Conceptual Framework *of* the Professional Education Unit

Executive Summary

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Northern Arizona University
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Vision Statement

We develop educational leaders who create tomorrow's opportunities.

The professional education unit at Northern Arizona University seeks to prepare educational leaders who create tomorrow's opportunities for young people: opportunities to learn and opportunities to improve their lives, their communities, and their prospects for the future. We strive to create a web of inquiry, exploration, and dialogue—through direct personal interaction and mediated by technology—that invites all members of the education community to come together to use discovery, innovation, and collaboration to improve people's lives through education.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to prepare competent and committed professionals who will make positive differences for children, young adults, and others in schools.

This mission builds on the mission of Northern Arizona University: "to provide outstanding undergraduate education strengthened by research, graduate and professional programs, and sophisticated methods of distance delivery." Our unit strives to prepare competent and committed professionals who will make positive differences for children, young adults, and others in schools. We work to prepare professionals who will succeed as they begin their careers and who maintain the disposition to grow professionally and work for the continuous improvement of these institutions in the face of a changing society.

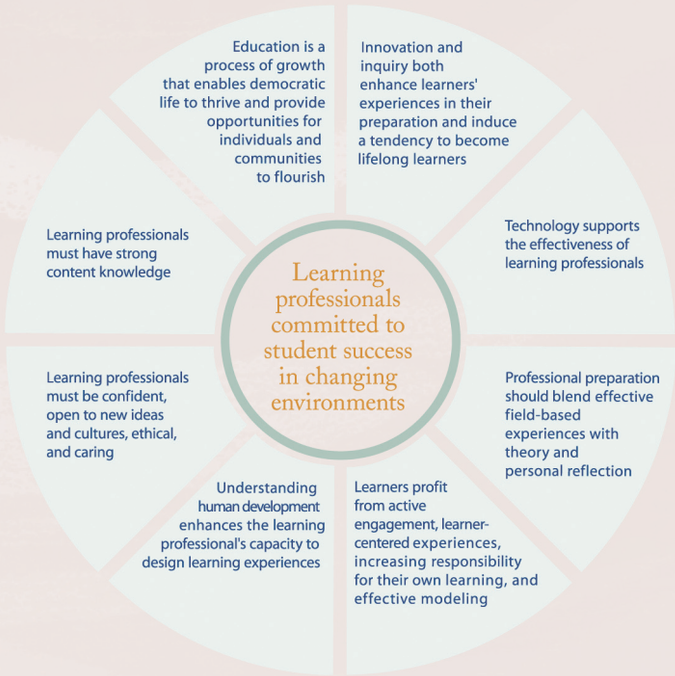
We recognize that preparing such professionals requires us to build programs that offer the broad range of learning experiences necessary for the complexities of practice. This further requires that we help our candidates gain content knowledge relevant to their work, practical knowledge for linking that content with learners or other clients, and the sound judgment and reflection associated with professionalism. A core obligation of being a professional is to thoughtfully apply learning and continue to learn throughout one's career.

We acknowledge that a central component of our mission involves the activities of inquiry and dissemination of current professional information. This requires that faculty members continually engage in scholarly endeavors and integrate those efforts with service to the P-12 community.

We understand that to fulfill our particular charge to have a positive influence on the educational system, we must make outreach to rural areas and minority populations a priority. This requires that we implement quality educational experiences through sophisticated methods of distance delivery.

Guiding Image

Learning professionals committed to student success in changing environments.



Philosophy

Faculty members in the professional education unit believe in the dignity and inherent worth of all people and in the central role of education in a democratic society. Education is a means of opening doors for people. Our complex and changing society, with increasing diversity and ever-changing technology, calls for special attention to developing educational leaders who function effectively in formal and informal learning environments. Such leaders gain their authority through thoughtful and ethical actions, which include problem posing and solving, the use of evidence in decision making, advocacy for all learners, and seeking opportunities for personal growth.

We believe inquiry calls on us to examine the best ideas from the past, to weigh various kinds of evidence, and to initiate rigorous research on promising ideas. Innovation leads to practical applications and offers new possibilities to schools and practitioners as they address the complexities of providing effective education to all learners.

We believe effective educators (our candidates) must have strong content background, professional competence, and dispositions to be confident, open-minded, ethical, and empathic. These dispositions develop through programs grounded in appropriate methodologies identified in the literature. Our philosophy calls us to hold high expectations for all candidates, our colleagues, and ourselves; to embody active respect for our colleagues and those we serve; and to provide the tenacious support needed for all to succeed.

Core Unit Values *(NAU corresponding values)*

- **Learner-Centered Education (NAU: student success)**
  We value programs that give candidates the greatest chance of success by including components that are experiential, collaborative (often in mutually beneficial partnerships with schools), problem-centered, reflection-oriented, outcome-based, research-guided, and technology-rich. We are committed to modeling effective learner-centered practices and dispositions.
- **Commitment to Diversity (NAU: educational access; diversity)**
  We actively promote diversity among administration, faculty, staff, and candidates. We endorse respect for diversity in our curriculum and pedagogical applications. Our efforts to serve peoples from rural Arizona communities enhance this commitment.
- **Innovation and Inquiry (NAU: excellence in education)**
  We focus on research that serves the organizations for which we prepare professionals, and we view our mission as incorporating new knowledge into the preparation of professionals and spreading this knowledge to the practitioners already in the field.
- **Advocacy (NAU: integrity and civility)**
  We believe that advocacy for learners and for equitable and effective institutions is a central responsibility.
- **Lifelong Learning (NAU: excellence in education)**
  We believe in the concept of continuous learning for personal and professional development and strive to instill that value in our candidates. Integral to this is our commitment to prepare candidates in the use of appropriate technologies both as learners and education professionals.

Purpose

Our initial and advanced programs in professional education accomplish the following purposes:

1. Prepare candidates who will effectively serve as professionals in existing education organizations.
2. Prepare candidates who will lead education organizations in ongoing improvement.
3. Further the development of knowledge through the synergistic relationship between professional preparation programs and innovation and inquiry.
4. Serve education organizations through preparing personnel and providing relevant knowledge.

nau.edu/coe

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