



Formation Beyond Education: Innovation in Non-Faith-Based University Ministry Doctor of Ministry Cohort

Faculty Mentor: Rev. Jeff M. Liou, PhD

Length: A 36-credit degree comprising six in-person seminars over three years, plus completion and defense of the Doctor of Ministry project.

Locations: Western Theological Seminary (Holland, MI); World Vision International (Monrovia, CA)

Overview: This Doctor of Ministry track invites ministers in non-faith-based university contexts seeking practical and theological reflection as you innovate and/or lead in your organizations. You will identify, clarify, and bring your experience, expertise and emphases into conversation with the educational mission of the university as an institution, especially the formation and development of students and faculty for their context and beyond. You will be encouraged to contribute to the life of your organization and to the work of university ministry by researching the ministry initiatives that lie within your sense of calling and context.

The whole university falls within the scope of this cohort. Hence, you may choose from among the various sectors of the university's ecosystem—e.g., academic departments, student affairs (incl. mental health services), residence halls, athletics, etc.—to examine their formational impact on students and faculty, as well as opportunities for ministry innovation. Additionally, you may choose to focus on a certain institutional type (e.g., small liberal arts, community college, large public), or to research and write for broader application across the types.

Finally, in the non-faith-based university context, the way that Scripture and theology occupy the center of your work deserves special attention. Because you minister on non-faith-based "turf," your double-consciousness of the church *and* the world in which it is situated deserves to be carefully articulated.

Objectives:

1. Practical-Theological Reflection on the University: In addition to best practices passed down from ministers before you, we will reflect together on the nature of our ministry context in God's world—the uniqueness of its spaces, the way it shapes us all, and what the Spirit is doing in and through the University... and you!
2. Clarification and Research: You will work to clarify your sense of calling to the University through reflection on your experiences, accumulated expertise, and passionate emphases in ministry. These will drive your research and writing on your chosen aspects of university ministry.
3. Innovation: Your organization or specific ministry context may benefit from your research and writing. Bring your specifics into the cohort for us to discern, reflect, and pray together over your innovative proposals.

Schedule:

- May 17-21, 2027 (Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI)
- October 2027 (Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI)
- April 2028 (World Vision International, Monrovia, CA)
- October 2028 (Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI)
- April 2029 (World Vision International, Monrovia, CA)
- October 2029 (Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI)

Format:

Each course is 6 credit hours at 42 estimated work hours per credit for a total of 252 hours per semester, at most. You will spend your time in the following ways:

1. Gathering (~43.5 hrs) - Plan for a regular rhythm of in-person seminar, followed by online 1-on-1 with the faculty mentor, as well as an online cohort gathering in the following pattern:
 - In-person seminar (40 hrs total)
 - 1-on-1 (1 hr)
 - Online gathering (1.5 hrs)
 - 1-on-1 (1 hr)(NOTE: Additional 1-on-1 meetings with the faculty mentor are most welcome and can be made by request.)
2. Reading (~100 hrs) - Measured at approximately 25 pages per hour, you will add your own research materials to the assigned readings not to exceed a total of 2500 pages.

3. Project/Assignments (~108 hrs) - As campus ministers, the innovations you are exploring within your ministry contexts (i.e. thoughtful integration of your current ministry hours) are a substantial part of this. In addition, you will synthesize your reading, reflection, and work in written assignments. Initially, these will be aimed at clarifying your project, but will quickly shift to focus on your thesis. Your written assignments will include the following general categories:

- Non-research writing: 10 pages @ 1 page per hour = 10 hours
 - Five (5) monthly, 1-page reflections
 - One (1) 5-page, project report
- Research-based writing: 10 pages @ ½ page per hour = 20 hours
 - This number represents the floor of what you'll end up writing each semester. You may (and should) be writing more as we get closer to the end of the program. You will likely enroll in DM940 Thesis Project concurrently with our sixth and final seminar, DM871. You'll focus almost entirely on your own reading, research and writing.
 - Assignments will include literature reviews, analytical work, theological (and other) research, etc.

Invited Lecturers:

- Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, PhD – Hispanic Theological Initiative (Ret.)
- Ruth Lopez-Turley, PhD – Rice University
- John Schmalzbauer, PhD – Missouri State University
- David Smith, PhD – Calvin University
- Timothée Joset, PhD – International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
- Keith Johnson, PhD – Director of Theological Education, CRU

Core Readings:

- Bramadat, Paul. *The Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Higon, Mike. *A Theology of Higher Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Jacobsen, Douglas and Jacobsen, Rhonda H. *The American University in a Postsecular Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Jennings, Willie. *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.
- Lindsay, D. Michael. *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Marsden, George M. *The Soul of the American University Revisited: From Protestant to Postsecular*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Newman, John H. *The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated*. Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1999.

- Patton, Lori D., et. al. *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. 3rd edition. San Francisco: Wiley, 2016.
- St. John Paul II. “*Ex corde Ecclesiae* [Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities].” The Holy See, April 15, 1990.
- Wilson, John S., Jr. *Hope and Healing: Black Colleges and the Future of American Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2023.

Additional Readings:

- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Jacobsen, Douglas and Jacobsen, Rhonda H. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Jacobsen, Douglas G., Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, and Rodney Sawatsky. *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Joset, Timothée. *The Priesthood of All Students: Historical, Theological and Missiological Foundations of a Global University Ministry*. London: Langham, 2023.
- Levin, John S. *Understanding Community Colleges*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Park, Julie J. *Race on Campus: Debunking Myths with Data*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2020.
- Smith, Ted E. *The End of Theological Education*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023.
- Werner, Dietrich et. al. *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- Additional articles in Canvas

Year One – Orientation

Students will survey the ecosystems of the universities where they minister, becoming acquainted with the range of narratives and theologies for approaching our context. Students will establish the trajectory of their research and/or dissertation focus.

