

**Wyoming INstitute for Disabilities
College of Health Sciences
University of Wyoming**

**Disability Studies Academic Plan III
2009-2014**

**Submitted
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WIND Disability Studies Academic Plan 2009-2014

Mission and Aspirations

The Disability Studies Program is the traditional academic component of the larger WIND mission. This academic plan therefore **refers only to that component**.

The goal of WIND's Disability Studies Program is to facilitate the academic and professional development of UW students and Wyoming professionals in disability content and issues. This is accomplished both through credit bearing courses in traditional academic settings and through non-credit bearing training settings.

The program has seven (7) components:

1. ***Disability Studies Minor*** delivered with WIND courses as well as with other disciplines' courses;
2. ***Infusion units*** taught as part of existing UW courses across campus;
3. ***Academic credit certificate programs***, typically taught in collaboration with other UW departments;
4. ***Internship program*** in which students from many disciplines can participate in credit or non-credit structured internships in WIND;
5. ***Graduate assistantships*** which offer the opportunity to work in clinical settings or in one or more of WIND's many externally funded project activities;
6. ***Community-based, non-credit certificate programs*** offered through WIND in collaboration with external agencies; and
7. ***Trainings and Conferences*** held all over the state on many disability issues.

The various components of the program over the years have attracted graduate and undergraduate students from many disciplines across campus as well as community professionals statewide.

Previous Planning Accomplishments

WIND's **1999 Academic Plan** had a single action item: to develop a WIND course prefix for its academic course work. That was accomplished and its foundation course was renumbered with that prefix.

The **2004 Academic Plan** expanded on that foundation with four action items: (1) Establish a

formal Disability Studies Program in WIND; (2) Establish a Minor in Disability Studies; (2) Obtain a Section I faculty position to implement the Minor; and (4) Develop additional courses to be taught under the WIND prefix as part of the new Minor. All four of those action items were accomplished.

Relevant Institutional Issues

Building depth versus adding breadth

A primary goal for the next planning period is to deepen and strengthen the academic foundation of the newly developed Disability Studies Minor. Continued development of WIND's disability curriculum and the resulting interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues across campus will be of great importance during the next five year cycle.

Promoting access to higher education

WIND is an active partner with its national partners in promoting access to higher educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) was signed into law on August 14, 2008. This is the first reauthorization in nearly a decade of important legislation covering federal student aid and major postsecondary education initiatives in the United States. The reauthorization contains new and revised provisions that will significantly improve postsecondary opportunities and supports for students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disabilities.

Reinforcing and refining areas of distinction identified in AP1 and AP2

“Professions and Issues Critical to the Region”

This Area of Distinction in Moving Forward III (p.8) acknowledged that “[p]rofessions and issues critical to the region are best viewed from an integrated perspective” and that “[t]his area of distinction has implications beyond the confines of formal degree programs: educators, engineers, business leaders, health-care professionals and legal experts all require continuing professional education and the lifelong development of cross-disciplinary knowledge.”

Disability issues impacting these particular disciplines (among many others) largely had been missing in the UW curriculum until WIND was established. Many WIND continuing education activities for Wyoming professionals have contributed to achieving this institutional issue.

We would argue that in its relatively short time as part of the UW community WIND has already achieved some distinction in bringing interdisciplinary disability awareness, education, capacity building and system change to both pre-service education on the UW campus and continuing education throughout the state.

Other Issues Highlighted in AP1 and AP2 that are still relevant for AP3

“Need to extend beyond UW’s campuses”

Moving Forward III emphasized the need “...to extend beyond UW’s campuses” in providing continuing education opportunities. WIND quite obviously does this very well in all its statewide activity. Our face to face educational and other efforts extend to every county in the state. However, WIND has reached a point in its university history where it is appropriate also to begin developing the capability of delivering at least some of its course work via distance education.

“Diversity”

Moving Forward III recognized disability as a diversity issue that should be addressed through the institution’s curriculum. “Accessibility of the curriculum also requires...curricular commitments to disability-related issues, for example through the **Wyoming INstitute for Disabilities**” (p. 20).

There are 50-60 million persons with disabilities in the country making this population the largest minority group in America. Running concurrently with modern civil rights movements (cultural/racial minority rights; women’s rights), disability is recognized as the broadest and most encompassing of these diversity issues and knows no racial, cultural, gender, socio-economic or other social or human characteristic boundaries.

We have made some inroads institutionally to recognize disability as a diversity issue in the same sense as we now acknowledge race, culture and gender as diversity issues by gaining USP “Diversity” status for some WIND courses.

We have a start; we now need to help the larger UW and state communities recognize disability as a diversity issue and to facilitate WIND as an academic vehicle to address this content.

“Stronger Interdisciplinarity”

Stronger interdisciplinarity is a recurring theme in all three of our institutional academic planning efforts.

By its very nature, the study of disability issues is broadly interdisciplinary and cross-cutting uniting faculty members from many disciplines with distinct but overlapping interests. This approach is natural, normal and necessary for disability content and issues. WIND’s approach to all its activities does this inherently in teaching, research and service.

