

## The Lead

### The College of Education and Human Services Newsletter

#### Lindenwood University

Vol. 2024: End-of-Fall

## Dean's Message

### Reflecting on a Successful Semester and Gratitude for Our College Community

Dear Students, Faculty,  
and Staff of the College of  
Education and Human Services,

As we approach the conclusion  
of the fall semester, I want to take  
a moment to reflect on the many  
accomplishments and  
milestones we've achieved  
together and to express my  
heartfelt gratitude to each of you.

To our students, you have  
demonstrated remarkable  
dedication to your academic  
pursuits, and your hard work has  
paid off. I am inspired by your  
perseverance, your commitment



to growth, and your passion for making a difference in the world. This semester has seen you excel in the classroom, engage in meaningful service opportunities, and contribute to the broader community. Whether it's through volunteering, internships, or collaborative projects, you are not only learning but also leading by example, embodying the values of service and leadership that are central to our College. Congratulations on all your academic achievements!

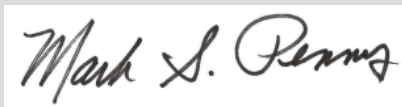
To our faculty and staff, I want to express my deepest appreciation for your unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in ensuring that our students receive the highest level of education and support. Your expertise, creativity, and passion are the cornerstone of our success, and it's your hard work and determination that shape the transformative experiences that define the College of Education and Human Services. Whether in the classroom, through research, or in service to our students, your contributions have made a significant impact on our College and the greater community.

As we look forward to the much-deserved Winter Break, let us take a moment to celebrate all that we have accomplished together this semester. Your resilience and spirit have made this a semester to remember, and I am filled with pride for all that we've achieved.

I hope you enjoy the break ahead, taking time to rest, recharge, and spend quality time with loved ones. I look forward to returning in the new year, ready to continue building on the strong foundation we've established and tackling the exciting challenges that lie ahead.

Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful Winter Break.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Penny". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a white rectangular box.

Dr. Mark S. Penny

Interim Dean, College of Education and Human Services

## Featured Stories

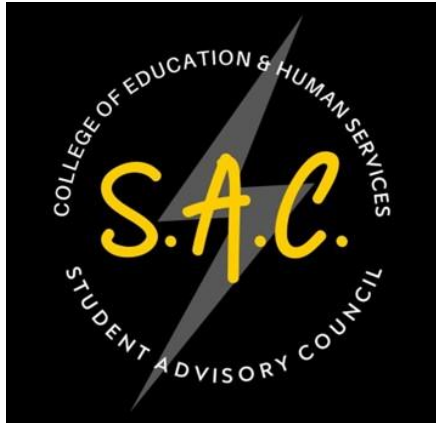
### **We are proud to announce the new EdD Interdisciplinary Education program!**

Have you started a doctoral program but not finished? Have you wondered if your Master's courses may apply to a terminal degree? Have you ever considered a doctoral degree, but you have questions? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, consider contacting Dr. Mitch Nasser for more information at [rnasser@lindenwood.edu](mailto:rnasser@lindenwood.edu).



[We have also created this 4-minute video discussing the program!](#)

**Student Advisory Council**



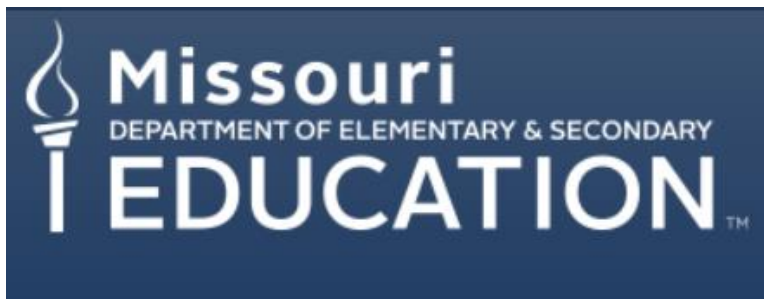
The SAC resumed meetings for the 2024-2025 school year on Thursday, October 3. The students discussed topics and concerns relevant to their coursework and success. Topics ranged from SAC purpose, practicum placement time frame, and praise of Professors. The outcomes of the council's discussions will be presented to the school administration for consideration.

Students of all levels (undergraduates and graduates) who would like to have a voice on a wide range of topics and important issues within the COEHS and around the University are encouraged to participate.

Please contact Chrissy Sachs [csachs@lindenwood.edu](mailto:csachs@lindenwood.edu) to participate.

Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of each month.

### Certification Corner DESE Updates



Are you seeking completion of a DESE certification? DESE requires the current certification criteria to be met. Please reach out to [certifications@lindenwood.edu](mailto:certifications@lindenwood.edu) with any questions about current requirements.

### DESE Updates

- As of 7/1/2024 DESE is now requiring the Praxis content test.

- There is a Missouri-specific help line at ETS (Praxis). This line must be used to reschedule or cancel an exam with no fee or to have scores sent to DESE if that was not indicated during registration.
1. Call 1-800-772-9476
  2. Press 0 to speak with a customer service representative.
  3. Tell the representative that you are from Missouri.

