



December 22, 2022

James D. Fielder, Ph.D.  
Secretary of Higher Education  
Maryland Higher Education Commission  
6 N. Liberty Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Kim E. Schatzel, Ph.D.  
*President*

Office of the President  
8000 York Road  
Towson, MD 21252-0001

Dear Secretary Fielder:

Towson University seeks your review and approval to offer a **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Autism Studies** in accordance with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13B.02.03.06.

The proposed program's innovative curriculum and interdisciplinary approach is designed to strengthen graduates' research skills while deepening their knowledge and perspectives on autism, thereby helping to address an area of significant national need.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Rhodri Evans, Assistant Provost for Assessment, Accreditation and Compliance, at [rhodrievans@towson.edu](mailto:rhodrievans@towson.edu) or by phone at 410-704-3312.

Thank you in advance for your review.

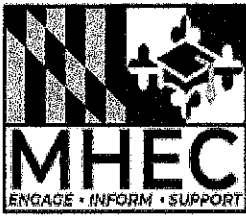
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kim Schatzel'.

Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.  
President

KS/rjme

cc: Dr. Darlene Smith, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, USM  
Dr. Melanie L. Perreault, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs  
Dr. Clare N. Muhoro, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs  
Dr. Sidd Kaza, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies  
Dr. Lisa Plowfield, Dean, College of Health Professions



Office Use Only: PP#

**Cover Sheet for In-State Institutions  
New Program or Substantial Modification to Existing Program**

Institution Submitting Proposal	Towson University
---------------------------------	-------------------

*Each action below requires a separate proposal and cover sheet.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> New Academic Program | <input type="radio"/> Substantial Change to a Degree Program            |
| <input type="radio"/> New Area of Concentration       | <input type="radio"/> Substantial Change to an Area of Concentration    |
| <input type="radio"/> New Degree Level Approval       | <input type="radio"/> Substantial Change to a Certificate Program       |
| <input type="radio"/> New Stand-Alone Certificate     | <input type="radio"/> Cooperative Degree Program                        |
| <input type="radio"/> Off Campus Program              | <input type="radio"/> Offer Program at Regional Higher Education Center |

Payment <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	Payment <input checked="" type="radio"/> R*STARS #JA970206	Payment <input type="radio"/> No	Amount: \$850	Date Submitted: 1/3/2023
Submitted: <input type="radio"/> No	Type: <input type="radio"/> Check #			

Department Proposing Program	Institute for Well-Being		
Degree Level and Degree Type	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)		
Title of Proposed Program	Autism Studies		
Total Number of Credits	60		
Suggested Codes	HEGIS: 1299.02	CIP: 30.9999	
Program Modality	<input checked="" type="radio"/> On-campus <input type="radio"/> Distance Education (fully online) <input type="radio"/> Both		
Program Resources	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Using Existing Resources <input type="radio"/> Requiring New Resources		
Projected Implementation Date <small>(must be 60 days from proposal submission as per COMAR 13B.02.03.03)</small>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Fall <input type="radio"/> Spring <input type="radio"/> Summer            Year: 2023		
Provide Link to Most Recent Academic Catalog	URL: <a href="https://catalog.towson.edu/graduate/">https://catalog.towson.edu/graduate/</a>		

Preferred Contact for this Proposal	Name: Rhodri Evans
	Title: Assistant Provost for Assessment, Accreditation and Compliance
	Phone: (410) 704-3312
	Email: rhodrievans@towson.edu

President/Chief Executive	Type Name: Kim Schatzel
	Signature:  Date: 12/22/2022
	Date of Approval/Endorsement by Governing Board:

Revised 1/2021

# A PROPOSAL FOR A PH.D. IN AUTISM STUDIES AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY

## Table of Contents

A.	Centrality to Institutional Mission Statement and Planning Priorities .....	3
	<i>A1. Program Description and Alignment with Institutional Mission .....</i>	3
	<i>A2. Strategic Goals Alignment and Affirmation of Institutional Priority .....</i>	4
	<i>A3. Five-year Funding Plan .....</i>	5
	<i>A4. Institutional Commitment .....</i>	5
B.	Critical and Compelling Regional or Statewide Need as Identified in the State Plan .....	6
	<i>B1. Program Demand and Need .....</i>	6
	<i>B2. Alignment with Maryland State Plan for Higher Education .....</i>	6
C.	Quantifiable and Reliable Evidence and Documentation of Market Supply and Demand in the Region and State.....	7
	<i>C1. Pipeline and Employment Opportunities .....</i>	7
	<i>C2. Market Demand .....</i>	7
	<i>C3. Anticipated Vacancies and Training Needs .....</i>	8
	<i>C4. Projected Supply of Prospective Graduates .....</i>	8
D.	Reasonableness of Program Duplication .....	9
	<i>D1. Similar Programs .....</i>	9
	<i>D2. Program Justification .....</i>	9
E.	Relevance to High-demand Programs at Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) .....	10
F.	Relevance to the Identity of Historically Black Institutions (HBIs).....	10
G.	Adequacy of Curriculum Design, Program Modality, and Related Learning Outcomes ....	10
	<i>G1 Program Development and Faculty Oversight .....</i>	10
	<i>G2. Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes .....</i>	10
	<i>G3. Assessment and Documentation of Student Learning Outcomes .....</i>	11
	<i>G4. Program Requirements.....</i>	12
	<i>G5. General Education Requirements .....</i>	14
	<i>G6. Specialized Accreditation and Certification .....</i>	14
	<i>G7. Outside Contracts .....</i>	14
	<i>G8. Program Information Assurances .....</i>	14

<i>G9. Advertising, Recruiting, and Admissions Materials Assurances</i> .....	15
H. Adequacy of Articulation .....	15
I. Adequacy of Faculty Resources .....	15
<i>I1. Quality of Program Faculty</i> .....	15
<i>I2. Ongoing Faculty Training</i> .....	18
J. Adequacy of Library Resources .....	19
K. Adequacy of Physical Facilities, Infrastructure, and Instructional Equipment .....	19
<i>K1. Assurance of Physical Facilities, Infrastructure and Equipment</i> .....	19
<i>K2. Assurance of Distance Learning Resources</i> .....	20
L. Adequacy of Financial Resources with Documentation.....	20
M. Adequacy of Provisions for Evaluation of Program.....	23
<i>M1. Procedures for Evaluating Courses, Faculty and Student Learning Outcomes</i> .....	23
<i>M2. Evaluation of Program Educational Effectiveness</i> .....	23
N. Consistency with the State’s Minority Student Achievement Goals .....	24
O. Relationship to Low Productivity Programs Identified by the Commission.....	24
P. Adequacy of Distance Education Programs .....	24
Appendix A. Relevant Program Summaries .....	25
Appendix B. Descriptions of Course Options in Program Outline .....	28
Appendix C. Program of Study .....	34

## **A. Centrality to Institutional Mission Statement and Planning Priorities**

### ***A1. Program Description and Alignment with Institutional Mission***

Towson University (TU) submits this proposal to create a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program in Autism Studies. This innovative Ph.D. program will be housed in the TU College of Health Professions' Institute for Well-Being (IWB) and draw from faculty expertise across campus. Specifically, the program will involve the Colleges of Education, Health Professions, and Liberal Arts, where faculty from multiple fields study the developmental course of autism across the lifespan at individual, family, and community levels. In addition, this program will be supported by autism-focused resources at TU, including: (1) the Hussman Center for Adults with Autism, with a focus on socialization and work-skills development programs; (2) the Speech and Language Center at the IWB, which addresses growth, development and social needs of individuals across the lifespan; (3) the Occupational Therapy Center at the IWB, which enhances skill development and participation in valued life roles; (4) the College of Education's Connections Immersion and Training Classroom, which serves children and their families in the Family Engagement Program; (5) the College of Education's Reading Clinic; and (6) the College of Liberal Arts' Research Collaborative with the Maryland State Department of Education.

TU's proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies is designed to strengthen graduates' research skills while deepening their knowledge and perspectives on autism. This four-year, full-time program will draw from interdisciplinary experts across TU, including practitioners, educators, and researchers who work with autism-related issues in their fields. Students in the Ph.D. program in Autism Studies will have the opportunity to become proficient in various research methodologies and apply these to pressing questions and topics within their own disciplines and across disciplines. They will collaborate with expert faculty, as well as external partners, as they deepen their research acumen and investigate significant issues related to autism and neurodiversity, which (as the proposal outlines) is an area of significant national need.

The National Institute of Mental Health describes autism as a neurological and developmental condition affecting how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave. Practitioners, educators, and researchers tend to approach autism from their own disciplinary perspectives. Recognizing the interconnectedness between the wealth of professionals who address autism-related issues, the proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies will provide essential connections across disciplines to advance research and leadership. In fact, this approach is integral to the program's design.

