

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 of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) & The College of Computing & Digital Media (CDM)

- ▶ About Graduate Study

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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 of Continuing and Professional Studies* and/or *College of Computing & Digital Media*.)

About the SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (SCPS) & 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 of Continuing and Professional Studies and the College of Computing and Digital Media.

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 professional 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 Professional Studies, please visit <http://scps.depaul.edu> .)

The *College of Computing and Digital Media/CDM* (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, the MSAT Program provides students with a Liberal Learning and Technical Specialization framework aimed to facilitate development in both: (a) areas generic to all professionals (i.e., Liberal Learning); and, (b) areas targeted to key *applied* technology emphases (i.e., Professional Specialization).

(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 MSAT Program provides students with a graduate-level framework through which to pursue their learning goals associated degree outcomes. The Program also maintains that the role of the ‘teacher’ is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with the student more 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, the MSAT Program encourages students to engage course-based learning, integration/synthesizing across courses and ongoing application/reflection of learning into their personal/professional practices.

(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, the MSAT Program encourages students to possess and utilize an ongoing setting (work or otherwise) in which to derive and/or apply related learning while enrolled. In this regard, the MSAT 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 the MSAT Program actively incorporates assessment processes (formative and summative) into the curriculum. Multiple assessors —including students themselves— are used to evaluate various portions of students’ graduate work. In so doing, the MSAT 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, the MSAT Program encourages students to network with one another to identify and develop appropriate learning colleagues. Specialization 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, the MSAT 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 resident faculty resources in both SCPS and CDM.

Adult Learning Resources: An Initial List

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