



Project Title: “Attention and Connection: Engaging Brains, Bodies, and Ecologies for Ministry”

Request Amount: \$75,000

Personnel

Project Leaders / Participating Faculty:

Mary Emily Briehl Duba, PhD, mduba@dbq.edu, 509-368-4437, Project leader
Dr. Duba is Assistant Professor of Theology.

Nicholas Elder, PhD, nelder@dbq.edu, 913-221-1901, Project Leader
Dr. Elder is Assistant Professor of New Testament.

Susan Forshey, PhD, sforshey@dbq.edu, 206-963-0472, Project Leader
Dr. Forshey is Assistant Professor of Discipleship and Christian Formation.

Administrators:

Annette Bourland Huizenga, PhD, ahuizenga@dbq.edu, 563-589-3858
Dr. Huizenga is Dean of the Seminary and Associate Professor of New Testament.

Mark Ward, PhD, mward@dbq.edu, 563-589-3202
Dr. Ward is the University of Dubuque’s Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

Proposed External Content Advisors:

Dr. Nancy R. Howell, Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion and Oubri A. Poppele Professor of Health and Welfare Ministries, Saint Paul School of Theology.

Dr. Anna Case-Winters, Professor of Theology, McCormick Seminary.

Dr. Russell Haight, Professor of Theology and Human Science, Bethany Theological Seminary.

Proposed Local Science Advisors:

We hope for three science advisors, one who specializes in each of our three focal areas. We request AAAS recommendations, but highlight the work of these local colleagues:

Dr. Adam Hoffman, Associate Professor of Environmental Chemistry, University of Dubuque.

Dr. Jake Kurczek, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, Loras University in Dubuque, IA.

Organization Information:

The University of Dubuque is a private, Presbyterian, coeducational, professional university founded in 1852, committed to nurturing the mind, body, and spirit as well as encouraging students to explore their fullest potential. While the university's Christian identity and history are an important foundation, the 2000 students are from a variety of religious traditions or no tradition, as well as drawing a racially and ethnically diverse student body from around the world. The university comprises the undergraduate college, which includes robust Aviation and Nursing departments, the graduate school, which includes a thriving Physician Assistant program, and a Theological Seminary, which offers four degrees (MA in Christian Leadership, MA in Mission and Discipleship, Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry) as well as a lay minister leadership certificate program.

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) was the founding school of the University of Dubuque in 1852 and today is one of eight Presbyterian Church USA seminaries for training pastors. UDTS operates within the University of Dubuque and shares a common board of trustees, president, and chief academic and financial officers.

UDTS is dedicated to forming God's people for servant leadership in ministry and mission. Its mission calls for five responses:

- Gathering in gratitude and faithfulness, to be reformed according to the Word of God.
- Growing in the Church's biblical faith in the Triune God.
- Excelling in theological education and scholarship.
- Living as faithful stewards of God's Gifts.
- Engaging the changing needs of the Church and World.

UDTS lives into this mission primarily by training pastors for ordained ministry. In fact, UDTS ties with Columbia Theological Seminary for second place in the number of graduates who go on to serve the Presbyterian Church. 71% of entering MDivs report intending to pastor a congregation. The seminary faculty are scholars in the academy as well as practitioners, active in lay or ordained leadership in their respective local, regional, and national church bodies.

The Master of Divinity (MDiv) Degree roots Christian leaders in the Scriptures, tradition, and practices of the church with an overarching focus on building missional communities that form fervent disciples. Both the residential and distance programs are designed for working adults, often serving in bi-vocational ministry. The MDiv program is growing, up 16.7% this Fall 2020, for a total of 77 enrolled in the program.

Among mainline seminaries, UDTS is a leader in developing new approaches to theological education, including the development of low-residency and distance programs in the early 2000s, teaching its students in a hybrid online/residential model. All Master of Divinity students, residential and distance, participate in the yearly two-week August residential courses three times in their seminary experience. August residentials are vibrant gatherings that create communities of learning, prayer, worship, and fellowship for required Master of Divinity courses, building connections with faculty and students, and students with each other. During the Fall and Spring semesters, distance students participate in 100% online courses, and residential students participate in hybrid courses, meeting residentially on Mondays and online the rest of the week. This arrangement allows freedom for student pastors and young adult ministry scholars to be in their place of ministry—local congregations or university practicums—the rest of the week.

