Project Title: Whole Person Education at Scale: Validation, Implementation, and System Integration Across Higher Education and Healthcare

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Narrative

While conceptual and descriptive models of holistic or whole person education are well established in the literature (Bhatt & Burns, 2024; Kezar et al., 2024; Wortham et al., 2020), these frameworks are largely normative or programmatic. There is limited empirical evidence demonstrating that specific educational activities causally contribute to holistic outcomes through theoretically specified developmental pathways. Few—if any—models have been empirically validated to show how competencies, domains, and holistic outcomes function together within a unified, testable structure, and scalable evidence (Slavin, 2008).

The lack of validated WPE frameworks produces a persistent education-to-practice misalignment that contributes to early-career disengagement, burnout, and erosion of mission-related behaviors (Ajjawi & Regehr, 2019; Duchscher, 2009; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Noddings, 2005).

This research project addresses this gap by validating the current AdventHealth University Whole Person Education (AHU WPE) Framework as a robust, evidence-based model of holistic education that will have a lasting impact on educational discourse. This study will

also examine whether WPE approaches endure in the post-university work environment of health care delivery and leadership, using purposive sampling across AdventHealth's network of more than 100,000 employees, to identify the impact on meaningful professional and organizational outcomes. The study will evaluate whether hospitals integrating whole person principles achieve stronger alignment of mission, professional formation, wellbeing, and service outcomes, with findings informing a supplemental volume on WPE as a future-oriented framework that reinforces institutional identity, human-centered leadership, and education's distinctive value in an era of AI and technological disruption.

Research Question

What is the impact of implementing the revised and validated WPE Framework over a 5-year period on measurable higher-order developmental outcomes, including SEM modeling, retention metrics, student performance, leadership impact indicators, and validated survey measures, among students, recent graduates, and mid-level institutional leaders?

Research Within Existing Scholarship

The literature highlights a growing interest in and acceptance of whole person approaches to education (Williams et al., 2024). After three years of a needs-assessment design project, this team is proud to present the first version of the AdventHealth University Whole Person Education Framework (AHU WPE Framework) (2 articles under Journal review).

This model rests on four "rooted" pillars: belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose. It

seeks to maximize students' potential through development across five "branches" of

holistic domains: intellectual, physical, psychological, spiritual, and social domains, that

emerge eleven "fruits" of essential student competencies—including but not limited to

critical thinking, communication, cultural competence, emotional intelligence, and self-

care—that are directly targeted, "sprinkled", through curricular, co-curricular, and

institutional learning activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1: AHU WPE Framework Tree

Figure 1 shows the tree representing the current Framework for Whole Person Education

(WPE) at AdventHealth University (AHU).

Academic programs intentionally design learning experiences to cultivate student attainment of competencies (Harden, 202). Sustained competency development is expected to produce measurable changes at the domain level, ultimately contributing to stronger outcomes across the four pillars. In this model, WPE is not defined by isolated activities, but by the coherent integration of educational practices that collectively influence higher-order developmental outcomes. At the core of AHU's framework is a theory of change that posits a directional and cumulative relationship across these levels: educational activities → competency development → domain growth → pillar-level outcomes.

This multidimensional research study highlights the importance of holistically supporting students' four pillars of wellbeing as an integrated outcome by including co-curricular services and core course design as critical predictors of student success, measured by persistence, performance, learning outcomes, degree completion, and institutional retention. The WPE approach intentionally highlights students' active engagement in the learning process, promoting personal and collective responsibility. It prepares them for workforce development by fostering character, ethics, empathy, and morals rather than technical knowledge alone (Keeling, 2020). Students' sense of belonging and psychological safety influences motivation, persistence, and performance, with consequences for equity in learning outcomes (Ambrose et al., 2024). Equity-minded teaching practices intentionally attend to student wellbeing and belonging as precursors to equitable learning outcomes (McNair et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that classroom environments supporting students' sense of belonging can meaningfully reduce equity gaps in academic outcomes (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). The WPE approach intentionally fosters values to prepare students for success in life and society.

Proposed Research Design

This study will use a descriptive quasi-experimental design, conducted in five phases and guided by SMART project objectives.

• Phase 1 (Year 1) WPE Framework Testing and Validation: The establishment of baseline activities and collection to provide a reference point for guiding implementation and evaluation of progressive success.

• Phase 2 (Year 2) WPE Implementation to Educational Innovation: Once the measurement and structural models are established, the validated framework will direct the implementation of curricular and co-curricular activities.

• Phase 3 (Year 3) WPE Reassessment of Success: Structured instruments from Phases 1 and 2 will be re-administered to measure and assess the effectiveness of the WPE Framework in practice.

• Phase 4 (Year 4) WPE Bridging Academic to Employment: Findings will identify strengths and limitations of the WPE Framework and its implementation, guiding the reorganization of activities to ensure educational lasting impact on the graduates.

