

Grant to fund domestic violence concentration

Fifteen-credit Women's Studies curriculum will focus on practical application, training

By [Danielle Brody](#)

Published: Tuesday, November 9, 2010

Updated: Tuesday, November 9, 2010 02:11

The department of women's studies at the university is set to add a new concentration in domestic violence, made possible by a \$187,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, which provides funding for nonprofit organizations.

Women's studies professor Jessica Schiffman said the three-year grant will go toward creating a five-class concentration, along with a 10-week practicum addressing domestic violence on a national scale. She said students enrolled in the concentration program will graduate with much of the training work necessary to become a certified domestic violence specialist in Delaware.

"It is very different from other programs on campus," Schiffman said. "We think actually that this may be the first program of its kind anywhere, as far as we know."

Lee Gierczynski, spokesman for Verizon Delaware, said Verizon gives grants to nonprofit organizations that support domestic violence prevention.

"It's a big priority of Verizon because domestic violence is a widespread problem that extends beyond just two people," Gierczynski said. "It affects children and extended family. We hope that through our efforts, we can help shine a spotlight on this issue."

According to Stephanie Ferrell, a spokeswoman for the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the coalition is collaborating with the women's studies department to design the concentration program. The DCADV is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence.

"The coalition is working closely with the department to design a curriculum," Ferrell said. "They will be providing some of the information and may be teaching some of the classes."

Schiffman said the concentration is different from a regular minor because it involves students working outside of the classroom by volunteering in shelters and other support groups during the 10-week summer practicum. This gives them the opportunity to work toward a domestic violence prevention certificate.

A certification from the DCADV requires 2,000 hours of direct service, but the concentration will give students a head start, Schiffman said.

"They will still have to do a number of hours in the community," she said. "A vast majority of the work will have been completed to become a certified domestic violence specialist, which I think is going to be a great advantage in the job market."

Ferrell said this program will benefit students' learning experiences and their contribution to the field.

"It will strengthen the work that organizations are doing because you'll have this pool of students who not only have direct education experience and the skills that are needed to work in this field, but once they completed the program they will have some of that hands-on work experience," she said.

Schiffman said the grant money will be distributed in different ways to develop the concentration. Some will go toward a part-time, three-year term position to plan and coordinate the program with the DVADC and other local organizations. It will also provide money to students who intern over the summer.

Schiffman said some areas of interest within the concentration include reducing women's violence, public policy, law or medical services and direct service.

"It will attract many students who are already thinking about doing that kind of thing," she said.

Ferrell said the concentration will be a continuation of the DCADV's involvement with the university.

"We also do a lot of work with law enforcement and court victims so it was a natural partnership for us to work with the university's women's studies department to best benefit students and the community," Ferrell said. "It's our opportunity to share what coalitions really do with public awareness, prevention, policy and advocacy."

Schiffman said the Faculty Senate must approve the concentration proposal and if approved, the concentration will be offered next fall.

"There's a lot to be done with violence against women," Schiffman said. "Having students come out of a program knowing how they can address the interpersonal as well as societal issues is a tremendous opportunity for the women's studies department. It is natural for us because it makes a connection between what we learn and what we do."

The department of women's studies at the university is set to add a new concentration in domestic violence, made possible by a \$187,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, which provides funding for nonprofit organizations.

Women's studies professor Jessica Schiffman said the three-year grant will go toward creating a five-class concentration, along with a 10-week practicum addressing domestic violence on a

national scale. She said students enrolled in the concentration program will graduate with much of the training work necessary to become a certified domestic violence specialist in Delaware.

"It is very different from other programs on campus," Schiffman said. "We think actually that this may be the first program of its kind anywhere, as far as we know."

Lee Gierczynski, spokesman for Verizon Delaware, said Verizon gives grants to nonprofit organizations that support domestic violence prevention.

"It's a big priority of Verizon because domestic violence is a widespread problem that extends beyond just two people," Gierczynski said. "It affects children and extended family. We hope that through our efforts, we can help shine a spotlight on this issue."

According to Stephanie Ferrell, a spokeswoman for the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the coalition is collaborating with the women's studies department to design the concentration program. The DCADV is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence.

"The coalition is working closely with the department to design a curriculum," Ferrell said. "They will be providing some of the information and may be teaching some of the classes."

Schiffman said the concentration is different from a regular minor because it involves students working outside of the classroom by volunteering in shelters and other support groups during the 10-week summer practicum. This gives them the opportunity to work toward a domestic violence prevention certificate.

A certification from the DCADV requires 2,000 hours of direct service, but the concentration will give students a head start, Schiffman said.

"They will still have to do a number of hours in the community," she said. "A vast majority of the work will have been completed to become a certified domestic violence specialist, which I think is going to be a great advantage in the job market."

Ferrell said this program will benefit students' learning experiences and their contribution to the field.

"It will strengthen the work that organizations are doing because you'll have this pool of students who not only have direct education experience and the skills that are needed to work in this field, but once they completed the program they will have some of that hands-on work experience," she said.

Schiffman said the grant money will be distributed in different ways to develop the concentration. Some will go toward a part-time, three-year term position to plan and coordinate the program with the DVADC and other local organizations. It will also provide money to students who intern over the summer.

Schiffman said some areas of interest within the concentration include reducing women's violence, public policy, law or medical services and direct service.

"It will attract many students who are already thinking about doing that kind of thing," she said.

Ferrell said the concentration will be a continuation of the DCADV's involvement with the university.

"We also do a lot of work with law enforcement and court victims so it was a natural partnership for us to work with the university's women's studies department to best benefit students and the community," Ferrell said. "It's our opportunity to share what coalitions really do with public awareness, prevention, policy and advocacy."

Schiffman said the Faculty Senate must approve the concentration proposal and if approved, the concentration will be offered next fall.

"There's a lot to be done with violence against women," Schiffman said. "Having students come out of a program knowing how they can address the interpersonal as well as societal issues is a tremendous opportunity for the women's studies department. It is natural for us because it makes a connection between what we learn and what we do."

