Preparing Leaders in Urban Special Education
A Special Education Masters Program

General Questions

1. Is the PLUS project a principal preparation program?

No, scholars accepted into the PLUS scholarship project are enrolled in a Master’s program in special education and complete courses that lead to eligibility for the Illinois LBSII credential as a Curriculum Adaptations Specialist.

2. Will I be eligible for the Illinois Director of Special Education credential upon completing the PLUS project?

The PLUS scholarship project is not designed for individuals wanting to obtain the Director of Special Education state credential. Scholars take four classes related to education leadership, but these are to prepare scholars to assume leadership roles in their schools or districts (e.g., Inclusion Specialist; Department Chair; Lead Teacher) and to work directly with other school administrators.

3. Can I still work, and if so, when are my courses and my PLUS Scholarship commitments?

The PLUS scholarship project is designed for persons who plan on going to school while working. All on campus courses and seminars are offered in the evenings (5:00-8:00) and each class meets once a week. Over half the courses in the project are offered either completely online or in a blended format (part online and part on campus). Scholars take three courses each fall and spring semester (15 weeks each) and are typically a combination of online/blended courses and on campus courses. Scholars will also meet 2-3 times a semester with the project directors either in person or online to complete project requirements.

In addition, all scholars will participate in the Urban Leadership Academy for 6 weeks (120 hours) during the second year in the program. This academy requires a 20 hours a week commitment starting in mid-June (when Chicago Public Schools are out for summer). Scholars will need to be available either 3 full-days a week (around 8:30-3:30) or 5 morning a week (around 8:30 – 12:30) for those 6 weeks. If you have a job in which you do not have that time free, then you would need to take a leave of absence during the second summer in the program in order to fulfill this requirement.

4. When must I apply, and to what program?

Individuals interested in applying to the PLUS Scholarship project must complete two applications. By October 1, 2015, submit the PLUS Scholarship application directly to the project faculty directors. By the deadline for all UIC Special Education Master’s applications in the College of Education (October 1, 2015), complete the online UIC Graduate College Application. Indicate on the application that you are applying to the Master’s Program in Special Education – Strand B.

5. When would the program begin?

You will be notified by e-mail of acceptance into the UIC Special Education Master’s program in late November 2015. At that time you will be notified if you have also received the PLUS Scholarship. Due to the quick turnaround we would need your decision within a week of receiving the acceptance into the PLUS Scholarship. We will hold a mandatory orientation in December 2015 in the College of Education.

Accepted PLUS Scholarship scholars will begin taking 3 classes during the spring 2015 semester which begin on January 11, 2015. Your commitment is to take all courses as outlined in your plan of study (classes in spring & fall semesters), complete the Urban Leaders Academy in summer 2017, graduate in Fall 2017, and participate in the Community of Practice after graduation.

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General Questions (continued)

6. What are the required courses in the PLUS Scholarship Project?

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<th>Spring Semester</th>
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<td>2016</td>
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<td>SPED 517*: Analysis of Behavior in Applied Context (C)</td>
<td>SPED 510*: Advance Curriculum Adaptations for Learners with Significant and Multiple Disabilities (H)</td>
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<td>SPED 522*: Advanced Procedures in Special Education as Consultant (H)</td>
<td>SPED 512*:Curriculum and Social Adaptations for Working with Learners with High Incidence Disabilities (H)</td>
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<td>EDPS 560: Improving Education Organizations (F)</td>
<td>DMD 440*: Assistive Technology Principles and Practice (D)</td>
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<td>SPED 448: Seminar in Data Interpretation and Evaluation (H)</td>
<td>SPED 578*: Classroom-Based Inquiry Internship (H) - TBD</td>
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<td>EDPS 548: Leading Improvement of Literacy Learning (F) - T</td>
<td>EDPS Elective (select one)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDPS 558: Leading Classroom Diagnostics and Interventions (F) - R</td>
<td>656: Leading Improvement of Mathematics Learning (F)</td>
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<td>576: Political Economy of Urban Education (F)</td>
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<td>579: Organization Theory in Education</td>
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<td>694: Special Topics in Educational Policy</td>
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7. What obligation would I have to the federal government who would pay my tuition and fees through the grant?

