

MILESTONES IN SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S DISABILITY PROGRAMS

- 1946 SU establishes the Department of Education for Exceptional Children. The first director of this department is William Cruickshank, a pioneer in the education of children with brain injuries and later learning disabilities and cerebral palsy. Cruickshank serves in this capacity until 1966.
- 1953 SU opens the Hoople Center for Special Education, one of the first special education buildings on university campuses in the nation.
- 1969 Burton Blatt is appointed Director of the Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation. Blatt had published the heralded photographic exposé of institutions for people with mental retardation in the United States, Christmas in Purgatory, in 1966. Blatt also publishes the book Exodus from Pandemonium, exposing human abuse and denial of education to children in state institutions, this year.
- 1969 The President's Committee on Mental Retardation publishes Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded, edited by Robert Kugel and Wolf Wolfensberger. Changing Patterns includes a chapter by Blatt based on Christmas in Purgatory as well as chapters by Wolf Wolfensberger and Gunnar Dybwad, who would later become Professor of Special Education and Visiting Professor of Special Education at SU, respectively.
- 1971 Burton Blatt gives crucial, ground breaking testimony in one of the first federal court cases on the right to education and the ability of all children to learn, PARC vs. Pennsylvania.
- 1971 Blatt founds of the Center on Human Policy, the first national institute for the study and creation of open, inclusive settings. SU faculty and students document the horrific abuses of people with disabilities who had been locked away in state institutions and advocate for creating community living alternatives to institutionalization
- 1972 SU professors participate in formulating the famous NYSARC vs. Rockefeller case that led to a court decree mandating reforms and deinstitutionalization at the Willowbrook State School, the largest state institution housing people with mental retardation in the nation. Noted historian David Rothman writes that the Center on Human Policy's ranks included "the most radical thinkers in the field" at the time in the book, The Willowbrook Wars: A Decade of Struggle for Social Justice.

- 1972 The Center on Human Policy and the Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation publish a booklet and monograph on participant observation in institutions and other organizations. These are the first of many texts and articles on qualitative research methods in the area of disability published by SU faculty and students. In a 2001 Exceptional Children article, an associate editor of the journal writes, “[T]he central actors in qualitative research in special education have undoubtedly been scholars at Syracuse University, who for decades have advocated for and practiced qualitative methods to reconstruct the meaning of the lives of children, youth, and adults with disabilities. . .The influence of this group, therefore, has spanned both the field of special education as a discipline as well as the general field of methodology in qualitative research.”
- 1972 Blatt hires Corinne Smith to direct the new Psychoeducational Teaching Laboratory that pioneers in the development of dynamic nonstandard assessment approaches for children with disabilities. The Gebbie Clinic is dedicated the same year.
- 1972-73 The Center on Human Policy sponsors a “Parent Power” conference and helps to organize the Parents’ Information Group for Exceptional Children. Both of these are cross-disability initiatives at a time when parents of children and adults with different disabilities had their own organizations and conferences and often competed with each other for scarce resources. The Parents’ Information Group eventually becomes Exceptional Family Resources, a private voluntary agency that continues to provide support services to families of people with disabilities.
- 1972-73 The Center on Human Policy opens the first group homes for people with mental retardation in Onondaga County. The operation of these homes is soon turned over to private, voluntary agencies.
- 1973 SU faculty in education and law organize a lawsuit leading to the initiation of deaf education in Syracuse.
- 1973 Wolf Wolfensberger joins the Special Education faculty and establishes the Training Institute on Human Services Planning, Leadership and Change Agency. Wolfensberger’s institute achieves international prominence in promoting normalization and later social role valorization.
- 1973 SU faculty and students are innovators in creating inclusive preschool and school programs serving students with significant disabilities (e.g. autism, Down syndrome) and students without disabilities.

