

Mission: Committed to optimizing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families through research, training, technical assistance and public service.

History: For over 50 years, the University has maintained a research and training program residing on the campus of the Parsons State Hospital and Training Center. This program includes the Parsons Research Center and the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities at Parsons. Over the years this center has achieved international recognition for the landmark and pioneering work conducted by University faculty. Early learning and communication research including the first national project demonstrating that individuals with intellectual disabilities could learn to cook, clean, meet their own grooming needs, and live independently was conducted at this site. University researchers at Parsons also developed and disseminated the first procedures for reliably testing both hearing and vision of persons with intellectual disabilities/hard to test, whose hearing and vision impairments were typically neither diagnosed nor treated before these developments. Similarly, Parsons pioneered work in the field of testing and treatment for disorders of speech, language, and communication.


Current Highlights:

- 13 PhD/EdD, 1 EdS, 11 Masters with a total of approximately 50 faculty and staff
- Contact with 14,553 Kansans/year through Training/Technical Assistance/Conference Presentations (17 year average)
- Contact with 2,975 professionals/year through national Training/Technical Assistance/Conference Presentations (7 year average)
- University Investment in Parsons of \$1 returns \$5.68 in grants/contracts (FY12 - Total budget \$5,105,287)
- The only National Institutes of Health funded research program on reading in individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- National Institutes of Health funded research program designed to understand and develop novel treatments for self-injurious and aggressive behavior in individuals with developmental disabilities by combining clinical and laboratory research.
- A nationally lauded assistive technology program that was recently recognized as an example of “Best Practices” by the Centers on Medicaid and Medicare.
- A statewide staff-training program that trained the first three direct support professionals in the nation to become nationally certified by the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals.
- An innovative program being replicated by the state for foster parents and biological parents of children with disruptive behaviors; providing an individualized, consumer driven, home based service.
- A nationally recognized statewide professional development and technical assistance system for early intervention and early childhood special education professionals, paraprofessionals, related services professionals and parents of infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities.
- A highly successful pilot intervention for weight loss in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that is being replicated with individuals who have mobility impairments.
- Research on communication in individuals with developmental disabilities, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development nearly continuously since 1964.
- A number of service programs serving Kansans in southeast Kansas and across the state.

Current Collaborations with other Universities: Columbia University, East Carolina University, Florida State University, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine – Kennedy Krieger Institute, Kansas State University, Mississippi University for Women, University of Kansas Medical School, University of Kansas School of Medicine at Wichita, University of Massachusetts School of Medicine, Virginia Commonwealth University, West Virginia University, Western Oregon University, University of Washington, Wichita State University

Life Span Institute at Parsons

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