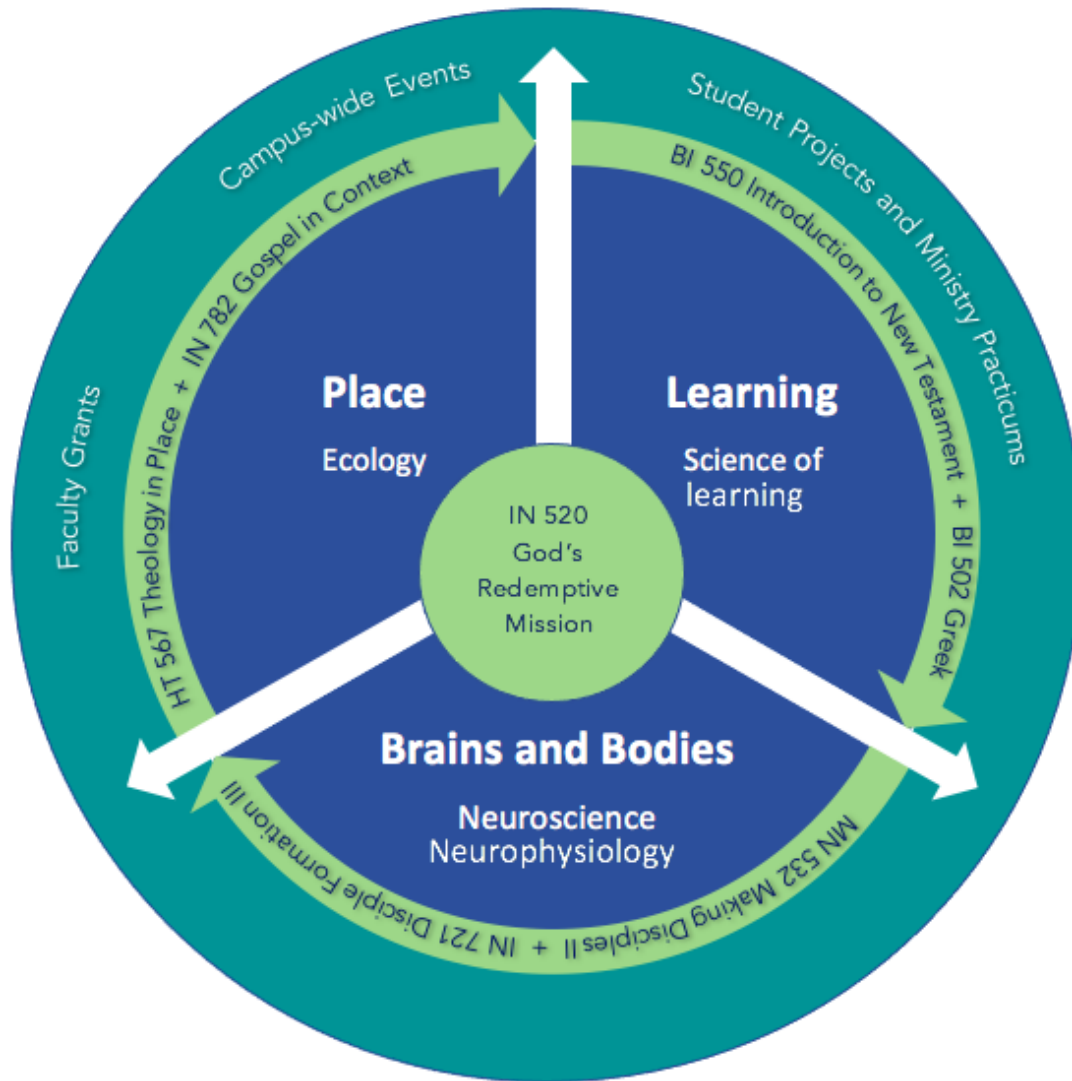
While committed to forming students in the Reformed tradition (74% of MDiv students affiliate with the PCUSA), UDTS is also an ecumenical seminary, with a long-standing United Methodist track for UMC student pastors (14% of MDivs) and also has Lutheran, Episcopalian, United Church of Christ, Christian Reformed Church, and non-denominational core faculty. Our low-residence and distance programs enable wide geographic diversity. Our student body comes from 27 States, with particularly strong cohorts in Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. About 75% of our students identify as second-career, bringing their expertise in other fields to their seminary studies.

