

Points of Distinction for the School of Education Graduate Program

The School of Education is a prominent Christian voice in higher education – looked at as a wellspring of resources and support in the areas of pedagogy, leadership, clinical practice, technology, and innovation.

The School of Education is recognized as:

- A Christian learning community that promotes excellence in academic preparation, wholeness in personal development, and faithfulness to mission.
- A source of expertise and resources within the surrounding communities.
- A vital force of change in the transformation of educational landscapes.
- An exemplary model of servant leadership and commitment to ministry.
- A candidate-centered learning environment where diversity is respected, valued, and encouraged.

Unit members strive to be servant leaders who model the ongoing pursuit of knowledge integrated with beliefs and values. Both faculty and staff live out their faith by presenting a positive environment for candidates, local learning communities, and the profession. They play significant roles in the ongoing professional dialogue within the local, regional, state, and national educational communities. They promote diverse learning environments advocating for responsive and technology-infused pedagogy. The SOE inspires, affirms, and prepares candidates to serve collaboratively and effectively with professional excellence, honesty, integrity, and sensitivity. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...” Ephesians 2:10a.

Graduates, given excellence in academic preparation, wholeness in personal development and faithfulness to mission, leave the SOE empowered to be servant leaders. With a depth of caring and the power of practice as educational leaders, graduates are vital forces of change in transforming the educational landscapes that lay before them. “Be very careful then, how you live—not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity...” Ephesians 5:15-16.

The SOE believes that true advocacy begins with each faculty member and his or her understanding of the positive power of diversity. Embedded in the unit’s educational philosophy and pedagogy, candidates are exposed to ethnic, socio-economic, linguistic, religious, cognitive, and cultural diversity within learning communities and supported in the transferring of these theoretical principles into educational practices that portray student empowerment and social justice. Faculty, candidates, and graduates are recognized for pursuing initiatives such as U.S. Dept. of Education’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and Race to the Top Initiative that promote equity and access for those who have become marginalized

and minimized by unjust and/or unthinking social and educational practices and policies. Responding to the Wesleyan heritage of pursuing a life of holiness, the SOE embraces and embodies a Christ-like ethic of love and sacrifice on behalf of those they serve as educators and leaders (Maddox, 1996). “Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Philippians 4:8.

As a community of faithful learners, PLNU’s philosophy and purpose for learning is to engender greater and deeper love for God and all that God has created, exploring the world in the confidence of God’s grace. As a university seeking faithfulness to the Wesleyan tradition, learning and faith are not seen as two separate and distinct spheres that need to be forced together. Rather, all engage in the learning process as a people striving to live faithfully toward Jesus Christ, who calls his followers to this love of God and neighbor. This community pursues the vocation of learning together in the very presence of the God of the universe, “freeing us to ask hard questions about our beliefs, ourselves, and our world.” (A Wesleyan Approach to Faithful Academic Life, PLNU, from 2009 edition).

With this philosophical perspective and purpose serving as the foundational tenets, the PLNU’s Outcomes (ILOs) provide three institutional themes with supporting goals that align the university mission and vision with its core values. The ILOs inform program outcomes in each of the university’s academic units. The SOE has adopted three defining themes – equip, transform, and empower, which collectively, ensure that the philosophical perspective and purpose of the university are actualized within the conceptual framework:

- The EQUIP category focuses on a deep and coordinated understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions demonstrated by effective educators.
- The TRANSFORM category focuses on the candidate’s ongoing development and competence to apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective educators in supportive diverse environments.
- The EMPOWER category focuses on the capacity of program completers, their sustaining high levels of mastery and demonstrating continual transformation in their professional practice.

These outcomes are linked to the Institutional Learning Outcomes and provide a structure for the unit’s goals. They provide the unit a context for ensuring a multi-layered continuity in curriculum, instruction, field experience, clinical practice, and assessment throughout the program of study. Finally, they play a significant role in influencing and affecting all stakeholders who work toward successful candidate outcomes.