- 1974-75 The Center on Human Policy helps to establish Syracuse Disabled in Action, the first disability advocacy group in Central New York led by people with disabilities.
- 1979 The Center on Human Policy issues The Community Imperative: A Refutation of All Arguments in Favor of Institutionalizing Anybody Because of Mental Retardation, a declaration supporting the right of all people with mental retardation and other disabilities to community living. The declaration is supported by professional, parent, and disability leaders across the country.
- 1981 With funding from the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Center on Human Policy hires two self-advocates who are former residents of state developmental centers and becomes the first university institute nationally to include people with intellectual disabilities among its professional staff.
- 1985 SU faculty publish the book, Achieving the Complete School, an ethnographic study of school inclusion.
- 1985 The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Department of Education awards the first of a series of large, multi-year grants to operate a national center on research and training to advance the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in society.
- 1987 Faculty produce the first national film on school inclusion aired on PBS. The film, *Regular Lives*, won numerous awards, including a Blue Ribbon from the American Film Institute.
- 1988 At the request of Madeleine Will, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, SU faculty and staff convene a Leadership Institute on Community Integration for People with Developmental Disabilities in Washington, D.C. to make recommendations to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in community settings, schools, and work places. A summary of the proceedings of the institute are published in From Being in the Community to Being Part of the Community.
- 1990 Professor Biklen publishes a ground-breaking article on facilitated communication, a method by which non-speaking children and adults with autism can learn to communicate. This work is subsequently featured on national television programs, including PrimeTime Live and Sixty Minutes.
- 1991 SU sponsors the first national conference on gender and disability.
- 1991 SU becomes the first research university to create an inclusive teacher training program.

- 1992 School of Education faculty founds the Facilitated Communication Institute to study and promote communication by people with autism and other developmental disabilities. In 2010 the Institute is renamed the Institute on Communication and Inclusion (ICI).
- 1995 SU establishes a Disability Studies program, the first in the nation.
- 1998 After decades of advocacy by SU faculty, staff, and students, New York State closes Syracuse Developmental Center, which was founded in 1854 and was the second institution for people with developmental disabilities in North America. All developmental center residents are moved into the community as opposed to being transferred to other state institutions.
- 1999 An editorial in the Syracuse Herald American states: “For decades, Syracuse University has been a source of enlightenment and energy in forging new paths to integrate people with disabilities into the mainstream. Its Center on Human Policy is a laboratory for progressive policies and practices that continues to have a national and international impact.”
- 2000 The National Historical Trust, a consortium of seven national organizations, including the American Association on Mental Retardation, the Arc of the United States, and the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation, includes Burton Blatt and Wolf Wolfensberger along with former Visiting Professor Gunnar Dybwad among its list of 35 honorees for “Significant Contributions of the 20th Century.”
- 2000 The Center on Human Policy reissues The Community Imperative declaration in response to a backlash against deinstitutionalization in California and other states. In contrast to 1979, when the declaration was supported by individual leaders and advocates, The Community Imperative receives endorsements from a broad range of national, state, and local organizations, including the American Association of People with Disabilities, the American Association on Mental Retardation, The Arc of the United States, the Autism National Committee, Service Employees International Union, AFL/CIO, and TASH.
- 2001 New York State approves SU’s graduate Certificate of Advanced Study in Disability Studies, providing formal recognition for advanced study in this area of inquiry.
- 2001 SU students form the Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee to advocate for changes in SU’s disability policies and procedures and to sponsor disability educational and cultural events.

- 2003 New York State approves SU's joint degree program in Law (J. D.) and Education (M. S.) in Disability Studies, the first such program in the nation.
- 2004 The School of Education, the College of Law, and the College of Human Ecology create the center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies as an extension of the work of the Center on Human Policy.
- 2004 CNN broadcasts the documentary Autism is a World, which is co-produced by SU Professor Douglas Biklen.
- 2004 Autism is A World is nominated for an Academy Award.
- 2005 The University creates the Burton Blatt Institute to advance the civic, economic and social participation of persons with disabilities worldwide. The Institute researches issues in such areas as employment, accessible design, accessible media and web technology, and voting rights.
- 2006 The Center on Human Policy issues A Statement of Common Principles on Life Sustaining Care and Treatment of People with Disabilities to oppose the involuntary withholding of nutrition, hydration, and routine medical care to children and adults with disabilities. This statement receives endorsements from national, state, and local disability organizations, including the American Association of People with Disabilities, The Arc of the United States, the National Council on Independent Living, and TASH.
- 2007 The Whitman School of Management founds the Disabled Veterans Boot Camp where veterans learn entrepreneur skills.
- 2008 An SU Disability Studies professor is named the recipient of the first annual Senior Scholar Award of the Society for Disability Studies.
- 2009 The School of Education establishes the Taishoff Center on Inclusive Higher Education to promote the participation of students with intellectual and other disabilities in postsecondary education.
- 2009 SU Press establishes the "Critical Perspectives on Disability" series and publishes the first book in this series.
- 2009 The Annie E. Casey Foundation awards a grant to the School of Education to organize Wolf Wolfensberger's archives and collection of rare books for eventual inclusion in SU's library's Special Collections.
- 2010 The SU Senate approves the School of Education's undergraduate Minor in Disability Studies.