



College of Individualized Studies Graduate Program Handbook



Welcome!

This handbook presents a selection of information about the Master of Arts and Master of Science in Individualized Studies programs. If after reading it you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Masters of Individualized Studies

Metropolitan State University

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General Information about the CIS Graduate Program

The College of Individualized Studies is offering a Master of Arts (MA) or a Master of Science (MS) in Individualized Studies. The MA/MS is a student-centered, individualized, interdisciplinary graduate program designed for individuals who have successfully completed a bachelor's degree and are looking to design a graduate program designed to meet their specific educational goals.

Admitted students start with the *IDST 600 Research and Planning* course and then move through a series of courses or other learning strategies, offered through other graduate programs at the university, to explore specific topics and issues drawn from several disciplines. Students' programs culminate in the *IDST 699 Individualized Studies Capstone* course in which they create a major Capstone Project/Research that aligns with their personal educational goals and builds on the coursework they have completed.

The degree awarded will be an MA or MS depending on a student's focus area. This distinction can be determined through student and faculty consultations in the IDST 600 course, and finalized at a later time.

Why Individualized Graduate Study?

Graduate students will broaden and deepen their knowledge through the specific content identified in the two required courses (IDST 600 and IDST 699), graduate classes they take in other Metropolitan State colleges, and other coursework in the College of Individualized Studies (CIS).

Students pursue graduate degrees for many reasons, such as gaining a different or better position, qualifying for a promotion, entering a new career path, or personal enrichment and development. In this graduate program, students can shape their study to meet their own specific personal and professional educational needs.

Advanced study expands potential for analysis, communication, critical thinking, cultural and multicultural understanding, intellectual resourcefulness, problem-solving and research. In an era of information explosion and rapid global development, advanced study is more important than ever.

CIS graduates will apply skills and knowledge within structured opportunities for self-directed learning, employing interdisciplinary perspectives inclusive of diverse viewpoints, leading to an effective presentation of their Capstone Project/Research to faculty, other graduate students, and the Metropolitan State University community.

Is the Program for Me?

If you are eager to reflect upon and make meaning of your education, then an individualized master's degree may be for you. As a CIS graduate student, you will consider how you can expand your concept of citizenship, engage in lifelong learning, and deepen the ways in which you contribute to society in general.

Graduate programs in a university have a variety of different goals. Some professional departments teach students skills that are directly applicable to specific jobs. Other departments are more

focused on helping individuals understand themselves, other people and the world around them. This program allows students to plan a program to meet specific goals—whether those are specific job-related skills, a better understanding of the world around them, or for their own personal development.

In IDST 600, students develop a focus that will provide direction and organization for their educational plans. Students investigate courses and graduate certificates offered through other departments in the university to shape that focus. They also identify learning opportunities that supplement or complement the focus area. Students are encouraged to include independent study and internships in their degree programs.

Ultimately, students will integrate what they have learned into an individualized Capstone Project/Research, completed in IDST 699. All capstones are expected to draw from a broad range of interdisciplinary scholarship, as designed in each student's individualized program.

Staying True to the Metropolitan State University Mission

Metropolitan State University is committed to making education accessible to busy working adults. This graduate program, designed to help students succeed in meeting their individual educational objectives, offers:

- Evening classes.
- Flexible program completion guidelines.
- Opportunities for independent study and internships, and credit for prior learning, as appropriate.
- Opportunities to include a limited number of graduate study credits from other institutions.

The program reflects the mission of Metropolitan State University.

- The program welcomes and encourages diversity in students, faculty and topics of study, capitalizing upon a range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Courses are affordable and offered in formats and at times convenient for working adult learners, maximizing accessibility.
- This is a student-centered program, leading each student towards academic success through an individualized plan of study based on graduate courses across the university, augmented with internships and student-designed study.
- Taught by experienced university professors, this is a high-quality program, with an unshakeable commitment to academic excellence.
- The program is situated squarely within the context of lifelong learning, welcoming students to post-baccalaureate study and preparing them to continue that study throughout their lives.

