

The White Paper

A vision for theological education for
all God's people

August 2014



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

This paper follows on from the Formation, Education and Discipleship paper presented to the UTC Council and Synod Standing Committee in June 2014.

Reflections with the Uniting Learning Network Gathering, the School of Discipleship, UME staff have led to a strong focus on the equipping of all Uniting Church members as a community of disciples living as gospel people. What does discipleship look like in the Uniting Church in Australia?

This paper goes on to explore principles of life-long learning that can be applied across the Uniting Church in NSW and ACT. The paper includes an overview of the Uniting Learning Network as it has evolved since its establishment in 2013.

The paper concludes with a proposal for the establishment of a new college, bringing together the work of UTC, ELM, School of Continuing Education, Institute of Mission, Leadership Institute, and the work of the Resourcing Team.

Ongoing Synod investment in a Uniting Church learning centre, with creative leadership, is leading to the identification of new learning cohorts (beyond the current focus on ordinands), the development of new learning pathways, the development of new education teams, and the development of further geographical centres for learning.

Duncan Macleod, *Director of the Uniting Learning Network*

Carolyn Thornley, *Dean of Ministry Formation*

July - August, 2014

A Community of Disciples Living as Gospel People

The Uniting Church in Australia carries a commitment to reflective practice, in which every member has the capacity to respond to the call of discipleship in worship, witness and service with integrity. Christ-centred discipleship, theological literacy, action learning, commitment to learning in community, and meaningful engagement with the wider community are essential to our identity.

The Uniting Church in Australia is focused on

- Equipping and developing lively and diverse followers of Jesus Christ fully engaged in the world.
- Growing Christians in relationship with God and others, who follow Jesus in word and action
- Empowering people to articulate and live out the Christian gospel in community
- Validating the God given vocation of all members

Discipleship for Uniting Church members is grounded in a 2000 year plus learning community

- Core of faith founded in the witness of the early Church
- Hebrew Scriptures
- New Testament
- Creeds and confessions
- Spiritual practices, including worship and prayer
- Faithful scholarship

Membership of the Uniting Church is embodied in the integration and renewal of all aspects of life

- Serving, pastoral care
- Worship
- Human dignity
- Justice, advocacy
- Gender equality
- Multicultural, intercultural capacity
- Collaborative, servant, transformative leadership
- Partnership with indigenous communities
- Ecumenical partnerships
- Global/Local interaction
- Inclusive – “place me alongside whom you will”

Uniting Church membership is lived out in relationships of

- Reconciliation
- Generosity
- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Prophetic courage
- Faithful discernment
- Intellectual curiosity and humility

Equipping God's People

The Uniting Church takes seriously the call of Ephesians 4:11-13, the equipping of God's people for service.

"The gifts God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

The Basis of Union includes an affirmation of the ministry of the whole people of God.

"The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ. The Uniting Church, at the time of union, will recognise and accept the ministries of those who have been called to any task or responsibility in the uniting Churches. The Uniting Church will thereafter provide for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission."

Paragraph 13, Basis of Union

Equipping God's people includes support for

- Primary relationships – family, close relationships
- Vocational integration – workplace, study, recreation contexts
- Community engagement
- Spiritual disciplines that nurture and sustain
- Advocacy for all God's people
- Corporate worship – participation and leadership
- Pastoral care
- Scriptural literacy – study, preaching, interpretation
- Articulating faith

Specified Ministries

"The Uniting Church, from inception, will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members women and men called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world."

Basis of Union, Paragraph 14

The Uniting Church in Australia recognises people in specified ministries of Minister of the Word, Ministry of Deacon, Lay Preacher. Presbyteries are able to recognise others in particular roles through the Ministry of Pastor.

The Synod has a significant role to play in the formation, equipping and support of people in these roles.

