

**Profile of the  
First Nations Education Doctorate  
University of Wisconsin–Green Bay  
2023 Regents Teaching Excellence Program Award Recipient**

**Highlights from nomination materials:**

- The First Nations Education Doctorate (Ed.D.) program is an innovative achievement – conceived, created, and sustained between UW-Green Bay and Tribal Nations in Wisconsin and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing. The doctoral program is held in person on weekends with UW-Green Bay faculty, Tribal elders, and knowledge keepers. It is the first doctoral program of its kind in Wisconsin.
- The program is an applied degree housed within UW-Green Bay’s College of Health, Education, and Social Welfare that leverages the expertise of four full-time faculty members (Mr. Forrest Brooks, Dr. J P Leary, Dr. Lisa Poupart, and Dr. Lois Stevens) and incorporates elders and oral scholars from the First Nations community to share Indigenous knowledge within their teaching of the curriculum. This allows the program to represent a considerable breadth of nations, including Oneida, Menominee, Lac du Flambeau, Cherokee, and Delaware.
- The program is centered in Indigenous knowledge systems. By design, the program is composed of key elements that differentiate and distinguish the program and its teaching excellence. These include 1) Indigenous teaching methods, 2) Indigenous assessment, and 3) Indigenous oral scholars who work collaboratively with First Nations faculty. Indigenous teaching methods include the use of a learning community model and holistic approaches to learning and student success (for example, formal opening and closing practices with each class period). Indigenous assessment, using practices from Tribal worlds, ensure evaluation of each student and the program with a focus on continuous improvement. The program brings together a balance of academic faculty in First Nations Studies and traditional Indigenous scholars (knowledge bearers) to collaborate and learn with doctoral students.
- The program was conceptualized in 2016 from discussions between the university and tribal leaders in Wisconsin. Two years later, the first cohort of students were accepted into the applied doctoral program, which was intentionally constructed and informed by Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing) and methodologies. The first graduates of the program earned their diplomas in spring 2022, and the third cohort started the program in fall 2022.
- This program models what is possible when university faculty and instructors engage in meaningful conversations with the communities they serve.
- The First Nations doctoral program is unique. Other programs in Indigenous Studies and related fields focus solely on content. In addition to content, the First Nations Education Ed.D. emphasizes Indigenous context which includes Indigenous pedagogy, elder epistemology, the use of Indigenous teaching and methods, use of Indigenous forms of assessment, offering a more holistic approach to education.
- The First Nations Education Ed.D. program prepares transformational leaders that will impact change in schools, community agencies and other institutions, and promote cultural resurgence in those organizations. These impacts are visible from student dissertation projects involving Tribal and community organizations that promote Indigenous language among youth, revitalize environmental resources, impact generational healing through art, and many other projects. Initial graduates of the program are impacting organizations in new and meaningful ways.

**In the words of a colleague:**

- “I consider the [First Nations Education Doctorate] program to be one of the most innovative, cohesive, community-oriented, and equity-minded academic programs that I’ve ever encountered....The degree offers a coherent, holistic program deeply rooted in indigenous sovereignty, values, and thought. In its functioning, the program embodies the 4Rs – the indigenous values of respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility.”  
—Dr. David Voelker, Frankenthal Family Professor of Humanities and History, UW-Green Bay