Across all phases, data will be collected from students, recent graduates, faculty, and mid-level institutional leaders across multiple sites, including 50 AdventHealth hospitals and AdventHealth University, using a convenience sampling strategy. This study will employ a mixed-methods design integrating measures with pre- and post-intervention comparisons and, when feasible, matched comparison units within and across groups and over time.

Different statistical analyses will be involved such as multi-site invariance testing, causal mechanism validation, and cross-sector comparative analysis, among others.

• Institutional-Employee Activities: A comprehensive survey instrument, based on validated measures and aligned with the WPE Framework, will be administered to 2,000 participants from AdventHealth and AdventHealth University. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will evaluate construct validity and examine the relationships among competencies, domains, and pillar-level outcomes.

• Faculty Activities: Gateway course initiatives facilitated by 40 faculty based on evidence-based, structured, faculty-led course redesign on WPE will measure the impact on students' academic performance, retention in high-impact prerequisite and foundational courses, and graduation rates.

• Student Activities: An anonymous online survey will be developed and distributed to 1,500 enrolled students who have completed at least one academic term to assess the impact of WPE. Aggregate data will be compiled for analysis and comparison across multilevel.

• Leadership Activities: Using document analysis and qualitative methods, this approach will examine how managerial best practices and organizational training support the sustained enactment of whole-person competencies among senior graduate students and emerging leadership cohorts (internship, residency, and early leadership teams). Learning objectives, turnover rates, and Glint managerial scores will be analyzed across 500 leaders.

Scholarly Contribution

By grounding WPE in a rigorously tested causal framework, this project will provide the higher education community with a replicable, empirically validated model for understanding how educational practices translate into holistic student outcomes. The revised framework will support accountability, guide educational innovation, and advance the scholarship of holistic education by moving from aspirational theory models towards measurable data, evidence-based decisions about curriculum design, co-curricular programming, and institutional practices such as strategic planning and resource allocation, while contributing to a shared inquiry into how redesigned learning environments shape student success. WPE commitments require evidence that educational formation translates into practice.

(1181 total words)

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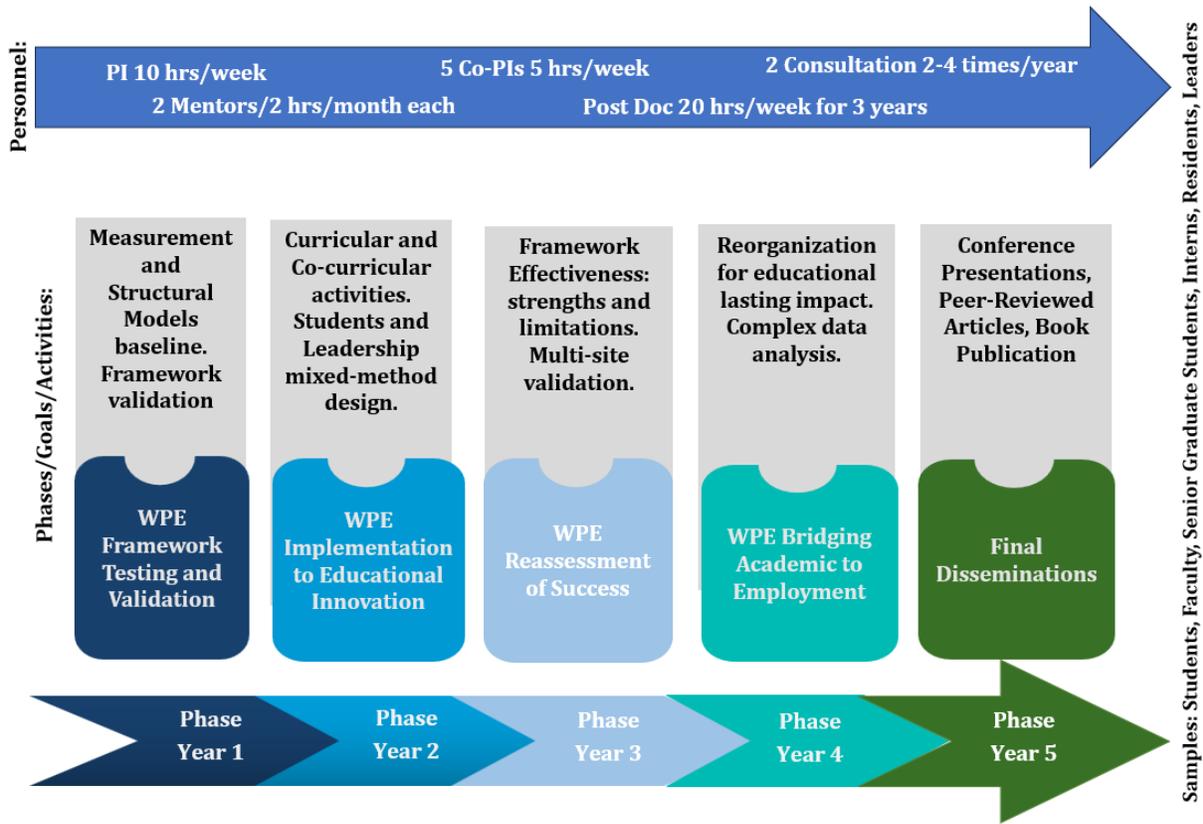
TEAM DESCRIPTION

Principal Investigator: Leana Goncalves Araujo, PhD, Associate Faculty and Research Officer. With over 20 years of experience in academia, she leads the Research and Grants Office, teaches doctoral courses in human physiology and pathophysiology, and mentors faculty in collaborative student research among all academic departments. Her background in public health and physiology research enables her to integrate social-behavioral and clinical sciences educational studies.

