Graduate Work in Human Development and Family Studies at Utah State University

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The success of the doctoral program in Human Development and Family Studies at Utah State University is directly related to its dedicated faculty, motivated students, and supportive administration. In addition to providing full funding for all qualified doctoral students during their entire program (full tuition awards, ½ time assistantships totaling $16,000 annually, and health care assistance), our unique approach to well-rounded training toward careers in academia sets us apart. Although not all students pursue careers in academia, our department focuses on strong doctoral training toward a successful career in university settings. In the past decade, our efforts have resulted in placing almost all our students, who have sought academic positions, in university settings. Like most research-oriented universities, our program excels in all areas of doctoral student training, but our expertise sets us apart from others in two distinct ways.

First, our faculty provide students with closely supervised research opportunities that begin in the very first semester. Our philosophy is to provide students the opportunity to develop their research skills in varied and important ways. The balance within the faculty of basic and applied research projects bolsters student development. Faculty work closely with students to scaffold them in their budding careers. Students have opportunities to present at professional conferences, publish in top-tiered journals, and write grants to support their research interests. It is also common for students to cross pollinate with other research labs both within the department and across campus, gaining skills and experience from other faculty mentors along the way. Hard working, planful students complete their doctoral training with impressive CVs, replete with quality products, making them competitive in the job market and prepared to launch their own research careers.

Second, we offer unparalleled teaching experiences. In an arena where teacher training for graduate students is often an afterthought or ignored completely, we dedicate ourselves to prioritize college teaching as part of our overarching goal to prepare our students for success in all components of their future role as professors. Indeed, our doctoral students are some of the best trained teachers in the country. Our nationally acclaimed Graduate Instructors Forum trains doctoral students in the intricacies of successful teaching in higher education. This is a mandatory forum for graduate instructors to meet bi-weekly to discuss teaching while engaging in philosophical and pedagogical exchanges with experienced faculty. All of our doctoral students teach their own undergraduate class. Moreover, doctoral students are, on average, the instructor of record for three classes before completing their degree. Students progress from teaching assistantships to graduate instruction gradually, gaining the necessary tools to succeed along the way. Guidance from dedicated faculty propels most graduate instructors through a rewarding teaching experience and they complete the program competent and confident in their role as instructor. During the last ten years, the Graduate Instructors Forum has trained 45 graduate instructors who have taught 144 classes, and almost 15,000 students.

Our departmental mission is to train doctoral students to excel both in research and teaching. Motivate students who come to our program eager to learn and complete their degree in a timely manner with all the necessary tools to excel in their career. Click here to find out more about our amazing faculty and find someone whose research interests align with yours to mentor you toward a rewarding career in academia.