## Curriculum & Instruction

### Guiding Lights: The Mentors Behind Tomorrow's Teachers

At a recent university ceremony honoring excellence in education, two cooperating teachers in partnering school districts were celebrated for their exceptional mentorship of Lindenwood teacher candidates. Both mentor teachers are veterans in the field and have demonstrated that their impact has stretched far beyond their classrooms into the lives of emerging educators.

#### Fall 2024 Outstanding Cooperating Teacher Awards



Katie Efen,  
Monroe Elementary,  
City of St. Charles School District



Sarah McDowell,

Duello Elementary,  
Wentzville School District

### Faculty Publication



Dr. Michelle Whitacre and Dr. Lynda Leavitt published a book chapter to be released in January 2025: *Cultivating Disruptive Innovators: Considerations in Developing Educational Leaders with Innovative Mindsets*. In J.B. Watters, G. Miller, and R. Rhone (Eds.), *Reimagining the P-20 Landscape for School Leadership Learning*. IGI Global.

This chapter explores the critical intersection of disruptive innovation and educational leadership, focusing on how Doctor of Education programs can cultivate innovative thinking in school leaders. Drawing from Clayton Christensen's disruptive innovation theory, the chapter examines how educational leaders must move beyond traditional paradigms to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving educational landscape. It discusses the systemic challenges that impede innovation in schools and offers six evidence-based strategies for developing educational leaders capable of driving disruptive change: experiential learning, entrepreneurial skills, interdisciplinary learning, communities of practice, technology integration, and fostering emotional resilience. Anchored in their experiences redesigning an EdD program centered on design thinking and innovation, the authors highlight the successes and challenges of equipping leaders with the creative, visionary, and risk-taking skills necessary to transform education.

## LU SCEC and KDP Host “Teachers Come Back” Panel

LU COEHS Alumni Sarah Schroeder Whalen (2010), Emily Milligan Byrd (2011, 2012), Sarah Milligan Byrd (2014), Stephanie Dawson (2020), and Katie O’Brien (2022) shared their joys and passion for teaching and tips for success, leading lively discussions and about how to not only survive but thrive as teachers. LU SCEC Officers Koryn Vangilder, Cassidy Thomas, and Ava Kiely led the discussions. Dean Mark Penny and Assoc. Dean Jill Hutcheson were joined with Faculty Ronda Cypret-Mahach, Alex Tripamer, Holly Karraker, Amanda Aldridge, Rebecca Panagos.



Panel Emily Milligan Bryd, Sarah Christine Whalen, Sarah Milligan Pate, Katie O’Brien, and Stephanie Dawson



Left to right (from back)

Koryn Vangilder, Rebecca Panagos, Sarah Christine Whalen, Emily Milligan Byrd, Stephanie Dawson, Katie O-Brien

Cassidy Thomas, Sarah Milligan Pate, Ava Kiely

Dean Mark Penny closing with thank you to Panel members.



## **Celebration of Teaching and Student Showcase**

### **Brings Future Educators to Lindenwood**

On December 6, the College of Education and Human Services hosted the “Celebration of Teaching and Student Showcase,” an inspiring event honoring the achievements of teacher candidates who successfully completed their student teaching in the fall.

A highlight of the event was the presence of a group from the Jefferson School District. Twenty five high school students considering careers in education attended the event with their chaperones from Jefferson High School. These students had the unique opportunity to interact with Lindenwood student teachers and LindenTeach Interns, gaining insight into their experiences



both at the university and in the classroom. The conversations offered real-world perspectives on what it means to pursue a teaching career, igniting excitement among potential future educators.

Lindenwood faculty and staff from the College of Education and Human Services also participated, creating a welcoming environment where high school students could engage, ask questions, and learn about the resources and support available for those entering the field.

“This event is a celebration of dedication and growth,” said host Dr. Amanda Aldridge. “Our student teachers and interns represent the next generation of educators, and it’s inspiring to see them share their journey with those who may one day follow in their footsteps.”

The showcase was a true celebration of education, highlighting the collaborative efforts of student teachers, university faculty, and local schools to prepare and inspire future educators.



### **Instructional Coaches of All Abilities**

#### **Present to COEHS and Provost**

For their final in EDU 34100HYB, students become experts in an exceptionality topic, teaching their peers strategies for creating an inclusive classroom and teach students of all abilities. Students presented their Posters to COEHS and Provost Faculty and Staff. Dr. Panagos plans to publish online their creative classroom tools and games for EC-grade 12 teachers to freely access for their own classrooms.





Provost Dan Kirk and Lindsey Johnston, Faculty Holly Karkaker, Bob Steffes, and Rebecca Panagos joined by freshmen and sophomores in EDU 34100HYBD.

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**Student Teachers Prepare for Launch in Spring**



Congratulations to our amazing Teacher Candidates who are preparing to begin their student teaching journey. These dedicated professionals attended their orientation meeting on Monday, November 25, 2024, marking the start of their final step toward becoming certified educators.

We're proud to support these aspiring teachers as they prepare to make a difference in classrooms across our community. Student teaching is a transformative experience that bridges theory and practice – and we know our candidates will shine.

Best of luck to our future professionals as they embark on this exciting chapter.

