

Disability Disciplines, PhD

Specialization(s): Special Education; Applied Behavior Analysis with Individuals with Disabilities; Rehabilitation Counseling; Disabilities Studies; Speech-Language Pathology; Pathokinesiology; Audiology

Department: Special Education and Rehabilitation Department

College: Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services

Overview

About This Degree

The disability disciplines doctoral program focuses on producing the next generation of university professors and other national leaders in disciplines related to disabilities. USU's graduate program in disability disciplines is in the top 20 of nationally ranked programs in its category, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. All specializations have a common emphasis on providing students with coursework and hands-on experience in conducting research, writing grants, reporting research through writing and conference presentation, and teaching and supervising at a university level.

Career Options

Students who graduate with this degree are prepared to become faculty at universities, to work as administrators, or as high-level practitioners in their respective areas.

What it takes

Admissions Requirements

Requirements for specific undergraduate and master's degrees depend on the specialization. All specializations require extensive experience and knowledge of the relevant field prior to admission. Students should contact the department for specific prerequisite requirements for each specialization.

Application Requirements:

- Complete the [online application](#)
- Pay the \$55 application fee
- Score at or above the 40th percentile on in the GRE or MAT
- Provide official transcripts of all college/university credits
- Provide three contacts for letters of recommendation
- GPA of 3.0 or higher during most recent 60 semester hours
- Teaching experience is strongly encouraged
- Provide letter of intent

International students have [additional admissions requirements](#).

Admissions Deadlines

The department has the following application deadline:

- Fall semester - February 1

Financial Assistance

The department supports its graduate students with federal training and research grants. As these grants change on a yearly basis, students should contact the department for more information.

A variety of additional funding opportunities are available, including [fellowships](#), [scholarships](#), [assistantships](#), [tuition awards](#), and [travel support](#). Additionally, students may be eligible for subsidized [health insurance](#) through qualifying assistantships.

Program Requirements

[Click here](#) to see course requirements for the **Doctor of Philosophy**.

Students are required to pass a preliminary exam at the end of their first year.

In place of traditional PhD qualifying exams, students must complete all of the following:

- Perform substantial research
- Write and submit a publishable paper
- Give a conference presentation
- Participate in grant writing
- Demonstrate competence in college teaching
- Demonstrate competence in supervision
- Complete a systematic literature review

Contact

Advisor(s)

Teresa Simonsen

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Faculty

Sarah Bloom, PhD, University of Florida

Assistant Professor

Area: Functional analysis and treatment of problem behavior, verbal behavior, reinforcer efficacy, early childhood

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Eadric Bressel, PhD, Utah State University

Professor

Area: Clinical Biomechanics, Gait Analysis, Aquatic Rehabilitation, focusing on the relationships between anatomical structures, mechanics, and injuries and how they pertain to the rehabilitation for people with disabilities.

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Dennis Dolny, PhD, Kent State University

Department Head and Professor

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Lillian Duran, PhD, University of Minnesota

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Tom Higbee, PhD, University of Nevada - Reno

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Judith Holt, PhD, University of Texas - Austin

Associate Professor/Director, Center for Persons with Disabilities

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Ben Lignugaris-Kraft, PhD, Utah State University

Professor, Department Head

Area: Mild-moderate disabilities, behavior analysis, secondary special education, parent and early reading

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Michael Millington, PhD, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Research Assistant Professor

Area: Rehabilitation, administration and services, vocational evaluation, disability and employment, dissemination

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Bob Morgan, PhD, Utah State University

Associate Professor

Area: Behavior analysis, transition, para-educator training, employment training

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Scott Ross, PhD, University of Oregon

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Area: Assessment and treatment of problem behavior, acquisition of verbal behavior, early childhood

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Charles Salzberg, PhD, University of Kansas

Professor, Graduate Program Coordinator

Area: Behavior analysis, students with disabilities in higher education, special education policies, mild-moderate disabilities, teacher education, multimedia training curriculum

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Andrew Samaha, PhD, University of Florida

Assistant Professor

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Get Involved

Professional Organizations, Honor Societies, and Clubs

Association for Behavior Analysis International: ABAI is a nonprofit professional membership organization with the mission to contribute to the well-being of society by developing, enhancing, and supporting the growth and vitality of the science of behavior analysis through research, education, and practice.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: ASHA is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 140,000 members and affiliates who are speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists in the United States and internationally.

Council for Exceptional Children: This is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. CEC advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides professional development, advocates for individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice.

