

Western Illinois University

Post-baccalaureate Certificate in Zoo & Aquarium Studies

~ Frequently Requested Information ~

About the Program (also known as the Graduate Certificate in Zoo & Aquarium Studies)

In 1991, WIU faculty in Biology and the Education Department of the Shedd Aquarium collaborated to offer graduate-level biology courses at the Aquarium. In 2000, the WIU Biology Department, Shedd Aquarium, and the Niabi Zoo developed the WIU PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies (see degree requirements in WIU graduate catalog at www.wiu.edu). In 2009, WIU received site approval for the Shedd Aquarium from the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Since its inception, the certificate has attracted students from 30 states in the US, Puerto Rico & 2 foreign countries, maintained high completion rates, increased enrollment, increased the number of course offerings, and resulted in employment by graduates at a variety of zoos, aquaria, and marine parks. To date, 75 students have completed their certificates and currently 33 graduate students are enrolled in the program; the number of students split about evenly between the WIUQC and Shedd Aquarium campuses. Of the students in the PBC program, 82% also enter the Master's Degree in Biology or Master's Degree in Liberal Arts & Science program. The majority of graduate students are women (90%) and 12% are minority students.

The program requires 18 semester hours of graduate work and is a non-thesis program. No substitutions or transfer courses are allowed in the program. Review of an admission application takes about 1 month. Students take two electives, along with 4 required courses. Elective courses may be selected from a variety of approved graduate courses in biology, anthropology, park recreation & tourism, museum studies, educational technology, and agriculture. (See program catalog description at www.wiu.edu for a full list.)

The program must be completed within three years of acceptance and typically takes 1 to 1.5 years to complete. Length of studies frequently depends on the date the student starts and the order in which the student takes courses. Courses are offered on a rotating basis, and students need to take the classes when they are offered. Typically, a new course starts every 8 weeks, so students can start the program at any time of year, including summer.

Most classes are condensed into 8-week sessions (first eight weeks or last eight weeks of the semester). To minimize travel costs and to allow students to maintain a full time job, courses are often offered on Friday or Saturday afternoons.

The program may be completed at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities in Moline Illinois (located 5 miles from Niabi Zoo). It may also be completed through the John G. Shedd Aquarium in downtown Chicago (also near Lincoln Park, Cosley Zoo, and Brookfield Zoo). Western Illinois University in Macomb does not have a nearby zoo. The required courses for the certificate are *not taught in Macomb* and students in Macomb would have to travel either to Moline or Chicago for every class.

Required Courses

Zoo Practicum (ZOOL 578)

The student arranges the zoo practicum directly with the facility. Work of 120 hours is required. The supervisor at the facility provides a letter and a brief statement of the work to Dr. Mike Romano, Chair of Biology, to verify the student worked at least 120 hours. Dr. Jeanette Thomas can provide a list of Midwestern facilities or make recommendations for possible internships. Think broadly, credit can be given for working at an animal shelter, dog training facility, rehabilitation facility, rescue facility, museum, veterinary office, in addition to zoos and aquaria.

Animal Training (ZOOL 585) VS. Animal Behavior (ZOOL 553)

Ken Ramirez, VP of the Marine Mammal & Training Department at Shedd Aquarium, teaches the Animal Training course. This course is highly recommended and only taught at the Aquarium on Saturday afternoons, during the first

8 Saturdays of fall semesters (12:00-5:00). If a student also wants to take Animal Behavior, it can be used as an elective.

Management Course (BIOL 583)

This course is team-taught by staff at the Shedd Aquarium and Lincoln Park Zoo. It is offered via CODEC to students at WIUQC. Since this is a business course, it is different from other courses biology students have taken. Students design a zoo, develop a business plan, and present their plan to the class.

Biological Studies in Zoos and Aquaria (ZOO 584)

This course emphasizes the types of research conducted in a zoo or aquarium, the legal issues, ethical issues, and experimental designs. Students design a zoo using *Zoo Tycoon* software and present to classmates. Three classes will be a field trip to the Shedd Aquarium, Niabi Zoo, and Brookfield Zoo.

