**United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities**

**Contextual Education**



# Letter from the Director of Contextual Education

Fall 2024

Dear United Student,

The program of Contextual Education is here to build on and advance your discernment as ministers and change agents in the world. In order to do this work, we are called to practice this work as a part of our academic program. We are committed to carrying out United’s mission and values into our contexts for ministry / social transformation / religious leadership and spiritual direction.

### MISSION

United Theological Seminary prepares innovative and compassionate leaders for the equipping of churches, other faith communities, and society toward justice and peace.

### VISION

United will be recognized as a progressive Christian seminary that engages its multifaith world respectfully to create a beloved community both within the seminary and beyond.

### VALUES

United values:

#### COMMUNITY

* **Building upon its heritage** as a seminary of the United Church of Christ
* **Ecumenical engagement** as an expression of the unity of the church
* **Interreligious engagement** that embraces religious diversity
* **Intercultural engagement** that appreciates a multiplicity of lived experiences

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#### COMMITMENT TO INTERSECTIONAL JUSTICE

* **Racial justice** that dismantles every aspect of white supremacy
* **Sexual and gender justice** that affirms and values every person
* **Eco-justice** that cares deeply for all living beings and our planet
* **Economic justice** that builds sustainability and wholeness for all

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#### CREATIVITY AND CURIOSITY

* **Rigorous academic studies** as an expression of the human spirit
* **Formative practices** that shape spiritual, ecclesial, and community leaders
* **Integration of arts and theology** that awakens imagination and intellect
* **Public witness** for the common good

During the course of all of our MDiv degree programs and selected MAL programs there is a practical component that we refer to as Contextual Education **(Previously, this was separated into Congregational Internship, Ministry Practicum and Social Transformation Practicum)**. This is where you practice your theological/ethical framework in relationship with others. These internships will take place in community groups, in congregations, through military service, in prisons, or in some other creative way that you are being led into service. During this internship you will be enrolled in one or more of the following experiences with increasing expectations and outcomes:

Contextual Education 1 - (first contextual based internship)

* FE1001/FE1030 (1.5 credits each over two terms) or
* FE1100 (3-credit one-term intensive)

Contextual Education 2 - (a continuation or new context based internship)

* FE2003/FE2030 (1.5 credits each over two terms) or
* FE2300 (3-credit one-term intensive)

Contextual Education 3: (a continuation or preparation for degree Capstone

* FE3004/FE3005 (1.5 credits each over two terms) or
* FE3006 (3-credit one-term intensive)

**Course Descriptions—Two-term Internship/Practicum**

The contextual education internship consists of a 10–12 hour per week supervised ministry experience in a congregational, faith-based, or secular setting over the course of at least two academic terms (at least 400 hours). Students will enter the internship with a completed Learning Agreement, allowing them to achieve the spiritual, personal and vocational goals needed to move into the next phase of professional ministry. Students will meet regularly with an action-learning team of other students in contextual education class. Evaluation assignments will be included during and at the end of the experience in relationship with the student's supervisor. Arrangements for placements and selection of a mentor/supervisor are made in conjunction with the Director of Contextual Education. This course may only be taken for a pass/fail grade. Each additional course will require a deeper learning experience and expected outcome.

**Prerequisites**

* *There are no prerequisites for FE 1001/1030*
* *Students must complete FE 1001/1030 to enroll in FE 2001/2030*
* *Students must complete FE 2001/2030 or have advisor approval to enroll in FE 3001/3030*

**Course Descriptions— Intensive**

Student in Contextual Education have the option of doing a 400 hour intensive experience over one term to get the full 3 credit hours. This would add to this experience 3 extra practicum hours with Professor Rock via zoom, 2 extra theological reflections (total of 5) and 1 extra case study assignments (total of 2) and one integrative paper (1200 words) describing an area of interest of change / improvement / depth that you encountered during your internship that will help guide you in your ministry or vocation.

**Types of Settings for Contextual Education**

There are three types of settings that can work for your internship and many of them can be found on the United Contextual Studies Website and Canvas pages. The Traditional and Enhanced Internships can both be used to engage in the Contextual Education requirement for your degree program.

*Traditional Internship/Practicum*

These sites have a long history of forming religious leaders. They are non-profit centers or congregations where an intern works alongside an experienced supervisor to engage in conversation and reflection on religious leadership and theological / ethical reflection. United asks these sites to submit a Site Application that speaks to the roles and expectations of an intern in their context. United also asks for a minimum stipend for the student to be paid by the Contextual Education Site. Supervisors would be required to submit a current resume or CV to be considered for this internship. You can find some options for this kind of internship here:

[Traditional Internship and Practicum Site Opportunities](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pNkBq_i_cyPANC0mHB3pP8VGYOJrmZP2BeRhsyfEAGY/edit#bookmark=id.7vuk5lrljtxl)

*Enhanced Internship/Practicum - Jobs w/ Supervision*

Many non-profit organizations and congregations would love to have students work full or part time in their context. These sites also offer an on-site or off-site supervisor that will act as a conversation partner with the student. The student would need to negotiate salary and benefits with the Site that is beyond the suggested stipend from the Traditional Internship. Supervisors would be required to submit a current resume or CV to be considered for this internship.

[Enhanced Internship and Practicum Site Opportunities](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pNkBq_i_cyPANC0mHB3pP8VGYOJrmZP2BeRhsyfEAGY/edit#bookmark=id.6uyejxl6bz61)

*United Student Employment*

Many non-profit organizations and congregations want to hire United Students to serve their context in part-time and full-time capacities. There are many offerings listed here. These sites do not come with supervision or qualify for Contextual Education. They are great ways to practice ministry and share the mission and values of United in the world. The Director of Contextual Education would still be a conversation partner with you in negotiation and evaluation of your ministry in these settings.

[United Student Employment Site Opportunities](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pNkBq_i_cyPANC0mHB3pP8VGYOJrmZP2BeRhsyfEAGY/edit#bookmark=id.xtki7sbndm0h)

**Placement Procedure and Timeline**

The process for securing approval of a placement site begins several months before the start of the experience. Please see the Contextual Education section of the Student Handbook for information on the required tasks prior to course registration and deadlines for participation in commencement the following spring.

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As the Director of Contextual Education I am here to be a discernment partner and to walk alongside you as the Professor of the Practicum course and director of the program.

Blessings,

# Rev. T. Michael Rock

# Director of Contextual Education and Spiritual Direction

Adjunct Faculty for Practical Theology

<https://calendly.com/tmichaelrocks13>