WMU to Expand Offerings in Youth and Community Development

College of Education and Human Development
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KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Youth and community development (YCD) is a quickly-professionalizing field, and WMU’s new master of arts degree and graduate certificate program in the College of Education and Human Development complete a continuum of community-based professional development opportunities available at the university. The M.A. degree and graduate certificate in YCD are being added to the current programs available at WMU: the B.S. in YCD and the Ph.D. in Education and Human Development with a YCD emphasis. Opportunities are now available for those seeking to enter the field, further their knowledge and skills, become leaders and pursue scholarly efforts in this area. Graduates may take roles in diverse youth-serving, family and community settings including afterschool, community service and youth activism programs; public and private human services organizations and agencies; dropout prevention and alternative education; juvenile justice; and informal learning environments such as museums, nature centers, environmental education, outdoor and adventure programs.

“We’re very excited to expand our options in youth and community development at Western, because Kalamazoo has a strong tradition in promoting work in this area. We hope these new academic programs will help further that effort,” says Dr. Jeffrey Jones, associate professor of secondary education and coordinator of the Ph.D. program. “We see this work as an act of social justice and strive to elevate youth assets within our community.”

A unique feature of all four options is the ability to engage with local youth and youth development organizations in partnership with the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network (KYD Network). The KYD Network is an organization that builds capacity within and coordinates the efforts of out-of-school time programs in the Kalamazoo area.
The Academic Programs

The B.S. in Youth and Community Development, offered by the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, is based on theoretical perspectives in childhood, adolescent and family development, best pedagogical practices, and is grounded in an ethic of family engagement and social action. The program prepares change agents to transform communities through an intentional investment in youth with interdisciplinary coursework and community-based experiences. A B.S. in Youth and Community Development is designed so students can take coursework that allows them to apply for the provisional Certification as a Family Life Educator (CFLE) and that addresses the core knowledge and competencies of the Michigan School-Age Youth Development Credential. Graduates of this program will be prepared to assume leadership roles in youth-serving settings such as after school and out-of-school time programs and informal learning environments. For more information, please contact the College of Education and Human Development Undergraduate Advising Office.

The Graduate Certificate in Youth and Community Development, also offered by the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, is rooted in community psychology and the prevention sciences to provide a foundation for studying setting-level interventions and developmental needs. The program is ideal for those currently working in the field who already hold a bachelor’s degree and would like to further their knowledge in this area, or for those pursuing a master’s degree in another area that would like to add a specialization to their coursework. For more information please contact Dr. Karen Blaisure, professor of family science and graduate advisor to students in the graduate certificate and master’s program.

The M.A. in Youth and Community Development, a collaboration between the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, the Department of Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies, and the Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology, is an advanced course of professional development for leaders in informal learning environments and the out-of-school time sector. It is based on theoretical perspectives in childhood, adolescent and family development, and organizational change and is grounded in an ethic of community engagement and social action. This program is also ideal for those currently working in the field who already hold a bachelor’s degree and would like to further their knowledge in this area. For more information, please contact Dr. Karen Blaisure.

The Ph.D. in Education and Human Development with an emphasis in Youth and Community development is designed for individuals seeking to pursue scholarly research and includes rigorous methodological training, individualized coursework and guided research with affiliated faculty. This program is intended for individuals already holding a master’s degree who are ready to begin doing research right away. For more information, please contact Dr. Jeffrey Jones.