Program Design

There is an opportunity within this master's program to design a course of study and Capstone Project/Research that spans disciplines, subject areas, and professional studies. One student might design a research-based capstone that studies women and micro-loans, while another student might design a creative project that combines video production with a marketing plan. Others yet

may choose to use mapping technology to look into links between property taxes, school funding, and student achievement. A student interested in the environment might develop a new way to teach school children about environmental preservation or study ways to reduce ocean pollution. Students may even ask whether zip codes can help predict health outcomes. The options are truly bound only by each student's interests and creativity! The scope and design of a student's study plan will start to be developed in the core IDST 600 course, will be carried out in the various courses and learning strategies selected, and will culminate in the IDST 699 Capstone Project/Research.

Course Work Overview

Admitted students begin by taking *IDST 600 Research and Planning*, which teaches methods of interdisciplinary inquiry through variable topics. The course serves as an introduction to the program and to interdisciplinary thinking, learning and research. To that end, students will study and discuss the ways in which knowledge is constructed in different disciplines and in integrated interdisciplinary study and research. One of the course outcomes is an individualized plan of study, designed to address each student's educational objectives within the framework of graduate program resources.

You may design a program with focus on coursework and research that integrates multiple disciplines, drawing from the arts, sciences, and professional studies. Designations of either MA or MS will reflect the composition of your plan and capstone project. If you chose to pursue a Master of Arts, the preponderance of your studies will likely be in *liberal arts* (humanities) subjects such as literature, philosophy, mathematics, and social and physical sciences. If you decided to pursue a Master of Science, the preponderance of your studies will likely be in *non-liberal-arts* (professional) areas, such as STEM, human services, or public advocacy.

Please note: There are some professional fields that require you to have a degree, often from an accredited program, in that specific field. Some examples are teacher education, nursing, accounting, and social work. Note that some applied subject areas, such as nursing and urban education, are limited to students in those graduate programs. Courses in these programs may not be accessible to students in the Individualized Studies masters program, and the details will be covered during IDST 600.

In addition, some focus areas may require prerequisites and additional testing. You are responsible for checking on and honoring any prerequisites/testing, and remember that if they are not met, your registration may be dropped!

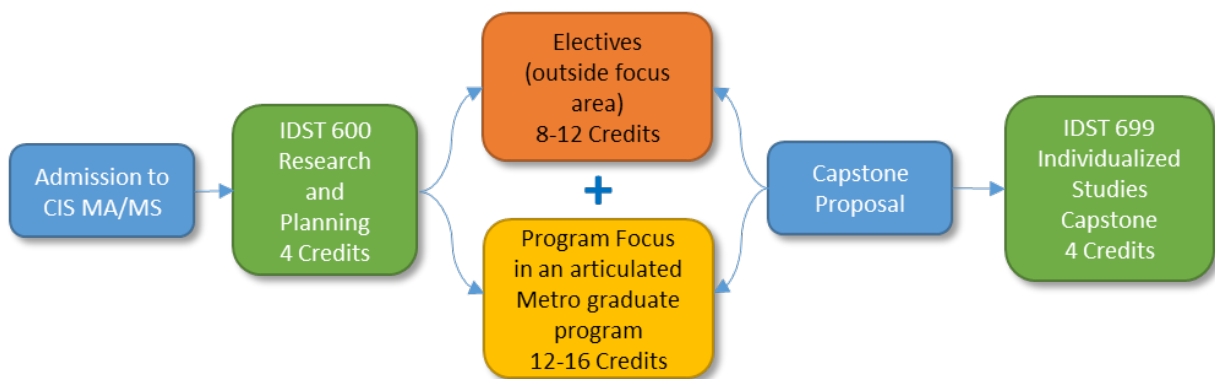
After completing IDST 600 and at least 24 credits in the program, students may apply to register for the second required course: IDST 699 Individualized Studies Capstone. Students will need to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 and have the approval of the Graduate Program Director to register for IDST 699, which focuses on the final revisions and completion of the student's self-directed capstone.

In addition to the two required courses, each study plan must include a 12-16 credit focus from another graduate program at the university, as well as another 8-12 credits from outside that focus area. For example, a student interested in entrepreneurship might complete 12 credits in College of Management and an additional 12 credits in Technical Communication. Students who are accepted

into certificate programs at Metro State can use up to 16 credits from those programs toward the MA/MS of Individualized Studies.

