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the kairos project

We are excited you are a part of the Kairos Project at Sioux Falls Seminary! Please review this guide carefully. It will provide you with some of the essential details as you join us on this journey of discipleship.

general information

Kairos Philosophy of Education
Sioux Falls Seminary is on the move. It is now recognized as one of the most innovative seminaries in the nation, helping change theological education and how it is done both in North America and throughout the world.

In 2014, the seminary launched an experiment called the Kairos Project. The goal was to shift the focus of theological education. The Kairos Project was designed to encourage integrated learning and shape theological education around moments in time instead of an academic calendar. Students walk alongside a mentor team and in community with fellow students, immersing them in a community of learning and, most importantly, a community of faith.

One result of this experiment is the Kairos Project Track. The other result is that this philosophy of education is now infused into every student’s educational journey in some way, regardless of program track. The mantra that goes with this philosophy—affordable, accessible, relevant, and faithful—is much more than a set of words. It emphasizes theological education as, first and foremost, a journey of discipleship and is integral to everything at Sioux Falls Seminary.

Theologically-Informed Outcome-Based Education
Theologically-informed outcome-based education is a fresh expression of education at Sioux Falls Seminary. It empowers students and creates new opportunities for integrating competency-based theological education, experiential learning, and traditional learning experiences. It also opens the door to new ways of thinking about the developmental journey of students and enables schools, churches, ministries, and businesses to work together in extraordinary ways.

For too long, theological education has been separated into various sections of the Church. Seminaries, churches, ministry organizations, clinical training processes, and more have been operating separately from one another. At Sioux Falls Seminary, we believe theological education should be a system in which multiple partners participate in the holistic development of individuals. We are committed to developing kingdom-minded people for service in the mission of God.

How Kairos Works
Through this educational philosophy, students utilize various types of assignments to validate achievement of educational targets, which leads to demonstrated competency of top-level outcomes and integrated targets.

Students work with a three-person mentor team to determine and adapt assignments in light of their needs, ministry context, and prior learning or experiences as they work toward demonstrated competency of the outcomes in their program.

Targets are articulated and determined by the faculty as a whole. Outcomes and the rubric used for the master assessment of each outcome are also determined by the faculty. To ensure coherence and wholistic educational design, elements of integrated competencies appear within each outcome.

With the exception of integrated intensive gatherings in Sioux Falls each October and April, coursework is typically completed in context. As a result, success is heavily dependent upon a student’s ability to be an intrinsically-motivated learner.

However, all of the seminary’s learning modules are available for students to supplement or enhance in-context work. Some commonly taken in a traditional format include those in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, church history, Christian heritage, and ethics.

Contextually-Integrated Moments
Kairos is intended to be a transformational experience. Learning is centered around moments in time. Students are immersed in their contexts. As much as possible, this is where learning should occur—whether in a church, a non-profit, and/or a business. Like a Venn diagram with deeply overlapping circles, the seminary sphere and ministry sphere (and any other sphere) should intersect greatly.

Supervision of a Mentor Team
A mentor team is comprised of a faculty mentor, a personal mentor, and a ministry mentor. Mentors should encourage mentees and help them process life. However, their principal role is to evaluate progress toward the program outcomes. In other words, mentors do things like help students order their lives to contextualized integrated educational moments, design adapted assignments, and, most importantly, review completed assignments. Through master assessments, the three mentors must make sure that each outcome has been achieved. This provides a well-rounded view of students instead of a one-dimensional faculty-to-student view. Students who do most of their work through traditional learning modules interact with their mentor team less than other students.

Direction of Faculty
Sioux Falls Seminary professors supervise and direct Kairos students at a number of key places: designing the standard curricula, teaching the intensives, orchestrating student...
group functions, and conducting institutional student learning and program assessment. Furthermore, each faculty mentor coordinates mentor team meetings, submits master assessment rubrics, and reports to the seminary.