Rigorous coursework in statistical analysis, qualitative methods, and applied research will also prepare graduates to undertake studies in pursuit of autism research advancement. Students in the program will likely come from various educational backgrounds, including speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, education, child life, rehabilitation science, social services, public health, political science, school psychology, psychology, and family studies.

The proposed doctoral degree requires successful completion of 60 credits, with 15 credits of coursework on the interdisciplinary foundation of autism, 18 credits of coursework on research and research methods, nine credits of cognate (i.e., self-selected courses across disciplines to deepen understanding of chosen topics), and 18 credits of dissertation study. Students will complete comprehensive exams at the end of the second year of study. The dissertation will allow for either a traditional format or an alternative format requiring the submission of three manuscripts in the area of study (including one manuscript on dissertation study findings) to peer-reviewed journals. The program seeks to admit approximately seven students each fall.

The proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies is consistent with TU's mission to "foster intellectual inquiry and critical thinking, preparing graduates who will serve as effective leaders for the public good." The program also aligns with TU's commitment to "academic excellence, interdisciplinary study, research and public service." This program will capitalize on TU's expertise in autism and will prepare researchers to explore broad and deep perspectives on autism with a unique emphasis on original research contributing to interdisciplinary, cutting-edge knowledge.

## ***A2. Strategic Goals Alignment and Affirmation of Institutional Priority***

TU's 2020-2030 Strategic Plan identifies as a key goal the development of "new master's and doctoral programs in accordance with regional demand and institutional mission." The creation of this novel and much-needed doctoral program will enhance TU's reputation as a national leader in higher education, committed to interdisciplinary study and academic excellence. With this new doctoral program, the first of its kind in the University System of Maryland and state of Maryland, and one of only a few similar programs in the nation, TU will be better positioned to achieve R2 status and emphasize its position as an anchor institution in the region and state. Thus, TU's leadership considers the program's implementation an institutional priority.

Furthermore, the proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies responds to TU's goal to capitalize on "new facilities in STEM and health professions to develop new, high-demand academic programs that support state and national workforce needs." This innovative program, housed in the College of Health Professions (CHP) and its new facilities, responds to growing interest in autism and workforce demand in autism-related fields. The proposed program will not only contribute to academia by preparing much-needed future researchers, educators, health professionals, and social scientists, but will also contribute to the research literature through the work of students and faculty. Graduates from the proposed program will contribute to the growing understanding of autism and expanding evidence base in areas related to diagnosis, intervention, and advocacy.

The proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies would help TU reach its goal to "substantially increase grant activities and scholarly output, utilizing the full spectrum of student, staff, and faculty expertise." There is extensive autism expertise at TU, across the Colleges of Health Professions, Education, and Liberal Arts, and in the Hussman Center for

Adults with Autism at the IWB. The proposed program brings this interdisciplinary expertise together to offer a unique opportunity for students and faculty to collaborate through scholarly activities and enhanced interdisciplinary research outcomes in autism.

This proposed research-intensive doctoral program together with TU's large, diverse student body and a committed faculty composed of highly capable and productive scholarly educators support the institution's drive to preeminent recognition as a national leader in higher education.

### ***A3. Five-year Funding Plan***

This Ph.D. program will be funded with TU R2 investment funding and reallocated support from across the university, as this program is built on already existing graduate courses and faculty expertise. During the internal university review and approval process for new academic programs, funds have been committed from the Division of Academic Affairs in dialogue with TU Administration and Finance. Resources and expenditures anticipated for the first five years are presented in Section L, Tables 1 and 2. Graduate student stipends, modest library and operational support, and four new faculty lines will be dedicated to the growth and development of this program during the initial five years. As faculty and student research grow, grant funds are expected to supplement university funding and be invested in the proposed program.

### ***A4. Institutional Commitment***

As outlined above, the proposed Ph.D. program is integral to the university's new research-driven mission and strategic vision, and thus TU is committed to its successful implementation.

TU has a rich infrastructure to support new academic programs. Administrative support for the program will be managed from within CHP with staff who are familiar with, understand, and manage graduate education and the needs of graduate students. TU's Office of Graduate Studies will also support administrative and operational needs for graduate program directors, guidance and review of student progression and success, graduate faculty status designations, and marketing. As indicated above and presented in Section L, financial support has been committed and will be reviewed annually to ensure sufficiency. Technical support is part of the University's infrastructure and will come from the Office of Technology Services. Further, technical support will also come directly from the colleges as they have dedicated staff for website development, computer technology needs and classroom support.

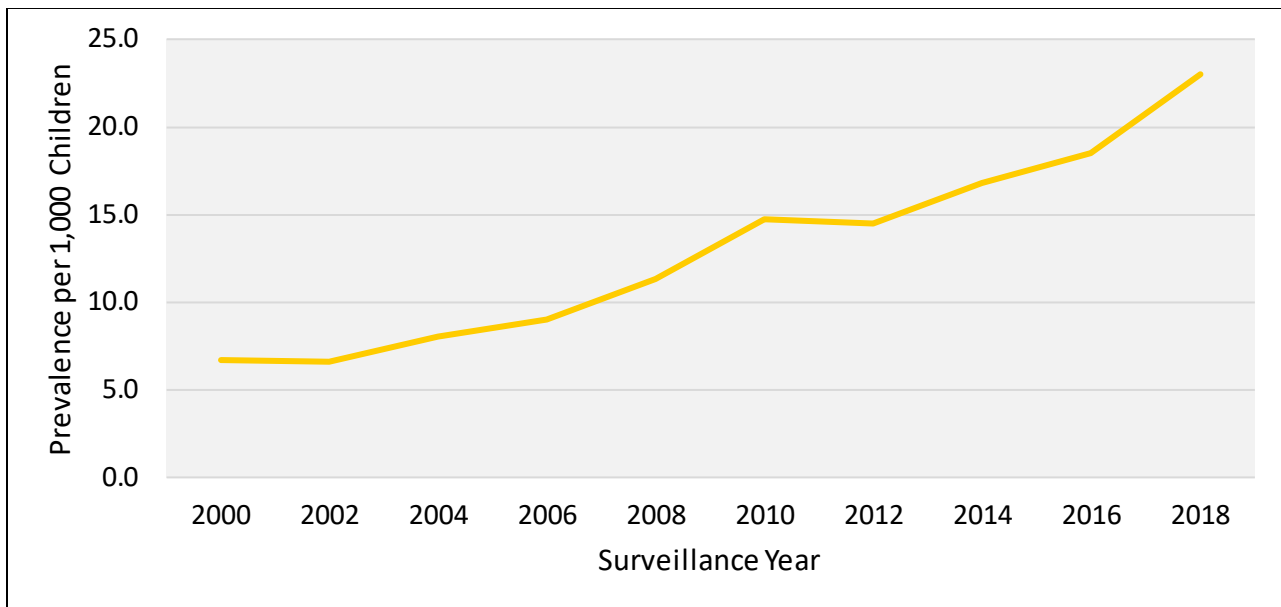
TU is committed to student success; students admitted are provided with sufficient time for program completion. Doctoral students are provided up to 10 years to complete their degree. TU anticipates, however, that faculty mentors and advisors will guide students in this program, and full-time completion is expected within four years from admission and matriculation.

## **B. Critical and Compelling Regional or Statewide Need as Identified in the State Plan**

### ***B1. Program Demand and Need***

The need to prepare researchers, educators, and policy makers in the area of autism is critical. The Centers for Disease Control reported the autism prevalence rate's increase from 6.7 per 1,000 children in 2000 to 23.0 per 1,000 children in 2018, illustrated in Figure 1 below.<sup>1</sup> This increased prevalence has overwhelmed school districts, mental health services, adult service agencies, and other systems in the region, state, and beyond. The increasing numbers of individuals and families experiencing autism, particularly with co-occurring or complex conditions (e.g., intellectual disability, mental health conditions), has intensified the need for research, policy, and programming that meet the complex and multifaceted needs of this population. Expertise in autism-related research methods to explore evidence-based interventions, educational approaches, and population needs are among some of the most critical areas for knowledge advancement and research in our state, region, and beyond.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of Autism in the U.S.**



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RESI

### ***B2. Alignment with Maryland State Plan for Higher Education***

One of the three goals outlined in the new 2022 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education is to “promote and implement practices and policies that will ensure student success.” Embedded within this overarching goal is the priority (Priority 5) to “maintain the commitment to high-quality postsecondary education in Maryland.” The highly

<sup>1</sup> “Data & Statistics on Autism Spectrum Disorder,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>.



interdisciplinary nature of the proposed Ph.D. in Autism Studies—which TU envisages will attract graduates of Maryland’s postsecondary institutions (including HBIs) with degrees in speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, education, child life, rehabilitation science, social services, public health, political science, school psychology, psychology, and family studies—addresses the Priority 5 action item by identifying an “innovative” field of study. Moreover, the collaborative nature of the program, in which students will be able to engage with multiple colleges and units within TU and interact with practitioners, educators, and researchers, supports the Priority 5 action item of providing practical “real world” experiences.

