One of the key components of the SUCCEED program at the University of Missouri – St. Louis is academics. Students take SUCCEED specific classes that are designed for the students based on academic interest and strive to develop critical thinking skills and independent thinking, gain self-esteem, and refine social skills. SUCCEED instructors have a very diverse background and interest base that adds to the unique culture of the program. Some of the instructors have been pulled from other UMSL departments to help not only diversify SUCCEED’s academic setting and strengthen areas of inclusion within the program, but to also diversify the university.

One of SUCCEED’s instructors is currently working on his Ph.D at UMSL. Courtney Boddie has taught a Seminar course and also Introduction to Psychology for the SUCCEED program. This fall, Boddie will be leading a Personal Finance class. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in Counseling and Counselor Education. His emphasis is in African American Psychology, Post-Secondary Disability, and Spirituality.

Boddie’s interest and experience in working with students with disabilities developed early on in his education. Boddie has a Bachelor’s of Science in Organizational Behavior/Human Resources, Entrepreneurship, and Psychology from Washington University and a Masters of Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from UMSL. While completing his early degrees, Boddie was an adjunct instructor at the Forest Park campus of St. Louis Community College. The majority of his students had intellectual disabilities that impacted their ability to learn. This was his first encounter working directly with this population and Boddie’s natural knack for connecting with these students began to manifest.

As he moved onto Washington University, Boddie took this experience and began serving as an executive function coach for students with Specific Learning Disability and ADHD. All of these experiences brought him to seek out the SUCCEED program while completing his current degree at UMSL.

Boddie has had a great deal of experience in working with students at various post-secondary venues. Boddie remarks, “The most significant difference I have noticed while working with this
population is that it has required me to slow down and be considerably more intentional than I had previously needed to be. I find that focusing on time-on-task, providing explicit and concrete steps, speaking slowly, and modulating vocabulary have been critical.” All of these factors have led Boddie to reformat the way he teaches and to alter his courses and coursework to better suit the individualized needs of the SUCCEED students. Boddie’s teaching skills have become more fine-tuned and his courses are a favorite of the SUCCEED students.

Boddie acknowledges his improvements in reaching out to the SUCCEED students, most noticeably with his language. “By far, my biggest challenges are my vocabulary and tendency toward abstraction. The most frequent question I am asked is ‘Can you say that differently?’ I have noticed over the course of my time teaching in the program that the frequency of these requests has decreased!”

Boddie’s experience with SUCCEED has been very exceptional and rewarding in so many ways. He hopes to take the knowledge, skills, and experience gained in working with SUCCEED to then “serve as an informal liaison with the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy on special considerations, strategies, and knowledge needed to effectively provide clinical services to SUCCEED students.”

It is impassioned instructors like Boddie that are fundamentals of the SUCCEED program and that add to the positive daily experiences of SUCCEED students. These instructors fuel a fire for knowledge and create a strong climate of learning that contributes to the foundation of independence that will allow students smooth transitions and successful outcomes through all phases of life.

Sarah Gordon, July 2015