Organization Curriculum:

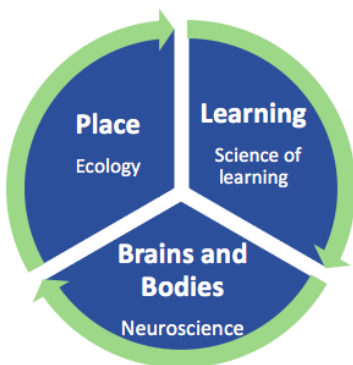
The MDiv curriculum is divided into four areas: Integrative Studies (IN), History and Theology (HT), Biblical Interpretation (BI), and Ministry (MN). The chart below contains the **required** courses in the MDIV program, arranged by area, with the addition of two electives which are offered annually, including during the grant cycle. The courses highlighted will be impacted in a substantial way by the grant.

Integrative Studies (IN)	History & Theology (HT)	Biblical Interpretation (BI)	Ministry (MN)
God's Redemptive Mission	Church History I	Introduction to the Old Testament	Caregiving I
Gospel in Context	Church History II	Introduction to the New Testament	Caregiving II
Starting Missional Communities	Doctrine I	Interpreting the New Testament: Exegesis (English or Greek)	Leading Worship
Disciple Formation I	Doctrine II	Interpreting the Old Testament: Exegesis (English or Hebrew)	Preaching
Disciple Formation II	Theology in Place (Elective)	Greek (Elective)	Making Disciples I
Disciple Formation III			Making Disciples II
Disciple Formation IV			

Project Description:



The proposed initiative, “Attention and Connection: Engaging Brains, Bodies, and Ecologies for Ministry” seeks to learn from the sciences in order to prepare students for ministry in the changing contexts of the 21st century. This grant will enable us to give sustained attention to these areas of interest and to learn from the sciences that intersect with them.



The areas shaded in blue represent the three foci of our project: **place**, **learning**, and **brains and bodies**. The grant will enable us to give sustained attention to these areas of interest and to learn from the sciences that intersect with them, namely **ecology**, **the science of learning**, and **neuroscience**.

Learning from **ecologists** will strengthen our ability to discern and articulate a robust theology of place. Insights emerging from the **science of learning** will strengthen our capacity to develop good pedagogical practices in our in-person and online modes of education and to equip our

students to become excellent Christian educators. Engagement with **neuroscience and neurophysiology**, especially the ways the brain builds memories, forms habits, and holds traumas, will deepen our approach to spiritual formation and the formation of disciples as whole people.

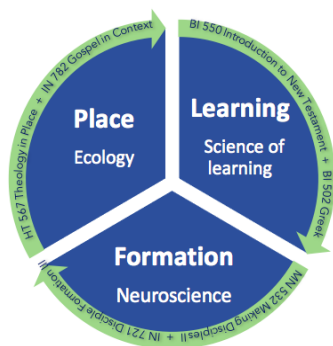
The areas shaded in bright green--both the inner circle and the middle ring--represent the courses in our curriculum in which these areas scientific engagement will occur.



We will engage all three areas of attention and their corresponding bodies of science in **IN 520: God's Redemptive Mission**, the first required class for all MDiv students. This course is co-taught annually during the seminary's August intensive term by three professors. During the spring and summer of 2021, IN 520 God's Redemptive Mission will undergo a course redesign and be taught by the proposed project leaders beginning in August 2021 and through the period of the grant. If found to be successful after assessment and evaluation, the same co-instructors will continue to teach the course beyond the period of the grant.

