Utah State University
DigitalCommons@USU

SPED Faculty Publications

Special Education and Rehabilitation, Department of

1-1-2004

The USU Mild/Moderate Distance Learning Degree and Licensure Program: It's All About Access

Nancy K. Glomb
Utah State University

R. Menlove

M. Jones

Recommended Citation
Glomb, N., Menlove, R., & Jones, M. (2004). The USU Mild/Moderate Distance Learning Degree and Licensure Program: It's All About Access. *Utah Special Educator*, 24 (6), 32.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Rehabilitation, Department of at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in SPED Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact becky.thoms@usu.edu.

The USU Mild/Moderate Distance Degree and License Program:

It's All About Access

Children with disabilities in today's schools are ensured equal access to a public education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.) This legislation levels the playing field for many children who may otherwise not be able to fully access and benefit from a quality educational experience and ensures that highly qualified special education teachers will guide the way. However, many bright and capable individuals who aspire to become highly qualified special education teachers are not able to fulfill their dream because of their own inability to access traditional, teacher training programs. For individuals who live and work in rural and remote areas, geographic proximity alone presents a significant obstacle. For others who may be within a reasonable commuting distance from a traditional university-based teacher training program, financial and family obligations may preclude their ability to enroll in and attend a traditional campus-based program.

Providing access to quality special education teacher training programs for all qualified applicants is particularly pertinent in light of the critical shortage of special education teachers in Utah schools. Each year more than 14% of all Utah special education teachers leave their positions. Utah has experienced critical shortages of special education teachers for more than 40 years, and special education teachers were among the highest ranked shortages in the most recent Teaching Field Index of Critical Shortages (Bell, 2003.) In addition there are increasing numbers of students enrolling in Utah schools, and a percentage of that increased enrollment includes students with disabilities.

The USU Mild/Moderate Special Education Distance Education Program addresses this critical, growing shortage of special education teachers by "leveling the playing field" for individuals, including many paraeducators, who may not be able to access a traditional campus-based teacher training program.

Students who participate in the USU distance education program fulfill the same requirements as students who participate in the traditional campus-based program at the Logan campus, and successful completion of this program leads to a Bachelor of Science degree in special education and K-12 teacher licensure in the state of Utah. Courses cover subjects such as applied behavior analysis and behavior management, effective instruction techniques, the legal and ethical aspects of special education, procedures for transitioning high school students to adult life, and effective communication and coordination between educators, parents, and related service personnel. Students have the option of working towards a dual major degree and endorsement with the Department of Elementary Education. Students completing the dual major degree/endorsement are eligible to teach in elementary grades 1-6 as well as programs that serve children and adolescents with mild to moderate disabilities.

The program is administered via an interactive video conferencing system that allows USU Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation faculty to deliver instruction to a variety of distance education classrooms across the state. Students access course materials, readings, assignments, instructor feedback, and class projects via an Internet-based course management program called WebCT. (For more information about the distance education delivery system, see "Are You Ready for a Masters Degree" in the April 2004 issue of the *Utah Special Educator*.)

The program is also designed to provide a variety of "real-life" practice opportunities in classrooms within each student's locality. Practicum classrooms have been established in school districts surrounding the distance education sites, and graduates of the USU special education program serve as supervisors who provide ongoing support, advisement, and feedback. The program is offered on a three-year cycle that includes one year of professional education courses and two years of special education major courses. Students typically enroll in two classes and one classroom-based practicum experience each semester, and class sessions are held one night each week. Currently, individuals can participate in this program through sites in Brigham City, Ogden, Salt Lake City, Tooele, Orem, Roosevelt and Vernal.

Getting started is as easy as picking up the phone or clicking a mouse. Program advisors are available to provide assistance in applying to the program and designing individualized programs of study. To be eligible for the USU Mild/Moderate Special Education Distance Education Program, an individual needs to have successfully completed at least 18 undergraduate credits including freshman English and College Algebra. A complete list of degree requirements can be found on the program website at **http://sped.usu.edu/mild**, and all of the courses required are offered through USU distance learning programs. To learn more about the USU Mild/Moderate Special Education Distance Education Program, contact Dr. Nancy Glomb, Program Director, at **435-797-3911** or **nkglomb@cc.usu.edu**, or Melanie Jones, Program Advisor, at **melaniej@cc.usu.edu.** ■

Real Opportunities

Nancy Glomb, Ronda Menlove & Melanie Jones, Utah State University