Approved by the Board of Trustees

May 16, 2024

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Board Meeting

May 16, 2024

RENAME AND REVISE THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DISABILITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES AND THE GRADUATE COLLEGE, CHICAGO

**Action:** Rename and Revise the Master of Science in Disability and Human Development, College of Applied Health Sciences and the Graduate College

**Funding:** No new funding is required

The chancellor, University of Illinois Chicago, and vice president,

University of Illinois System, with the advice of the University of Illinois Chicago Senate, the College of Applied Health Sciences, and the Graduate College, recommends the renaming and revision of the Master of Science in Disability and Human Development.

The degree is structured as an interdisciplinary program, dedicated to ensuring that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in society. The curriculum examines disability across the lifespan, emphasizing self-determination and community participation. When the degree was first established, the majority of candidates already worked in specialized roles relating to social and disability services. However, the disability field has since expanded to include jobs in educational and cultural institutions, government, and the private sector. Accordingly, the current program prepares leaders in community-based and governmental agencies, experts in assistive technology, advocates in the disability rights movement, and scholars seeking advanced degrees.

Reflecting changes in the field, the program will now be renamed as the Master of Science in Disability Access and Inclusion. This renaming better aligns with related career pathways and accurately reflects the overall goals of the program. For example, disability access and coordinator roles in secondary and postsecondary institutions, government, and the private sector are now commonplace. Similarly, arts and cultural institutions increasingly hire access specialists to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, including both employees and the public.

Students will continue to complete one of two available concentrations. The concentration in Assistive Technology has been retained with revisions, and the concentration in Disability Studies will be eliminated. In turn, the concentration in Disability Accessibility will be established. Additionally, the program will no longer include a thesis option, as all students will now complete the coursework-only curriculum. These changes reflect the program’s updated focus on applied, skills-based learning, while better matching the profile of prospective students.

The program now actively recruits students who seek to work in a variety of professions and fields related to disability accessibility and assistive technology. These students benefit from in-depth coursework and specialized training directly related to job skills and readiness. In contrast, the previous thesis option was more appropriate for students seeking to enter into research careers or to continue into a PhD program. Removing the thesis option also creates additional space in the curriculum for students to gain necessary experience in relation to advanced career options within the disability field.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further senate jurisdiction is involved.

The president of the University of Illinois System recommends approval.

This action is subject to further review by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.