People who are blind or have visual impairments are able to manage the world around them, learn and participate in school and perform everyday activities. However, what they need is someone who teaches them to harness their potential. Our M.S.Ed. in Special Education (Visual Disabilities Program) prepares you to become that person. We offer one of the nation’s preeminent programs for training professionals to provide educational and rehabilitation services for persons of all ages with visual impairments. Three specializations are available: Orientation and Mobility, Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and Visual Impairments. We are also the first university in the United States to offer a certificate of graduate study in the area of Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist for People with Visual Impairments. Our program is approved by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Council for Exceptional Children and the Illinois State Board of Education.

**Admission Requirements**

You’ll need to submit:
- Your application to the Graduate School.
- Your official transcripts (our faculty select those applicants who are most qualified, typically requiring a GPA of 3.0 or higher for the last two years of your undergraduate work) and test scores.
- Two letters of recommendation from your employers, supervisors or professors.
- Your personal statement of why you’re applying and your goals for a career in special education.

**Dollars and Sense**

Want the financial deal of a lifetime? If you’re a U.S. citizen and fully admitted to Graduate School, you can be considered for a generous financial package. We’ll pay for all or your tuition (in-state or out-of-state) and fees. These federal dollars we have available also will cover your full health insurance and pay you a yearly stipend of $5,520. In return, you’ll promise to work with students who are blind or visually impaired – anywhere in the United States – for a period twice as long as you receive our financial support. You’ll need to buy your own books and supplies (and pay your own living expenses), but you won’t owe NIU a penny. The only catch? If you can’t fulfill your promise, you’ll need to reimburse the federal government for the dollars you received for our program.

**Job Security**

The prospects for now and the foreseeable future are excellent, particularly if you’re willing to relocate. At the current rate of graduation of specialists in our field, we will not be able to keep up with the needs of individuals with visual impairments. In fact, many of our graduates are recruited by the personnel at the sites where they do student teaching or complete their internship – and many find at least three job offers on the table at graduation.
M.S. ED. IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Choose Your Specialization

**Orientation and Mobility.** Orientation and Mobility instructors teach techniques for safe, independent travel – white canes, for example – to individuals who are blind or have visual impairments. You’ll prepare your students to travel in a variety of environments, from self-contained residential programs to fully independent travel in unfamiliar environments. You’ll obtain national certification from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals.

**Vision Rehabilitation Therapy.** You do not need any previous experience working with people who are blind or have low vision to pursue this teaching degree. As you learn methods and strategies to teach independent living skills to individuals with visual impairments, you’ll obtain national certification as a vision rehabilitation therapist from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals.

**Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments.** To obtain an Illinois teacher license with an endorsement in visual impairments, you’ll learn how to work with students who have blindness and low vision, how to teach all students and how to integrate students into schools and communities. You’ll also learn effective ways to incorporate common core standards and curriculum with individual education plans, as well as how to use state-of-the-art assistive technology.

### Coursework

**Orientation and Mobility**
- SEVI 510 Anatomy, Pathology, and Functioning of the Eye (3)
- SEVI 520 Basic Orientation and Mobility for Teachers of Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 541 Instl. Systems for Utilization of Low Vision (3)
- SEVI 552 Collaboration Principles and Skills for Professionals Working with Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 570 Advanced Orientation and Mobility (3-6)
- SEVI 571 Principles of Orientation and Mobility Techniques for Learners with Visual and Multiple Impairments (3)
- SEVI 585C Internship in Orientation and Mobility Instruction of Persons w/Visual Impairments (1-12)

Students must take 6 semester hours in this course. One graduate level course in research, such as: SESE 792 or ETR 520 or approved by advisor.

**Vision Rehabilitation Therapy**
- FCNS 640 Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences for Educators of the Visually Impaired (3)
- SEVI 510 Anatomy, Pathology, and Functioning of the Eye (3)
- SEVI 520 Basic Orientation and Mobility for Teachers of Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 540 Communication Systems Used By Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 541 Instructional Systems for Utilization of Low Vision (3)
- SEVI 543 Teaching Activities of Daily Living to Persons with Visual and Multiple Disabilities (3)
- SEVI 552 Collaboration Principles and Skills for Professionals Working with Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 560 Rehabilitation of Adults with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 585B Internship in Rehabilitation Teaching of Persons with Visual Impairments (1-12)

Students must take 6 semester hours in this course. One graduate-level course in research, such as: SESE 792 or ETR 520 or approved by advisor. Elective coursework with advisor’s approval.

**Visual Impairments**
- SEVI 500 Education of Students with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 510 Anatomy, Pathology, and Functioning of the Eye (3)
- SEVI 520 Basic Orientation and Mobility for Teachers of Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 540 Communication Systems Used By Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 541 Instructional Systems for Utilization of Low Vision (3)
- SEVI 552 Collaboration Principles and Skills for Professionals Working with Persons with Visual Impairments (3)
- SEVI 581 Student Teaching in Elementary Special Education: Vision Impairments (3)
- SEVI 582 Student Teaching in Secondary Special Education: Vision Impairments (3)
- SEVI 586 Topical Seminar in Teaching Students with Visual Impairments (3)

One graduate level course in research, such as: SESE 792 or ETR 520, or approved by advisor. Elective course work with advisor’s approval. You also might be required to complete prerequisite courses prior to enrolling in specific graduate courses.