Communities of faith, whether they be congregations, faith communities, or clusters of people working and volunteering within agencies and educational institutions, provide their members the opportunity to live out their calling as people of the Christian gospel. Christian discipleship – following in the way of Jesus – is embodied in spiritual practices, primary relationships (family etc.), articulating faith, scriptural literacy, corporate worship, community engagement, vocational integration (work, study and faith relate to one another), pastoral care and advocacy.

Community of faith



Learning in Communities of Practice

People learn most effectively in the context of communities of practice. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

We have the potential to foster learning in the context of congregations, in agencies and institutions. With support, learning communities can be developed around shared ministries.

The following list provides a glimpse of communities of practice happening across the Synod.

Academic research and publishing
Administration & Management,
Aged Care Chaplaincy
Biblical Scholarship,
Camping, Adventure, Venues,
Children's Ministry – teaching, service,
Church History Research
Community Work, Community Organising,
Community Development
Counselling
Creative Arts – Music, Film, Sculpture, Fine Arts, Creative Writing
Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy
Disability Ministry – service, advocacy
Ecology/Environment
Education – Primary & Secondary School - SRE, Religious Education
Education – Tertiary - lecturing, research
Ethnic Ministry, intercultural relationships
Executive leadership, business leadership
Family Ministry, counselling
Frontier Service Chaplaincy
Funerals and Grief Support
Hospital Chaplaincy - volunteers, hospice support
Indigenous Resource Ministry
Interfaith Dialogue, Research, Partnership
Marriage Ministry - preparation, wedding celebrants, marriage counselling
Media & Communication – Film, Television, Radio

Military Chaplaincy
Ministry Formation
Music Ministry – song writing, recording, leadership
New Church Development
Pastoral Care
Police Chaplaincy
Preaching,
Presbytery leadership – administration, pastoral care, mission, education
Prison Chaplaincy
Property development, oversight
Psychology
Publishing – print & online,
Research
Resource Ministry
Retreat Leadership
Rural Ministry, Chaplaincy
School Chaplaincy
Seniors Ministry
Social Justice Advocacy
Spiritual Direction
Supervision
Tertiary Chaplaincy, Mission Workers
Theology – research, writing, teaching
Tourism Chaplaincy
Transition/Interim Ministry
Worship Leadership
Youth Ministry
Young Adults Ministry

Lifelong Learning

The Uniting Church's approach to theological education and lifelong learning for all members is connected with what we are discovering about learning around the world.

Adult Learning

Malcolm Knowles, developed a set of principles for life-long learning.

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected

Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *The Politics of Pedagogy*, encouraged educators to take seriously the capacity of students to shape their own learning by critically reflecting on their environment, asking questions, growing capacity for shaping their environment, and reflecting on their own action. Freire first wrote in the context of adult literacy classes. Educators have since applied these principles to social change movements.

Transformative Learning

Research into educational practice indicates that our enhanced capacity for life requires more than addition of content. Transformative learning processes allow for and encourage:

- Self awareness
- Addressing core assumptions
- Integration of learning disciplines
- Expanding horizons
- Action, reflection, action

Cultivating Imagination

"Educating Clergy" is the first book in a series of comparative studies by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that examines how the members of different professions are educated for their responsibilities in the communities they serve.¹ The study looks at how Jewish and Christian seminaries cultivate the pastoral imagination that integrates knowledge and skill, moral integrity and religious commitment in the roles, relationships and responsibilities students will be assuming in their clergy practice. The four pedagogies identified in the study can be applied to education for all members in the Uniting Church in Australia.

¹ *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006

- Interpretation
- Formation
- Contextualisation
- Performance - practice

Pathways for Learning

Multiple pathways for learning are needed for members of the Uniting Church and those volunteering and working within the Uniting Church's congregations and agencies.