Grant funding will provide faculty financial support for the redesign of God's Redemptive Mission. The project leaders will receive these funds (\$3,000) as summer compensation in advance of the 2021–2022 academic year, the period in which the course will be redesigned. Each of the project leaders will introduce one of the scientific fields and assign at least one reading related to it in the class.

In its redesigned format, IN 520 will include a day of **immersive education at Wolter Woods and Prairie**, a natural area recently acquired by the University of Dubuque, which includes limestone cliffs, river bottom, woodlands, restored prairie, and a sustainable garden. This natural area is already a site of scientific research by faculty and students in UD's Natural and Applied Sciences Department. Located in the Driftless Area of the midwest (and only 15 minutes from UDTs' campus), the land is home to species and geological wonders not found anywhere else. UD's acquisition of Wolter Woods and Prairie opens up new opportunities for experiential, place-based pedagogies, which has synergy with our project's focus on the relationships between brain, body, and ecology in the context of theological education for ministry. Grant funds will be used to build an immersive place-based curriculum, which integrates ecology and whole-person formation and draws on the science of learning. The impact of grant monies spent in this way is high: every UDTs seminarian will experience--in brain and body--the integration of ecology with theological reflection and spiritual formation.



Having been introduced in IN 520, the central areas of attention and their corresponding fields of science will be further explored and drawn into connection with one another in six additional courses taught by the project leaders, indicated in the green circle of arrows.

Dr. Duba will further engage ecology in HT 567 Theology in Place and IN 782 Gospel in Context, which is co-taught with Dr. Christopher James. In the latter course, students explore the ways that contexts shape missional

discernment and practice. This grant would allow us to incorporate an under-developed facet of missional context: the ecological context of land, water, and life. This new unit of the course will show why ecological attention matters for ministry and develop an ecologically-informed theology of community, salvation, and mission. In particular, we will examine the ways that ecology informs our understanding of ourselves as creaturely members of biotic communities, invites us to hear the gospel as good news for the whole creation, and contributes to a theology of “deep mission,” in which we respond faithfully to God’s own “deep incarnation” (Niels Henrik Gregerson, Celia Deane-Drummond, et al). HT 567 Theology in Place further develops these ideas by engaging students in theological reflection on place. In the past, we have used the desert of Ghost Ranch, NM as our case study, but grant funding will allow us to redesign the curriculum for the Midwest Driftless Area (the ecological and geological context of UD’s Wolter Woods and Prairies), drawing on the sciences of ecology, geology, and watershed, as well as local indigenous knowledge of this place.

Dr. Elder will further engage the science of learning in BI 550 Introduction to the New Testament and BI 502 Greek I. He presently incorporates practices informed by the science of learning into his pedagogy and has presented and published on informed pedagogy for biblical studies in several venues. Grant support would allow him to move the science of learning from “behind” his courses (i.e. in the planning stages of his teaching) to “in” his courses (i.e. engaging the science of learning with students). Specifically, he intends to incorporate accessible readings about how the brain works and how insights from brain science can help students develop brain-aware learning practices. By engaging students with this science and offering them brain-aware techniques, Dr. Elder hopes to provide students tools that will be valuable not only for their time at UDTS, but that they will also utilize in their future ministries and pass along to future parishioners.

Dr. Forshey will further engage neuroscience and neurophysiology in MN 532 Making Disciples II and IN 721 Disciple Formation III. She has taught habit and memory formation, basic brain health, and mindfulness in IN 520 God’s Redemptive Mission; brain-based strategies for learning in MN 532 Making Disciples II (Christian Education); and the physiology of addiction in IN 721 Disciple Formation III for the past six years. Receiving this grant will help further support and deepen scientific engagement in these three courses by introducing students to philosopher of science Michael Polanyi, and developing a Christian apologetic for doing rigorous theological reflection and faith formation within a scientific worldview; consider the neurophysiological effects of trauma on learning and develop trauma-informed approaches to traditional Christian spiritual practices; and continue to explore the formative value of traditional Christian spiritual disciplines in conversation with neuroscience and neurophysiology.



