

New Programs at M State

As more children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, online program fills education need



With a growing number of children being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, M State recognized a need to offer training for those who want a better understanding of the disorder.

Beginning in fall 2018, M State will offer an online certificate program, Foundations in Autism Spectrum Disorders, which will provide basic knowledge about ASD along with the needs of individuals diagnosed with the condition.

Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in the United States and now affects more than 3.4 million Americans; from 2001 to 2010, the prevalence of autism increased by nearly 120 percent among American children, according to the Autism Society.

M State instructor Jennifer Redlin, who has spearheaded creation of the certificate program, said the 15-credit certificate is designed for a broad range of individuals including staff at

public and private schools and social service agencies, child care workers, occupational or speech therapists, and family members caring for individuals diagnosed with autism.

“Most of the educational or specialized autism certificates are found in graduate schools,” Redlin said, “but we saw a need for a certificate where people could learn the basics at the undergraduate level. Even a student who is working on a degree from another college could get a leg up in the job market just by having this background and knowledge about autism.”

Many of the courses will be taught by Redlin, who has a master’s degree in clinical psychology and specializes in the field of applied behavior analysis, which she described as the treatment of choice and one of the best evidence-based treatments for individuals with autism. The certificate program is currently awaiting state approval.

Redlin is also the program director for M State’s Mental Health Behavioral Aide II certificate program, designed to prepare students to provide therapeutic and rehabilitative care for children and adolescents with behavioral and emotional disturbances.

Medical assistants answer to health care worker shortage

M State aims to help fill a gap in the health care industry with its introduction of a Medical Assistant diploma program that will cross-train students to work alongside physicians and perform both administrative and clinical duties.

“This really addresses a need within health care,” said Steve Erickson, M State’s dean of technical programs. “Graduates will be multi-skilled with training in administrative and clinical tasks in typical ambulatory settings such as clinics and physicians’ offices.”

In addition to skills in medical office processes related to billing, insurance and electronic medical records, students will learn routine clinical duties and conclude the 37-credit diploma program with a 160-hour clinical experience under the direct supervision of a physician.

In two clinical procedures courses, students will develop basic clinical and laboratory skills that will prepare them to compile patient data, measure blood pressure, draw blood, and perform electrocardiograms and pulmonary function testing.

While the lab courses will be taught on the Detroit Lakes campus, the majority of courses in the program will be offered online. The program will be offered beginning in the fall of 2018.

“Medical assistants are used heavily in larger metro areas such as the Twin Cities and Duluth,” Erickson said, “but the position is still fairly new in our area.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in the field is expected to grow 29 percent from 2016 to 2026, which it describes as “much faster than average for all occupations.” The expected growth is attributed in part to technological advances and to the aging baby-boom population, which will increase demand for preventive medical services.

The program was developed with the assistance of the advisory committee for M State’s Medical Administrative Office program.



Transfer Pathways simplify transfer process

Four new Transfer Pathways degrees in biology, business, psychology and theatre simplify the process for M State students who intend to transfer to Minnesota State system partner universities and earn bachelor’s degrees in those fields.

Dr. Matt Borcharding, M State’s dean of liberal arts education, said that students who complete one of the new Pathway associate degree options are guaranteed course transfer and acceptance at the junior level at Minnesota State University Moorhead and any of the other six universities in the Minnesota State system.

“The two-year and four-year colleges worked together to develop what’s essentially a common pathway from a two-year institution to a four-year institution,” he said, with all 60 credits in the pathways degree counting toward the related bachelor’s degree.

He said this means students can complete the first two years of these bachelor’s degree programs by taking university-equivalent courses at M State, which offers students more individualized attention in smaller-sized classes and lower tuition (which can mean graduating with lower student debt).

MSUM is the No. 1 choice of a transfer university for M State students, Borcharding said, and the Transfer Pathways mean M State students transferring to MSUM can be confident their associate degree will transfer in its entirety into their MSUM major.

The four pilot Transfer Pathways at M State and the programs they transfer into are:

- **Business Transfer Pathway:** Business Administration BS, Finance BS, Project Management BS and Global Supply Chain Management BS
- **Biology Transfer Pathway:** Biology BA and Ecology BS and Evolutionary Biology BS
- **Psychology Transfer Pathway:** Psychology BA
- **Theatre Arts Transfer Pathway:** Theatre Arts BA

The 2015 Minnesota Legislature charged Minnesota State with the goal of creating more than two dozen different Transfer Pathway degrees. In addition to MSUM, the universities within the Minnesota State system are Bemidji State University, Mankato State University, Metropolitan State University, St. Cloud State University, Southwest Minnesota State University and Winona State University.

