

B.

Program **CONTEXT**

About Section B...

This section explores the **CONTEXT** of the MS in Applied Technology (MSAT) Program.

Subsections include...

- ▶ About DePaul University

- ▶ About The School for New Learning (SNL) & The College of Computing & Digital Media (CDM)

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About DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Founded by the Vincentian Fathers in 1898, DePaul University has grown over the years from a small institution with a limited curriculum to a comprehensive university that includes ten schools and colleges which offer a wide range of academic and professional programs serving nearly 23,000 students.

Despite its growth and stature as the nation's largest Catholic university, DePaul remains committed to maintaining its value-centered, urban character as well as serving individuals from a broad range of professional cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

DePaul's commitment to cultural diversity is reflected in its distinctive mission: "...to foster through higher education a deep respect for the dignity of all people...and to instill in its students a dedication to the service of others."

For more information (e.g., mission/purpose, accreditation, etc.), please visit the Course Catalog. (<http://sr.depaul.edu/CourseCatalog/CurrentCourseCatalog/index.asp> ---under *Colleges and Schools*, click *School for New Learning and/or College of Computing & Digital Media.*)

About the SCHOOL FOR NEW LEARNING (SNL) & the COLLEGE OF COMPUTING AND DIGITAL MEDIA (CDM)

The Master of Science in Applied Technology (MSAT) Program is a collaborative curriculum—drawing upon the individual and combined strengths of two of DePaul's colleges: the School for New Learning (SNL) and the College of Computing and Digital Media (CDM).

The School for New Learning (established in 1972) exists to serve the educational needs of working adults. Recognized as a leader in the field of adult education, the School is dedicated to providing individualized, student-centered education in a collaborative learning environment.

Consequently, undergraduate and graduate programs in the School are designed to bridge the artificial gulf between ideas and actions so students learn ***ideas for action***. Curricula are outcomes-based and shaped to be "customizable" to the learning needs of the individual student and, most importantly, the contribution he/she seeks to make upon degree completion. The programs enable students to focus their learning while also integrating their work and life experiences with the values and traditions of liberal learning. Working closely with faculty members as well as expert practitioners, students are assisted in both developing and demonstrating targeted areas of professional competence and honing their skills in the areas of communication, self-direction, reflection, critical thinking and creative problem-solving—skills deemed essential for maximizing personal and professional effectiveness in a world of dynamic change.

(For more information about the School for New Learning, please visit <http://snl.depaul.edu> .)

The College of Computing and Digital Media (established in 1995) stands out among technology schools for its teaching excellence, broad range of courses, technological currency, relevance to practitioners, and openness to those with diverse ideas and interests.

Known as a pioneering school, CDM is the largest school of technology in the United States—offering a variety of BS and MS degrees as well as a unique PhD program that welcomes industry professionals. CDM's broad range of programs combine an emphasis on theory with a consideration of real-world practice. The programs are designed to keep pace with the latest developments in technology while remaining grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. In

addition, their multidisciplinary approach enables students to develop the skill of teamwork as well as the right mix of theory and practice to apply critical and creative thinking to new fields and become a leader in a world in constant evolution.

The College's distance learning initiative automatically captures audio, video, and computer screen images from most CDM master's level classes and makes them available online.

(For more information about the College of Computing and Digital Media, please visit <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu>.)

About GRADUATE STUDY

Education beyond the baccalaureate level can be divided into two major categories: (1) education undertaken for personal and professional development that does not lead to a degree, and (2) education leading to a formal graduate degree. Non-degree seeking post-baccalaureate education takes a number of forms including seminars, conferences and formal certificate programs offered by colleges and universities. Degree seeking post-baccalaureate education includes both masters and doctoral degrees. Both forms of post-baccalaureate education are necessary and important to support career advancement and ongoing professional development. However, it is the distinctive role and nature of graduate education at the master's level that serves as the focus of this section.

Master's level graduate education has a rich and important heritage. Since its inception in the newly founded universities of medieval Europe, the nature of the master's degree has changed in both content and form. The word "master" derives from the Latin word *magister*, which means "teacher." Thus, in the medieval university, a master was a *licensed teacher in the faculty of arts*.

Following its transplantation to the United States, master's education grew both in content specialization and in the number of students enrolled. According to Conrad, Haworth, and Millar in their landmark study of master's education entitled—A Silent Success: Master's Education in the United States (1993), the number of Master's degrees awarded annually in the U.S. grew by 48% from 1970 to 1990. Nearly 300,000 master's degrees have been granted each year since 1987—a number which accounts for nearly 25% of all degrees awarded by institutions of higher education.

In recent years, master's level education in the United States has evolved to incorporate the much broader purpose of professional development across numerous fields of endeavor. This evolution has been driven, at least in part, by society's increasing demand for individuals (professionals) capable of deriving and contributing timely, accurate and relevant information. To this end, master's level education has expanded to become an important means through which professionals are able to both expand their knowledge and skills and enhance the competency and competitiveness of their contributions (Conrad, et al., 1993). Thus, master's education today stands in sharp contrast to the traditional aims of graduate education which historically included "...full-time, sustained examination of an academic discipline, unlimited access to mentors and research facilities, mastery of broad academic skills in research methodology and foreign languages, and an explicit expectation that the novitiate would produce new knowledge in the form of a monographic thesis" (Spencer as cited in Conrad et al., 1993, p. 17).