## **C. Quantifiable and Reliable Evidence and Documentation of Market Supply and Demand in the Region and State**

### ***C1. Pipeline and Employment Opportunities***

Although programs exist in the state that provide certifications and applied training in special education and autism studies, there are currently no doctoral programs specifically focused on autism studies available in Maryland.

The pipeline of students likely to pursue TU’s Ph.D. program in Autism Studies will draw from many different disciplines including, but not limited to, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and occupational science, education, child life, rehabilitation science, social services, public health, political science, school psychology, psychology, and family studies. The proposed Ph.D. program will draw students who are professionals committed to investigating and expanding knowledge about autism, effective service provision, and impacts on families and communities.

Students completing the proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies at TU would be well-equipped to pursue a variety of employment opportunities that require a research doctoral degree. TU expects that, over time, six to seven students would graduate from the program annually to fill the demand for these advanced roles. These could include positions within the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda and the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore. Occupations pursued by graduates of the Ph.D. program may include, but are not limited to, special education consultant, autism specialist, data scientist, health scientist researcher and administrator, post-secondary professor, and autism research coordinator.

Due to the specialized nature of the positions for which applicants with a doctoral degree would align, representative data for these professional subsets are difficult to obtain. However, Figure 2 below shows a sampling of potential occupations for which graduates of the proposed Ph.D. program would be compatible.

### ***C2. Market Demand***

See Figure 2 for expected vacancies in careers aligning with the research and professional training included in the proposed Ph.D. in Autism Studies. All the selected occupations are projected to exceed the Maryland average growth rate of 10 percent between 2018 and

2028. Additionally, every occupation has a higher average wage than Maryland’s average of \$65,900 across all occupations. The demand for tenure-track positions with a Ph.D. degree in Autism Studies is projected to increase significantly across fields as autism prevalence and attention to the field continue to grow.

**C3. Anticipated Vacancies and Training Needs**

**Figure 2: Select Related Occupations and Characteristics for Maryland**

Occupation	Annual Mean Wage, 2021	2018-2028	
		Projected Growth	Projected Annual Openings
Post-secondary Assistant Professor in Relevant Fields (Education, Health Specialties, Social Work, Psychology)	\$80,000	14-15%	870
Medical and Health Services Managers	\$135,870	20%	1,750
Training and Development Managers	\$130,050	11%	180
Data Scientists	\$117,660	11%	20
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	\$93,330	23%	270
Occupational Therapists	\$86,460	29%	330
Speech-Language Pathologists	\$85,850	33%	300
Instructional Coordinators	\$79,470	15%	258
Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	\$72,730	16%	940

Sources: O\*Net, RESI, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Projections Central

In terms of training needs, TU’s proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies would not only provide in-depth instruction through interdisciplinary experts, but also include statistical analysis and methodology training that equips students to conduct high-level research on autism. Additionally, the advanced nature of the degree program would allow graduates to pursue other roles that require a doctoral degree, such as program administration, leadership, and research, among others.

**C4. Projected Supply of Prospective Graduates**

As indicated above, there are very few similar programs at the doctoral level in the nation and none in the state of Maryland – the University of Maryland’s Ph.D. in Special Education is included as the closest in the state in terms of content. Information related to the most relevant programs in the state and nationwide is provided below. Some of the comparable programs in other states utilize an apprentice model that allows them to accept a small number of new students per year. TU anticipates admitting approximately seven students into the Ph.D. program each fall and that most students will complete the degree in four years.

**Figure 3: Similar Programs in Maryland and Across the Nation**

<b>Fall New Enrollment in Similar Programs</b>						
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
University of Maryland	Ph.D. in Special Education	8	3	0	2	2
University of Texas, Austin	Ph.D. in Autism and Developmental Disabilities	6	10	13	11	9
University of North Texas	Ph.D. in Intellectual Disability/Autism	1	3	6	3	3
Columbia University	Ph.D. in Applied Sciences of Learning and Special Education with a Focus in Intellectual Disability/Autism	1	2	1	2	2

## **D. Reasonableness of Program Duplication**

### ***D1. Similar Programs***

Although there are several programs in the region that offer a master’s degree or graduate certificate in autism (see Appendix A for more information about these programs), none of the programs identified contain the advanced doctoral-level research training required of TU’s program, and there are no comparable Ph.D. (or any other type of doctoral degree award) programs that Towson’s proposed program would duplicate. As seen in Figure 3 above, there are very few Ph.D. programs that focus on Autism Studies across the nation, such as those offered by Columbia University, University of Texas at Austin, and University of North Texas. Cambridge College Boston has a program with some overlap in content (Applied Behavior Analysis with a Specialization in Autism Intervention), but it is conducted through a distance-learning model and has a specific focus on one category of autism intervention.

### ***D2. Program Justification***

This type of advanced degree provides students with the expert knowledge and tools required to pursue roles in research and leadership to improve systems and practices in education, health care, and related fields, while also contributing to changes in culture and improvement of outcomes, among other opportunities. Additionally, by utilizing interdisciplinary experts in the planned curriculum, students will gain a broad scope of knowledge across diverse fields of employment. These methods will help to ensure that students are able to effectively investigate key research areas across a diverse range of settings and content areas.

### **E. Relevance to High-demand Programs at Historically Black Institutions (HBIs)**

None of the four HBIs in the state of Maryland offer doctoral programs similar to the Ph.D. program in Autism Studies proposed here. Interested and qualified students who graduate from a variety of high-demand programs at Maryland HBIs (e.g., social work, vocational rehabilitation counseling, education, special education, family studies, health professions) would provide a pipeline for this program and may apply to the proposed Ph.D. program to further their education in autism studies and research. As such, the program has the potential to enhance the demand for relevant programs at Maryland's HBIs.

### **F. Relevance to the Identity of Historically Black Institutions (HBIs)**

As indicated above, there are no programs currently offered at the doctoral level in autism studies at any of Maryland's four HBIs. Consequently, given the specialized subject-area and doctoral-level focus of the proposed Ph.D. degree, TU does not anticipate that its implementation will impact the uniqueness and institutional identities and missions of HBIs.

### **G. Adequacy of Curriculum Design, Program Modality, and Related Learning Outcomes**

#### ***G1 Program Development and Faculty Oversight***

The curriculum for the Ph.D. program in Autism Studies was developed by faculty from the College of Health Professions, the College of Education, and the College of Liberal Arts (see Figure 5), drawing upon faculty members' expertise in autism and program development. Through an iterative and collaborative process, courses and content areas were discussed by the interdisciplinary team and reviewed for relevance to the proposed degree program and its learning outcomes. The faculty who will oversee the program are identified in Section I1; they are tenured and tenure-track faculty with expertise in a wide range of disciplines that investigate and address issues of autism.

#### ***G2. Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes***

The educational objectives of TU's proposed Ph.D. in Autism Studies are to prepare students to become proficient in various research methodologies while deepening their knowledge and perspectives on autism, such that graduates of the program will be able apply these research skills and content knowledge to pressing questions and topics within their own disciplines and across disciplines.

The following are the proposed learning outcomes for students who enroll in the Ph.D. program in Autism Studies:

1. Develop substantive core research-based knowledge in the field of autism and a related discipline (e.g., education, occupational therapy, sociology).
2. Apply interdisciplinary research-based perspectives and practices to promote collaboration and innovation in the field of autism research and practice.
3. Master methodologies required to evaluate and conduct independent research.

4. Design and conduct original research in the field of autism.
5. Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate research findings and autism knowledge more generally to professionals and laypeople.

### **G3. Assessment and Documentation of Student Learning Outcomes**

TU's Office of Assessment within the Division of Academic Affairs coordinates the assessment of student learning outcomes. Assessment of student learning occurs at the course, program and institutional levels and involves academic and co-curricular activities. The Office of Assessment works collaboratively with faculty and staff to support analysis and research of TU's curriculum, courses, departments, and programs to improve student learning through effective, faculty and staff-driven assessment of academic programs and student learning outcomes achievement.

Specifically, the Office of Assessment provides information and resources for assessment, maintains the technological infrastructure to support academic assessment, supports faculty and programs through workshops and consultation, and assists with collection, analysis, and distribution of institutional and programmatic assessment data.

The proposed Ph.D. in Autism Studies will employ a variety of assessment measures appropriate at the doctoral level to assess student learning, including (but not limited to) course papers, presentations, comprehensive examinations, and preparation of a dissertation and oral defense. Figure 4 maps assessment activities to specific learning outcomes.

