



**Strategic Priority Funding  
Application Form**

**2007-2008**

#21

Project Name Specialized Graduate Certificate in Forensic Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation

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Dept. Chair Signature *[Signature]* Date 11/30/2006

Dean Signature *[Signature]* Date 11/30/2006

Vice President Signature *[Signature]* Date 11/30/2006

Date Submitted to Office of Institutional Planning: 11/30/2006  
(Deadline is November 30, 2006)

Priority Number(s)

# Minnesota State University, Mankato

## FY08 Strategic Priority Funding Request

1. Which Strategic Priority and Objective does this funding request support? See link for Strategic Priority definitions: <http://www.mnsu.edu/president/priorities/definitions/>

Strategic Priority 3 Distance Learning

Innovative Idea Establish online Special

Graduate Certificate program in Forensic Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation (This program would be the only one of its kind, both nationally and internationally, at this time)

**Strategic Priority Objective** Objective 5: Identify and add additional programs based on experiences with the first 3-5 (programs).

### Additional Strategic Priorities Related to Project

Priority 1: Campus-wide/Objective 2b. Enrollment Management

Priority 4: Review and Enhance Graduate Education/Objective 2: Based on market Studies... and create graduate programs (including licensure programs).

Priority 6: International Programs / Objectives 3 & 4: Develop a recruitment and retention plan to bring international students to our campus and to retain these students; To examine opportunities for international students to share their cultures and also for domestic students to study and share their experiences with the university community.

2. Provide a brief description of your project. Please attach a one page project narrative:

To create and implement a 5 course/15 graduate semester hour specialization certificate program at the graduate level for rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation nurses, case/disability management specialists, rehabilitation consultants, economists, attorneys, and others who are desiring specialty education in forensic vocational rehabilitation consultation. This certificate would enhance those qualifications of professionals who wish to or are already providing forensic expert opinions within legal settings such as personal injury, motor vehicle accidents, product liability, employment discrimination, Worker's Compensation, divorce, catastrophic injury, wrongful death, and injury or death of a child, at the Federal, state, or administrative levels of court jurisdictions.

3. **How will the funding request support the Strategic Priority?**

- a. Provide Project Director with release time for 3 semesters and 10 extra duty days during summer 2007 to develop curriculum, work with technical specialists, recruit students, and conduct search and training for Adjunct Faculty members that could teach online courses.
- a. Provide Graduate Assistant support for 3 semesters (not summer) for curriculum research, development of marketing materials, and other administrative duties required to establish program.
- c. Provide technical specialists in law and disability economics to assist Project Director in development of curriculum and materials for 3 courses (including simulated courtroom experience).
- d. Provide Project Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program, Speech, Hearing, and Rehabilitation Services Department and College (CAHN) with needed resources to develop this sole source specialization that is of extensive interest and need for the profession.

**4. Describe the measurable outcomes:**

- a. Students will show improvement in their level of knowledge, skills, and manner of delivery of forensic expert opinion and consultation, as measured by their grades/evaluations for each course, and a structured self-assessment prior to and upon certificate program completion.
- b. Student performance, at the end of their academic preparation, in development and delivery of expert vocational rehabilitation opinion and consultation services, will be assessed as highly relevant, persuasive, and appropriate to those issues addressed within the legal situation in which they are retained. Assessment(s) of student performance will be made by program faculty, representatives of the legal and forensic vocational rehabilitation professions, and others, based upon the student's performance in a "Moot Court" simulation experience (final course in the certificate program).
- c. Students will demonstrate efficient, effective, and high quality development and delivery of forensic opinion and consultation services, as measured by assessments completed by retaining attorneys and others within the courts in which they provide expert opinion and consultation services. Students will be assessed at various intervals post-completion of the graduate specialization certificate program (e.g., 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years).
- d. Program students (both completer's and any that might not complete) will assess the certificate program as including appropriate content for the specialization, having high quality and effective delivery of instruction, as providing high quality and personal advisement to the student during the program, and providing relevant research, issues, and needs for development of the specialization, by completion of a confidential structured program assessment instrument.
- e. Overall program improvement will be assessed as being timely and effective in addressing student by completion of a structured assessment instrument for each cohort group as they complete the program. Comparisons between the results of this assessment from cohort group to cohort group, etc., will take place as the information evolves. Both immediate and long-term changes to the curriculum and operation of the program will be discussed with the Advisory Committee, so that both timely and longer-term changes can be made to maintain high quality, relevance, and interest in what the program has to offer.