Overview of the Individualized Program Course Work	Credits
IDST 600 Research and Planning (required)	4 credits
*Focus Area of Study	12-16 credits
*Approved Graduate Elective Credits (Outside the Focus Area)	8-12 credits
IDST 699 Individualized Studies Capstone (<i>required</i>)	4 credits
TOTAL	32 credits

*Graduate course work at the 500G level or higher, in courses, independent studies or internships clearly relevant to the approved Focus Area



Sequence: Students are expected to complete IDST 600 at the start of their programs; any course they take prior to, or concurrent with, IDST 600 must be approved by a CIS faculty member. Students who complete two classes without completing IDST 600 will not be allowed to register for other courses until IDST 600 is successfully completed. IDST 699 is normally the final course. When taking courses in other graduate programs, students must follow the sequences and meet the prerequisites in place for those programs and/or courses.

Transfer Credits: Students can apply up to 8 transfer credits toward their plan, with the approval of the Graduate Program Director. Transfer credits must have been earned at another accredited institution and not be part of any other completed degree program. Current students enrolled in graduate coursework at Metro State may transfer up to 12 graduate credits. Exceptions may be made for certificates and minors, to allow up to 16 credits to be transferred (such exceptions will be based solely upon the CIS Admissions Committee's review and approval).

Part-Time Graduate Studies: This program is designed for part-time students, including those who are employed full-time and might take just one graduate course per semester. Most classes meet once a week on a weekday evening.

Digital Literacy: The program involves use of technology, including navigating the Internet,

researching online library databases, keyboarding, and using Metropolitan State University email for all official business. It is expected that all students have competence in these areas.

Academic Advising

Since its founding, Metropolitan State University has emphasized a student-centered educational philosophy with strong faculty involvement in advising. Advising begins with the instructor in IDST 600 Research and Planning, where students articulate their educational objectives.

Students will be assigned a faculty advisor who will guide them toward appropriate course selection and also help arrange creative learning strategies, including customized independent studies and internships.

As a student nears completion of the program, the Graduate Program Director identifies a faculty member from a discipline related to the student's focus area and Capstone Project/Research. This faculty member reviews the student's capstone and, in addition to the IDST 699 instructor, will advise students in the final stages of their program.

Required Courses

IDST 600 Research and Planning Course Description

In this course students will explore various research methods and methodologies, approaches, and ethical considerations in their research or creative projects. Among others, students are expected to engage with and identify, synthesize and evaluate relevant scholarly works. As such, the course will also emphasize the study and research skills and methods needed to conduct a final research and/or creative project.

Further, students are expected to develop a focus that will provide direction and organization for their educational plans. Students will investigate courses offered throughout Metro State to shape that focus and tentatively outline final projects that will demonstrate their multidisciplinary learning. The course will introduce students to the nature of individualized study and the significance of interdisciplinary studies.

During this course students will also consult with their advisor and instructor to decide whether they will pursue a Master of Arts (MA) or a Master of Science (MS). The decision will depend on the area of focus and the coursework that will be selected. While the conversation about a particular path starts in this course, students can make adjustments as they continue their coursework and through consultations with faculty.

By the end of IDST600, students will submit a plan of study that outlines their focus areas and associated learning. The approval of this plan, including the relevance and appropriateness of associated learning, is at the discretion of the faculty. A faculty committee will have final approval responsibility for both students' plans and final projects, prior to registration for IDST 699.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify a complex problem, intellectual or creative query using an interdisciplinary

perspective.

- Explore and determine disciplines as well as methodologies and approaches that most appropriately address a complex problem, intellectual or creative query.
- Identify, synthesize, and evaluate relevant scholarly study.
- Create an interdisciplinary plan that pursues an in-depth study of a complex problem, intellectual or creative query from different perspectives.

Independent Studies and Internships

In addition to taking graduate courses at Metropolitan State University (and up to 8 transfer graduate credits from other institutions), students can earn program credits through the following creative learning strategies. Students interested in setting up an independent study or internship are invited to send an email describing that interest to the Graduate Program Director, who can refer you to the appropriate forms and help identify possible faculty supervisors.

Faculty Designed Independent Studies (FDIS)

Graduate FDIS is usually an independent study version of an existing graduate course, or a 500G-level independent study version of an existing 500-level course.

Student Designed Independent Studies (SDIS)

Graduate SDIS is most often a unique learning opportunity customized by a student with the individual faculty member.