**Program Customization**
Students can tailor course work to their individual needs. The Kairos curriculum provides a set of suggested assignments for each program outcome. These suggested assignments provide prescribed opportunities for students to demonstrate Christian maturity in the areas of knowledge, character, and ability. Assignments are thoughtful activities ranging from discussions to papers to journals to retreats to readings to videos to pilgrimages. They can be done in any order. In harmony with ministry rhythms and under the instruction of mentor teams, assignments can be adapted or tailored. See Student Information/ Achieving the Outcomes and Adapting Assignments for details.

**Participation in a Cohort-Based Community of Learning**
Community develops quite naturally as students and mentors experience educational life together.

Contributing to this are: deep mentor relationships, opportunities for worship and fellowship, and informal, but meaningful relationships that form over shared interests and contexts. Students enter, and remain united, as cohorts. They attend the same intensives when possible, sometimes meet in recurring student groups (known as huddles), and may pursue many of the same assignments together.

**Outcome-Based Christian Maturity**
The Kairos Project is thoroughly oriented toward outcomes, which are integrated learning goals that represent critical features of Christian fullness. Each degree program has prescribed learning outcomes. Everything within a program moves toward achieving the major markers of maturity. Assignments do not exist for their own sake but as ways to quantify demonstrable movement toward the outcomes.

When the mentor team and student believe the student has validated the achievement of targets related to a specific top-level outcome, the student participates in a master assessment, which is then used to demonstrate the level of competency in that outcome and whether or not completion of the outcome has been achieved.

**Student Information**
**After Acceptance**
After receiving notification of acceptance into the Kairos Project, students should:

- Confirm plans to enroll and set a start date. Students may start any month. Those no longer interested in attending should promptly notify the seminary.

- Complete the payment plan authorization form that was included with the acceptance letter and return it to the Office of Enrollment Management as soon as possible. Tuition is paid through automatic monthly payments.

- Begin the orientation process through the self-paced Outcome Zero course. Once payment plan authorization is received and processed, students are partnered with a Kairos Advisor, who provides them with the information needed to begin the orientation process through Outcome Zero.

Through this process, students:
- Complete the new student checklist;
- Learn about Moodle, Google Drive, research, writing, prior learning assessments, adapted assignments, and more;
- Secure a personal mentor and a ministry mentor;
- Learn about the Ministry Support Network;
- Familiarize themselves with the Kairos curriculum and complete initial adapted assignments;
- Register and make preparations for the next on-campus gathering.

- Save the date for upcoming Kairos
gatherings. Participation in Outcome Zero provides access to this schedule. Information is also online at sfeminary.edu/kairosinfo.

- Review the enclosed student and mentor team information.

Kairos Updates Email

After beginning Outcome Zero, you will start receiving a monthly e-mail from the seminary. This Kairos Updates email shares important news and updates related to the curriculum, gatherings, learning modules, course schedules, and more. Be sure to read it carefully each month.

Gatherings

Integrated intensive gatherings are of critical importance for students. Intensives include condensed segments of dynamic learning, instructor-student interaction, peer-to-peer dialogue, and building of the seminary community. The seminary’s highly-contextual model of learning is intimately tied to the on-campus gatherings. Accordingly, attendance at the entirety of a gathering is required. Students foreseeing any obstacle for attending an entire gathering should enroll in a future one instead.

Gatherings typically begin Monday afternoons and wrap up Thursday evenings. Students should plan to arrive in Sioux Falls by mid-afternoon on Monday and depart on Friday.

Students, whether attending or planning to be absent, are asked to register for each gathering. Registration takes place through Eventbrite and notification regarding registration is provided through the monthly Kairos Updates email.

Finding a Mentor Team

Each student’s work is conducted under the supervision of a mentor team. Students have a group of three mentors walking alongside them, overseeing their progress toward program learning outcomes and providing a continuum of balanced, personal educational care. Mentor teams are a critical feature of the Kairos Project, along with the direction of faculty and participation in a cohort-based community of learning.

To learn more about the role of and expectations, requirements, and criteria for members of the mentor team, see the Mentor Information section below.