**5. Assessment Measures – Define what methods will be used in assessing the effectiveness of the project.**

- a. External and internal peer review of curriculum content and materials will take place both in the formative stages of developing each course and summatively.
- b. Cost of establishing and maintaining program will be continuously monitored during the development and implementation stages of the project.
- c. Student learning and instructional effectiveness will be assessed continuously within each course, during the capstone experience, and in terms of retention/completion of the program.
- d. Support of professional organizations (particularly those that certify forensic vocational rehabilitation experts) of the certificate program will be assessed during its development, implementation and continued offering will be assessed. A Program Advisory Committee will be established to aid in guiding the program, assessing its' effectiveness, and marketing of the program, during the early stages of its development.

**Reports Due:**

6. Mid Year Report Due January 31, 2008
7. Summary Report Due June 30, 2008

8. **Budget Request:** From Strategic Initiative Funding

The following budget is based upon funding beginning at the start of Spring Semester 2007 and continuing through until completion at the end of Spring Semester 2008 (a period of approximately 18 months).

	<u>Request</u>	<u>Match</u>
Salary (for course development by Project Director; replacement for part of instructional assignment through use of Adjuncts; 1 course (3 crs.) equivalent per semester x 3 semesters; curriculum development and recruiting time during summer for Project Director with 10 additional duty days @ \$505/day; compensation in accordance with IFO/MnSCU contract)	\$ 15,400	\$ 42,475
	**Per current IFO/MnSCU contract.	
Fringe (@ 25% for full-time faculty)	\$ 1,263	\$ 10,594
Grad Assistant (1/2 time- 10 hrs/wk for 3 semesters; @ \$ 9,000/year for 1.0 FTE GA = \$ 4,500/semester; for 0.5 FTE= \$ 2,250/semester x 3 semesters).	\$ 6,750	\$ 0
Grad Assistant Stipend (@ 9 semester credits/academic year – In-State Resident tuition rate; 3 semesters x 4.5 credits= 13.5 credits; 9 grad crs. = \$2,384.10-Fall 2006-2007)	\$ 3,577	\$ 0
Non Salary (Specify)		
Law and Disability Economics Specialists for curriculum development (3 courses) along with Project Director @ \$1,500/course for technical specialist assistance	\$ 4,500	\$ 0
Transportation/Lodging per University policies, for curriculum planning and development mtgs. and marketing of program at prof. organization conferences (2 anticipated)	\$ 2,250	\$ 0
Equipment	\$ 0	\$ 0
<b>Total Budget Requested** ***</b>	<b>\$ 33,740</b>	<b>\$ 53,069</b>

\*\* Pending funding

\*\*\* If funds are not provided until the start of the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the budget request and project time line will be adjusted to meet those parameters (a period of approximately 12 months). Impact on budget request would be in the Salary, Fringe Benefit, Grad Assistant, Grad Asst Tuition Waiver line items. Salary for Adjunct faculty to replace the Project Director for one course (3 crs.) during 1 semester of release time would be deducted (-\$3,500) from the proposed budget request, as would 1 semester of stipend (-\$2,250) and 1 semester of prorated tuition waiver support (-\$1,193) for the Grad Assistant. These adjustments would decrease the Total Budget Requested by \$ 6,943 to \$26,797.

9. **Special consideration (e.g., room, building, office or any impact on other divisions):**

All equipment, online supports, and facilities are accessible to the Project Director and technical specialists during the curriculum development phase. Facilities for conduct of courtroom testimony ("Moot Court" experience) would be arranged for each time offered and an appropriate differential tuition rate for this course or the entire certificate program may need to be determined and approved to support any extra costs such as these (market rate tuition). Textbooks would be available directly from the legal and rehabilitation publishers at a discount of approximately 50% (with free shipping in addition) when sold and sent directly to enrolled students. Due to the nature of this program being primarily online and the location of potentially enrolled students being throughout the United States, Canada, Ireland, and other locations, use of on-campus or Mankato-based book stores is inefficient (additional time necessary for receipt of texts by students) and more costly (in terms of the basic textbook cost and shipping) for students than the alternative stated above.

## Specialty Graduate Certificate Program in Forensic Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation

The purpose of this proposal is to establish a new specialization certificate program at the graduate level for rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation nurses, case/disability management specialists, rehabilitation consultants, forensic economists, attorneys, and others who desire education in forensic vocational rehabilitation consultation. The program will consist of 5 graduate-level courses of 3 semester credits each, for a total of 15 semester credits being required for completion.

This certificate would enhance the capacities of those professionals who wish to or are already providing forensic expert opinions within legal settings, such as personal injury, employment discrimination, Worker's Compensation, catastrophic injury, or wrongful death, and in Federal, state, and other courts or administrative hearing settings. Potential students would come from throughout the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, and other countries in which forensic experts are utilized within their courts and which use English law as the basis for their legal system. Forensic Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants provide objective testimony or case consultation on the impacts of disability and/or death upon retention by plaintiff or defense attorneys or by the court (as a consultant to the judge and jury).

