

B.

Program CONTEXT

About Section B...

This section explores the *CONTEXT* for this graduate program. Specifically, this section includes the following subsections:

- ▶ About DePaul University

- ▶ About The School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS)

- ▶ About Graduate Study

- ▶ About Adult Learning

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 for a student body of over 23,000.

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 **Graduate Students**, click on **School of Continuing and Professional Studies**).

The **School of Continuing and Professional Studies/SCPS** (established in 1972; formerly the *School for New Learning*) 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 student-centered education in a collaborative learning environment.'

SCPS offers innovative undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates that are recognized for their quality and applicability in an ever-changing profession world. The School also provides continuing education and workplace learning opportunities via seminars, workshops and customized corporate training programs as well as personalized academic and career guidance, credit for prior learning, and flexible learning structures designed to meet the demands of busy adult lives. These programs are designed to help students develop skills in collaboration, persuasion, critical-thinking, inquiry, technology, creativity, and adaptability that meet the requirements for success in the 21st century workplace.

(For more information about the School of Continuing and Profession Studies, please visit <http://scps.depaul.edu> .)

The School's academic programs are outcomes-based and tailored to the learning needs of the individual student. These programs enable students to focus their learning while also integrating their work and life experiences with the values and traditions of a liberal education 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 skills deemed essential for maximizing personal and professional effectiveness in a world of dynamic change.

To accomplish its mission, the School of Continuing and Professional Studies considers the following eight "commitments" to be critical to its ongoing success:

A Commitment to Learning as a Way of Life:

For all of its learners SCPS cares about the substance and process of learning – the knowledge, abilities and values they acquire, as well as the educational goals they attain. The School believes that adults learn deeply by reflecting, particularly on experience, drawing meaning and transferable knowledge from all they have done. When we are most successful, students refine their habits of learning, and experience the excitement of expanding their curiosity, of using formal inquiry, of developing as independent lifelong learners.

A Commitment to Learning Outcomes:

Curriculum design and assessment practices at SCPS focus on the outcomes of learning – the student’s demonstrated knowledge and abilities, learned in a variety of ways. This focus on competence leads faculty to pursue excellence in curricular design, advising strategies, and teaching methods. It enables students to integrate classroom learning with learning from life and work, and to apply continuously what they are learning in other contexts.

A Commitment to Partnership with Students:

In collaboration with learners, faculty and staff design, implement and assess individualized educational programs. This learning-centered partnership, based on mutual respect for each participant’s expertise, prior learning, and decision-making power, deepens and broadens learning.

A Commitment to Diversity:

SCPS faculty develop teaching, advising and assessment practices that value human differences in the broadest sense. SCPS seeks, in particular, to present a welcoming environment for those who have historically been excluded from higher education, and to enable all to benefit from the richness that diversity brings to a learning community.

A Commitment to an Evolving, Developing Organization

SCPS is a continuously evolving organization, open and responsive to the emerging educational needs of individuals and groups in a constantly changing world. SCPS’s response includes ongoing research in effective teaching, mentoring, and assessment, resulting in imaginative design of programs, structures, systems, courses and materials.

A Commitment to Community in Service of Learning:

SCPS students, faculty, and staff work and learn in a community that fosters the mutual regard and support necessary for learning. Individuals creatively address challenges caused by multiple locations, asynchronicity, and varying areas and levels of knowledge. Members commit themselves to the Vincentian personal regard for the dignity of individuals, respectfully dealing with conflict, setting goals which benefit individuals as well as DePaul and its urban, and global communities, and celebrating achievements.

A Commitment to Social Justice:

SCPS deliberately works to shape a more just, livable world; to ensure that those who have historically been ignored, excluded, marginalized, oppressed and economically disenfranchised benefit from the many learning opportunities available through SCPS and beyond. In its curriculum, its classroom environments, its assessment practices, its advising strategies, and its formal advocacy, SCPS creates an intellectual and social milieu where a plurality of worldviews, cultures and value systems are respected, understood, encouraged and appreciated.

