

## AUTISM PROGRAM GRADUATE BUILDS CURRICULUM TO EDUCATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

Amy Jensen decided she wanted to enroll in the online Autism Spectrum Disorders Added Authorization Program after learning of her cousin's son's diagnosis. As a high school teacher, she saw some of her students struggling and wanted to better understand how to support students diagnosed with Autism.

The online format of the program fits with Jensen's schedule and allowed her to spend time with her family. "My husband travels in the summer for work, so I was able to travel with him." Jensen says. "It is more convenient to be able to meet once a week online with the teacher and then have time to work on the course work at your own pace at home".

Like Jensen, many students in the Autism program are working professionals and choose the program for the flexibility it offers. The UMass Global program offered by the School of Extended Education, is completely online and students participate in a virtual meeting with a professor to discuss course concepts.

Once enrolled in the program, Jensen says, "I have used so many of the things learned in the Autism Program to teach my students." The program provided her with the resources, tools and techniques she needed to support all students, especially the students who are struggling.

In the classroom, Jensen was able to implement the concepts she learned immediately by integrating Universal Design and differentiated instruction to create an inclusive environment that sets her students up for success.

A component of the program is observing other teachers and working with them to build on the course concepts. This has allowed Jensen to build a strong network of teachers that she can continue to collaborate with.

Recently, she has put what she has learned to use by writing curriculum for a new class at her school called "Teaching Students with Special Needs." The class teaches high school students about being paraprofessionals in the Special Education, at risk or English Learner classrooms.

Jensen is now inspiring the next generation to be interested in careers in special education. She has introduced evidence-based practices, gained from her Autism program, teaching her students how to work in these classrooms. She notes, "I have included so many of the inclusive practices I learned into the curriculum that was written."



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In addition to designing a course, she has also had the opportunity to help other teachers that she mentors understand how to teach students on the Autism spectrum.

Jensen reflects that she always knew she wanted to get a Master's, but did not know what to focus on. "I took the Autism program classes and found the passion of special education, which I really never thought of as an option. I finished the Autism program and enrolled in Brandman's\* Master's of Special Education."

She emphasized the important role Brandman's\* Faculty Dr. Nicole Nicholson and Dr. Anne Spillane had in supporting her during the program and encouraging her to pursue the Master's program after completing the Autism program. Jensen says, "The professors at Brandman\* Support their students and truly want them to be successful."

The program has allowed Jensen to be comfortable when teaching students with special needs. "I really could not be the teacher I am today without this amazing program," she notes.

Attend an upcoming info session to learn more about UMass Global's Autism Spectrum Disorders Added Authorization Program program and get all your questions answered.

[www.umassglobal.edu/autism](http://www.umassglobal.edu/autism)