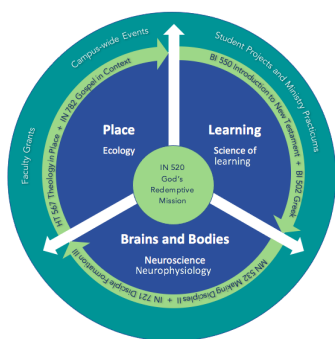
In addition to substantive changes to our core curriculum, the grant’s impact radiates out (indicated by white arrows) into non-curricular opportunities for faculty, students, and the wider campus community.

Our project creates two pools of funds: faculty grants and student-focused projects and ministry practicums.

Faculty grants will be available for faculty who are not project leaders for the grant. On a first-come, first-serve basis, UDTs faculty who wish to integrate scientific engagement into their courses can apply for funds in the first pool. Faculty who do so would receive \$1,500 of compensation. If faculty opt in, this would essentially incorporate their course into the middle green circle of impacted courses. Faculty can use this compensation either as a stipend or as funds for course resources.

In addition to these faculty funds, we propose a **flexible financial pool for students** (\$5,000) that will be used for various purposes, such as: paper prizes for student work that engages an intersection between science and theology; financial support for a Young Adult Ministry Scholar who wishes to complete a ministry practicum that engages an intersection of science and theology; and financial support for students who wish to engage science in a theological project, either in a course or in their local, ecclesial context. Any funds that are not used from the pools of support for faculty and students will be used to increase the library’s holdings with respect to the intersections of science and theology.

Finally, the grant also funds **two campus-wide lecture events**, one of which will be held during the August 2022 intensive term. We intend to hold this event towards the end of the grant period for several reasons. First, by this point, students in two different cohorts will have been introduced to scientific engagement in God’s Redemptive Mission. Our speaker will be an expert in one of the fields addressed in that course. Second, students who enrolled in God’s Redemptive Mission in August of 2021 will also have experienced scientific engagement in the second- and third-level courses in our model. Moreover, many students who matriculated prior to Fall 2021, and thus will not have been enrolled in the redesigned version of God’s Redemptive Mission, will still have experienced some scientific engagement with theology if they enroll in one of the second-level courses from our model that run in Spring 2022. Third, we project that an August lecture will have the largest community impact, as the majority of the seminary’s distance students only travel to campus for the August intensive, during which a major lecture event annually takes place. Fourth, and finally, holding the event in 2022 will provide additional time and space from the coronavirus pandemic. We hope that by this time in-person events, including our residential August intensive term, will once again be both safe and normal.



The impact of this grant on UDTs’ curriculum, faculty focus, and student formation for ministry is significant. At the core of our model, fewer members of the UDTs community are impacted, though at a steeper grade of engagement. At the outer ring, more students, faculty, and community members are impacted but through shorter-term or elective exposure.

The integration of science into IN 720 God’s Redemptive Mission would immediately impact all MDiv (and MAMD) students matriculating in the fall of 2021, which we estimate will be twenty-five students with similar enrollment for 2022. The grant’s impact will continue to be felt throughout these students’ time at UDTs, as at least one of the other courses that would be supported by the grant is offered in any given academic term. Students who matriculated prior to the academic year 2021–2022 will also be impacted by the grant through participation in Drs. Duba’s, Elder’s, and Forshey’s higher-level courses. In total, we anticipate that 90–100 unique students will engage science in three or more courses during the period of the grant.

Each student who matriculates in 2021 will have at least four required experiences of scientific engagement with theology with the possibility of up to ten experiences during the period of the grant.

The outer ring of the grant model will **impact** the largest number of students and faculty at UDTS. Our previous August lectures have drawn approximately 100 community members. We anticipate strong community and campus-wide attendance at these interdisciplinary events, especially as we will publicize the events through UD's Natural and Applied Sciences department as well as through Dubuque's ecumenical consortium of local faith leaders.