Achieving Outcomes and Adapting Assignments

Outcome Zero provides an opportunity for students to learn about adapted assignments and practice writing adapted assignment proposals.

Because advanced standing is not offered through the Kairos Project, students are encouraged to demonstrate proficiency through adaptive assignments and/or transfer at the target level. Both are worked out through mentor team conversations and are officially noted on the student’s progress map.

What Are Adapted Assignments?

Adapted assignments (AAs) are substitutions in the curricular template. Students may, with the permission of the mentor team, submit tailored assignments that fulfill the same basic purpose as a single existing assignment or a group of existing assignments. Students may choose to modify or exchange assignments because of their specific interests or relevant ministry situations. This is one of the main ways that the Kairos Project facilitates flexible, context-specific education.

Adapted assignments are not credit for previous experience nor are they loopholes for general recognition of maturity in general areas. Students must produce new work or newly-tailored versions of past work that are intentionally designed to replace specific assignments. All adapted assignments must be documented.

Adapted assignments are encouraged and are welcome enhancements to the program. Mentor teams can provide great assistance by helping students construct assignments that are suitable for their ministry area(s). Ultimately, however, responsibility for initiating adapted assignments begins and ends with students.

How to Propose an Adapted Assignment

Students must initiate the process by creating adapted assignment proposals. Proposals must be generated in writing and submitted through Google Drive.

- Students submit a proposal. The proposal should contain the suggested assignment, the proposed assignment, and one or two paragraphs justifying the submission.
- Upon submission, mentors should be notified of the submission via an e-mail from the student.
- The faculty mentor then evaluates the adapted assignment proposal. For combinations of three or more targets, all three mentors must be in agreement in order for the substitution to be accepted.
- Notification of acceptance (or revision or rejection) is documented on the proposal and progress map.
- Students should not begin an adapted assignment until receiving approval from the mentor team.

The Evaluation Process for Adapted Assignment Proposals

Mentors will balance flexibility with intentionality. The Kairos Project seeks to provide context-relevant content that is purposefully aimed at the degree program outcomes. While a great amount of liberty exists for the mentor team, the following questions should help guide the evaluative process.

1. Does this adapted assignment move the student toward the target?

Each existing assignment is related to a respective target. Therefore, each adapted assignment should have the same goal in mind. Mentors may also consider whether adapted assignments fit within the
respect knowledge, character, or ability category.

2. Does this adapted assignment require similar levels of competence and depth?

Substituted assignments should reflect the same level of competence in a given area. Students should have to manifest a comparable depth of insight, whether it be degree of knowledge, reflection, or experiential involvement. In effect, a student's demonstrable competence should be analogous to that called for by original assignments. Exact work load in new assignments may be on par with original requirements (e.g., difficulty of book read, pages written, time invested) – but not necessarily.

For maintenance of quality, the dean may review adapted assignments periodically and reserve the right to deny or adjust adapted assignments.

Learning Modules
Each semester, the seminary offers a number of traditional learning modules and courses that are offered on campus, online, and/or via video conference. Upcoming course schedules can be reviewed online at sfseminary.edu/courseschedules. Students interested in taking one of these courses should first discuss the opportunity with their mentor team. Then, once approved, students may contact the Registrar to enroll.

Master Assessment Protocol
The student and their mentor team should determine when the student is ready to be assessed for a particular outcome, typically upon completion of all the targets within that outcome. When ready, the mentor team determines the means through which master assessment will take place for that particular outcome—often through a Master Assessment Review. Once the student demonstrates competency, the outcome is considered complete and a grade is given and academic credit is awarded.

To learn more, see Mentor Information/Mentor Expectations/Protocol for Master Assignments.

Mentor Registration
Mentor teams are a critical feature of the Kairos Project. While faculty mentors are appointed by the seminary, personal and ministry mentors are nominated by students.

In order for students to nominate mentors, they must register them during Outcome Zero. During this process, mentor nominees must complete and return a mentor application and consent form, which glean information about the their personal background and ministry experience.