**Figure 4. Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

<b>Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>
<b>1.</b> Develop substantive core research-based knowledge in the field of autism and a related discipline such as education, occupational therapy, or sociology.	<i>Measure 1: Grade on final presentation in Autism in Children course (SPED 620, IDHP 621)</i>  <i>Measure 2: Grade on final paper in second-year Cognate course</i>  <i>Measure 3: Successful completion of Comprehensive Exams</i>
<b>2.</b> Apply interdisciplinary research-based perspectives and practices to promote collaboration and innovation in the field of autism.	<i>Measure 1: Grade on team project in Laws, Policy, Ethics, and Advocacy course (IDHP 741, PSYC 791, SPED 765)</i>  <i>Measure 2: Grade on debate in first-year Seminar course (IDHP 650)</i>  <i>Measure 3: Successful completion of interdisciplinary courses across at least two colleges in the university</i>
<b>3.</b> Master methodologies required to evaluate and conduct independent research.	<i>Measure 1: Final grade on Quantitative Methods course (OCTH 610, EDUC 790)</i>  <i>Measure 2: Final grade on Qualitative Methods course (OSC 890, GEOG 620, EDUC 791)</i>

<b>Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>
<b>4.</b> Design and conduct original research in the field of autism.	<i>Measure 1: Grade on dissertation proposal</i>  <i>Measure 2: Grade on mentored dissertation progress</i>
<b>5.</b> Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate research findings and autism knowledge more generally to professionals and laypeople.	<i>Measure 1: Grade on Grant Writing course (PRWR 619)</i>  <i>Measure 2: Grade on final teaching demonstration in teaching and presentation research course (e.g., SPED 604)</i>

Achievement of student learning outcomes will be documented in a variety of ways. For example, grades earned at the individual assignment and course level will be documented in TU's learning management system (Blackboard), while the final approved version of the dissertation will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and archived in TU's library. More generally, assessment data will be recorded, archived, and tracked over time by the program director, who can draw on the expertise and resources of TU's Office of Assessment for assistance. Assessment data will be disseminated annually to program faculty and to CHP's Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, who has overall responsibility for assessment within the college, for consideration in the context of program improvement.

#### **G4. Program Requirements**

This Ph.D. program is a 60-credit hybrid program following completion of a master's degree in a related field of study. Full-time study is planned understanding, however, that part-time study will be available. Courses will be taught in-person on the main TU campus and through virtual educational platforms. Admitted students will be offered fellowship or research assistantship support so they can focus on research during their studies.

Required courses will be divided into four major areas of study: Interdisciplinary Foundations of Autism (Core), Research and Research Methods, Cognate, and Dissertation Study. See below for a program outline, with course descriptions included in Appendix B and a year-by-year program of study in Appendix C.

- **Interdisciplinary Foundations of Autism (Core)** (15 credits): These courses will cover topics related to autism across the lifespan, including diagnosis, intervention, and transitions to adulthood and beyond.
  - **First-year Seminar** (3 credits; *IDHP 650 Historical and Current Perspectives of Autism*)
  - **Family Collaboration** (3 credits; sample courses: *SPED 605 Working with Families of Students with Disabilities, FMST 601 Applied Family Relationships, FMST 610 Family-Professional Collaboration*)
  - **Autism in Children** (3 credits; sample courses: *IDHP 621 Contemporary Issues for Infants and Children on the Autism Spectrum, SPED 620 Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*)

- **Autism in Teens and Adults** (3 credits; sample courses: *IDHP 623 Contemporary Issues for Adolescents and Adults on the Autism Spectrum*, *SPED 629 Transition for Students with ASD Across the Lifespan*)
- **Laws, Policy, Ethics, and Advocacy** (3 credits; sample courses: *IDHP 741 Ethical and Legal Issues in Clinical Practice*, *PSYC 790 Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in Psychology*, *SPED 765 Leading Change in Autism: Advocacy, Law and Education Policy*)
- **Research and Research Methods** (18 credits): These courses will address quantitative methods and statistics, qualitative methods, applied research, and grant writing, with the opportunity for electives in areas such as program evaluation. Along with the applied research course, students will complete an early research project to prepare them for the dissertation process.
  - **General Research Methods** (3 credits; sample courses: *OCTH 613 Advanced Research Methods in Occupation-Based Practice*, *EDUC 789 Research Methods, Design, and Analysis*)
  - **Quantitative Methods** (3 credits; sample courses: *OCTH 610 Data Analysis in Occupation-Based Research and Evidence-Based Practice*, *EDUC 790 Advanced Measurements and Statistics in Education*)
  - **Qualitative Methods** (3 credits; sample courses: *OSC 890 Qualitative Research: Occupation and Life Narrative*, *GEOG 620 Qualitative Methods*, *EDUC 791 Advanced Qualitative Research Methods*)
  - **Grant Writing** (3 credits; sample courses: *PRWR 619 Grant and Community Writing*)
  - **Applied Research** (3 credits; sample courses: *FMST 620 Project in Family Focused Program Development (mixed methods action research)*, *FMST 615 Applied Research Methods in Family Science*, *WMST 609 Applied Research Methods and Skills I*, *SPED 604 Action Research in Special Education*)
  - **Self-selected Research Course** (3 credits; sample courses: *FMST 880 Graduate Project in Family Studies*, *PSYC 615 Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling*, *PSYC 687 Advanced Experimental Design I*, *PSYC 688 Advanced Experimental Design II*, *PSYC 689 Multivariate Analysis*, *PSYC 691 Independent Investigation in Psychology*, *PRWR 619 Grant and Community Writing*, *OSC 770 Special Topics in Occupational Science*)
- **Cognate** (9 credits): Students select courses that allow them to develop interdisciplinary breadth and depth of autism-related knowledge and research in their area of study. Examples of cognate areas may include intellectual disabilities, neurodiversity, cultural and disability studies, family studies, and mental health.
  - Sample Courses  
*IDHP 641 Communication, Behavior, and Participation Linkages for People on the Autism Spectrum*  
*IDHP 642 Program Design and Implementation in Autism*  
*PSYC 611 Developmental Psychology*

*PSYC 622 Advanced Multicultural Psychology*  
*PSYC 722 Advanced Multicultural Counseling*  
*GEOG 652 Geographies of Health*  
*SOSC 606 Sociological Insight*  
*SOSC 609 Developmental Human Learning: A Lifespan Approach*  
*SPED 621 Formal and Informal Assessment Techniques for Students with ASD*  
*SPED 622 Social Thinking and Connectedness for Students on the Autism Spectrum*  
*SPPA 600 Language Development and Disorders from Birth through Preschool*  
*SPPA 606 Language Development and Disorders in School-Age Children*  
*SPPA 615 Autism Spectrum Disorders and Speech-Language Pathology*  
*SPPA 710 Written Language Development and Disorders*  
*SPPA 714 Augmentative and Alternative Communication*  
*HLTH 619 Management of Post-Acute Care Services*  
*HLTH 657 Health Advocacy Across Service Settings*

- **Dissertation Study** (18 credits): These credits will span the development, proposal, data collection, analysis, writing, and defense of the dissertation project. Students will register for dissertation credits in their college of focus.

In addition to their course of study, students will obtain teaching and leadership experience in autism studies; this may be completed as a graduate assistantship, during the cognate courses, or through an individualized opportunity that reflects the experience of the student.

Students will each be matched with a faculty mentor(s) based on their area of interest and research focus. The faculty mentor(s) will serve as the Dissertation Chair(s). Dissertation committees will consist of a minimum of four faculty members with graduate faculty status, including the Dissertation Chair(s). At least two academic departments must be represented on this interdisciplinary committee.

#### ***G5. General Education Requirements***

Not applicable.

#### ***G6. Specialized Accreditation and Certification***

Not applicable.

#### ***G7. Outside Contracts***

Not applicable.

#### ***G8. Program Information Assurances***

A handbook will be offered to all incoming students outlining the Ph.D. in Autism Studies' policies, curriculum, requirements, expectations, technology, campus supports and



resources, and financial aid details. Students will provide a signature assuring review and comprehension of the handbook's contents prior to the start of coursework. For prospective student information, this handbook will also be available on the program website.

### ***G9. Advertising, Recruiting, and Admissions Materials Assurances***

TU regularly reviews its advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials to ensure that they clearly and accurately represent the program and services available, and that there is consistency across different modes of communication such as the TU website, the academic catalog, other print and online promotional materials, etc. More specifically, a tenured or tenure-track faculty member will be appointed as program director. Working in collaboration with the Office of Graduate Studies, the program director will oversee recruitment, communicate with prospective students, and monitor student progress during their time in the program. As noted above, a student handbook will be available on the website to provide clear and accurate program information. An admissions committee of interdisciplinary faculty members will conduct annual evaluation of applications and issue admissions decisions using a pre-established framework based on existing doctoral program guidelines at TU.

### **H. Adequacy of Articulation**

Not applicable.