Organization Capacity:

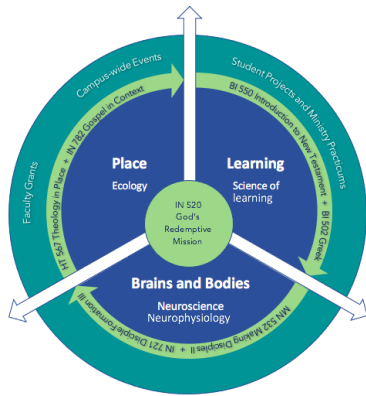
The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary has the necessary organizational capacity to meet the goals of this grant project and is well-positioned well to do so. The project has the full support of the Seminary Dean, as well as the Office of Academic Affairs at the University of Dubuque. The project aligns with our mission to educate and form ministers for service to God's church and world with attention to context, including the changing ecological, neurological, and pedagogical contexts of our day.

Embedded at the University of Dubuque, we look forward to building interdisciplinary connections with our colleagues in the Department of Natural and Applied Sciences, as well as with faculty in the new Neuroscience department at neighboring Loras College. The UD campus provides hospitable space for the community-wide events, as well as student-focused conversations. Technologically, we are equipped for and experienced with livestreaming, allowing us to broadcast events through our active social media. Project faculty will have support from the University Librarians for religion and the sciences, especially in the summer months during curricular revisions. The grant budget also includes funding for a student worker position to assist with administration and organizing the community-wide events.

Commitment to Cultural Engagement:

UDTS places attention to context and intercultural engagement at the center of its approach to ministry. We are mindful of the global character of the church and the diversity of faith and culture in the world in which the church ministers. Throughout the curriculum, instructors take care in text selection and teaching to represent a variety of perspectives and voices so that UDTS students might benefit from the rich diversity of thought in the church and world and are prepared to minister in a variety of contexts. A natural place of concentration for this engagement is in the three-course sequence in mission. This sequence is regarded as an interdisciplinary offering in the MDiv program. Learning in these courses includes reference to fields and topics such as cultural anthropology and ethnography, among others, and in the context of rural, urban, and Native American communities. In such courses, students participate in cross-cultural immersion trips--to Native American, urban, rural, or Hispanic communities.

Commitment to Sustainability:



The impact of the grant will have long-term significance and sustainability. First, the grant will support the integration of scientific engagement into the student experience at UDTS from the outset of the curriculum through all four years of the MDiv program. The core course in our proposal, IN 520 God's Redemptive Mission, will be taught twice over by the project leaders during the grant period: in August 2021 and August 2022. If upon assessment and evaluation, the redesigned version of this class is deemed to have been successful during these terms, the project leaders and the dean of the seminary anticipate that the same faculty will teach the course in subsequent terms. Should this be the case, students matriculating after August 2022 will continue to be positively impacted by the grant.

Moreover, scientific engagement will be integrated into at least six additional courses in UDTS's curriculum by the project faculty into the future. All of these are taught annually, and many are required courses for all degree programs. We anticipate that several other faculty members will be enthusiastic about integrating one or more pedagogical experiences of science into their courses. This being the case, a Science for Seminaries grant would support not only the revision of God's Redemptive Mission and the core courses taught by the project leaders, but also other classes in the curriculum.

The grant will allow us to develop a scientifically-grounded, theologically-informed model for UDTS' use of UD's Wolter Woods and Prairies. The UD administration has encouraged the Seminary to make use of the Woods and Prairies for theological education, but we have not yet had the financial resources to do this in a scientifically-grounded way. The grant will support this work and allow us to begin a new tradition at UDTS of integrating this land and scientific study for engaging Seminarians with ecology and neuroscience as an essential part of their theological education. To ensure that our use of the land is sustainable, this grant will enable us to develop not only a curriculum for long-term use, but also a budget for the Seminary's continued use of the land. The development of this tested curriculum and budget will allow us to access institutional funds to put toward the Seminary's use of the Wolter Woods and Prairies beyond the term of this grant.

Finally, this project has already begun to spark interdisciplinary relationships with science faculty in UD's Natural and Applied Sciences. This grant gives us an occasion to cultivate these relationships and reason to anticipate and build future collaborations.