Internships and Prior Learning

Graduate internships are usually coordinated through the Center for Community Based Learning and could involve a wide range of projects and activities. Elective credit may also be available by assessing some of your prior learning (PLA). Students can contact the Graduate Program Director for more information.

IDST 699 Individualized Studies Capstone Description

In IDST 699, students will produce a culminating work that brings together and builds upon their graduate studies journey. In this course, students focus largely on revising, refining, and completing their capstone, which would have been drafted prior to registering for IDST 699. All Capstone Projects/Research are expected to draw on relevant scholarship spanning at least two well-defined academic disciplines or professional areas of expertise, as guided by the student's faculty advisor.

Learning Outcomes

- Articulate and examine a complex problem, intellectual or creative query using an individualized approach.
- Pursue and apply research, sufficient in depth and breadth to be commensurate with graduate-level work.
- Apply advanced writing and rhetorical skills in communicating results.
- Demonstrate advanced ability to present results, both orally and in writing.

Each student's substantive body of knowledge will lead to the development of an individualized Capstone Project/Research. This final product represents central currents of thought from the student's diverse educational path, and applies what students have experienced throughout their studies.

As students of an individualized master's program, each capstone will use an interdisciplinary lens to address one or more complex problems, intellectual or creative queries that draw from multiple areas of their educational endeavors. Although the capstone is expected to be critical in nature, academically sound, and represent original work, students are actively encouraged to apply their capstone to real-world issues that matter to society at large.

In this seminar, students will carry out and finalize their Project or Research Paper according to their approved proposal, including:

- Review and share literature and resources relevant to their project or research paper.
- Refine and share the theoretical framework and scope of their project/research.
- Apply appropriate methods and methodology (approach and processes of their project or research).
- Synthesize and evaluate findings or application of their work to the local and global community.
- Professionally present the process and results of their capstone in both oral and written format.

Preparing for the Individualized Capstone Course

The Individualized Studies Capstone is where the Capstone Project/Research is brought to completion. Before registering for IDST 699, students must devote considerable time and attention toward developing their capstone. This means taking multiple graduate-level courses, having consultations with faculty advisors, doing independent research and reflection, and writing drafts for components of the capstone. In IDST 699, students focus largely on revising, refining, and completing their capstone.

Before registering for IDST 699 student must:

- Complete IDST 600.
- Confer regularly with their advisor and other faculty to discuss program progress.
- Complete at least 24 additional credits in the graduate program.
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. Students should consult with the Graduate Program Director if their GPAs ever fall below 3.0.
- Submit a completed Capstone Proposal to the Graduate Program Director.

Students are encouraged and expected to complete their capstone the first semester they register for it. However, if unable to do so, an extension may be requested to re-register for the course. Such a request may be granted for up to two semesters by the Program Director. Requests must be made in writing and should include:

- The reason(s) for requesting the extension.
- A summary of the student's plan to finish graduation requirements Students are not allowed

to register for the course more than three times.

Applying to the CIS Graduate Program

Minimum Admission Requirements

Applicants must demonstrate evidence of readiness for graduate study including an earned baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution (or equivalent) with a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

Applicants with competence-based transcripts and no calculated GPA will be considered.

Exceptions to this GPA standard may be made based solely upon the CIS Admissions Committee's recognition of special circumstances for the lower GPA and the candidate's clear demonstration of additional compensatory strengths. In the case of a GPA lower than 3.0 you may submit a supplementary letter along with the admissions essay addressing the reasons for the lower GPA and your plan to be successful in graduate school.

Admission is not guaranteed.

Application Deadlines

The following deadlines apply for resident and non-resident (international students):

- Fall Semester – April 1
- Spring Semester – September 1
- No Summer Admissions

Applications received by the deadline will be reviewed by the CIS Admissions Committee, which will report its decision to each applicant within a month after the deadline.

Admission is based on meeting a number of qualifying criteria, detailed below. In addition, every semester there will be a limited number of seats available. If you meet the criteria but are not admitted due to limited space, the Admissions Committee may grant deferred admission.

Application File Requirements

A complete application file consists of two parts (three for international students). Begin the application process by first applying online using the [online graduate application](#). All application materials become the property of Metropolitan State University and are not returned. All application materials must be received in the Graduate Studies Office by the application deadline, and will be made available to the CIS Admissions Committee for review.