Utah Rehabilitation Association: URA is a recognized chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association. It is a private, nonprofit organization with the goal of providing quality rehabilitation for persons with disabilities. USU has a student chapter of the URA.

American Society of Biomechanics: The American Society of Biomechanics (ASB) was founded in 1977 to encourage and foster the exchange of information and ideas among biomechanists working in different disciplines and to facilitate the development of biomechanics as a basic and applied science.

Society of Neuroscience: The Society for Neuroscience is the world's largest organization of scientists and physicians devoted to understanding the brain and nervous system. The nonprofit organization, founded in 1969, now has nearly 42,000 members in more than 90 countries and 130 chapters worldwide.

International Society for Posture and Gait Research: The ISPGR provides a multidisciplinary forum for basic and clinical scientists to present and discuss the latest research and clinical findings relating to the control of posture, gait and related disorders.

North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity: The North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity is a multidisciplinary association of scholars from the behavioral sciences and related professions. The Society functions to: develop and advance the scientific study of human behavior when individuals are engaged in sport and physical activity; facilitate the dissemination of information; improve the quality of research and teaching in the psychology of sport, motor development, and motor learning and control.

Labs, Centers, Research

Autism Support Services - Education, Research, and Training: ASSERT is a classroom at the Center for Persons with Disabilities that offers training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students, while providing intensive, individualized instruction to preschool children with autism spectrum disorder. USU students can apply to work in the program and earn either university credit or compensation while learning how to effectively teach students with autism spectrum disorder.

Biomechanics Laboratory (Graduate): Research in the biomechanics laboratory focuses on relationships between anatomical structures, mechanics and injuries and how they pertain to the rehabilitation for people with disabilities. For example, there are excellent opportunities to focus on aquatic-based research for a number of applications, including aquatic therapy for spinal cord injury, stroke, obesity, low back pain osteoarthritis, and strength conditioning.

Center for Persons with Disabilities: The CPD is a nationally recognized research center that joins the expertise of researchers and faculty with community partners to address the most difficult challenges facing persons with disabilities and their families. Research addresses issues that cross fields ranging from biomedicine to education. In clinical experiences, learners join teams of professionals, family members, and individuals with disabilities to deliver services and supports.

Early Intervention Research Institute: The EIRI is an interdisciplinary organization committed to investigating and improving policies and practices that support the well-being of at-risk children as well as those with special needs and their families. The institute conducts research as well as provides training and technical assistance at community, state, national, and international levels.

Edith Bowen Laboratory School: EBL is one of Utah's charter schools, offering services to more than 300 students grades K-5. The school, in cooperation with Utah State University, trains more than 200 pre-service teachers preparing to become professional educators, as well as supporting several other departments/colleges on campus, including special education, physical education, music, psychology, and business. Because the school is funded through state funds and donations, no tuition is charged to students.

EmployAbility Clinic: The EmployAbility clinic provides direct services to individuals with disabilities living in the Cache Valley community, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other individuals with severe disabilities. In addition, the clinic provides opportunities for advanced instruction for graduate students in the rehabilitation counseling program, and opportunities for conducting research in the area of employment for individuals with disabilities. Clinic staff also work extensively with employers in the development of natural supports within the work environment to ensure continued success following the withdrawal of direct employment support services.

Motor Rehabilitation and Learning Laboratory: Research within the MRL Lab focuses on how the human nervous system learns new motor skills and relearns existing ones during motor recovery following neural damage. Findings from this research are currently providing much-needed evidence to support and optimize the design of targeted rehabilitative training for older adults across a range of age-related physical disabilities.

Sensory Motor Behavior Laboratory: The Sensory Motor Behavior Laboratory is interested in understanding how people physically interact with their environment. Specifically, we are interested in how people plan and execute sequential actions and how examination of movement variability can inform us about mechanisms of control involving both the brain and body. Current research includes movement timing related to visual control and stuttering, the role of social/contextual factors on characteristics of movement variability and potential therapeutic interventions for persons with movement disorders specifically related to control of sequential, timed movement (Parkinson's Disease).

Severe Behavior Clinic: This is an outpatient clinic that serves children and adults with disabilities who engage in problem behavior. The clinic is a cooperative project between the Special Education and Rehabilitation and Psychology departments as well as USU's Center for Persons with Disabilities. Services provided include functional analysis of problem behavior, function-based interventions, and caregiver training.

SKI*HI Institute: The SKI-HI Institute enhances the lives of young children with special needs, their families, and care givers. The institute's training and services focus on early intervention and early childhood programming for infants and young children, ages birth to five years, with hearing and vision impairments and other disabilities.