHD) NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY (NAU)**

IHD offers a **Minor in Disability Studies** for undergraduates. Students are required to take 15 units of core courses which include an introduction to disability, an introduction to universal design and a course that covers key legislation pertaining to individuals with disabilities. For 3 credits, students may then choose an elective from courses in disability history, ethics and disability and an Introduction to Principles and Practices of Family Support, Self-determination, and Disability, among others.

For a minimum of 15 credit hours, a **Graduate Certificate in Assistive Technology** is also offered. Two courses are required: Disabilities and Technology in the Lifespan and Assessment and Effective Practices in Assistive Technology. Students must then choose their specialization and an instructor-approved capstone project.

In 2017, IHD began offering an **Emphasis in Disability as part of a new Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Health**, co-sponsored by the College of Health and Human Services and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Like USF, IHD established an **Interdisciplinary Training Clinic**, which recruits students across disciplines who are completing practicums and internships to participate in evaluations, mostly of children. Participating disciplines have included speech pathology, nursing, social work, and psychology, among others. In cooperation with other university departments, IHD designed **course infusions or modules**, which take information about disability and embed it across the broader university curriculum. The modules include direct experience examples and questions to augment content across university courses.

### **Successes from the IHD model include:**

- The Minor in Disability Studies has a healthy enrollment and students are satisfied with the curriculum. Many students have started to question why the content they learn from the minor is not included as part of their major;
- Infusion of content across the university curriculum introduces key content to students not enrolled in IHD's formal programs. IHD found that their work in this area is just as important as the formal programs, because although IHD can't reach many students through its formal programs, its scope of influence widens through the clinic, practicums, course infusions and other activities; and
- IHD has created training experiences that authentically represent interdisciplinary practice.

### **Challenges include:**

- IHD finds itself competing against programs like psychology, with much larger student enrollments. The UCEDD has had to argue for the importance of their work and why it is vital to the university curriculum;
- IHD uses core funding, but that funding covers a broader scope of activities across all the core functions, not just pre-service prep. IHD continues to find new and creative ways to distribute state, university, and department funding amongst the faculty; and

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- Sustainability is the biggest challenge- IHD knows it has the capacity to grow, but it does not have the faculty to build big programs with large numbers of students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE IHD AND FCIC

**Build relationships across the university to understand opportunities and know about potential barriers.** The strength of these programs is partly dependent on how well UCEDDs are able to market them, and in order to do so, UCEDDs need to be able to promote a broader understanding of how their programs can enrich students. Collaborations with faculty across departments can be particularly helpful in developing courses or training experiences: by tapping into the relationships they'd built within the university, IHD was able to pull together an interdisciplinary faculty council to advise their team and give input on how to improve their programs.

**Study academic degrees and certificates to determine how your content may be merged to benefit students.** There could be opportunities to create interdisciplinary content that's germane to majors outside of your UCEDD's normal scope.

**Get creative with funding.** Both the IHD and FCIC have had to supplement their core funding with a combination of department or university funding. IHD found that by offering distance courses, they were able to draw from a new source: the university's virtual arm.

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## Relevant Resources

- UCEDD Logic Model ([https://www.aucd.org/docs/UCEDD\\_Logic\\_Model\\_and\\_Definitions.pdf](https://www.aucd.org/docs/UCEDD_Logic_Model_and_Definitions.pdf))
- Webinar: Interdisciplinary Pre-Service Preparation for UCEDDs Without a LEND or Training Grant (<http://bit.ly/2Ruo4dB>)
- Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (<http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/program-areas/training.html>)
- Institute for Human Development (<https://nau.edu/ihd/>)

## For More Information

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