This interdisciplinary approach has resulted in WIND courses being cross listed with other UW departments (e.g., Women’s Studies).

In research, this same approach of interdisciplinary blending of content and faculty has also worked well (see next section below).

In service, WIND works effectively with many different entities in every county in its work to build the capacity of Wyoming communities to become better able and willing to fully support and include persons with disabilities in every aspect of community life—employment, recreation, social interaction, spirituality, etc.

“Research Infrastructure”

A good example of WIND’s interdisciplinary approach in research was the study conducted through WIND’s “Teaming with Technology” project which involved faculty from Psychology, Early Education, Nursing, Social Work, WIND and Communication Disorders in trans-disciplinary assessment of young children with disabilities while testing the effectiveness of computer-based, distance assessment. Through this funded project, faculty from these disciplines were given a research opportunity leading to refereed publications and significant contributions to the field without draining resources from their home departments.

“Making effective use of faculty resources”

Another recurrent theme in all three of UW’s academic planning efforts is the compelling point that the institution must do better in the future than it has in the past to make effective use of faculty resources. WIND’s approach highlighted above to include disability issues as part of existing campus curricula requires only an infusion of disability content into existing programs resulting in disability being a “value added” component of nearly any discipline. Blending existing interdisciplinary faculty expertise makes effective use of faculty without draining too much away from core faculty responsibilities.

The collaborative, value-added interdisciplinary model WIND uses works in all areas of University responsibility—teaching, research and service and needs to be continued.

Action Items

1. *Continue building the Disabilities Studies minor by:*

Adding new courses where appropriate
Student recruitment (including students with disabilities)
Marketing the minor across campus

Rationale: The minor has been in place for only one academic year and needs curricular attention. Additionally, the Minor is little known on the campus.

Timeline: Years 1-5

Institutional Issues Addressed: Building Depth versus adding Breadth; Diversity

2. ***Develop the capacity and ability to deliver course work for the Minor and other training opportunities through distance technology.***

Rationale: As an institution, we have become increasingly sensitive to the fact that not everyone who might benefit from UW courses can come to Laramie. Our institutional distance education capabilities have become more refined and effective thus promoting more opportunities.

Timeline: Year 2

Institutional Issues Addressed: Need to extend beyond UW's campuses; Making effective use of faculty resources

3. ***Develop a graduate certificate in autism for Wyoming teachers***

Rationale: There is a virtual explosion in children being diagnosed with autism; approximately 1 in every 150 children are born with autism. This creates a great need to educate teachers in the educational system to work with such children. This will also strengthen cross-university collaboration with the Colleges of Education (Special Education and Early Childhood) and A&S (Psychology).

Timeline: Year 1

Institutional Issue Addressed: Issues and Professions Critical to the Region

4. ***Develop community-based certificates for direct care staff in the developmental disability community***

Rationale: In Wyoming, as nationally, there is a great need to train direct care staff in appropriate, positive and effective approaches to supporting persons with intellectual and other disabilities.

Timeline: Years 2-5

Institutional Issue Addressed: Issues and Professions Critical to the Region

5. ***Deepen and strengthen WIND's research and publication efforts for both WIND faculty and our UW collaborating faculty***

Rationale: While some projects and activities have yielded excellent interdisciplinary research and publications, many other opportunities have not been taken advantage of in the same way. Even though most of WIND's funded projects do not include a required research component, many can provide the opportunity to conduct useful research and to build a knowledge base. This is also an opportunity to expand our collaboration with faculty and

units and across campus e.g., colleagues in all Health Sciences units, Education, A&S and WySac.

Timeline: Years 1-5

Institutional Issues Addressed: Research Infrastructure; Stronger Interdisciplinarity; Making effective use of faculty resources

6. ***Increase WIND's capacity to perform public policy analyses of policies with implications for disability issues, particularly developmental disabilities.***

Help UW develop a University wide Policy Center in collaboration with colleagues from many disciplines and entities across campus including existing units like WySac, CRHRE, etc.

Increase WIND's visibility in the state's disability policy making arena.

Rationale: UW should be the first place state policy makers think of when needing policy data, advice and counsel and that could be greatly enhanced with a visible, easily accessible UW Policy Center.

Timeline: Years 2-5

Institutional Issues Addressed: Making effective use of faculty resources; Research Infrastructure

7. ***Develop the "Wyoming Accessibility Center"***

To support the development and distribution of accessible instructional materials for students in public schools, community colleges and UW;

Rationale: The federal law legislating educational services to students with disabilities mandates states to provide instructional materials in accessible formats. The State Department of Education, the Community Colleges and UW have agreed to collaborate on building this capacity in WIND.

Timeline: Year 1

Institutional Issue Addressed: Promoting access to higher education

To facilitate and support assistive technology (AT) assessments for students in the K-12 public school system and adults in workplace settings;

Rationale: There is very limited access to AT assessments in Wyoming for

either students or adults. Both the State Department of Education and the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are very interested in WIND developing this capability.

Timeline: Year 1 and Continuing

Institutional Issue Addressed: Issues critical to the Region