Field Education

Field education is an integrative practice that uses the action/reflection model of education to unite the theological curriculum with experiential learning to form a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the Christian faith. Integration occurs as students practice the art of theological reflection while serving in churches, specialized ministries, and focused ministries such as teaching or international ministry. Field education is where theology and ministry merge as supervisor and student bring to bear the resources of the Christian faith, acquired through Seminary coursework and life experience, upon the practical decisions of ministry as they search for theological meaning in life.

Field Education occurs in either a Christian congregation or in a specialized ministry site. An acceptable specialized ministry site engages in ministry within the world promoting Christian values, but might not be designated as a religious organization (for example social justice organizations, soup kitchens, crisis ministries, organic farms, advocacy groups, organizations associated with the UN). In these cases, the on-site supervisor must hold at least a masters’ degree, but might not have specific theological training. For these sites, a Christian theological conversation partner must be identified who will have regular conversations (monthly during the academic year, biweekly during the summer) focused on Christian theological issues that integrate the practice of ministry with the work the student is doing in the academy.

Through field education, students grow in self-understanding, gain an awareness of the role of supervision in ministry, and develop overall competence in the practice of ministry. In addition to these overarching goals, the five specific outcomes for field education are self-awareness, relationship development, skill acquisition, testing and affirming vocational call, and integration of practice with theological understanding.

Within the first two weeks of the placement, the student and supervisor develop a learning/serving covenant that identifies specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and transferable goals for each of the five aforementioned areas of development. A general description for the placement is tailored to meet the needs and desired outcomes for the student and the site. Weekly supervisory sessions enable the student and supervisor to track their progress using selected models for reflection. A formal assessment process by student and supervisor completes the placement.

In addition to integration of theology with practice, program outcomes seek to enable students to:

- Identify and enhance strengths and address weaknesses
- Develop leadership skills
- Become more adept at accomplishing the tasks of ministry
- Improve effectiveness in planning and communicating
- Engage a process of call clarification
- Become effective practitioners

Program

Some students enter seminary with a clear and specific sense of their vocation, while others are searching for clarity about the form of their ministry. Through ongoing discernment and practical experience, changes in vocational objectives occasionally occur. The field education program offers experiences that take into account the various needs of students while at the same time providing an integrated and consistent program. The program aims to expand students’ vision of the church by exposing them to its mission and ministry in its ecumenical, cross-cultural, and racial/ethnic dimensions.

Every Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Education and Formation, or dual-degree student must do two placements, one of which is in a church. The second placement can also be in a church, or in a specialized ministry setting, depending on the student’s emerging call. MDiv, MACEF, and dual-degree students are expected to complete one summer placement, which is a minimum of thirty-five hours each week for a minimum of ten weeks (350 hours), and one academic-year placement, which is ten to fifteen hours each week for a minimum of thirty weeks (300 hours). MA(TS) students are required to do only one placement (either summer or academic year) in a church or specialized ministry. Students are encouraged to seek different contexts for each placement and discouraged from seeking a placement in their home churches.

Ordinarily, field education is not done during the junior academic year. Typically the first placement is full-time during the summer after the first year and the second is part time during the middler year. Each placement carries two semester hours of credit, resulting in the accumulation of the four required academic credits for field education for MDiv, MACEF, and dual-degree students. MA(TS) with accumulate two required academic credits for field education.
A Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Education and Formation, MA(TS) or dual-degree student may do a yearlong intensive internship for two credits in place of either a summer or academic-year placement. Year-long intensive placements are usually done after the student has completed two years of theological education. Students have the option of doing additional field education placements for elective credit. As with required placements, two credits are awarded for elective field education placements, except for PC 4110 and PC 4111 for elective CPE which give 3 credits.

Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Education and Formation, and MA(TS) students are required to register for field education courses each semester of participation, according to the procedures that govern the selection of academic courses. A grade of P (pass), D, or F (fail) is recorded at the end of the course. Additional information about field education can be found in the Field Education Handbook.

**Placement Opportunities**

All field education placements are done in sites approved by the Office of Field Education under the direction of certified supervisors. There are several kinds of placements: churches and specialized ministries, clinical pastoral education, international placements, and placements that focus on the ministry of teaching. The pool of more than 650 churches and specialized ministries is representative of seventy different denominations with locations in rural, suburban, urban, and metropolitan contexts. Specialized ministries include prisons, health institutions, community service agencies, educational institutions, retirement centers, and organizations for individuals with special needs. A clinical pastoral education (CPE) unit can satisfy one field education requirement. CPE placements are available in urban, rural, metropolitan, and suburban areas within commuting distance of the Seminary or during the summer in more than thirty states in the U.S. The Field Education Office provides opportunities for cross-cultural, racial/ethnic, and international placements. International placements are located in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin and South America.

**Field Education Advisement System**

Upon entering the Seminary, each MDiv, MACEF, MA(TS) and dual-degree student is assigned a field education advisor. Students are required to have two meetings per year with their advisor: the first one in October to discuss their call and general objectives in field education; the second one in January to focus on the type of field education placements they would like to pursue. Whenever possible, students are placed in settings of their own denomination. All programs for MDiv, MACEF, MA(TS) and dual-degree students must be planned with the approval of their field education adviser and secured by April 1st.