You would have a service obligation, which we explain below. You are required to work with special education students for 2 years for every year of support (4 years total). You can see many of the frequently asked questions about the service obligation here, https://serviceobligations.ed.gov/2006faq.cfm#9. Also review the service obligation information https://serviceobligations.ed.gov/ProgramRegs2006.cfm.

8. I see that I must have teaching experience with, and commitment to, work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations in urban setting.

Yes, all programs in the College of Education are committed to helping students gain cross-cultural competency. For the PLUS Scholarship applicants must have at least 3 years of teaching experience (administrator experience does not supplant the required teaching experience; however special education case management experience will be considered). Therefore, we are highly interested in individuals have experience working in a variety of contexts (e.g., schools, community agencies) with individuals with disabilities from culturally and/or linguistically diverse population. Faculty infuses those competencies throughout the program so that all students study their beliefs about culture in order to challenge prevailing practices. In order to interact effectively with their students, and design effective inclusion programs related to students with disabilities from a culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, all students and future leaders need to confront their own racism and biases, learn about cultures of others, and perceive the world through diverse cultural lenses. Research-based evidence and argument is used in all coursework and the PLUS Scholarship supports and include resources from national centers, CEC sponsored work, and up-to-date scholarship about topics such as the recognition of cultural diversity in special education, and links between family and cultural awareness and disability.

9. Will scholars be required to take the LBS2 Curriculum Adaptations Specialist state exam?

Yes. All scholars are required to register and take the exam prior to the final semester in the PLUS project. The PLUS project is unable to pay for the cost of taking the exam. Scholars are to forward the exam results to the project directors prior to final tuition supports are paid.
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General Questions (continued)

10. Can I apply if I already have a MEd in special education?

Yes. Individuals with a master’s degree in special education from a University other than UIC are encouraged to apply to PLUS. However, individuals who received a master’s degree in special education from UIC cannot be accepted into the program at this time.

Benefits

1. Tuition is free?

Yes. At the end of the 2 year commitment, you return the debt to the federal government by serving a “service obligation.” For every year you accept the PLUS Scholarship, you will owe two years of service as a teacher leaders in the area of special education or related services. Since the program is 36 credits in length, the service obligation is anticipated to be 4 years. You will likely have a total of at least 7 years after graduation to complete the service obligation. If you are currently in a position as a special education teacher or other related service provider (see Federal guidelines) where at least 50% of your time or 50% of children or adolescents you service qualify for special education services, then you may be able to begin your service obligation while you are completing your program. Federal guidelines under these circumstances may allow you to complete 1 year of service obligation prior to graduation after you have completed one year in the program.

2. Along with the tuition, I see scholars have additional supports.

Yes. The PLUS Scholarship covers in-state tuition, university fees and a stipend ($500 a year). In order to help you become a leader in special education, we will help you join organizations through which you will network with other professionals and receive mentoring. All scholars will join a professional organization, and attend 1 yearly conference that will be part of project. Other benefits include becoming part of a cohort of emerging leaders, project seminars with the project directors, receiving mentoring from professionals, and participation in the summer academy that expand on your program of studies. The total value of tuition and additional financial supports is approximately $24,000 per scholar.

Eligibility and Application Process

1. Who can apply?

All new individuals to the UIC Special Education Master’s Program – Strand B who have not started the program prior to January 2015, and who meet all other eligibility requirements as listed on the PLUS Scholarship website as well as fliers and brochures. However, individuals must be US Citizen or Permanent Resident in order to receive the PLUS award. If you are international student you can apply to the UIC Special Education Program, but not the PLUS scholarship.

