



Northern Arizona  
University

## Conceptual Framework of the Professional Education Unit

### 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, opportunities to improve their lives, their communities, and prospects for the future. We strive to create a web of inquiry, exploration, and dialog—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.*

### 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

*Key dispositions for  
candidates:*

**Confident**  
**Open**  
**Ethical**  
**Empathic**

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 are developed 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.

As an institution, Northern Arizona University has articulated values that include the following: excellence in education (rigorous and high quality), student success (placing learner needs at the center of planning), educational access, diversity, integrity, and civility. The unit embraces these values.

#### **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.
- **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.
- **Life-long 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.

## **Purpose**

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

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