

\$1M Grant to Train Doctoral Students in Special Education

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The grant will fund doctoral students to help address faculty shortages in higher-ed special education.

[*Apply for the USU Disability Disciplines PhD Program by January 15, 2023*](#)

Faculty in the department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling (SPERC) were recently awarded a grant of over \$1 million through the Office of Special Education Programs within the U.S. Department of Education. This award will fully fund a minimum of six doctoral students in a multidisciplinary program designed to produce effective faculty members in fields serving people with disabilities. As part of the training program, students will acquire expertise in evidence-based practice in their particular area of focus, as well implementation science, an innovative area that merges research and practice.

The grant will be directed and managed by SPERC faculty members Kaitlin Bundock and Tim Slocum, as well as Sarah Pinkelman, adjunct SPERC faculty member and associate professor at Western Michigan University.

“There is a shortage of special education faculty in institutions of higher education,” said Bundock. “These leaders play a critical role in shaping practice in schools and other settings that serve people with disabilities. They are responsible for training practitioners and conducting research to advance the field.” Bundock added that this new doctoral program will help address the shortage of special education faculty by “training scholars in evidence-based practice, implementation science, and open science frameworks.”

Scholars in the grant-funded program will have opportunities to become experts in a content specialization of their choice (e.g., applied behavior analysis or special education), rigorous and transparent research methods, and the effective use of evidence-based practice in applied settings. In addition to funding tuition, the grant will also provide students with a yearly stipend, cover the costs of books and materials, and support student travel to academic conferences.

Graduates are expected to become leaders in their field and positively impact the lives of people with disabilities by assisting school districts in sustainably implementing evidence-based practice, researching evidence-based practice and implementation science, and effectively teaching these practices to pre- and in-service practitioners. Faculty members are now recruiting students for the fall 2023 semester.

Other faculty members in the department of Special Education and Rehabilitation affiliated with this grant include Sophia D’Agostino, Wilhelmina van Dijk, Ray Joslyn, Audrey Hoffman, Kristen Rolf, and Stephen Kwiatek.

The USU Disability Disciplines PhD Program starts in August 2023, and the application deadline is January 15, 2023.