The Admissions Committee will make decisions only if your application is complete. Note that if you are completing a four-year program you may apply to the graduate program if you are in your final year; however, you cannot start the graduate program until you have finished your bachelor's degree.

Please note: depending on your focus area there may be additional admission requirements at a

later time. Please see the Course Work Overview section of this handbook.

Part One

- Complete the Online Graduate Programs Application, using your Minnesota State StarID. If you don't have a Minnesota State StarID you will create one at the beginning of the application.
 - If you don't have or choose not to provide your Social Security number (SSN), please follow the No SSN instruction to activate your StarID. If you encounter difficulty with the online application, please email graduate.studies@metrostate.edu.
- Non-refundable application fee, paid online
 - The current fee of \$20 is waived for graduates of Metropolitan State, certified veterans and active military.
- Official transcripts
 - Must show a bachelor degree or equivalent earned from a regionally accredited institution with grade-point average or narrative description describing courses completed.
 - Transcripts from ALL schools attended after high school and from any graduate or professional programs are required.
 - All transcripts from non-US schools must be evaluated (course-by-course) by either ECE (preferred) or WES.
 - Electronic transcripts should be sent to graduate.studies@metrostate.edu.
 - Paper transcripts should be sent directly from the sending institution (preferred) to:

Metropolitan State University
Attn: Graduate Admissions
700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul MN 55106

Part Two

After you have submitted your online application, log in to the Applicant Portal using your Star ID and password to upload application materials, and check on the status of your application. The Applicant Portal will indicate any missing application items.

- Two professional letters of recommendation: submit reference contact information using the online application.
 - The most effective letters may be from professors familiar with your work in upper-division courses, and able to comment on your preparation for advanced study.
 - Personal references will not be considered. Applicants should remind their references of the application deadline when speaking with them.
 - Once submitted, references will receive a "no reply" email from Minnesota State with a link to the recommendation form.
 - References should check junk mail if the email is not in their inbox. The link is good for 60 days, however, the application deadline may be sooner.
- Admission Essay; Upload via the Applicant Portal using your StarID.
 - Your admission essay will serve as both a goals statement and a writing assessment. The admissions essay is extremely important to the application review process.

Submit your essay in 900-1000 words, using 12-point font, double-spaced, clearly written, well-organized, with correct grammar, accurate spelling and punctuation, good sentence structure, and clear sub-headings. Make sure that you carefully address each of the following:

- Pledge of Authorship: Please begin your admissions essay with the following statement: (Your essay will not be accepted if this is not included.) I, (complete name) , verify that this admissions essay is my own work, and I am fully aware that discovery otherwise will invalidate my entire application.
- Why you are interested in graduate individualized study (focus either on the MA or the MS option)?
- How do you feel your previous experiences, academic or otherwise, have prepared you for this program?
- What subjects and what disciplines are you interested in, and why?
- What skills and knowledge do you expect to gain through this program?

Part Three – International Students Only

In addition to documents required for all applicants in parts one and two, international students in the US or abroad, on any type of visa are required to provide this information.

Required by the application deadline:

- Proof of English proficiency (Official TOEFL or IELTS score).
 - Official scores must be submitted, student copies are not acceptable. Metropolitan State University's school code for TOEFL is 6445.
 - Minimum scores: TOEFL 80 IBT, 213 CBT, 550 PBT or IELTS 6.5.
 - IBT=internet based; CBT=computer based; PBT=paper based.
 - An English proficiency report is not required for applicants who have received a degree in the US or have completed a minimum of 16 credits.

The following is needed, if you are offered and accept admission to the program:

- Financial statement (F1 visa only).
- Immunization records.
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94, and international home address and phone numbers.

Mailing address:

International Student Services
Metropolitan State University
700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55106-5000

Please visit [International Student Services graduate admissions](#) for part three details.

Questions about Applying to the CIS Graduate Program?

- Questions about the online application, fee, transcripts/transcript evaluations, online references and document upload feature can be sent to graduate.studies@metrostate.edu (preferred) or call 612-659-7150.

- Questions about Part Two requirements or the program in general, please contact Prof. Daniel Woldeab, Graduate Program Director, at daniel.woldeab@metrostate.edu (preferred) or call 612-793-1781.
 - 262 St. John's Hall
700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, MN 55106-5000

Maintaining Progress in the CIS Graduate Program

Academic Progress Policy

Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Progress Policy, and for monitoring their academic progress and immediately notifying the Graduate Program Director of a low grade or non-completion of a class or other learning.

