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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**

**About the Kairos Project**

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.

Kairos Project tracks are offered within the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Leadership, and Master of Arts (Bible and Theology) programs and are equivalent to the classic tracks within the respective programs.

**How It Works**

Through this educational philosophy, students utilize various types of assignments to validate achievement of educational targets, which leads to the demonstration 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, working toward achievement of top-level outcomes for their program.

The targets themselves are articulated and determined by the faculty as a whole. Outcomes and the rubrics used to assess the master assignments for each outcome are also determined by the faculty. To ensure coherence and holistic educational design, elements of the integrated competencies appear within each outcome.

With the exception of intensives on the main campus 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, ethics, and more.

**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.

**Outcome-Based Christian Maturity**

The Kairos Project is thoroughly oriented toward outcomes, or 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 (which includes a member of the seminary’s faculty) and student believe the student has validated the achievement of targets related to a specific top-level outcome, the mentor team allows the student to participate in a master assignment, which is then used to demonstrate whether or not completion of that outcome has been achieved.

**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.

**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 find contextually-integrated educational moments, design adapted assignments, and, most importantly, review completed assignments. Through the master assignments, 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.

**Direction of Faculty**
Sioux Falls Seminary professors supervise and direct Kairos students in ways that differ from classic program tracks. The faculty guides Kairos 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 assignment rubrics, and reports to the seminary.

**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, meet in recurring student groups (known as huddles), and may pursue many of the same assignments together.

**student information**

**After Acceptance**
After receiving notification of acceptance into the Kairos Project, students should:
- **Confirm plans to be a part of the Kairos Project group and set a start date.** There is usually a waiting list for the Kairos Project. Those no longer interested should promptly notify the seminary. Students may start any month.
- **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 will provide them with the information needed to begin the orientation process through Outcome Zero.
- **Save the date for upcoming Kairos intensive weeks.** Participation in Outcome Zero provides access to this schedule.
- **Review the enclosed student, mentor team, and Ministry Support Network information.**

**Intensives**
Intensives 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 intensives. Accordingly, attendance at the entirety of an intensive is required. Students foreseeing any obstacle for attending an entire
intensive should plan on enrolling in a future intensive instead.

**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 respective 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.

**Protocol for Master Assignments**
Students should inform the mentor team when they are ready to be assessed for a particular outcome, typically upon completion of all the targets within that outcome. If the mentor team agrees, students begin work on the master assignment for that particular outcome. Once the student passes the master assignment, the outcome is considered complete and a grade is assigned. To learn more, see Mentor Information/Mentor Expectations/Protocol for Master Assignments.
Mentor information

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

Mentor teams 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 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:

- 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 the Master of Arts in Christian Leadership and Bible and Theology programs or three to four years for the Master of Divinity. Beyond evaluators and supporters, mentors commit themselves to being co-learners with students. This is a considerable investment of time and energy.

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 are also three levels of mentor engagement for target review.

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 Assignments - When students inform their mentor that they are ready to be assessed through a master assignment, mentor teams discuss the request and either agree or disagree with the student.

If the mentor team agrees with the student’s request, the faculty mentor informs the Office of Enrollment Management. The student is then registered for the particular Kairos Project course that corresponds with the outcome to be assessed through the master assignment.
Once the student completes the requirements of the assignment, the mentor team assesses the work. Once the student passes, the faculty mentor informs the Office of Enrollment Management, and a grade is officially recorded.

**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. 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.

**ministry support network information**

**What is the Ministry Support Network?**
The Ministry Support Network is a community of people who further the development of individuals participating in the kingdom mission by regularly sharing their time, treasure, and talents. The majority of those participating do so through financial support to Sioux Falls Seminary, often monthly.

**How Is It Integrated into the Curriculum?**
Sioux Falls Seminary has created a model of theological education that is, first and foremost, a disciple-
ship process. It is our goal that graduates are seeking discipleship conversations within their networks. One of the best measures of discipleship in western culture is generosity. And, at the same time, money is the one of the only topics people do not talk about. As a result, students are asked to have discipleship conversations around the topic.

In order to fully engage in the Ministry Support Network, students must first pause to reflect on how they deal with money. Are they stewarding well the resources God has given them? Are they generous? What does the Bible have to say about financial stewardship and generosity?

Once ready, students invite people in their networks into a conversation through which they share what they are learning about financial stewardship and generosity. In that conversation, they invite these individuals to join the Ministry Support Network by giving $25 per month to the seminary’s Ministry Support Network fund.

Although often very personally-challenging, this assignment within the curriculum is very beneficial to students and the kingdom.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

- **How do I get started?** Start by learning and reflecting on the above questions. Once ready, begin by talking with people who might likely welcome a chance to encourage you. Be clear on what the conversation involves and ask them for feedback in the process.

- **Why $25 per month?** The purpose of the Ministry Support Network isn’t about the money itself. Rather, it is about the conversations and the life changes that happen through them. The reason an amount is included in the assignment is because experience shows that without a designated amount, students simply avoid the topic. The amount of $25 is just enough to make conversations meaningful without limiting participation. It is important to note that students are held accountable to having conversations and not to the number of gifts given.

- **How is the money used?** Gifts to the Ministry Support Network are used to further the mission of Sioux Falls Seminary and for creating models of theological education that are affordable, accessible, relevant, and faithfult.

- **How do I complete the Ministry Support Network assignment?** Students are required to have three conversations every six months. These conversations are then summarized in a document and stored on Google Drive. Following every third conversation, students alert their faculty mentors. This will, in turn, trigger a conversation.

Please contact Nate Helling by e-mailing nhelling@sfseminary.edu or by calling 800.440.6227 or 605.336.6588 for additional information on the Ministry Support Network.