Reading – books, journals, online articles

Spiritual practices – prayer, engagement in Scripture

Small groups – Bible study, book reading, action reflection, governance, accountability, prayer

One-to-One – supervision, coaching, mentoring, spiritual direction

Gatherings – retreats, conferences, forums

Vocational education and training (VET sector) - Certificate I, II, III, IV, Diploma qualifications

Non-accredited courses – introduction courses, continuing education

Immersion experiences – CPE, Urban ministry, About Face

Academic courses – Diploma, Bachelor, Masters, Doctorates in Theology, Ministry & other disciplines

Research – individual and group research, publishing, contributing to shared knowledge

Online community – email discussion groups, blog discussion, social media discussion, forums

Workplace learning – skills learned on the job



Supported by library resource centre

Craig Mitchell, Formation Education Discipleship Director with the UCA Assembly, writes the following in his report to the Assembly after two years research in Christian education and leadership.

Congregations as Lifelong Learning Communities

1. Effective Christian education requires ***an intentional culture that values, promotes and resources lifelong growth in faith***, and acts ***adaptively*** to achieve this.
2. Effective Christian education involves appropriate opportunities for formal and informal learning both ***within and across generations***.
3. Effective Christian education draws regularly on ***resources beyond the congregation***, both ***receiving*** wisdom from others and ***sending*** its members to learn and serve.
4. Christian education should take place in ways that ***reflect our theology and ethos as a church*** - our commitments to our first peoples; to being a multicultural church, a priesthood of all believers, a multigenerational community of faith, and a community of women and men.
5. Lifelong learning communities pay particular attention to ***passing on the faith to the next generations***, and order their lives accordingly.

Christian Education in Context

6. Christian education attends to the formation of Christian identity, both belief and living, within the context of our globally connected, multicultural, multi-faith, pluralistic world.
7. Christian education attends to learning within culture, learning from culture and learning across cultures.
8. Christian education both shapes and is shaped by mission, an ongoing cycle of learning for and from active participation in one's local context and beyond.
9. Christian education needs greater attention to the ways that people explore and express meaning and spirituality in everyday life - in language, relationships, culture and patterns of living.

