



Community Development Student Handbook

Last Updated January 2020

Community Development Graduate Program

Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity, and social justice, through the organization, education, and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity, or interest in urban and rural settings. (As adopted by [IACD](#), [CDS](#) and [NACDEP](#).)

The Great Plains IDEA Community Development master’s degree or graduate certificate will empower you to lead communities to action and engage citizens in democratic decision-making.

There are five Great Plains IDEA institutions participating in the Community Development (CD) program. Degree titles vary by institution.

University	Master’s Degree	Master’s degree culminating experience	Graduate certificate culminating experience
Iowa State University	Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies with specialization in CD	Creative component or thesis	<i>ISU does not offer this certificate</i>
Kansas State University	Master of Science in Community Development	Coursework only examination, master’s report, or thesis	Summary reflection (“mini-portfolio”) of coursework
North Dakota State University	Master of Science in Community Development	Thesis, evaluation study paper, or coursework only with presentation	<i>NDSU does not offer this certificate</i>
South Dakota State University	Master of Science in Sociology with specialization in CD	Thesis, practicum/capstone research paper completion, or coursework completion with portfolio; all options include an oral examination	No required culminating experience
University of Nebraska Lincoln	Master of Applied Science with specialization in CD	Degree project	<i>UNL does not offer this certificate</i>

Course descriptions, a course planner, and contacts for participating universities can be found on the Community Development webpage: <https://www.gpidea.org/program/community-development>



Program Requirements

The master's degree in community development is a 36-credit hour post-baccalaureate program of study. The graduate certificate in community development is a 12-credit hour post-baccalaureate program of study.

To qualify for the master's degree, students must:

1. Be admitted to the master's degree program at a participating university
2. Complete the necessary coursework
3. Meet the master's degree requirements of their admitting/degree granting university

Course Requirements for Master's Degree Program

The master's degree program requires completion of 36 credit hours of coursework and successful completion of a culminating experience which varies by institution. See when courses are offered using our interactive [Course Planner](#).

Core courses for the master's program includes 18 credit hours:

- Foundations of Community Development
- Principles and Strategies of Community Change
- Organizing for Community Change
- Community Analysis (Introduction to Methods)
- Community and Natural Resource Management
- Community and Regional Economic Analysis

Course Requirements for Certificate Program

The certificate program requires completion of 12 credit hours of coursework and successful completion of a culminating experience which varies by institution. Core courses for the certificate program includes 6 credit hours:

- Principles and Strategies of Community Change
- Organizing for Community Change

Who to Contact for Help

Your primary program contact will vary by institution.

Institution	Primary Program Contact	Campus Coordinator
Iowa State University	Tim Borich , program director	Casey Smith
Kansas State University	Huston Gibson , program director	Rachel Ohmes
North Dakota State University	Christopher Whitsel , program director	Melissa Selders-Ortez
South Dakota State University	Meredith Redlin , graduate student coordinator and advisor	Aimee Maher
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Daniela Mattos , program director	Dan Cotton