Internal Mentors: Oleg Kostyuk, PhD, Assistant to the President for Mission, Assistant Professor of Religion, and Karen Benn Marshall, EdD, MS, Senior Vice President of Academics, Provost

Co-Investigators: Daniel Phelps, PhD, Associate Faculty, Master of Healthcare Administration, and Neal Smith Jr, MS, JD, Library Director, will lead the "Institutional-Employee Activities" due to their expertise in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and assessment validation. The Executive Director of Learning Innovation & Faculty Excellence, Erica Caton, PhD in Social Work, will lead the "Faculty Activities" due to her experience in pedagogical innovation and assessment. Elizabeth Clark, PT, DPT, EdD, NCS, RYT200, Professor and Chair of the Physical Therapy Department, has been involved in various scholarship and student mentorship initiatives, with experience in survey design. She will lead the "Student Activities". Julian X. Torreblanca, PhD, MHA, MBA, Business Research Professor, Fund Development Officer, will oversee the "Leadership Activities" due to his position influence between the University and the Corporation.

TIMELINE

Personnel:

PI 10 hrs/week

5 Co-PIs 5 hrs/week

2 Consultation 2-4 times/year

2 Mentors/2 hrs/month each

Post Doc 20 hrs/week for 3 years

Phases/Goals/Activities:

| Measurement and Structural Models baseline. Framework validation | Curricular and Co-curricular activities. Students and Leadership mixed-method design. | Framework Effectiveness: strengths and limitations. Multi-site validation. | Reorganization for educational lasting impact. Complex data analysis. | Conference Presentations, Peer-Reviewed Articles, Book Publication |

| WPE Framework Testing and Validation | WPE Implementation to Educational Innovation | WPE Reassessment of Success | WPE Bridging Academic to Employment | Final Disseminations |

| Phase Year 1 | Phase Year 2 | Phase Year 3 | Phase Year 4 | Phase Year 5 |

Samples: Students, Faculty, Senior Graduate Students, Interns, Residents, Leaders

DRAFT BUDGET

Total Request: $284,750 (Budget Tier $250,001-$375,000)

Line Item	Amount	Budget Justification
Salary: PI	**$50,000**	20% effort for five years (12 calendar months total). 61% institutional / 39% grant. Fringe 25% ($12,500) included.
Salary: Internal Mentor	**$0**	Provost, Chief Academic Officer, Senior Vice President: 2 hrs/month for 5 years (0.69 months total). Institutional cost share: $11,520.
Salary: Internal Mentor	**$0**	Director of Mission Integration: 2 hrs/month for 5 years (0.69 months total) to ensure WPE alignment. Institutional cost share: $8,640.
Salary: 5 Co-PIs	**$0**	$125,000 institutional cost share, representing 3 calendar months per Co-PI (15 total months).
Salary: Post Doc Position	**$105,000**	20 hours/week for three years ($35,000 annually), consistent with NIH guidelines. Fringe included at 20% ($21,000).
Subcontract:	**$8,000**	Quantitative Social Science Consultant: $200/hour for 4 hours biannually to provide methodological guidance and support rigorous empirical integration within the WPE framework.
Subcontract:	**$8,000**	Research Standardization Consultant. $400/hour for 4 hours every 3 months for the 5 years.
Project Expense:	**$40,000**	Participant Incentives of $10 to encourage research participation.

Travel: Data Collection	**$2,000**	Site visits for focus groups and workforce data collection. Institutional Effort will represent all remaining expenses.
Equipment & Software:	**$6,000**	NVivo (multi-year licenses). Qualitative coding and analysis software that will be used for interview and focus group data.
Equipment & Software:	**$6,000**	SPSS / SEM Modeling Software. Advanced statistical modeling and validation of software for latent constructs.
Equipment & Software:	**$10,000**	Qualtrics Survey Platform. Supports large-scale survey deployment and longitudinal data hosting.
Project Expenses:	**$8,000**	Professional transcription services for interviews and focus groups.
Other: Editorial	**$8,000**	Professional editing to support peer-reviewed dissemination.
Subcontract: Production Team	**$13,750**	**Production Team:** Video production, editing, captioning, and accessibility for Leadership Activities. Institutional cost share: $17,000.
Other: Peer-Reviewed Dissemination	**$20,000**	Conference presentations and articles publication of each phase's findings. Institutional Effort will represent all remaining expenses.
Travel: Dissemination	**$12,000**	Conference travel expenses for poster and oral presentations. 2 times a year 2 X $1,200 X 5 years = $12,000.