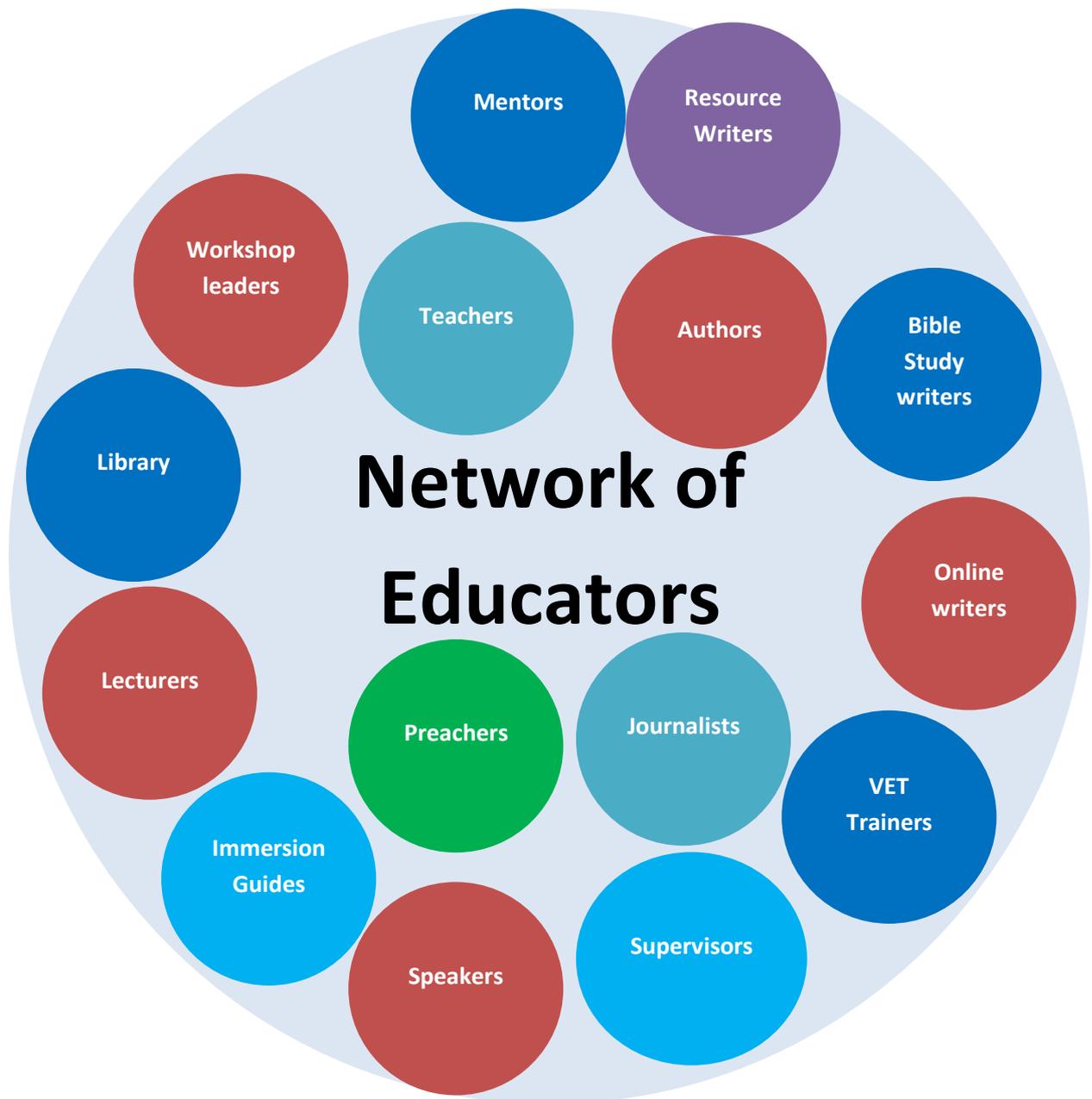
Leadership in Christian Education

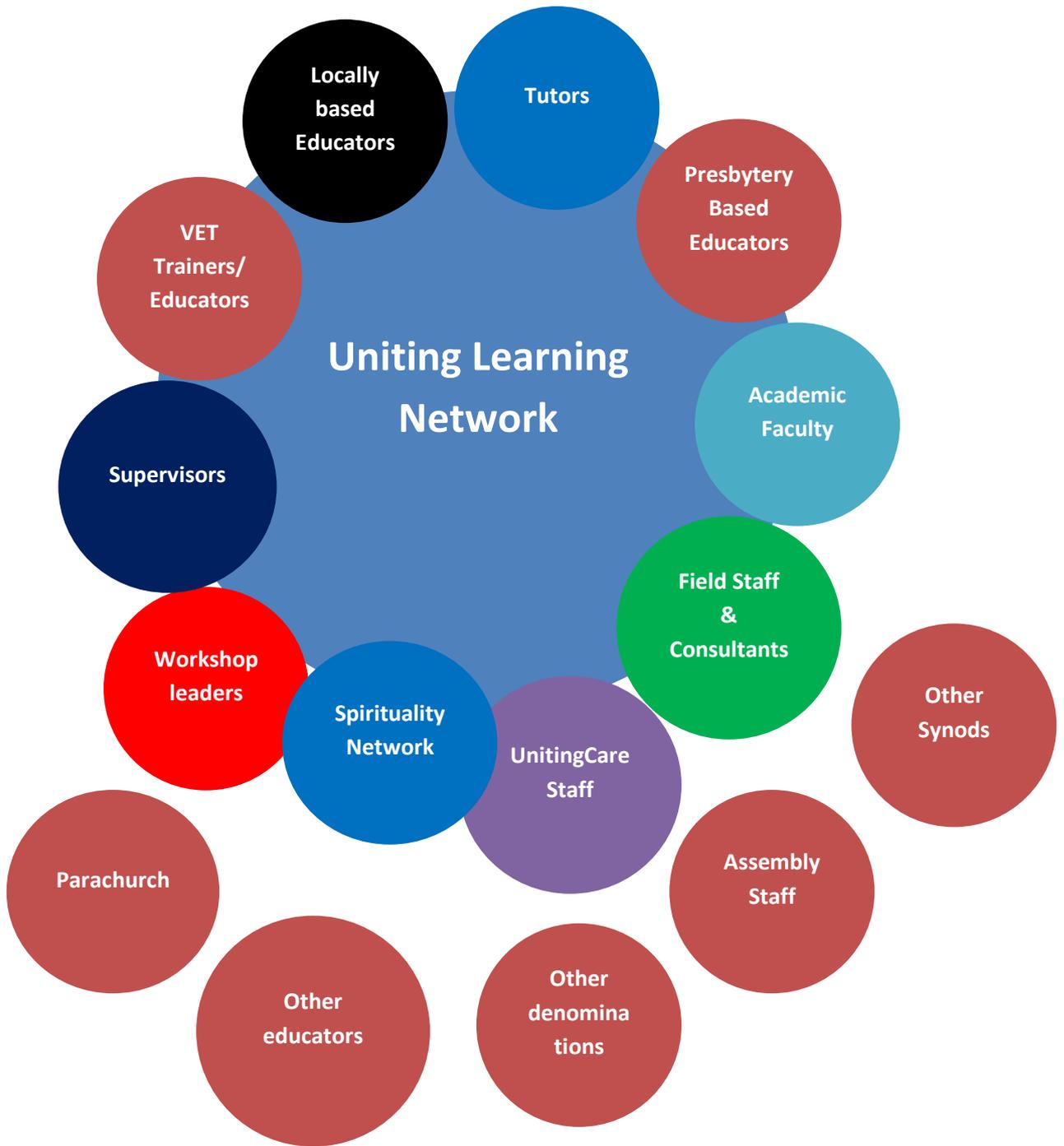
10. Effective Christian education involves intentional educational leadership that builds a culture of lifelong learning, seeks appropriate learning resources, attends to formation in Christian practices, explores Scripture and Christian beliefs, and resources both communal and individual faith journeys.
11. Effective Christian education involves intentional capacity-building in educational leadership - through training, mentoring, resourcing and formation - and in development of a strong sense of team ministry among congregational leaders.
12. Effective Christian education is exemplified in leaders who speak regularly, positively and encouragingly about growth in faith and discipleship, and whose own learning and growth is evident.

The NSW/ACT Synod has a responsibility to support Uniting Church congregations, Presbyteries, agencies and institutions in the development of learning capacity. The most strategic use of resources will include the nurture of leaders who will take initiative within their own sphere of influence.

Networks of Educators

It is tempting for institutions to assume that the employment of a staff person will cover the needs of their field. Every field of life-long learning thrives when carried by a network of educators. To take seriously the wide range of learning pathways we need mentors, resource writers, authors, Bible study writers, bloggers, journalists, online social networkers, preachers, teachers, workshop leaders, speakers, immersion guides, lecturers, tutors, vocational educators and trainers, supervisors.





An Effective Network Needs an Effective Hub

The Uniting Church in NSW and ACT covers a vast geographical area, with a number of regional clusters. Presbyteries are fostering local learning, supported with resources developed and shared across the Uniting Learning Network. Sharing resources for face-to-face educational gatherings, along with online resourcing, is helping to deliver a wide range of educational opportunities.

Working together across the Synod helps to equip and resource Presbyteries, Standing Committees, Boards, Committees (Counselling, Discipline) in principles and procedures for Life & Witness consultations, Mission audits, Performance Appraisals, Vitality of Ministry processes, and conflict management.

