

A Rationale for Experiential Education

The Office of Experiential Education, led by [Rev. Julian DeShazier](#), Director, integrates critical academic instruction with meaningful experiences in contexts outside of the classroom. We offer these experiences in partnership with churches and agencies - across Chicagoland and beyond - in order to facilitate the most dynamic learning environment possible.

The work of Experiential Education forms students in three primary areas:

- (1) Offering contextual realities for deeper understanding of the Church's work in the world.
- (2) Personal and spiritual formation of students preparing for and currently practicing ministry.
- (3) Leadership formation for students, towards a more vital ministry in the public square.

Serving as a junction point between traditional classroom learning, ministry experience, and life in the city, our office offers a wide range of opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. Let's say a student takes a course in the Hebrew Bible and now wants to learn more from a rabbi, or is discerning a call to work with the homeless and wants to learn more from organizations doing that work: we are here to help make those connections throughout their seminary journey, and students can engage us anytime. We also host regular events that bring together students and ministry field experts to share wisdom and build relationships.

These opportunities are available to every McCormick student (please feel free to reach out to us as ideas emerge!). Below is more information on the field studies program in particular.

FIELD STUDIES PROGRAM (AT A GLANCE)

Students in the Master of Divinity (MDIV) and Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM) are required to complete one (1) academic year (Fall and Spring semesters, consecutively) of ministry practice under supervision at an approved church or

agency, in conjunction with classes MIN-404/405 Reflection on the Practice of Ministry. Transfer or equivalency credit from another accredited academic institution will also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Persons currently engaged in full-time Christian ministry will enroll in MIN-404/405 Reflection on the Practice of Ministry and be assigned a mentoring pastor for reflection, guidance, and evaluation.

A meaningful field studies experience will combine spiritual, academic, personal, and professional formation while simultaneously developing and refining the art and skills necessary for public ministry.

APPLYING FOR FIELD STUDIES

Students entering the field studies program must complete seven (7) courses prior to beginning their placements. Students must also register for and complete the online “101 Healthy Boundaries” course *before* beginning their field placement. (This course is currently offered online during the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms, and students have the entire term to complete the course content).

You must submit an application to begin the placement process. At the beginning of each academic year (usually in October), our office will review applications and meet with students on an ongoing basis, with expectations to finalize all placements by April. See below for a document further outlining the timeline for the field studies experience.

A Timeline for the Field Studies Program

* Students entering the field studies program must complete seven (7) courses prior to beginning their placements in the fall. However, students can begin the placement process without having seven (7) courses completed.

**Students must also complete the online “101 Healthy Boundaries” course *before* beginning their field placement. Students must register for this course - currently offered online during the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms - and it is asynchronous (they have the entire term to complete the boundaries course).

The Office of Experiential Education directs the field studies program each year.

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October: Consultation

At the beginning of the academic year, students interested in taking field studies the following year will have an initial consultation with Office of Experiential Education to complete the field studies program application and begin discussing placement options. Consider the following questions as a beginning to the conversation:

- Why am I in seminary?
- Why am I here at McCormick and in Chicago?
- What are my interests/options in ministry?
- Are there denominational requirements that need to be fulfilled for ordination?
- What areas of ministry do I want to explore or strengthen my practice?

November - March: Matchmaking

Locating and confirming a field site is a process led primarily by the student. Students will search for potential sites and make the final determination of where they will serve during their field placement year.

After the initial consultation, our office will provide some initial options for field placement, but students are also welcome to search out and find potential sites on their own. Once a student has identified a potential site, they should send the site’s contact information to our office *prior* to making contact with the site. Once a potential site has been approved, our office will make official contact with that site’s supervisor-mentor to connect the student and site.

A placement is only confirmed by mutual selection: students will interview (and be interviewed by) potential field sites, and both student and site must agree to work together.

April: Confirming a Site

Because internship opportunities fill up quickly, work to find a field placement should begin in earnest in October, and a field placement should be secured and confirmed by April 1.

Traditionally, opportunities become fewer and less aligned with a student's vocational and academic interests after this date.

If students have not secured placement by the end of the Spring semester, they will be ineligible to enroll in MIN 404 or begin field studies. At the beginning of the next academic year, students will have to restart the placement process.

*****Once your placement is confirmed, enjoy your summer!*****

September – May: Working on Site

At the beginning of the following academic year, students will begin at their field sites – 12-15 hours a week – while taking MIN 404 (Fall) and MIN 405 (Spring). Student work at the field site concludes at the end of the academic year in May.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

▪ **Do I take classes while I am working at a field placement?**

Yes. Credit for field studies requires the successful completion of MIN 404/405 Reflection on the Practice of Ministry taken concurrently with their field studies placement. If students do not complete the course, even if they complete the on-site requirements, they will have to restart the field studies program again. Ministry at the field site must be done while completing the course.

▪ **Is this a paid internship?**

No. Field sites may offer a stipend but this is not a requirement. McCormick does not offer a stipend to students as part of the field studies program.

▪ **Does a placement have to be in a congregation?**

No. Students may complete the field studies program in a variety of diverse settings related to public ministry. At the beginning of the placement process, students will work with our office to determine the best type of site – congregation or nonprofit agency – to suit their vocational and academic interests. Any potential site is required to offer a theologically trained person to serve as supervisor-mentor and guide the student in weekly theological reflection. On rare instances, a student may serve at a field site and be provided with a theological reflection partner outside of the site.

▪ **If I am out of town, can I still participate in field studies?**

Yes. We will help to secure you a placement in the city where you live. This will potentially take more time, so begin the process ASAP.

- **Can I serve at two field sites?**

Only the approved placement taken as part of the field studies program will meet the graduation requirement. Additional placements *may* be granted credit as an elective through an independent study contract approved and supervised by a McCormick faculty person. Beyond this, our office is always here to connect *every* McCormick student to opportunities for contextual education beyond the field studies program, and students are encouraged to reach out to our office to help make and/or deepen connections across the city.

- **Can I fulfill my field placement requirement by taking CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education)?**

Students may receive one ministry elective credit at the completion of CPE upon approval of their academic advisor and the Office of Experiential Education and Field Studies. This does not take the place of field studies. We have allowed CPE experiences to serve as field studies placement sites in the past, but these opportunities are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and students must still complete MIN 404/405 during the placement year.

- **Can the Office of Experiential Education help with any denominational requirements for field placement?**

Yes! Please let us know what your tradition requires and we can use the field studies program or other opportunities to try and meet this need while you are in seminary.

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