Special Education

The mission of the Department of Special Education is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families in advocating for inclusive practices. This is achieved by preparing competent educators to engage collaboratively with education professionals, service providers, and families in developing individualized, culturally responsive, instructional planning and application. We are committed to equipping candidates to select and implement evidence-based practices through consistent applied experiences.

THE PROGRAM

At Gonzaga, we are committed to educating students to become leaders that serve the common good. The Department of Special Education chooses to approach this commitment one individual at a time understanding that getting to know someone helps us to understand their worth and to address their needs as a whole person. Through getting to know our students and creating individual plans for success, we model our expectations in genuine ways while encouraging our students to do the same.

Many courses in our program offer community-engaged service learning activities to provide students opportunities to experience servant leadership. As a community of reflective learners, Gonzaga’s faculty, staff, and students form supportive relationships that encourage service for others and responsibility to each other.

The Special Education major is a great gateway to prepare for becoming a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, school psychologist, social worker, or school counselor. Since these fields frequently serve individuals with differing abilities, understanding and gaining experience with individuals having a variety of disabilities provides insights into the needs of the individual, style of learning, ability to build trust, development of relationships, as well as engagement of challenges to attain success.

Strong partnerships with the local schools and agencies provide opportunities for applying the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-life experiences through field experiences. Students complete a minimum of 60 hours of field experience prior to their senior semester practicum or student teaching. Qualified university supervisors, agency mentors, and/or cooperating teachers provide mentoring support at all field practicum levels.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

The Department of Special Education offers a flexible and marketable academic program that prepares students to work with individuals with mild to severe disabilities such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities, communication disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and behavior disorders. Students can complete a major (B.Ed.) or minor in Special Education.

The minor in Special Education is designed to increase personal understanding and abilities when interacting with those who may need additional guidance to participate in society fully.
CERTIFICATION & RECIPROCITY

Many students in the program combine an academic degree with initial teacher certification. Special Education majors seeking certification in Special Education obtain an endorsement to teach preschool through grade 12. These students must add at least one additional endorsement area at the elementary and/or secondary level. Students seeking elementary education certification receive an elementary endorsement and can teach grades K-8 in general education classrooms in addition to their special education endorsement. Other endorsement areas include but are not limited to Reading, English Language Learners (ELL), English, Mathematics, Spanish, Biology, and History.

All teacher preparation degree programs and elementary, secondary, school counselor, and advanced certification programs are approved by the Washington State Professional Educators Standards Board.

The state of Washington is a member of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment & Support Consortium (INTASC). Completing a teacher preparation program at Gonzaga University, therefore, qualifies a candidate for reciprocity to teach in states that participate in the interstate certification compact.

OUTCOMES

Gonzaga University prides itself on outcomes for its students. The Department of Special Education was ranked 21st out of 185 Special Education Programs by College Factual, placing in the top 15% of Special Education programs in the United States. Over the past five years, Gonzaga graduates in their first year after graduation tend to follow in one of three major paths.

The largest group of graduates obtain work in the teaching profession (approximately 70%), the next group go onto graduate school (approximately 25%), and the third group join a volunteer service agency like the Jesuit Volunteer Corp and Mercy Corps (approximately 5%). Additionally, many of our graduates have received state awards, scholarships, started their own businesses, etc. Graduates from Gonzaga’s Special Education program are trained to become highly qualified professionals and, as a result, experience excellent career outcomes upon graduation.

The Department of Special Education offers a Masters in Special Education. Students may choose from three areas of emphasis: Functional Analysis which includes options toward obtaining Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) certification, Special Education, and Early Childhood Special Education.

ENDORSEMENTS

Many of our students add teacher certification in Special Education and one other endorsement area to increase marketability in the teaching profession. Some of our majors go on to obtain advanced degrees in a variety of helping professions other than teaching. Endorsements offered at Gonzaga include:

- Biology, 5-12
- Chemistry, 5-12
- Early Childhood Special Education, PreK-3
- Elementary Education, K-8
- English Language Arts, 5-12
- English Speakers of Other Languages, K-12
- Health and Fitness, K-12
- History/Social Studies, 5-12
- Mathematics, 5-12
- Music, K-12
- Physics, 5-12
- Reading, K-12
- Special Education, PreK-12
- Theatre Arts, K-12
- World Languages-French, Spanish, K-12

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