Teams of educators are required to provide training courses in Ethical Ministry, Living Our Values, Lay Preachers, Safe Church, SRE, Governance, Communication, Workplace Health & Safety.

Uniting Learning Centre

The Synod's Resourcing Hub is currently located at the Centre for Ministry with two Uniting Mission & Education teams, United Theological College and the Resourcing Team, alongside staff working with UAICC, Schools, Pastoral Counselling Institute, all supported by an administration team and housed by Uniting Venues.

UnitingCare employs educational staff in the Institute of Family Practice, Ageing, Children Youth & Family Services and the Justice Unit.

A resourcing hub is required to foster and coordinate the development of learning cohorts, and provide resources and leadership for the development of teams of educators.

One college

The Synod has the capacity to form one college bringing together academic, formation, consultancy, resourcing and publishing functions.

The new college, at its heart, will hold theory and practice together. The new college will provide theological and practical ministry education that is academically rigorous in all respects but widely accessible, that shapes people's theological understanding while equipping them to contribute leadership in the realities of a changing Australia both in church and wider community.

College staff will be recruited as theological educators and leaders in their field with the capacity to:

1. Become an intentional community of educators across a wide range of levels and competencies.
2. Form learning communities in the classroom and online.
3. Work with peers in learning communities – CSU School of Theology, UCA national network of theological educators, practice-based networks.
4. Work with Synod wide cohorts of educators in their discipline and be available for interdisciplinary integration.

The College will include qualified educators who have the capacity to act as the Synod's partners in the CSU School of Theology. College staff will cover key disciplines of Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Church History, Practical Theology, Missiology, Ministry Practice, Spirituality and Pastoral Care, with support from adjunct faculty, sessional lecturers, other College staff and other members of the Uniting Learning Network.

College staff will identify ministry cohorts, including formation opportunities for those in vocational life, people preparing for and placed as Lay Preachers, Chaplains, Ministry of Pastor, ordained ministries of MOW and Deacon. The focus for this work will include Biblical, Theological, spiritual and pastoral theology integration, community and leadership development.

College staff will be engaged in fields of development such as First Third of Life (children, youth, young adults, families), Multicultural/Cross-cultural, Ecology, Community Development, Leadership, Mission Development, Pastoral Counselling, Spiritual Direction, Safe Church, Religious Education.

The College will develop the capacity to engage in accredited vocation educational training in partnership with existing RTO registered training organisations such as UnitingCare's Institute of Family Practice, Wesley Mission's Vocational Institute and CSU Training.

Camden Theological Library will provide a resource base for the Synod's resourcing of theological education and discipleship formation, with particular resource collections developed for formation cohorts as they are identified, including the Godly Play resource collection and online documents.

Video conferencing technology and online learning software will be used to connect on-site learning experiences with educators and students in other locations.

College Partnerships

College partnership in the Charles Sturt University School of Theology will continue, with links built with St Mark's, Canberra, St Francis, Brisbane, and St Barnabas, Adelaide.

Partnerships with other institutions in Sydney will include Alan Walker College of Evangelism, the Sydney Alliance, UnitingCare NSW.ACT, Barnabas Ministries.

National partnerships will include Trinity College Queensland, Brisbane, Uniting College of Leadership & Theology, Adelaide, Pilgrim College, Melbourne, United Theological College, Perth, Nungalinga College, Darwin, Yalga-Binbi College for Community Development, Townsville.

Ecumenical partnerships with other educational institutions in NSW and ACT will be fostered.

The Uniting Church thanks God for the continuing witness and service of evangelist, of scholar, of prophet and of martyr. It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds.

Basis of Union, Paragraph 11

Appendices

1. Excerpts from 2003, 2005, 2013 Synod and Assembly reports on theological education
2. Assembly Regulations regarding Ministry Formation
3. MEC Guidelines for formation of MOW, Deacon
4. MEC Guidelines for formation of Lay Preacher
5. MEC Guidelines for formation of Ministry of Pastor