Applying Credits to a Master's Degree

All credits for this certificate apply to either a Master's Degree in Biology or a Master's Degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences through Western Illinois University. Students interested in a Master's Degree in Biology should discuss options with Dr. Jeanette Thomas. Students interested in a Master's Degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences should discuss options with Dr. Althea Alton. Essentially, the 18 hours of credits from the PBC in Zoos & Aquarium Program apply as elective to either of the master's degree. To complete the master's degree the student needs to take 3 core classes plus thesis credit hours. Thesis and non-thesis options are available in the Master's Degree in Biology.

Travel Information

Travel to Shedd Aquarium in Chicago:

Travel from the Quad Cities to Shedd Aquarium is either by a carpool organized by students or by Amtrak on the Illinois Zephyr. The train schedule allows student to travel to and from the Shedd Aquarium for a class on a single day. Dr. Thomas takes Amtrak from Princeton, IL to Union Station in Chicago and will help students travel from Union Station to and from the Aquarium by either taxi or bus. Students should purchase train tickets in advance because the train is sometimes booked. Advance ticket purchase provides the lowest ticket price. Students can order tickets online at Amtrak.com or by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL and the tickets will be mailed to them. Students with a Student Advantage Card or a AAA membership can obtain a discount on Amtrak tickets. Amtrak also offers a 10-punch card with 10, one-way tickets that must be used within 60 days (this is by far the cheapest).

If the student drives to class at the Shedd Aquarium, there is metered-parking along Solidarity Drive near the aquarium (bring quarters), or paid parking at Soldier Field Parking Lot or the Field Museum Parking Lot. Please allow extra travel time for downtown traffic, especially during the summer when several events take place in downtown Chicago.

Another travel option is to take the Metra from Chicago suburbs to downtown Union or Ogelsby Station and either walk, take a bus (number 151), or take a taxi to the aquarium. Because Aurora is the farthest south Metra station, some QC students drive to the Aurora station, park their car, and then take Metra to Chicago. For travel options, look at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) website for bus numbers and schedules.

Travel to Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, IL:

There is no public transportation to Niabi Zoo. Students should consider forming a car pool. The zoo is located off highway 6, about 5 miles east of the Quad Cities airport. If driving from Chicago, the easiest route is to take I-80 south and exit onto I-74 at Colona (towards Galesburg or Peoria, not Davenport), drive about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, and exit at sign that the Niabi Zoo sign. This is highway 6 and the zoo is about 7 miles from this exit. Parking is free.

Course Information

For classes taught by Dr. Thomas, the lecture notes and exams will be emailed to the students. Typically, there is no textbook required. For Animal Training, a book written by Ken Ramirez is used. For the zoo management class students access course information via Western Online.

Technology

Students are encouraged to bring a laptop to class. At the WIU-Quad Cities campus in Moline IL, laptops can be checked out and the building has wireless Internet. At the Shedd Aquarium, classes are in the ETC (Electronic

Technology Classroom) and desktop computers are available, along with cables for a LAN connection to the Internet at each student's desk.

Tuition and Fees:

A graduate student is considered fulltime if taking 9 semester hours and part time if taking 6 semester hours. Tuition and fees for WIU courses is at the rate for students at WIUQC, which is less than on the main campus in Macomb because student fees are lower (see www.wiu.edu, WIUQC campus, tuition rates). WIU guarantees the tuition rate will not increase as long as the student takes courses continuously in the program. Federal financial aid, at the graduate student rate, is available for the PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies.

If a student takes a class onsite at the Shedd Aquarium, in addition to the WIUQC tuition there is a fee paid to the aquarium: \$50 for volunteers/interns at the aquarium, \$100 for a course that is not connected via CODEC, or \$150 for a CODEC course.