### **I. Adequacy of Faculty Resources**

#### ***I1. Quality of Program Faculty***

TU's faculty for the proposed Ph.D. Program in Autism Studies are interdisciplinary and are housed in various departments and colleges across campus, including the College of Health Professions, College of Education, and College of Liberal Arts. The figure below shows the faculty with autism-related and other relevant expertise and consists of four full professors, five associate professors, four assistant professors, and three new tenure-track faculty. All tenured and tenure-track faculty have earned a doctoral degree in relevant disciplines and conduct research in areas relevant to autism studies. The faculty have been productive in producing high quality and high impact research and are committed to interdisciplinary education and practice. See Figure 5 below for additional information about the faculty, their fields of study, and sample courses they could teach. Note that all faculty could serve as mentors and/or dissertation committee members. Additional interdisciplinary faculty will teach courses on methods and cognate areas.

**Figure 5. Faculty Resources**

Faculty Name	FTE	Highest Degree Earned/Field of Study	Rank	Status (Full- or Part-time)	Sample Courses Faculty Could Teach
<b>Existing Faculty</b>					
Connie Anderson <sup>1</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Sociology and Marriage and Family Therapy	Associate Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>IDHP 621 Contemporary Issues for Infants and Children on Autism Spectrum</i></li> <li>• <i>IDHP 623 Contemporary Issues for Adolescents and Adults on Autism Spectrum</i></li> <li>• <i>IDHP 641 Communication, Behavior and Participation Linkages for People on the Autism Spectrum</i></li> <li>• <i>IDHP 642 Program Design and Implementation in Autism</i></li> <li>• <i>IDHP 650 Historical and Current Perspectives of Autism</i></li> </ul>
Briella Chen <sup>2</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Special Education	Assistant Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPED 604 Action Research in Special Education</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 620 Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 622 Social Thinking and Connectedness for Students on the Autism Spectrum</i></li> </ul>
Kelly Coburn <sup>1</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Speech-Language Pathology	Assistant Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPPA 615 Autism Spectrum Disorders and Speech-Language Pathology</i></li> <li>• <i>SPPA 714 Augmentative and Alternative Communication</i></li> </ul>
Patty Rice Doran <sup>2</sup>	1.0	Ed.D./Special Education	Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPED 621 Formal and Informal Assessment Techniques for Students with ASD</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 765 Leading Change in Autism: Advocacy, Law and Education Policy</i></li> </ul>

Faculty Name	FTE	Highest Degree Earned/Field of Study	Rank	Status (Full- or Part-time)	Sample Courses Faculty Could Teach
Karen Eskow <sup>3</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Social Work	Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>FMST 601 Applied Family Relationships</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 610 Family-Professional Collaboration</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 620 Project in Family Focused Program Development</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 880 Graduate Project in Family Studies</i></li> </ul>
Maria Fracasso <sup>3</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Psychology	Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>OSC 997 Dissertation Research</i></li> </ul>
Amanda Ginter <sup>3</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Family Science	Associate Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>FMST 601 Applied Family Relationships</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 610 Family-Professional Collaboration</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 620 Project in Family Focused Program Development</i></li> <li>• <i>FMST 880 Graduate Project in Family Studies</i></li> </ul>
Kay Holman <sup>2</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Special Education	Associate Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPED 604 Action Research in Special Education</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 620 Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 605 Working with Families of Students with Disabilities</i></li> </ul>
Greg Knollman <sup>2</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Special Education	Assistant Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPED 629 Transition for Students with ASD Across the Lifespan</i></li> <li>• <i>SPED 765 Leading Change in Autism: Advocacy, Law and Education Policy</i></li> </ul>
Beth Merryman <sup>1</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./ Policy Sciences	Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>OSC 997 Dissertation Research</i></li> </ul>
Danika Pfeiffer <sup>1</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Speech-Language Pathology	Assistant Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SPPA 710 Written Language Development and Disorders</i></li> <li>• <i>SPPA 600 Language Development and Disorders: Birth-Five</i></li> </ul>

Faculty Name	FTE	Highest Degree Earned/Field of Study	Rank	Status (Full- or Part-time)	Sample Courses Faculty Could Teach
S. Craig Rush <sup>3</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./School Psychology	Associate Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSYC 622 <i>Advanced Multicultural Psychology</i></li> <li>• PSYC 611 <i>Developmental Psychology</i></li> </ul>
Kaitlyn Wilson <sup>1</sup>	1.0	Ph.D./Speech-Language Pathology	Associate Professor	Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IDHP 650 <i>Historical and Current Perspectives of Autism</i></li> <li>• SPPA 615 <i>Autism Spectrum Disorders and Speech-Language Pathology</i></li> </ul>
<b>New Faculty</b>					
Assistant/Associate Professor, College of Health Professions	1.0	Ph.D./Autism Research	Assistant/Associate Professor	Full-time	TBD
Assistant/Associate Professor, College of Education	1.0	Ph.D./Special Education	Assistant/Associate Professor	Full-time	TBD
Assistant/Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts	1.0	Ph.D./Interdisciplinary Studies	Assistant/Associate Professor	Full-time	TBD

<sup>1</sup> Faculty from the College of Education

<sup>2</sup> Faculty from the College of Health Professions

<sup>3</sup> Faculty from the College of Liberal Arts

## ***12. Ongoing Faculty Training***

The Faculty Academic Center of Excellent at Towson (FACET) is Towson University's faculty development center. FACET's mission is to support an inclusive and collaborative faculty community and foster a culture of excellence in scholarship and teaching. FACET supports faculty through a combination of programs, resources, funding, and access to partners across campus. All faculty have access to programs, workshops, meetings, and conferences to support pedagogy that meets the needs of students. Working in collaboration with the Office of Technology Services, FACET also recommends, reviews, and provides programs to support faculty development and advancing skills with Blackboard, TU's learning management system. FACET provides one-on-one or small group, virtual or face-to-face meetings with an instructional design team, who also perform course reviews. Faculty may attend open meetings as well as request consultation from FACET staff.

## **J. Adequacy of Library Resources**

Towson University's Cook Library (<https://libraries.towson.edu>) is prepared to support an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Autism Studies through synchronous and asynchronous instruction, point-of-need reference consultations, and the provision and curation of specialized resources. TU affiliates in the program have access to over 44 health and medicine subject-specific databases, including bibliographic, reference, and image resources, over 11,000 journal subscriptions within health and biological sciences domains, and an extensive collection of books and e-books to support evidence-based practice, with an already substantial initial collection of over 500 books and e-books on the subject of autism. Cook Library databases such as MEDLINE, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, PsycINFO, and ERIC index important autism journals such as the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *Autism Research*, and *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*.

In addition to a dedicated subject specialist liaison librarian, CHP is supported by specialized, health-related research guides, such as 'Planning for Your Literature Review in the Health Professions' (<https://towson.libguides.com/expert-reviews>), 'Searching for Evidence in the Health Professions' (<https://towson.libguides.com/searching-for-evidence>), 'Research Impact' (<https://towson.libguides.com/research-metrics>), and a YouTube channel with videos to support searching and methods research (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMqAATLPshn8Znip6E3QMSw>). Towson University students and faculty have access to on-demand chat and a 24/7 study space in the Cook Library Building.

## **K. Adequacy of Physical Facilities, Infrastructure, and Instructional Equipment**

### ***K1. Assurance of Physical Facilities, Infrastructure and Equipment***

TU's existing physical facilities, infrastructure and instructional equipment are sufficient to support the needs of the program. The proposed Ph.D. program will be housed in the College of Health Professions and its Institute for Well-Being. TU is currently constructing a \$185 million, 240,000 square foot CHP building with estimated completion in summer 2024. This building will allow for high-tech simulation and instruction, and include a 350-seat auditorium, 19 collaborative classrooms, and over 20 collaborative lab/research spaces to strengthen interprofessional education and scholarship. Additional unique spaces include an activities of daily living lab, a pediatric lab, a therapy garden for educational purposes, and a makerspace.

Additional space for applied research related to autism will be available at the IWB, which is home to the Hussman Center for Adults with Autism. Staff and faculty offices, classrooms, and research labs will be housed in existing CHP and IWB spaces until the transition to the new CHP building in 2024. Additional interdisciplinary faculty offices and research labs will be housed in their existing, established spaces in their respective college buildings.

## ***K2. Assurance of Distance Learning Resources***

While most courses will be delivered on the main TU campus via face-to-face instruction, the university is able to support distance education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Towson University expanded its resources and expertise in delivering services to support distance education. The program will rely on FACET for such expertise and all students will be assured access to TU's institutional e-mail system and Blackboard learning platform.

### **L. Adequacy of Financial Resources with Documentation**

With a formal shift in university mission to recognize research as a core component, Towson University is investing in doctoral research programs in areas of faculty specialization and research. The Ph.D. in Autism Studies has adequate resources to meet the needs of this interdisciplinary program. This degree program will be funded with existing resources, new graduate student funding, University R2 investment funds, and reallocated faculty effort from the College of Education, College of Health Professions, and the College of Liberal Arts. The majority of graduate courses already exist in focused areas such as special education, autism studies, occupational therapy, and psychology. A minimum of four faculty FTEs and part-time administrative staff support will be reallocated to support this program (Table 1. Resources).