To remain in good standing and to be qualified for graduation, students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0. Grades below C do not apply to program requirements, but are calculated in the cumulative grade point average.

Academic Probation, Dismissal and Reapplication

Satisfactory Academic Progress

- Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress to remain in the program.
- Only courses with a letter grade of C (2.00) or better count toward degree requirements; and a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 is required for admission to IDST 699, and for graduation.
- Students with a cumulative graduate GPA below 3.0, or who do not complete 67% of the graduate credits attempted, will be placed on academic warning for a semester. Students may be suspended from the program if, after the warning semester, their academic performance has not improved to satisfactory levels.
- Students suspended from the CIS graduate programs for unsatisfactory academic progress, may reapply after one calendar year has passed. Re-admission decisions are made by the CIS Admissions Committee and are not automatic.
- Only courses with letter grades (A–C) are applied to the MA/MS degree, except in the case of graduate internships, which may be graded S–NC.
- Students should immediately consult with the Graduate Program Director if they have questions or concerns about their academic standing.

Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Removals from the Program

Students suspended from the program for unsatisfactory academic progress may appeal the suspension to the College of Individualized Studies dean. The appeal must be in writing and it must provide specific grounds for the appeal. The appeal to the dean is due within 30 days of receiving confirmation of suspension from the program; appeals received after 30 days will not be considered.

Reactivating into the CIS MA/MS Program

Should a student who is admitted to the CIS graduate program not be able to start the program and

register for courses, they will be able to retain their accepted status for up to a year; students in this situation should consult with the Graduate Program Director. Students who have been admitted but do not register for courses for more than a year without consulting with the Graduate Program Director will be dropped from active status and will need to reapply to the program.

Similarly, students who started the program and are in good academic standing, but who have not registered for courses for three calendar years, must reapply to the program. If readmitted, students are required to satisfy the degree requirements in force at the time of readmission, if those requirements differ from those in force at the time of original admission.

Time to Completion

The CIS graduate program allows students to complete their MA/MS degree within two to three years. However, students may take up to five years from the first semester of graduate study to complete their degree program requirements. An extension of the time limit may be requested by writing to the Graduate Program Director. Such requests must be received prior to the expiration of the time limit. Requests for extensions should include:

- The reason(s) for requesting the extension.
- A summary of the student's plan to finish graduation requirements.
- A specific date for the extension to expire.

Extension decisions are made by the Graduate Admissions Committee, are not automatic, and cannot be appealed.

Appendix A – CIS Professors & Independent Study Topics

If you are interested in Graduate Student Designed Independent Studies (SDIS), CIS faculty offer the following areas of interest and expertise.

Professor Charles Tedder

- American literature after 1900
- Literature and human rights
- Literary and critical theory
- Science fiction, futurism, and utopian studies
- Fantasy, popular culture, and genre studies

Professor Carol Lacey

- American studies
- Women's studies (history, public policy and advocacy)
- American history (women's history, Minnesota history, social history, intellectual history, constitutional history, juvenile justice)
- Family studies (public policy and advocacy)
- Journalism and mass communication
- Classical music history, theory, performance

Professor Sheila Kunkle

- Film studies (theory and analysis: American film, contemporary film, world film, foreign films, genres)
- Adult education (theory, practice, and philosophy)
- Psychoanalytic theory, culture, and major thinkers
- Politics and civic engagement
- Cultural studies

Professor Daniel Woldeab

- Adult education
- Adult literacy
- Human resources development
- Organizational leadership and policy
- Work and human resources education
- Technology and pedagogy
- Technology and culture
- Cultural competency, acculturation, and acculturative stress and anxiety

Professor Gemma Punti

- Undocumented immigrants (policy, education, work, and health)

- Live experiences of immigrants and refugees (education, work, health)
- Immigration policy (theory and practice)
- Cultural assimilation
- Community-based research
- Academic civic engagement
- Language planning and policy
- Cultural competence/humility and civic skills

Professor Richard Bohannon

- Religious studies (sociology of religion, US religion, early Christianity, religious environmentalism)
- Environmental studies (American environmentalism, environmental social theory)
- Geography (GIS, cartography)