## **Educational Leadership**

### **Student Successfully Completes Doctoral Dissertation Defense**

One student recently completed a successful defense of their doctoral dissertation, earning their Doctorate in Education.

**Emily Sue Woodall** defended her dissertation titled “A Design Thinking Mixed Method Study on Social-Emotional Learning Lessons for Early Elementary Learners.” Her dissertation chair was Dr. Lynda Leavitt. Abstract: Social emotional learning (SEL) had largely been absent from early elementary curriculum, despite research which indicated the need for specialized SEL curricula for unique groups, especially students identified as gifted and talented, exceptional students living in geographically isolated areas, and unidentified gifted students from historically disadvantaged minority groups, including African American, Latinx, and Native American. The researcher proposed an SEL pilot in early elementary grades, including pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, may create a scaffolded approach to SEL curricula throughout the students’ educational experiences with a focus on scaffolding to specific subgroups, such as gifted and talented students with unique SEL needs. The proposed intervention aligned with the Lindenwood University Leadership, Ed.D. conceptual framework leading to organizational change in the domains of developing and transforming educational processes, practices, and organization through (1) human centric in that the research seeks to design creative solutions for the future; (2) sought organizational change insofar as scaffolding an SEL program to promote and evaluates educational policy and systems focused on continual improvement; and (3) deconstructed bias and misconceptions of groups, including gifted and gifted minority students, to create change and address inequities in education in the areas of Ethics, Equity and Social Justice.

### The “Feed Your Mind Fridays” Speaker Series returns in 2025

Please consider attending one or both of the sessions in spring 2025. Please see the schedule below for details.

January 17, 2025

12:00-1:00 pm

#### [Conspiracy Theories and Working with Students Who Believe Them](#)

Conspiracy theories are a growing concern for many of us. The presenter will discuss what research says about engaging with students who believe in

April 4, 2025

12:00-1:00 pm

#### [The Wonder Mindset](#)

Wonder offers a framework to embrace the beauty, awe, and mystery found in discovering innovative ideas (Gilbert & Byers, 2017). By cultivating a sense of wonder, we can break free from feeling

conspiracy theories, how conspiracy theories can serve as a way to make sense of the world, and how we can support students as they make sense of the complex world we share. Dr. Benjamin Wentworth is the guest speaker for this session.

"stuck" in our jobs and create new possibilities for developing innovative solutions within our day-to-day work. This mindset encourages exploration, allowing us to see possibilities for growth and change that may otherwise remain hidden.

Presenters: Tara Nelson, Cassie Gilbert, Melissa Cournia, and Nate Wood

[Anyone may sign up for these events through the Lindenwood Learning Academy here!](#)

## Human Services

### Peaceful Dialogue Across Differences

Dialogue embraces the social work skills of active listening and questioning to honor diverse experiences. It focuses on understanding others' perspectives rather than convincing them.

In a Social Work Practice II class activity, the social work faculty, Dr. King and Dr. Mueller, demonstrated cultural mentoring through open and honest discussions about racial differences. Gracie Halfmann described this as “intriguing,” noting the faculty's comfort in fostering peaceful dialogue. This approach allowed students to integrate the social work value of lifelong learning with cultural mentoring practices.

Then, students of the same racial identity—Black, White, and bi-racial—met in their same race group to develop questions about other races. The ground rule was to approach from curiosity, not judgment. These affinity groups eased the tension of direct conversation by allowing for clarification.

The class reconvened as one group to ask racial group to racial group for clarification. Questions included: What do Whites really think about Black Lives Matter? Are Blacks comfortable with Whites in Black spaces? Why don't Whites season their food? When is it appropriate to use Black or African American? For the bi-racial culture—Are you forced to take sides? Each group responded openly and honestly, recognizing differences and common ground.

Social work students reported the experience as meaningful. Taylor Slabe appreciated the respectful communication, focusing on “building bridges to appreciate others’ perspectives.” Other students noted that the experience eased discomfort, enabling deeper cross-racial communication. Madison Fournie mentioned that the affinity group experience “jumpstarted” continued discussions outside of class.



LU Social Work Students and Faculty

## Upcoming Events

## Spring 2025 Semester Begins

January 13, 2025

## Study Abroad @ Oxford

July 2-23 2025

### Follow us on social media!

#### Facebook

[Lindenwood COEHS](#)

#### Instagram

[Lindenwood\\_COEHS](#)

#### X (Twitter)

[LU College of Education and Human Services](#)

#### Student Council for Exceptional Children (LU SCEC)



[Instagram](#)



[Facebook](#)

If you are a Human Services Alumni, check out:

[LinkedIn: Lindenwood University Alumni Human Services](#)

## Publication Schedule for The Lead

We've shifted from a monthly schedule to four times per year:

Mid-Fall semester

End-of-Fall semester

Mid-Spring semester

End-of-Spring semester

We hope you enjoyed this issue of The Lead!

Please email any suggestions or feedback to [COEHS@lindenwood.edu](mailto:COEHS@lindenwood.edu)

Editor: Cameron Lashley, aided by Grammarly



**Lindenwood University College of Education  
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