The Project Director has been working with the leadership of the International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals (IARP) and their Forensics Section in order to establish this program over the past 3-4 years. The market is such that the program would have immediate access to approximately 3,000 members of this organization residing in the United States, Canada, and Ireland. In the next 2-3 years additional chapters are to be formally established in England, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, with an increased market being made accessible. Forensic experts in the United States have desired this type of formal graduate education program to be established for the past 20-25 years, but previous attempts were not successful. Other professional organizations, such as the National Association of Forensic Economics (NAFE) and the American Rehabilitation Economics Association (AREA) would provide access to an additional 2,500+ professionals who actively participate as forensic experts. In addition, there are currently 100 CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) accredited Master's and Doctoral programs in Rehabilitation Counseling and Rehabilitation Education located throughout the United States, producing 2,800+ graduates annually for the profession. New CORE accreditation standards that took effect on January 1, 2004, require that students in all of these programs receive familiarization and skill development within the area of forensic expert testimony, life care planning, and consultation prior to graduation at the Master's degree level. Currently, there are only a handful of Rehabilitation Educators that teach in these programs who have served as forensic vocational rehabilitation experts or consultants, and many, as with direct service providing rehabilitation professionals, have not received formal training in these areas.

Four (4) of the proposed courses in the graduate certificate curriculum would be taught and advised through a variety of distance learning modalities (e.g., Desire2Learn IMS, web conferencing, e-mail, video-streamed lectures, threaded discussions, etc.). The Project Director will teach several courses, conduct recruitment, and provide advisement for persons interested or enrolled in the program. Instruction will serve as a part of his normal workload, once the curriculum has been fully developed and is scheduled for offering through Extended Learning. Adjunct faculty would be selected to teach in specialized areas of the curriculum, such as forensic economics and law, so that participants would obtain the most current and accurate research, along with practice-based information and skills development, to enhance their capacities and to improve the quality of the profession and its' service to the courts.

The preliminary four (4) courses in the curriculum include: REHB 670 Foundations of Forensic Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation (3 crs.); REHB 672 Law and the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (3 crs.); REHB 674 Economics of Physical and Mental Disability (3 crs); and REHB 676 Case Analysis and Opinion Development (3 crs.).

The fifth (capstone) course is proposed as REHB 678 Forensic Expert Opinion: Moot Court Experience. This specific course would involve both online distance education and the meeting of participants in a face-to-face format to present their testimony within a "Moot Court" simulated experience. This capstone experience would also serve as an experience for law students in managing and utilizing forensic experts in a simulated case, an area that is typically neglected within legal preparation programs. Communications between the "experts" and the "retaining counsels" would take place prior to the face-to-face experience through instructional technology/distance learning modalities as with the other courses in the curriculum. Assessment of all dimensions of the "expert's opinion" testimony will be made, involving full-time and adjunct faculty, law faculty, law students, certificate program students, and other selected observers. Rubrics will be developed to assess the performance of law and forensics students for this experience, providing multi-dimensional feedback from opposing counsel and experts, judge, jury members, and selected observers. This feedback will provide each student and faculty member with valuable information about quality of presentation and other dimensions, usually not readily available to expert witnesses or the attorneys that retain them.

The Project Director previously met with two of the Deans at William Mitchell College of Law about this proposed program, in hopes of gaining involvement and support for it. Based upon that meeting, it is very possible that several law school faculty members would be interested in assisting with the development and instruction in a portion of this specialized curriculum courses. Contact with these parties will need to take place early on for this project, since movement towards creation and implementation of the program did not go forward at the time due to a lack of necessary financial support.

Assessment of knowledge, skills, and abilities will be through content based examinations, research papers, threaded discussions, and practical exercises developed to address the specific roles, functions, and abilities necessary to perform in the field. Rubrics, valid and reliable written assessments, developmental checks, and continuous feedback on student progress and performance will be made in each course instructor and by the Project Director, who will also serve as the advisor for members of each cohort group(s) that will be enrolled. It is anticipated that each cohort will involve approximately 20 graduate students and that once established; at least 2 cohorts could begin the program each year. The capstone experience would be scheduled for late in Fall and Spring semesters. This face-to-face experience would take place either on the MSU, Mankato campus, at a facility (such as Wm. Mitchell College of Law or similar venue) where there is adequate lodging, transportation, and meeting facilities, or as a pre-workshop component to national training conferences of one or more of the professional organizations mentioned (IARP, NAFE, AREA).