

HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, M.A.

Director, Olga Dietlin

The Master of Arts degree program in Higher Education and Student Development prepares individuals for professional positions in student affairs/higher education in schools, colleges, and universities, with a particular focus on emerging adult identity and spiritual formation. This program is aligned with the guidelines for Master's-level student affairs professional preparation programs, identified by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2019) and NASPA/ACPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (2015). In addition, as part of the Master's degree, students complete coursework in conflict mediation and receive a Certificate in Conflict Resolution from the Chicago Center for Conflict Resolution. Students engage in coursework related to the history of higher education and student affairs, organization and administration of student affairs, discipleship and spiritual formation, characteristics and development of emerging adults, kingdom diversity and justice, student and staff well-being, legal issues in higher education, and program evaluation and research.

This degree is offered in partnership between with the School of Mission, Ministry & Leadership, and the Student Development Division of Wheaton College. The program faculty members are full-time, tenure track professors in the School of Mission, Ministry & Leadership, or leaders in the profession who hold full-time appointments in student affairs.

The Program's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) reflect the Program's mission to train professionals who are academically grounded (possessing professional knowledge), spiritually maturing (leading and serving others as they continue to grow in Christ), and practically skilled (proficient in the skills and competencies expected of entry-level professionals holistically prepared to work with diverse individuals and groups in higher education settings).

The Program's Students and graduates should be able to:

- Articulate a foundational understanding of the profession's history, philosophy, roles, and values and how the Christian faith animates the mission of higher education professionals.
- Identify central tenets of relevant development and learning theories, key characteristics of emerging adults, and [their application to work with diverse populations.](#)
- [Exhibit knowledge, dispositions, and skills essential to effective professional helping relationships and conflict resolution in residential and remote college settings.](#)
- [Integrate personal strengths and values with the leadership, organizational, and legal knowledge to lead student and professional teams.](#)
- [Engage in self-reflection, study, and identifiable collaborative action in preparation for serving, developing, and discipling students of all backgrounds.](#)

- [Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and utilize research and assessment methodologies to inform practice and advance scholarship in higher education.](#)
- [Apply the principles and practices of discipleship and Christian spiritual formation to building the foundation for effective ministry in higher education.](#)

Admissions

Admission to the Higher Education and Student Development graduate program is open both to those who are currently involved in higher education roles and to those who are preparing for future vocational service. Admission does not require a specific undergraduate major or a prescribed set of courses, but students are expected to possess a basic knowledge of the Bible and proficiency in written and spoken English. Continued enrollment in the degree program requires successful candidacy approval, which occurs after admission and before 12 hours of coursework have been completed. During the candidacy approval process, School of Mission, Ministry & Leadership professors and Student Development partners will evaluate the presence of essential professional and ministry skills and dispositions, as well as the student's demonstration of a commitment to growth in Christian virtues. At the time of acceptance into the program, the department will notify the student if there are any deficiencies which need to be met.

Delivery Options

It is expected that all Higher Education and Student Development candidates will be engaged in a student development role while completing the degree, so that coursework is immediately integrated with student personnel practice.

Students apply for Graduate Assistantships or Graduate Residential Assistantships at Wheaton College, or another partner institution, as part of the application to the Wheaton College Graduate School. Students complete all courses as a cohort by taking modular intensive courses, combined with online or hybrid courses with faculty from the Wheaton College Graduate School campus in Illinois.

Students assume roles as graduate assistants, coordinating some aspect of Student Development or Student Affairs, as the hands-on laboratory for student development practice and collaboration.

Requirements

Requirements for the MA degree in Higher Education and Student Development. Students are required to complete 36 hours of credit in the following courses:

Code	Title	Credits
Core Courses		
HESD 521	Personal Spiritual Formation	2
HESD 546	Holistic Growth in College: An Integrated Approach	2
HESD 549	Theology and Philosophy of Ministry	2
HESD 575	Conflict and Mediation	4
HESD 595	Higher Education: Past, Present, and Future	4
HESD 602	Research and Reflective Practice	4
HESD 608	Well-Being in Young Adults	2
HESD 614	Diversity and Student Development: Building Communities of Shalom	2
HESD 636	Leadership in Higher Education	2

HESD 639	Legal Issues in Higher Education	2
HESD 641	Emerging Adult Development	4
Theological Studies Requirement (TSR)		
BITH 565	Christian Theology	4
Final Project		
HESD 696 or HESD 698	Professional Practice and Portfolio: Capstone Applied Thesis	2
Total Credits		36

As part of this 36-credit program, all graduate students are required to complete a theological studies requirement of 6 semester hours. For HESD students, this consists of HESD 549 and BITH 565 Christian Theology.