Commitment to Adult Learning

The active, reflective practice of established and emerging principles of adult learning is central to the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. Faculty and staff, who come from many formal disciplines, enable and encourage colleagues to develop, apply, and disseminate knowledge in the practice of adult education--continuously.

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 (1993) in their landmark study of master's education entitled—A Silent Success: Master's Education in the United States, 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 novice 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 being 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

SCPS's Graduate Programs offer 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, SCPS's Graduate Programs 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 practice; and, (c) in the integration of the two. (Sample Resources: Brookfield, 1986; Chickering, 1981; Houle, 1961; Kegan, 1994; Knowles, 1978; Knox, 177; Lindeman, 1926; Schön, 1983; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008)

(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 SCPS's Graduate Programs provide students opportunities to develop and articulate their personal and professional goals (sought outcomes) and pursue individual interests and goals. The Programs also maintain 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. (Sample Resources: Brookfield, 2013; Dewey, 1938; Kolb & Boyatzis, 1976; Kolb, 1984; Knowles, 1978, 1984)

(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, SCPS's Graduate Programs enable students to identify and pursue learning activities of their own choosing, within the context of core courses as well as through Electives and the Applied Inquiry Project. In so doing, students are encouraged to explore and employ a wide variety of activities (e.g., through work projects, independent 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. (Sample Resources: Ambrose, et al, 2010; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, 1997; Boyatzis, 1995; Cross, 1981; Houle, 1961; Kidd, 1959; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Rogers, 1969; Smith, 1982; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Tough, 1979)

(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, SCPS's Graduate Programs require that students possess—prior to admission—a base of prior experience in the areas of practice 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 SCPS's Graduate Programs stress the ability to articulate, reflect upon, and analyze experience in order to better apply knowledge (derived through content) and create knowledge (derived through experience). (Sample Resources: Brewer & Marienau, 2016; Brookfield, 1987; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; 1973; Kolb, 1984; Knowles, 1978; 1984; Lindeman, 1926; Lyons, 2009; MacGregor, 1993; Mezirow, 1990; Schön, 1983, 1987; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Tough, 1979)

(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 SCPS's Graduate Programs actively incorporate 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 practice — are used to evaluate various portions of students' graduate work. In so doing, the SCPS's Graduate Programs facilitate students' constant development of skills in both reflective self-assessment and the solicitation/utilization of feedback. (Sample Resources: Banta, 1993; Boyatzis, 1995; Younger & Marienau, 2017; Kolb, 1984; Lindeman, 1926; Younger & Marienau, 2016)

(6) Peer Collaboration

Adult learning is enhanced when learners are provided with opportunities to interact with peers during the learning process. Therefore, SCPS's Graduate Programs create opportunities for students to network with one another to find appropriate learning colleagues. Core courses and the Liberal Learning Seminars provide important occasions to interact with peers. Students also are encouraged to 'interact with peers' in the larger community of practice (beyond DePaul) associated with their areas of study. (Sample Resources: Brookfield, 1986; Bruffee, 1993; Houle, 1984, Sullivan & Rosin, 2008; Wenger, 2009)

(7) Supportive Climate

Adult learning is enhanced when it takes place in a climate that minimizes anxiety and encourages experimentation. Therefore, SCPS's Graduate Programs seek to create an environment responsive to, and supportive of, the needs of adult learners. Such an environment includes: (a) a flexible model of education fostering peer support among students; (b) a curriculum deliberately incorporating the interests of the individual; and, (c) an ongoing relationship with a full-time faculty mentor and a practice professional in the community— (Sample Resources: Chickering, 1981; Daloz, 1986; Kegan, 1994; Smith, 1982; Srinivasan, 1977; Taylor & Marinena, 2016; Wlodkowski, 1993; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

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