Winter - DM850 Orientation Seminar 1 - From Mandatory Chapel (Christendom) to Humanist Chaplains (Postsecularity)

- In-Person Themes: We'll get to know one another's stories, contexts and experiences. We'll discuss the evolution of both the university and ministry to/within/alongside the university. We'll also reflect together on the mission of a university and its impact on campus ministry.
- General: We'll cover the major administrative, curricular, and academic components of the program. We will get to know one another, and establish rhythms for the three years we will work together.
- Core Reading as assigned.

- Academic Progress: Possible project and thesis directions are explored in one-on-one meetings with the mentor.

Fall - DM851 Orientation Seminar 2 - Theological Approaches to the University

- In-Person Themes: We will deepen our relational connection and group reflection. During this gathering, we'll dive deep into our theological convictions and assumptions, as well as those of our students and faculty. Diverse theological trajectories in our cohort will be leveraged for the diverse trajectories on our campuses.
- General: The cohort theme will be deepened and expanded for students to explore and clarify the direction of their project and their eventual writing. A first draft of a literature review is submitted. Research pathways/methods are finalized with the mentor(s). Includes a one-week in-person intensive.
- Core Reading as assigned.
- Academic Progress: An oral description of the direction of a submitted written proposal is given during one-on-one meetings with the mentor.

Year Two – Research

Students will sharpen their research focus through their project-based learning. Assignments will comprise an opportunity to prepare for excellence in academic writing (inc. reviewing literature, analyzing argumentation, citing sources, etc.). Together, we will deepen our exploration of contemporary trends and horizons for university ministry.

Seminars

Winter - DM860 Research Seminar 1 - Disciples & Disciplines: Formative Pedagogy, Learning, and Belonging

- In-Person Themes: We will deepen our learning community as we explore one another's academic and spiritual formation. We will discuss various approaches to teaching and learning within the university, especially trends focused on transformational learning, belonging, and diversity. We will consider the stories that the academic disciplines tell students, and how they shape the same precious people we are attempting to make disciples. We will visit a handful of campus types to stimulate our communal reflection and discussion.
- General: You will share the learnings of your research projects and engage in active research and writing for your thesis during individual hours.
- Core Reading as assigned.
- Academic Progress: Provisional decision about approaches/methods

Fall - DM861 Research Seminar 2 - Christians in the Crucible: Faith-Based Student Development in the Non-Faith-Based Context

- In-Person Themes: We will deepen our community as we share our experience

of developing students beyond religious education and ministry activity. Noting the differences between faith-based and non-faith based contexts, we will explore how the university approaches holistic student development with special emphasis on student mental health.

- General: Students begin to implement projects. This intensive will be focused on critical reflection on what you learn in your context and interpret that learning within an academic theological framework.
- Core Reading as assigned.
- Academic Progress: Ongoing research and writing

Year Three – Writing

In this last year, you will focus on writing your thesis using the research methods appropriate for your area of inquiry (e.g., action research, case studies, ethnography, etc.). Seminar discussions will retrace topics that should be familiar to your everyday work, but will focus on your innovative proposals to move ministry forward into the future.

Seminars

Winter - DM870 Thesis Seminar 1 - Institutional Types, Cultures, Structures, and Possibilities

- In-Person Themes: We will visit another handful of campus types to stimulate our communal reflection and discussion. We will zoom in and out of the university landscape as we consider the role of community colleges, HBCUs, HSIs, large public schools, small liberal arts colleges, etc. Overall, we will reflect together on this landscape, socioeconomic realities, local communities, as well as the role of secondary and post-secondary education in American democracy. What is God doing in our communities and in our country through higher education?
- General: You will have focused time for research and writing.
- Core Reading as assigned.
- Academic Progress: A final timeline for completion is agreed upon, allowing sufficient time for first- and second-reader interactions.

Fall - DM871 Thesis Seminar 2 - Cutting Edges: Non-Faith-Based Universities for the Sake of the Church?

- In-Person Themes: We will deepen our community as we reflect on our respective ecclesial traditions. We will explore the current trends in church disaffiliation among college-age adults. We will consider the practical-theological significance of local churches for mission, formation, student development, and democratic participation.
- General: You will have focused time for research and writing.
- Core Reading as assigned.

- Academic Progress: Guidance and direction are given for the thesis defense.

Projected Schedule:

Course	Dates	Location
Launch <i>DM850</i>	May 17-21, 2027	WTS
2 nd Seminar <i>DM851</i>	October 2027	WTS
3 rd Seminar <i>DM860</i>	April 2028	WVI, Monrovia, CA
4 th Seminar <i>DM861</i>	October 2028	WTS
5 th Seminar <i>DM870</i>	April 2029	WVI, Monrovia, CA
Final Seminar <i>DM871</i>	October 2029	WTS
Commencement	April 2030	WTS

DM 940, the Thesis Project, is typically concurrent with DM 871.

Tuition, Costs, and Fees:

Tuition rates remain fixed for the duration of the three-year program, with an additional cost if students need further time to complete their final projects.

This cohort will be subject to the 2027/2028 tuition rate, which will be set in February 2027. For current DMin tuition and fees, please see the [WTS website](#).

Students are responsible for all travel, food, and lodging costs associated with attending the six required seminars.

More information on the Doctor of Ministry at WTS is available on our [website](#).

Questions? Please contact the following:

Cohort information

Jeff Liou, Faculty Mentor - jeff.liou@westernsem.edu

Application & Admission

Drew Brown, Director of Admissions - drew.brown@westernsem.edu

DMin Program

Yolanda Vega, Program Administrator - yolanda.vega@westernsem.edu