2. Do I need to have teaching experience?

Yes, all scholars accepted into the program must have at least 3 years of successful teaching experience with students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3. Do I need to have a background in special education?

Yes, your undergraduate or graduate degree needs to be an area of education and you have a state teaching license, certification, or endorsement in an area of special education. All scholars must have a current LBS1 endorsement on their license.
Eligibility and Application Process (continued)

4. I understand there are two initial applications, and I must submit materials to two places. Why?

All individuals interested in the PLUS Scholarship, must also apply to the UIC Special Education Master’s program – Strand B. In order to be considered for the PLUS Scholarship, you must be accepted into the Master’s program, thus you need to complete an application for both.

Individuals must use the PLUS Scholarship application available for HERE and submit online (no paper copies accepted) to the project directors by October 1, 2015. The application consists of descriptive information about yourself, a goal statement, and your resume. Once you are accepted into the UIC Special Education Master’s program, then your application will be reviewed and rated by faculty on the project.

Additionally, you must submit online a Graduate College application by the deadline as well. Follow all the steps and requirements listed on the admission website (http://education.uic.edu/academics-admissions/programs/special-education-0#application-process), remembering to indicate that you are applying to Special Education Masters program for the Spring 2016 semester. This application requires you to upload transcripts and a goal statement (you can use the same one as from the PLUS application). Three letters of recommendations are required; therefore you will need to line up your recommenders prior to submitting the application. Recommendees will be sent an email with instruction on how to upload their letters. All materials must be uploaded no later than October 1, 2015 (including recommendation letters). The Department of Special Education faculty will review this more extensive set of documents. Faculty will want an extensive profile of your background and future interests as they evaluate potential success for you to become a leader in special education.

5. Is there an interview?

Yes, all applicants who have applied to the UIC Special Education Masters program and the PLUS Scholarship will be interviewed by faculty. Most interviews will take place in October/November 2015 during business hours. Department of Special Education personal will contact you by email to notify you of the interview time and date. If you reside further than 50 miles from Chicago, arrangements can be made to conduct the interview by phone.

6. Are there other requirements for admissions?

Yes, all applicants must participate in a 30 minute impromptu writing session. During selected times after October 1, 2015 students will be provided with a writing prompt related to special education and will have 30 minutes to complete it. The majority of these writing impromptus are done online.

7. I maybe out of town during the dates of the interviews. What alternatives do I have?

You must have all materials in by the posted due dates. You must be available through e-mail to be notified of your interview and possible acceptance in November. There will most likely be multiple interviews dates scheduled for October/November. Only in rare instances can we make individual accommodations and interview on another day.
Eligibility and Application Process (continued)

8. Will I be told if I am missing materials?

We have provided a checklist for the PLUS Scholarship application (see the web materials and application) for you to monitor what you are emailing. The UIC Graduate College, along with individuals in the College of Education, will send you emails reminding you to complete the online Graduate College application and what needs to be completed. Only completed applications by the deadline, both to the Graduate College and to the project directors will be reviewed.

9. Do I need to take the GRE?

No.

10. Who should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

You will need to submit the names and contact information of 3 individuals who have agreed to write letters of recommendations when you complete the UIC Graduate Application online. We recommend that you check with each person to ensure they monitor their email for directions from the University on how to upload their letters and that they will be able to complete the process by October 1. Therefore, we suggest that you begin the UIC Graduate Application process early and submit their names in the system early while you are still in the process of completing other aspects of the application. It is important that recommendations come from individuals who are able to address your potential as a leader in special education. Ideally the recommendations should come from both college or university professors and supervisors familiar with your qualifications, teaching ability and experience working with students with disabilities, and ability to carry out advanced degree work.

11. I still have more questions, who should I contact?

You can contact the project directors Daniel M. Maggin, dmaggin@uic.edu or Marie Tejero Hughes, marieth@uic.edu. You can also attend one of information sessions or send a question by filing out the form at http://education.uic.edu/academics-admissions/programs/special-education-0#faqs-and-scholarships.