

# Master of Community and Economic Development



*The master's degree in community and economic development (CED) is designed to provide current and aspiring professionals in the field with the latest tools and skills so they can positively impact communities. Students will enhance skills in community development (e.g., strategic visioning and volunteer management), economic development (e.g., business retention and expansion and entrepreneurial development), and marketing and data analysis (e.g., conducting surveys and employing digital marketing).*

## Designed for the Working Professional

The program is delivered in a hybrid format, with course content delivered primarily online with occasional face-to-face class meetings at the WIU-Quad Cities campus in Moline (IL). The hybrid delivery provides the best of both worlds—the interaction and personal attention of face-to-face class meetings and the flexibility of online learning. Students who enroll full time can complete their degree in 17 months, while continuing to work full time.

## Provides Practical, Applied Knowledge and Skills

This professional degree program is being offered by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), a unique WIU department with more than 25 years of experience engaging with communities in outreach programs. IIRA operates several award-winning programs including MAPPING the Future (a strategic visioning program), the Peace Corps Fellows Program (an internship program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers), and the Midwest Community Development Institute (a training program for community and economic development professionals). Furthermore, IIRA has an extensive network of partners that provide presenters, program guidance, and internship opportunities, ensuring that the curriculum is relevant to the issues faced by current practitioners.

## Faculty Expertise

Courses will be taught by faculty and staff at the IIRA, with advanced degrees in sociology, economics, geography/planning, marketing, business administration, and public administration. Faculty and staff also have extensive on-the-ground experience working with communities and local

practitioners. Faculty and staff have held many leadership positions in professional organizations and served on the boards of state and federal policy groups. Furthermore, to ensure grounding in the latest community issues and approaches, practitioners and thought leaders in the field will serve as adjunct faculty and lead presentations, discussions, and online modules.

## Career Opportunities

Communities need professionally-trained community and economic developers to help them thrive. This is especially true for many small communities where many elected officials are not paid.

Community and economic developers work in community-based organizations; city, state, and federal government agencies; foundations; social service agencies; banks; utilities; think tanks; investment firms; and universities. Examples include: 1) senior vice president at Chase Manhattan's community development lending program; 2) manager of a housing program run by a Chicago nonprofit neighborhood organization; and 3) economic developer for a small town in western Illinois.



**Program Location:**  
Quad Cities

## Contact Information

### Questions about the program:

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Chris Merrett, Director and  
Graduate Coordinator  
(309) 298-2281 or (800) 526-9943  
[cd-merrett@wiu.edu](mailto:cd-merrett@wiu.edu)

### General admission questions:

School of Graduate Studies  
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD  
[Grad-Office@wiu.edu](mailto:Grad-Office@wiu.edu)  
[wiu.edu/grad](http://wiu.edu/grad)

**Western Illinois  
University**  
QUAD CITIES



### Degree Requirements

A minimum of 36 semester hours is required for the Master of Arts in Community and Economic Development degree. The required hours will consist of 15 semester hours of core courses, six hours of directed electives, nine hours of general electives, and a six semester hour capstone internship, applied project, or thesis.

### Admissions Requirements

Prospective students will have a bachelor's degree in a field related to community development, with a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or 3.0 minimum for last two years, and preferably will have demonstrated exposure to community development practice through an internship, work or volunteer experience.

Also required:

- Three letters of recommendation
- Résumé
- Two-page essay explaining how the WIU Community and Economic Development graduate program will help the student achieve career goals
- Official transcripts

*Western Illinois University complies fully with all applicable federal and state nondiscrimination laws, orders, and regulations. The University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from discrimination based on sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or veteran status.*



*"I am learning a lot at IIRA and WIU, both in and outside of the classroom. I enjoy the opportunities to meet and network with the faculty and staff, as well as other community development professionals. I believe my time at IIRA and WIU will continue to inspire me as I move forward in my career."*

*— Mary Fuller,  
IIRA Graduate Assistant*