Today, "most people who pursue master's degrees...are seeking a kind of advanced education designed to expand their understanding and improve their skills so that they can be more effective in their careers" (Hasselmo as cited in Conrad et al., 1993, p. xi). In response, master's education has become increasingly practitioner oriented. It emphasizes career development, skills training and pragmatic goals (Glazer, 1986). Such education is based on a whole new set of assumptions: "...that students should be encouraged, through evening and external programs, to consider graduate study as an adjunct to the other priorities in their lives; that they are expected

to master specific, rather than general, techniques and bodies of knowledge; and that they are trained to become, however tired the cliché, consumers rather than producers, of scholarly research” (Spencer as cited in Conrad et al., 1993, p. 17).

In short, contemporary master’s education “is linked to the needs of the student and the demands of the marketplace...it emphasizes practice [as well as] theory, skills [as well as] research, and training [as well as] scholarship...” (Glazer, 1986, pp. 83-85). As a result, it has also developed models of educational delivery that are non-traditional in nature. These programs emphasize alternative modes of course delivery and innovative, flexible scheduling. They also work to accommodate the needs of their adult students—most of whom are typically employed full-time (Johnstone, 1996).

About ADULT LEARNING

The MSAT Program offers a unique and distinctive approach to graduate education, founded upon the following presuppositions about adult learning:

(1) Personal and Professional Competence

Adult learning is enhanced when students have opportunities to develop both social and work role competencies. Therefore, SNL’s MAAPS Program provides students with a Liberal Learning and Professional Competence framework that can be tailored to their individual needs. This framework is designed to assist students to develop: (a) in areas generic to all professionals (i.e., Liberal Learning); (b) in specialized areas pertinent to their individualized areas of focus (i.e., Professional Competence); and (c) in the integration of the two.

(2) Outcomes-Based Planning

Adult learning is enhanced when learners have specific, measurable learning goals and are able to expand their inherent capacity to be self-managing in both the planning and accomplishing of such. Therefore, the SNL’s MAAPS Program provides students with a graduate-level competence framework through which to develop and articulate their personal and professional goals (sought outcomes) and develop an individualized plan for their professional and liberal learning within the Program. The Program also maintains that the role of the ‘teacher’ is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with the student rather than merely transmitting knowledge and evaluating conformity to it.

(3) Multiple Methods and Ways of Knowing

Adult learning is enhanced when learners are able to participate in structuring the learning experience and choosing learning activities best suited to their learning needs and individual learning differences. Therefore, SNL’s MAAPS Program enables students to identify and pursue learning activities of their own choosing in order to develop and demonstrate competencies in accordance with their individualized Graduate Focus Area Learning Plans and their individual learning styles. In so doing, the Program also encourages students to explore and employ a wide variety of activities (e.g., work projects, individualized studies, tutorials/guided readings, conferences/special programs and also formal coursework) and capitalize on the fact that learning is a process that happens throughout one’s life—not merely in a classroom.

(4) Relevant Experience and Reflection

Adult learning is enhanced when both its content and its process are linked to learners’ past and present experiences and they are able to draw on such experiences as a resource for learning. Therefore, SNL’s MAAPS Program requires that students possess—prior to entering the Program—a base of prior experience in the areas of study they wish to pursue as well as an ongoing setting (work or otherwise) in which to

derive and/or apply related learning while enrolled. In this regard, the SNL's MAAPS Program stresses the ability to articulate, reflect upon, and analyze experience in order to better apply knowledge (derived through content) and create knowledge (derived through experience).

(5) Ongoing and Multifaceted Assessment

Adult learning is enhanced when ongoing, systematic feedback is provided regarding learners' growth and development and incorporates the perspective of those closest to the context of the learning and its application. Therefore SNL's MAAPS Program actively incorporates assessment processes (formative and summative) into all aspects of the curriculum. Multiple assessors — including the students themselves, faculty members with expertise in adult learning methodologies, and practicing professionals with content expertise in students' individual areas of study — are used to evaluate various portions of students' graduate work. In so doing, the SNL's MAAPS Program encourages students' constant development of skills in both reflective self-assessment and the solicitation/utilization of feedback.

(6) Peer Collaboration

Adult learning is enhanced when learners are provided with opportunities to interact with peers during the learning process. Therefore, SNL's MAAPS Program encourages students to network with one another to identify and develop appropriate learning colleagues. Core courses and the Liberal Learning Seminars provide important occasions for peer interaction with other students; however, the Program also challenges students to deliberately 'interact with peers' in the larger community of practice (beyond DePaul) associated with their areas of study.

(7) Supportive Climate

Adult learning is enhanced when it takes place in a climate that minimizes anxiety and encourages experimentation. Therefore, SNL's MAAPS Program seeks to create an environment responsive to, and supportive of, the needs of adult learners. Such an environment includes: (a) classes offered whenever and wherever a critical mass of students wish; (b) a flexible model of education fostering peer challenge and support among students; (c) a curriculum deliberately incorporating the interests of the individual; and, (d) relationship-building opportunities with a resident faculty advisor/mentor and a working professional in one's practice community—both of whom provide mentoring support and feedback throughout the program of study.

Adult Learning Resources: An Initial List

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