

The Chaminade University SOCED Program: An Alternative Education for Military Personnel

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BACKGROUND

Chaminade University of Honolulu is a private, coeducational catholic university established in 1955 by the Society of Mary, known as the Marianist Order. Chaminade University is named after Father William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850), a French Catholic priest who fought and lived through the intolerance of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror and founded the Society of Mary in 1817. The Marianists arrived in Hawai'i in 1833 where they assumed the leadership St Louis School for boys in Honolulu. In September 1955, St Louis Junior College opened under the direction of the Reverend Robert R Mackey. Two years later the program expanded into a four-year coeducation college with the name Chaminade College of Honolulu. In 1977, Chaminade College became Chaminade University of Honolulu.

Chaminade University shares with St Louis School a beautiful hillside campus located in Honolulu with a spectacular view of Diamond Head and Waikiki. Approximately, 2,300 full-time and part-time students are enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate programs at Chaminade. The university offers a core curriculum in the liberal arts currently including 22 major programs at the undergraduate level, three certificate programs and seven master's degree programs.

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Chaminade's education programs are unique in that all classes are offered in the evening or Saturdays whether on or off campus. This scheduling accommodates the needs of non-traditional students: Faculty is available to offer students individualized attention, and students can remain employed and schedule their field experiences around their work schedule.

Chaminade University offers Bachelor of Science degrees in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and Secondary Education. All Chaminade programs are approved by the Hawai'i State Department of Education. The Montessori Teacher Education Program at Chaminade is also unique in that it is the only Montessori program in the State of Hawai'i accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education and approved by the American Montessori Society (AMS) (Chaminade University, p 102).

GRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Chaminade University offers a Masters of Education degree with specializations and certification in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Leadership, and Special Education. Chaminade also offers the Respecialization in Special Education (RISE) program for training current DOE special education teachers seeking certification. Education courses are offered in an accelerated 11-week schedule, four semesters a year, beginning in October, January, April and July.

Chaminade also offers post-baccalaureate certification in secondary education designed for persons with baccalaureate degrees in subject fields other than education. This program is offered on military bases on Oahu.

THE MILITARY CONNECTION

Since the Summer Term of 1992, Chaminade University of Honolulu has been participating in the Service Members Opportunity Colleges Education program (SOCED). The mission of this U S Department of Defense sponsored program is to prepare service members and their dependents for careers after their military service is completed. The transient nature of military life makes it difficult to complete a college degree at a single institution. The typical military student usually spends only two or three years at each location before being transferred, and this is not long enough to complete any college program. In the past, the credits earned by military personnel were often not transferable to another institution of higher learning. This made it extremely difficult for the student in the military to accumulate enough credits for a degree or teaching certificate.

The SOCED program was designed to solve this problem. More than 1,000 colleges and universities, including Chaminade University, have formed an alliance which tailors courses to meet the needs of military personnel and allows the credits earned to be transferred from university to university. Thus, when a transfer of duty occurs, military personnel do not lose the credits they have earned. In this way individuals in the military can accumulate enough credits to obtain baccalaureate degrees or teaching certification (U S Department of Defense, p 1-1).

THE SOCED PROGRAM

The SOCED program is an integral part of the Chaminade University of Honolulu Off-Campus Evening program which offers credit courses that can lead to a baccalaureate degree and/or a secondary provisional teaching certificate. All course requirements for secondary teaching certification as well as some elementary and early childhood education course requirements are offered. Undergraduate degrees are also offered in Business, English, Social Studies, History, Political Science, Criminal Justice, Psychology and Behavioral Science.

The secondary education program has experienced steady growth, from 12 students in 1993 to more than 200 at present, with the majority of the students entering the certification program at the post-baccalaureate level. The program was developed to allow participants with college degrees to obtain basic teaching certificates in designated academic fields.

Courses are offered in four 10-week accelerated semesters a year, beginning in October, January, April and July. All courses are offered on weekday evenings or on Saturdays, on five military bases on O'ahu. Students entering with a degree in an acceptable academic major can complete the requirements for certification in four to five accelerated semesters and a semester of student teaching.

STUDENT TEACHING

A semester of full time student teaching in a public or private school classroom is a certification requirement that cannot be waived and this presents the most difficult hurdle for the student in the military. Arranging a semester in which a service member can devote full-time to student teaching can be a serious challenge. Some students are able to time their course work so that they finish close to the time of their separation from the military. They can then use accumulated leave time to complete the semester of student teaching.

Other students relocate to the mainland and complete their student teaching under the guidance of a participating college of education. It is the student's responsibility to make all arrangements for such student teaching assignments. The student teaching credits are then transferred back to Chaminade to complete the education program requirements for state certification.

CERTIFICATION

The accumulation of courses alone does not guarantee that the student will be certified by the State of Hawai'i. Students must also fulfill Hawai'i State program requirements, including student teaching and the Praxis exams. If the student meets these requirements, he or she is certified by the State of Hawai'i. This provides the student in the

military with some flexibility in searching for jobs since the State of Hawai'i has a teaching certification reciprocity agreement with more than 30 other states.

ENROLLMENT

While the Chaminade University of Honolulu Off-Campus Evening program is designed for the SOCED military student and their dependents, civilian college-age and change-of-career non-traditional students are also encouraged to enroll in the courses. This creates an interesting mix of students which Chaminade instructors have found to be dynamic and motivational: The optimism of the younger students are balanced by the experience of the older non-traditional students; the military view of the world is tempered by the civilian perspective; the mainland experiences of many military students stand in contrast to the experiences of local residents and ethnic differences add yet further richness to the tapestry of the courses. In today's multicultural society, the SOCED classes provide an ideal learning environment for those who would teach.

CONCLUSION

The variety of program opportunities offered at Chaminade University of Honolulu reflect the Marianist tradition of providing education and community leadership. The SOCED program is consistent with this venerable tradition. Chaminade University is proud to cooperate with more than 1,000 other colleges and universities in offering individuals in the military an opportunity to become teachers. This program not only provides a valuable service to those who serve our nation, but it also trains teachers at the secondary level where there is currently a teacher shortage. The teachers produced through the SOCED program are competent, disciplined and highly qualified individuals who can and will make a difference in the schools of the nation. The winners will be their future students whose lives they will touch and enrich.

References

- Chaminade University. 1997. *General Catalogue 1997-1998*. Honolulu, HI: Chaminade University of Honolulu.
- US Department of Defense. 1995. *SOCED Handbook 1995-1996*. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office.

Marianne H Au joined the education faculty at Chaminade University of Honolulu in 1993. She received her EdD from the University of Hawai'i in 1990. She initiated the Post-Baccalaureate Secondary Certification Program in 1994 as part of the off-campus evening program.