

# IDASL Program Increases Awareness | CPD

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IDASL students meet in the AT lab for a tour

*By Talia Pratte*

The Interdisciplinary Disability and Service Learning Program, or IDASL, is a two-semester course inviting students from all majors and levels to learn about the issues people with disabilities face every day. In the weekly class, students watch presentations, listen to guest speakers, and participate in lead discussions. The class is facilitated by Jeanie Peck and Alma Burgess, two CPD employees.

Peck has been working with the program since its inception in 2001 and her favorite part of the class is seeing how far the students have come at the end of the class in May.

The students write three papers in the IDASL class. The reflection essay is written at the beginning of fall semester and two defining moments papers are assigned at the end of the semester. For both facilitators, reading these papers is one of their favorite parts of the class.

"The thing I like to see most," Peck said, "is where people are at, the beginning of fall semester and where they're at in the spring and their awareness and understanding of the history of disability."

For Burgess, "It's really nice when a student goes, 'aha! I got it!'"

Another component of the class is learning about advocacy. Fall semester provides background information and an overview of the history of disability law. In spring,

the students follow a bill in the state of Utah and advocate for it.

"We do individual advocacy, group advocacy, and legislative advocacy, so they are presented with some skills that they can learn and take into their lives," Burgess said.

He said that advocacy is important because, "The person themselves will either develop a disability, or a family member or they'll work with or interact with someone who has a disability."

Another component of the class is the service-learning aspect. Students have eight locations in which they can perform their service hours:

- **The Assistive Technology (AT) Lab** focuses on building, modifying and repairing assistive technology such as wheel chairs, walkers, and scooters.
- The **Child Care Nutrition Program** is an extension of the School Lunch Program dedicated to ensuring that adequate nutrition is available to children.
- **Common Ground Outdoor Adventures** takes people with disabilities on outdoor excursions such as canoeing, rock climbing, and biking
- **Developmental Skills Laboratory (DSL)** provides day training, life skills practice, and helps individuals with severe disabilities to increase their independence.
- **OPTIONS for Independence**, a nonresidential Independent Living Center that promotes independence and choices for people with disabilities.
- **Project PEER** facilitates the transition out of the public school system for students with cognitive disabilities between 18 and 21.
- **Top Sports** provides recreational opportunities for children and youth with disabilities.
- **Up To 3 Program** provides services for children under three with disabilities such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, eating and nutrition services, hearing and vision consultation, and specialized instruction for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Kayla Currier is taking the class as part of her graduate assistantship.

"The best part for me," Currier said, "is being introduced to many agencies and being able to network with different people that provide services."

Celesti Neilson is another participant in the class. She thinks the class is important because it increases awareness about people with disabilities and their daily lives.

Neilson said, "I think my favorite part is to learn about the people's disabilities from other perspectives besides mine."

"It doesn't matter what your major is, this is a class that would benefit you," Peck said.

College credit and stipends are available depending on attendance and volunteer hours completed. For more information, visit <http://www.idasl.net>.