Seminary faculty and/or a faculty representative determine whether or not nominees are suitable. Nominations may be deferred to the dean or brought to a faculty meeting. Sioux Falls Seminary reserves the right to refuse nominees or elect suitable replacements.

Mentor Requirements and Criteria
Mentors need to be diverse enough to edify students holistically. Accordingly, mentors should be qualified in different ways, care deeply for the development of the student, and be willing to walk alongside the student throughout the educational journey.

Faculty mentors are approved members of the Sioux Falls Seminary faculty. In most cases, they have an earned doctorate. All faculty mentors are acquainted with academic standards and scholarly research and are skilled at praxis.

Personal mentors are typically confidants or individuals from whom students wish to learn. They must have, or be willing to develop, a close relationship with the student. The personal mentor is able to provide spiritual companionship because he or she is rooted in faith and understands the Christian life.

Ministry mentors must be intimately engaged in the student's current ministry role. In most cases, this means that ministry mentors are supervisors, either a pastor or organizational leader, within a ministry context. In certain cases, they can be board members or more experienced colleagues.

Mentors are required to commit themselves to the student's full educational process in the Kairos Project, typically either two years for Master of Arts in Christian Leadership, Master of Arts in Counseling, and Bible and Theology programs or three to four years for the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry. Beyond evaluators and supporters, mentors commit themselves to being co-learners with students. This is a considerable investment of time and energy.

Mentor teams of students who complete most of their work through traditional learning modules tend to interact with the student less frequently than other mentor teams.

Note: Recommendations to have family members serve as part of a student's mentor team will not be accepted.

Mentor Expectations
Mentors are expected to walk alongside students. Opportunities to learn more about Kairos, the mentor role, and the use of technology will be made available to all mentors. In addition to offering encouragement and a listening ear, mentors conduct the following primary functions:

Review - Reviewers, as specified within the curriculum or determined by the student and mentor team, assess material and assignments and provide feedback, helping students execute assignments satisfactorily and progress toward each respective outcome.

Three Levels of Review for Targets
Just as there are three types of assignment levels (foundational, explorative, and integrative), there
1. **Confirm** - Confirm that the assignment was completed. This level only requires one mentor/reviewer.

2. **Light Review (Explorative)** - Read/watch/listen to the assignment to ensure that it accomplishes the target. This level only requires one mentor/reviewer. Light assignments should be building blocks toward the two or three heavy review assignments per outcome.

3. **Heavy Review (Integrative)** - Careful attention is given to assessing the assignment and may involve more than one mentor/reviewer. There are typically two or three heavy assignments per outcome. These assignments are key building blocks toward the master assignment.

   
   - **Authorization of Adapted Assignments** - Mentors help tailor the program by inserting assignments that may fit better with their student's given ministry context. While it is primarily the responsibility of students to propose adapted assignments, mentors can assist in coming up with creative alternatives that meet the intention of the original assignment. The faculty mentor and entire mentor team authorizes any changes. To learn more, review the General Information/Adaptable Assignments and Student Information/Achieving the Outcomes and Adapting Assignments sections of this document.

   - **Supervision of Progress** - Mentors must be attentive to student progress. They help students stay on course and keep tabs on assignment completion rate. They also spur students toward greater activity and efficiency and work with them to find intersecting areas of theological education, ministry, and other spheres of life.

   - **Follow Protocol for Master Assessment** - When students are ready to be assessed on a particular outcome, mentor teams discuss the request and either agree or disagree with the student.

     If the student is ready to be assessed, the mentor team, under the direction of the faculty mentor, carries out the master assessment process, most often through a Master Assessment Review.

     Through master assessment, the student's level of demonstrated competency in the outcome is assessed and knowledge, character, and ability in this area is reviewed deeply. Once the student passes, the faculty mentor formally completes and submits the online master assessment entry form. As a result, notification is sent to the student and the Office of Enrollment Management, and a grade is officially recorded and academic credit is given. If the student does not pass, the mentor team may assign additional work to be done before reassessment takes place.