Expenditures for the program include four faculty FTEs, to include three tenure-track research faculty and one lecturer who will support research faculty teaching in the program. Faculty hires will occur during Years 1 through 4 of the proposed program. In addition to faculty resources, graduate assistantships for full-time doctoral students, library resources, marketing, and faculty scholarship travel funds are requested (Table 2. Expenditures). As the program unfolds, Towson University anticipates the University's commitment to and investment in the strategic goal of achieving R2 Carnegie Classification and tuition and fees to provide adequate funding support.

**TABLE 1: RESOURCES**

<b>Resources Categories</b>	<b>(Year 1)</b>	<b>(Year 2)</b>	<b>(Year 3)</b>	<b>(Year 4)</b>	<b>(Year 5)</b>
<b>1. Reallocated Funds</b>	<b>\$324,320</b>	<b>\$721,073</b>	<b>\$942,259</b>	<b>\$970,528</b>	<b>\$999,644</b>
a. Reallocated Funds-Faculty Support <sup>1</sup>	\$187,650	\$450,986	\$530,874	\$546,801	\$563,205
b. Reallocated Funds-Admin Staff Support <sup>1</sup>	\$11,120	\$11,454	\$11,797	\$12,151	\$12,516
c. Reallocated Funds-University R2 Investment <sup>2</sup>	\$125,550	\$258,633	\$399,588	\$411,576	\$423,923
<b>2. Tuition/Fee Revenue<sup>3,4</sup></b>	<b>\$130,909</b>	<b>\$243,733</b>	<b>\$365,400</b>	<b>\$380,074</b>	<b>\$395,323</b>
Number of Full-time Students	7	14	21	21	21
In-State	5	10	15	15	15
Out of State	2	4	6	6	6
Annual Tuition Rate In-State <sup>4</sup>	\$12,024	\$12,505	\$13,005	\$13,525	\$14,066
Annual Tuition Rate Out of State <sup>4</sup>	\$24,912	\$25,908	\$26,945	\$28,023	\$29,144
Subtotal Tuition	\$109,944.00	\$200,130	\$297,360	\$309,360	\$321,900
Annual Fees - University Fees	\$20,965	\$43,603	\$68,040	\$70,714	\$73,423
<b>3. Grants, Contracts &amp; Other Sources</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>4. Other Sources</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>TOTAL (Add 1 - 4)</b>	<b>\$455,229</b>	<b>\$964,806</b>	<b>\$1,307,659</b>	<b>\$1,350,602</b>	<b>\$1,394,967</b>

<sup>1</sup>Re-allocated funds are based on incumbent faculty FTEs dedicated to program with salary and fringe rates. Salary and fringe rates increase by three percent annually.

<sup>2</sup> University funds will be reallocated and invested in this program to support of the TU strategic priority to achieve R2 Carnegie Classification.

<sup>3</sup>Student enrollments are calculated at 75 percent in-state and 25 percent out-of-state. It is anticipated that all students will enroll on a full-time basis.

<sup>4</sup>Tuition and fees increase by four percent annually.

**TABLE 2: PROGRAM EXPENDITURES**

<b>Expenditure Categories</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
<b>1. Total Faculty Expenses</b> (b + c below)	<b>\$90,350</b>	<b>\$225,111</b>	<b>\$367,876</b>	<b>\$519,004</b>	<b>\$534,573</b>
a. #FTE	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.0
b. Total Salary <sup>1</sup>	\$65,000	\$161,950	\$264,659	\$373,384	\$384,585
c. Total Benefits (39% fringe rate) <sup>1</sup>	\$25,350	\$63,161	\$103,217	\$145,620	\$149,988
<b>2. Total Administrative Staff Expenses</b> (b + c below)	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
a. #FTE	0	0	0	0	0
b. Total Salary	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
c. Total Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>3. Total Support Staff Expenses</b> (b + c below)	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
a. #FTE	0	0	0	0	0
b. Total Salary	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
c. Total Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>4. Equipment</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>5. Library<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$62,500</b>	<b>\$31,800</b>	<b>\$33,708</b>	<b>\$35,730</b>	<b>\$37,874</b>
<b>6. New or Renovated Space</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>7. Other Expenses</b> (a + b + c + d + e below)	<b>\$235,570</b>	<b>\$469,254</b>	<b>\$718,306</b>	<b>\$741,763</b>	<b>\$766,028</b>
a. Travel	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
b. Program Support/Operating	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
c. Marketing	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
d. Tuition Waiver	\$80,976	\$168,430	\$262,751	\$273,261	\$284,191
e. Student Stipends <sup>3</sup>	\$135,594	\$279,324	\$431,555	\$444,502	\$457,837
<b>TOTAL (1-7)</b>	<b>\$388,420</b>	<b>\$726,165</b>	<b>\$1,119,890</b>	<b>\$1,296,497</b>	<b>\$1,338,475</b>

<sup>1</sup>Salaries/costs increase by three percent per year.

<sup>2</sup> One-time funding of \$32,500 with yearly ongoing subscriptions of \$30,000; ongoing subscription costs increase by six percent annually.

<sup>3</sup>Doctoral student assistantships (two fellowships; five research assistantships per program cohort).



## **M. Adequacy of Provisions for Evaluation of Program**

### ***M1. Procedures for Evaluating Courses, Faculty and Student Learning Outcomes***

Course evaluations takes place primarily in two ways. The faculty review courses taught on an annual basis to determine strengths and concerns related to a course as well as to make sure that the content identified in the course syllabus is being covered. If a review indicates concerns or problems with a course, faculty work to develop strategies for addressing/rectifying problems. Additionally, student evaluation of courses takes place at the end of every semester. Using a tool developed by TU faculty that allows for quantitative and qualitative feedback, students can assess instructor performance (e.g., ability to communicate clearly; quality of student- instructor interaction; preparedness) and suggest “improvements” for a course.

Evaluation of faculty takes place using policies and procedures established by TU’s promotion, tenure/reappointment and merit committees and occurs at the department, college, and university level. The main areas of evaluation include teaching, scholarship, and service. Tools used as part of the annual evaluation process include review of the individual’s portfolio that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Evidence of scholarship (e.g., articles in scholarly journals; presentations at scholarly meetings).
- Service work.
- A synopsis of teaching related-activities (e.g., courses taught; new instructional procedures; interdisciplinary, diversity, international, and technology-related projects).
- Review of course syllabi.
- Peer teaching observation reports.
- Quantitative and qualitative student evaluation of instruction.

Section G3 outlines the various assessment measures that will employed throughout the program and shows their alignment with specific student learning outcomes. For the dissertation research courses, student achievement is assessed via the preparation and oral defense of the dissertation proposal and dissertation, whereas in the traditional instructor-led courses, assessment measures exist for each learning outcome. On an annual basis, specific learning outcomes are identified for assessment purposes. The program director, with the support of TU’s Office of Assessment, will oversee the processes involved in the assessment of student learning outcomes, including collection and analysis of data, and creation of action plans, as necessary.

### ***M2. Evaluation of Program Educational Effectiveness***

The assessment of the program in relation to academic matters will be guided by the Office of Assessment and CHP’s assessment committee, following established TU policies and procedures to collect and analyze data, including review of the program’s assessment plan

to ensure that learning outcomes remain appropriate and students are meeting expectations.

On matters relating to retention, student and faculty satisfaction, cost-effectiveness, and other key performance indicators, the program and/or CHP work closely with multiple units within TU, such as the Office of the Provost, Enrollment Services, Student Services, etc., to review data on a regular basis (e.g., each semester or annually) and, when needed, develop action steps or plans to improve the program.

Additionally, TU will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Ph.D. program every seven years as part of the USM-mandated Periodic Review of Academic Programs process. The purpose of the review is to promote continuous program improvement and ensure that the needs of students are being met. Each program will prepare a self-study, engage an external reviewer to evaluate the program and identify strengths and areas for improvement, and submit a final report to the USM Board of Regents for review and approval.

#### **N. Consistency with the State's Minority Student Achievement Goals**

The proposed Ph.D. program aligns with TU's cultural diversity goals and its initiatives to create a more inclusive TU. With the diversity of faculty and student backgrounds from across the university and the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum, the proposed program will allow for recruitment and retention of a diverse group of future leaders in autism studies. In addition, the program's focus on neurodiversity and the range of autism experiences aligns with TU's Goal 1.2.3 from the 2020-25 Diversity Strategic Plan to "increase student participation in faculty scholarship related to diversity, equity and inclusion." Furthermore, the proposed Ph.D. program inherently responds to Goal 3.1.2 to "foster a spirit of collaboration across units."

Additionally, because none of the HBIs in the state of Maryland offer Ph.D. programs like the proposed Ph.D. program in Autism Studies, this program will offer quality educational opportunities to graduates from these institutions from a variety of backgrounds and majors. Collaboration between TU and Maryland's HBIs in advertisement and recruitment for the proposed program will enhance the diversity of the program's student body and aligns with the state's goal to increase minority student achievement.

#### **O. Relationship to Low Productivity Programs Identified by the Commission**

Not applicable.