If a student takes a class on site at Niabi Zoo, in addition to the WIUQC tuition, there is a fee paid to the zoo of \$100. This fee provides a membership card to Niabi Zoo, which includes free admission to Niabi Zoo plus discounted admission to most AZA-accredited zoos

Student Organizations:

WIUQC has a very active organization for students in the PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies, ABZS (email: abzs.wiu@gmail.com). Contact these students for information about the program, living in Moline, and job opportunities.

Chicago students in the PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies Program have formed an organization called CASZA (email: casza.wiu@gmail.com). Contact these students for information about the program, living in Chicago, and job opportunities.

Two Campus Options

The campus a student chooses to attend depends on several factors and students can take courses at either WIUQC or the Shedd Aquarium, depending on their circumstances.

Western Illinois University – Quad Cities

The office of Dr. Jeanette Thomas, Coordinator of the PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies Program, is at the Moline campus of Western Illinois University-Quad Cities and the Niabi Zoo is about a 10-minute drive from campus. The Niabi Zoo is an AZA-accredited facility run by Rock Island County Forest Preserve. There are 230 acres of natural forest, of which 23 acres is the zoo. The zoo has an approved new design, has raised capital, and is building a new facility in stages. The new Education Center (where WIU classes will be held) opens during spring 2011. Check their website for details (<http://www.niabizoo.com/>). Volunteer and internships in Husbandry, Behavioral Enrichment, and Education are available at the zoo and hours can be used for the Zoo Practicum credits.

The cost of living is less expensive in the Quad Cities than in Chicago. Apartment housing is available close to campus. Black Hawk Community College is two blocks from Western Illinois University-Quad Cities and provides a place to take any deficiency courses at a reasonable price. Several Western Illinois University master's level students teach at local community colleges (Black Hawk College, Scott Community College, & Muscatine Community College), which provides great job experience. Employment on the WIUQC campus is also available. Many students work at local veterinary clinics or pet stores. For housing and jobs, consult QOnline.com and QCemployeeme.com, the Quad City Times, or Rock Island Argus newspapers. The Reader (a weekly local newspaper) is also helpful for housing and activities in the QC area.

Shedd Aquarium in Chicago

Although the cost of living is relatively high in Chicago, the pay rate for jobs is correspondingly higher. Lincoln Park Zoo, Cosley Zoo, and Brookfield Zoo are also in the Chicago area. The mass transit system, such as the Metra and the CTA bus, is very reliable. CTA buses to the Aquarium include numbers 14, 28, 127, 151, and 146. There is a taxi stand at the Aquarium, but it is sometimes difficult to get a taxi on a Friday evening. Students should plan on taking the bus or walking after class. Students can find housing by contacting other students in the program (Dr. Thomas can give some advice here) or by using apartmentfinders.com or craigslist.com.

Food during Class

At Western Illinois University-Quad Cities, there are vending machines and a microwave oven in the basement student lounge. There are several nearby fast-food restaurants, as well. At the Niabi Zoo, there is a concession stand when the zoo is open to the public. At the Shedd Aquarium, there are vending machines and the Bubble Net Food Court, a cafeteria-style restaurant. Union Train Station has a food court and Amtrak trains have a dining car.

Contact Information

Dr. Michael Romano, Chair of WIU Biology (email: M-Romano@wiu.edu).

Dr. Jeanette Thomas is the Coordinator for the PBC in Zoo & Aquarium Studies Program and thesis advisor for Master's Degree in Biology (email: jeanettethomaswiu@gmail.com). Please see her homepage at http://wiu.edu/cas/biological_sciences/faculty/thomas.php

Dr. Althea Alton is the Coordinator of the WIU Master's Degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences (email: AK-Alton1@wiu.edu).

Evelyn Hoing is available to answer questions related to Graduate School admissions (email: EA-Hoing@wiu.edu).

OR see the program website at:

<http://www.wiu.edu/grad/catalog/zooaquastudies.php>



WESTERN
ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY

October 2007