     **Master Assessment Reviews:**

     A master assessment review is a competency conversation, much like an oral assessment or defense of an outcome, that reviews the target work a student has done throughout the particular outcome and/or by concentrating on a particular lengthy target assignment that best exemplifies the outcome (at the mentor team's discretion; for example a successful Ordination Council for a theology-related outcome).

     Master assessment reviews ordinarily take 1-2 hours, which includes completion of the Master assessment rubric individually by the student and each member of the mentor team, further discussion about whether or not the mentor team feels the student is competent in the particular outcome, and online entry of the agreed upon Master assessment score by the faculty mentor.

     Although Master Assessment Reviews are the standard method for completing Master Assessments within the Kairos Project track, mentor teams may use alternative assignments in lieu of a master assessment review as deemed appropriate.

**The First Mentor Meeting**

Mentor teams typically begin their work as students near completion of Outcome Zero. The Kairos advisor will help students and the team transition to the student's faculty mentor. The three mentors, the student, and the Kairos advisor convene either in person, by phone, or via video conference. The first meeting will address these topics:

   - **Get Acquainted.** Be aware of one another's Christian walk, ministry/vocation, Church affiliation, relationship to student, education, location, family, etc.

   - **Review the Kairos Guide Together.** Go over each section. Questions about the program should be fielded and addressed.

   - **Review Google Drive.** Get accustomed with the online platform. Navigate together the basics of Google Drive, the location of program content, and the assignment submission area.

   - **Discuss What the Mentor Team Culture Might Look Like.** Discuss a preferred frequency and medium for meetings.

**Mentor Team Best Practices**

**General**

1. The student actively communicates with the mentor team, thinking ahead, making plans, asking questions, and inviting the mentor team to participate in specific ways.

2. A student should switch out mentors as soon as possible if there is not a good fit.

**Contact**

1. Weekly: The faculty mentor checks each student's progress. The faculty mentor looks for new submissions, answers questions from students, provides feedback, and e-mails other mentors as necessary.

2. Monthly: Longer conversations...
between the faculty mentor and the student happen about once a month. This may happen in several different ways, including a phone call, a meeting, or the student contacting the faculty mentor during a designated “office hours” block.

3. Quarterly: Meetings that bring together the entire mentor team may be held less frequently, such as quarterly, but with consistency.

Other meetings can also occur as needed, for example if the student is experiencing a change in life, context, or ministry.

• Meetings
  1. An agenda is shared at the outset of each meeting. It is modified to accommodate the questions, issues, and updates raised by the student and other mentors.

  2. Time is devoted to discussing adapted assignments. If a student is not producing them, mentors have the student describe imminent ministry activities and discuss possible assignments.

  3. Time is reserved for prayer with each all-mentor team meeting.

  4. The next meeting is scheduled prior to the conclusion of each mentor meeting.

  5. The faculty mentor is responsible for letting the seminary know about students or fellow mentors who are struggling to attend meetings.

• Review
  1. Mentors aim to have initial evaluation completed within two weeks. When students have a time-sensitive deadline, they make that known to the evaluating mentor.

  2. If a reviewer is not specified by the curriculum, a lead reviewer system is used in which each assignment is linked with a specific evaluating mentor. Usually the assignments are divided according to the knowledge, character, and ability categories or according to outcome.

  The designated mentor alone reviews and issues a pass within the progress map. Non-lead mentors may elect to do a secondary evaluation, however.

  3. Mentors require appropriate written and verbal communication from their students, using standards appropriate to the student’s ministry context as well as to the nature of the assignment.

  4. Lead mentors leave substantive comments in the progress map, offering affirmation, challenge, and constructive critique. If a mentor feels totally unable to evaluate a certain assignment, it should be communicated to the other mentors immediately.

  5. Everything official is documented on Google Drive, with the exception of students working through Pathright. Artifacts are stored here, and the student’s work and advancement is officially noted through the progress map. Adapted assignments, submissions, official comments, and evaluation status are clearly recorded.

Sioux Falls Seminary

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visit www.sfseminary.edu/kairos