#### **P. Adequacy of Distance Education Programs**

Not applicable.

## Appendix A. Relevant Program Summaries

### Towson University

#### *Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Autism Studies Certificate*

This certificate is aimed at a diverse group of individuals who are working with children and/or adults with ASDs (autism spectrum disorders) in a variety of settings (e.g., educational, healthcare, workplaces). Program curriculum includes topics on common ASD traits, “co-occurring conditions, epidemiology, evidence-based interventions, classroom and workplace strategies, family impact, research and key policy issues.”<sup>2</sup> This 16-unit certificate is offered online through the College of Health Professions and typically takes one to two years to complete. In the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 21 students enrolled in this certificate program.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom Certificate*

This program is targeted to those currently teaching or professionals in a related field who want to increase their skills and knowledge to effectively work with students and families impacted by ASDs. Program curriculum includes completing application assignments that enable implementation of learned skills in the classroom, interacting with faculty and experts in ASDs, and engaging with community partners tasked with supporting individuals with ASDs and their families. This 15-unit certificate is offered through in-person courses from the College of Education.<sup>4</sup> In the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 12 students enrolled in this certificate program.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Master's in Special Education, Teacher as Leader in Autism Spectrum Disorder Concentration*

This master's degree specialization aims to equip graduates with expert knowledge on effective, evidence-based educational practices for students with ASDs. Students in this concentration will learn from faculty with extensive research and classroom experience with ASDs and gain effective strategies for interacting and collaborating with families, communities, and invested agencies. This 36-unit degree typically requires two to three years of in-person instruction to complete.<sup>6</sup> In the 2020-2021 academic year, there were a

---

<sup>2</sup> “Autism Studies Certificate,” Towson University, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://catalog.towson.edu/graduate/degree-certificate-programs/health-professions/autism-studies-certificate/#text>.

<sup>3</sup> Towson University, “Duplicated Headcount of Graduate Students by College and Major: Fall Term 2016 Through 2021,” 1.

<sup>4</sup> “Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom Post-Baccalaureate Certificate,” Towson University, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www.towson.edu/coe/departments/specialed/grad/autism-classroom-certificate/>.

<sup>5</sup> Towson University, “Duplicated Headcount of Graduate Students by College and Major: Fall Term 2016 Through 2021,” 1, accessed September 12, 2022, [https://www.towson.edu/ir/documents/f\\_maj\\_hdct\\_dup\\_gr.pdf](https://www.towson.edu/ir/documents/f_maj_hdct_dup_gr.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> “Teacher as Leader in Autism Spectrum Disorder Concentration,” Towson University, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www.towson.edu/coe/departments/specialed/grad/special-education/autism/#:~:text=The%20program%20offers%20you%3A,students%20who%20are%20experienced%20teachers>.

total of 140 graduate students enrolled in a Special Education master's degree program at Towson University (includes both Special Education Concentration and Teacher as a Leader in Autism Spectrum Disorder Concentration).<sup>7</sup>

### **University of Maryland, College Park**

#### *Graduate Certificate, Supporting Children with Intensive Behavior Needs*

This certificate program is designed for educators who work with students who have intense behavioral needs and are aiming to increase their skills and knowledge to effectively work with students and families impacted by ASDs. Covered topics include the neuroscience of learning, principles of behavior change, school leadership, educational law, and team management.<sup>8</sup> Online courses are taught by faculty from both University of Maryland and Kennedy Krieger Institute, and the program also includes on-site educational opportunities at Kennedy Krieger Institute.<sup>9,10</sup>

### **University of Maryland (Universities at Shady Grove, Rockville)**

#### *Master's in Special Education, Specialty in Autism Spectrum Disorders*

This master's degree program is targeted to professionals who are aiming to increase their skills and knowledge to effectively work with students and families impacted by ASDs. Program curriculum includes learning primary and associated traits of individuals with ASDs and related developmental delays and disabilities; utilization of evidence-based methods to increase classroom, behavioral, and self-determination skills and classroom management; and gaining strategies for social and communication challenges.<sup>11</sup> Courses are presented in a combination of in-person, online, and hybrid formats.<sup>12</sup> In Fall 2021, a total of 77 students were enrolled in a University of Maryland Special Education graduate degree program (not exclusive to the Specialty in Autism Spectrum Disorders concentration).<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Towson University, "Duplicated Headcount of Graduate Students by College and Major: Fall Term 2016 Through 2021," 1.

<sup>8</sup> "Supporting Children with Intensive Behavior Needs," University of Maryland, accessed September 12, 2022, <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/support-children-Z137/#text>.

<sup>9</sup> "Supporting Children with Intensive Behavior Needs," University of Maryland, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://education.umd.edu/academics/programs/certificates/supporting-children-intensive-behavior-needs>.

<sup>10</sup> Unable to obtain enrollment and/or graduation data for this certificate program.

<sup>11</sup> "M.Ed. in Special Education - Focus Autism," University of Maryland, The Universities at Shady Grove, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://shadygrove.umd.edu/academics/degree-programs/med-special-education-focus-autism>.

<sup>12</sup> "Special Education, Master of Education (M.Ed.), Specialty: Autism Spectrum Disorders - Off Campus," University of Maryland College of Education, accessed September 12, 2022, <https://education.umd.edu/academics/programs/off-campus/special-education-master-education-med-specialty-program-non>.

<sup>13</sup> "Number of Registered Majors," University of Maryland, accessed September 12, 2022, <https://reports.umd.edu/tableaupublic/1804>.

## **Johns Hopkins University**

### *Graduate Certificate, Education of Students with Autism and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders*

This certificate program is targeted towards parents, teachers, and other individuals who work with and support those diagnosed with an ASD, particularly in kindergarten through 12th grade educational settings. This 18-credit program covers a range of topics including descriptive and diagnostic characteristics of ASDs, identifying and implementing evidence-based practices, and learning research methods to measure the effectiveness of these approaches. Additionally, students in the program will be able to use the results of their assessments to develop educational programs that increase positive skills and behaviors. This online program can be completed in one year over three semesters, however students have up to three years to complete the requirements.<sup>14</sup> In 2019 there were 6 students enrolled in this certificate program at Johns Hopkins University.<sup>15</sup>

### *Master's in Special Education, dual focus on Severe Disabilities with Emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorders*

This master's degree program aims to prepare teachers for working with students requiring specialized instruction and intensive support, including those with ASDs. Program curriculum includes focused training for teaching individuals with severe disabilities; classroom behavior management; relevant legal and federal requirements, using formal and informal assessments of student performance, and collecting and evaluating data to inform academic and behavioral decisions. This 36-credit master's degree takes between two and five years for students to finish in-person courses, and also requires the completion of an internship.<sup>16</sup> In 2019, there were 53 master's degrees in Special Education awarded by Johns Hopkins University across all specialties (not exclusively Severe Disabilities with Emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorders).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> "Graduate Certificate – Education of Students with Autism and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders," Johns Hopkins School of Education, accessed August 1, 2022, [https://education.jhu.edu/academics/gc\\_autism/](https://education.jhu.edu/academics/gc_autism/).

<sup>15</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission, "Trends in Enrollment by Program 2006-2019," 72, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Research/AnnualReports/2019EnrollbyProgram.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> "Master of Science in Special Education: Severe Disabilities with an Emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorders," Johns Hopkins School of Education, accessed August 1, 2022, [https://education.jhu.edu/academics/msse\\_severe/](https://education.jhu.edu/academics/msse_severe/).

<sup>17</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission, "Trends in Enrollment by Program 2006-2019," 75.

## **Appendix B. Descriptions of Course Options in Program Outline**

### *EDUC 789 Research Methods, Design, and Analysis*

Provides an overview of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of research methods, as well as an introduction to the theory and practice of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Prepares students to complete advanced coursework in qualitative and quantitative research methods and applications.

### *EDUC 790 Advanced Measurements and Statistics in Education*

An advanced statistics course for doctoral students focusing on using multivariate statistics in educational research designs. Course covers statistical analyses ranging from multiple regressions, canonical correlation through multivariate analysis of variance and covariance, as well as discriminate function analysis. Advanced skills of experimental and nonexperimental designs, and uses of contemporary statistics software will be developed.

### *EDUC 791 Advanced Qualitative Research Methods*

Focus on developing in-depth knowledge and skills in the use of qualitative methodology. Designed for doctoral students and includes philosophical foundations of qualitative inquiry, building the conceptual framework for a study, the methodological issues of research design, issues of validity and logic, as well as data analysis and representation. Through intense reading and writing, students will examine the advances and challenges presented by recent developments and new applications in qualitative research methodology.

### *FMST 601 Applied Family Relationships*

Course explores the fundamental components of the development and maintenance of family relationships. Students will critically analyze various perspectives and techniques of interpersonal relationships and will apply knowledge through case analysis. Content will include topics such as conflict resolution, intimacy and distance in relationships, relationship enhancement and maintenance, and exploration of family stories through case analysis.

### *FMST 610 Family-Professional Collaboration*

Problem-based learning from a multidisciplinary perspective to enhance professional and family collaboration.

### *FMST 615 Applied Research Methods in Family Science*

Program evaluation methodology for assessment of practice of human services.

*FMST 620 Project in Family Focused Program Development*

Exploration of complex relationships in family program development, and student involvement in a family focused service-learning project. Students will conduct initial field exploration to identify a focus area that could benefit from creative family programming.

*FMST 880 Graduate Project in Family Studies*

Implementation and documentation of a research project specific to child life or administration of child life programs or family involvement in a practice setting.

*GEOG 620 Qualitative Methods*

Exploration of qualitative methods in geography. Basic principles of research design, ethical and procedural considerations.

*GEOG 652 Geographies of Health*

Interrelationship between health and our social and physical environments. Emphasis on geographic approaches to inequalities in health, well-being and care.

*HLTH 619 Management of Post-Acute Care Services*

Examination of the long-term care industry, including relevant political and regulatory structures, issues of access, availability, and other managerial challenges of working with post-acute care populations.

*HLTH 657 Health Advocacy Across Service Settings*

Study of skills and knowledge to advocate for vulnerable populations, including experience in the investigation of complaints and relevant interview processes.

*IDHP 621 Contemporary Issues for Infants and Children on the Autism Spectrum*

Theoretical and applied perspectives of current issues related to infants and children on the autism spectrum; family concerns; and considerations of educational, community, and home contexts.

*IDHP 623 Contemporary Issues for Adolescents and Adults on the Autism Spectrum*

Overview of theoretical and applied perspectives of current issues related to adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum with a primary focus on person-centered strategies and evidence-based practice.

*IDHP 641 Communication, Behavior, and Participation Linkages for People on the Autism Spectrum*

An analysis and application of positive communication and behavioral management strategies to promote social participation and inclusion of people on the autism spectrum.

*IDHP 642 Program Design and Implementation in Autism*

Program needs assessment, design, and evaluation for people on the autism spectrum to support participation in educational, work, home, and community settings.

*IDHP 650 Historical and Current Perspectives of Autism*

Explores historical and current perspectives of autism. The course will cover the evolution of ideas surrounding autism etiology, treatment, education, and advocacy.

*IDHP 741 Ethical and Legal Issues in Clinical Practice*

Provides interdisciplinary exploration of legal and ethical issues in clinical practice, research, administration, and teaching. Includes emphases on cultural diversity, truth-telling, informed consent, confidentiality, accountability, reimbursement pressures, new technologies/treatments, end-of-life care, licensure, practice, and ethics.

*OCTH 610 Data Analysis in Occupation-Based Research and Evidence-Based Practice*

In depth examination of quantitative and qualitative data in health-related literature and application of data analysis procedures in occupation-based research.

*OCTH 613 Advanced Research Methods in Occupation-Based Practice*

Application of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

*OSC 770 Special Topics in Occupational Science*

Explore topics of special interest in occupational science theory and research.

*OSC 890 Qualitative Research: Occupation and Life Narrative*

Qualitative methods used in the study of occupation and other related social sciences.

*OSC 895 Applied Project*

Design and implementation of an applied research project in occupation that has the potential to be developed into a dissertation topic.



*OSC 997 Dissertation Research*

Design, implementation and documentation of focused study of applied occupation in community systems.

*PRWR 619 Grant and Community Writing*

Theory and practice of writing grant proposals, fundraising, and writing as social action for communities and non-profits. Includes the study of rhetoric and writing as it applies to nonprofits, civic engagement, advocacy, etc.

*PSYC 611 Developmental Psychology*

Psychological structures and functions in human development across the life span. Both theoretical and research approaches are presented.

*PSYC 615 Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling*

Principal methods of behavioral research emphasizing concepts rather than statistical procedures. Preparation of counselors to evaluate methods, designs, and results of counseling research.

*PSYC 622 Advanced Multicultural Psychology*

Promotion of cultural awareness and understanding of relevant theories, terminology and techniques for communicating and working with individuals of diverse backgrounds.

*PSYC 687 Advanced Experimental Design I*

Treatment of descriptive and inferential statistical methods and design considerations.

*PSYC 688 Advanced Experimental Design II*

Treatment of advanced analysis of variance designs and related techniques.

*PSYC 689 Multivariate Analysis*

Multivariate statistical methods useful in behavioral scientific research. Topics: correlation, regression, factor analysis, discriminate analysis.

*PSYC 691 Independent Investigation in Psychology*

An opportunity for graduate students to undertake research problems according to their interest and training under the direction of a faculty member.

*PSYC 722 Advanced Multicultural Counseling*

Self-awareness, theoretical, assessment and treatment issues in the areas of multicultural counseling.

*PSYC 790 Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in Psychology*

Treatment of ethical, legal and professional issues related to the practice of school, clinical and counseling psychology.

*SOSC 606 Sociological Insight*

Theories, methods and substantive issues in sociology. Consideration of recent advances in sociological research.

*SOSC 609 Developmental Human Learning: A Lifespan Approach*

Provides graduate students with basic theories, historical development and application of scientific methods to human learning.

*SPED 604 Action Research in Special Education*

Structured reflection of an action research project completed within a classroom, school, or district with a review of fundamental concepts and practices in special education research.

*SPED 605 Working with Families of Students with Disabilities*

The role of the family system and the impact of having a child with a disability on that system. Practice in strategies for effective communication and family support.

*SPED 620 Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Provides an in-depth introduction into the characteristics, assessment methods, and instructional issues related to educating a student with an autism spectrum disorder in the classroom.

*SPED 621 Formal and Informal Assessment Techniques for Students with ASD*

Information related to both formal and informal assessment for students with autism spectrum disorders. Participants will improve observation skills, learn administration procedures, interpret assessment results, and improve programming.

*SPED 622 Social Thinking and Connectedness for Students on the Autism Spectrum*

Theories and research on social development, social communication, social connectedness, and instructional techniques for individuals on the autism spectrum.

*SPED 629 Transition for Students with ASD across the Lifespan*

Practical application of legal requirements for preparing students with autism spectrum disorder for transition across the lifespan including from early childhood services to school age supports from class to class, school to school, into employment, post-secondary and adult settings, including prevocational and vocational methodologies, student-centered planning and interagency linkages.

*SPED 765 Leading Change in Autism: Advocacy, Law and Education Policy*

Federal and state laws, policies and regulations guiding provision of services for students with autism and related conditions; advocacy in fostering legal, policy and educational change.

*SPPA 600 Language Development and Disorders from Birth through Preschool*

Theoretical and applied aspects of normal, delayed, and disordered language development in children ages 0 to 5 with an emphasis on family-centered assessment and intervention practices.

*SPPA 606 Language Development and Disorders in Children*

Characteristics of language disorders, assessment and intervention techniques for children and adolescents including the culturally linguistically different and specific disorder populations.

*SPPA 615 Autism Spectrum Disorders and Speech-Language Pathology*

Information for speech-language pathologists to assess, treat, and support individuals with autism spectrum disorders in speech, language, and social communication.

*SPPA 710 Written Language Development and Disorders*

Language theory and application for the development of written language skills in children. Assessment and intervention within the classroom curriculum.

*SPPA 714 Augmentative and Alternative Communication*

Compensatory or augmentative use of various nonspeech communication modes with persons whose impairments prevent effective verbal communication.

*WMST 609 Applied Research Methods and Skills I*

How to interpret, evaluate, and conduct research about women and gender issues in organizations and society, using the computer, the Internet, and statistical software for accessing and producing information.

**Appendix C. Program of Study**

Year	Fall	Spring	Summer	Credits
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First-year Seminar: Historical and Current Perspectives of Autism (3)</b></li> <li>• <b>Autism in Children Course (3)</b></li> <li>• <i>General Research Methods (3)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Autism in Teens and Adults Course (3)</b></li> <li>• <b>Laws, Policy, Ethics and Advocacy Course (3)</b></li> <li>• <i>Quantitative Methods (3)</i></li> </ul>		18
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Collaboration Course (3)</b></li> <li>• <i>Qualitative Methods (3)</i></li> <li>• <u>Cognate Course #1 (3)</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Applied Research (with early research project defense) (3)</i></li> <li>• <u>Cognate Course #2 (3)</u></li> <li>• <u>Cognate Course #3 (3)</u></li> </ul>	Comprehensive Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Grant Writing (3)</i></li> </ul>	21
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Research Elective (3)</i></li> <li>• <i>Dissertation (3) (Identify Topic and Advisor)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dissertation (6) (Literature Review, Proposal)</i></li> </ul>		12
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dissertation (6) (Research, Analysis)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dissertation (3) (Analysis, Writing, Defense)</i></li> </ul>		9
<b>Core in bold, Research and Research Methods in italics, Cognate underlined</b> <b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>				<b>60</b>