

Dear new PLU colleagues (with cc to your chairs and deans),

Although summer has only officially begun, planning for the opening of the 2023-2024 academic year is well underway. I am writing today to provide information regarding your orientation as a new member of the PLU faculty, as well as to share details about back-to-school activities to include on your calendar. Please note the university's expectation that faculty will participate in these events. If you are relocating, please plan on arriving in the region with ample time to give your full attention to these events.

If you have not already done so, please visit the [Getting Started at PLU](#) page for important information such as getting keys to your office and your PLU ID card.

## Syllabi Construction, Course Design, and Learning Management System

The university does not have a university-wide template for syllabi; rather, we advise faculty to construct syllabi that are learning-centered, engaging, and reflective of their teaching philosophy. The blog post "[Preparing a Learning-Focused Syllabus](#)" by Dr. Sara M. Fulmer (Teaching and Learning Assessment Specialist at Wellesley College) is an excellent introduction to this approach; Dr. Fulmer utilizes evidence to outline the benefits of a student-centered syllabus – sparking motivation, setting a firm foundation for engaged learning, building trust, etc. – and shares examples and strategies for achieving this aim.

To assist you in development of syllabi, we do have examples of suggested syllabi statements about various policies (such as attendance, student [office] hours, accommodating disabilities, and other matters) that reflect this student-centered approach that you may include in your syllabi. This list will be distributed to all faculty via email in August. Because some units have additional recommended syllabi statements or course design expectations, I suggest that you also check in with your College Dean or School Dean/Chair regarding any unit-specific details.

I'd also like to bring to your attention two of our valued colleagues who may be able to assist you as you develop syllabi and design courses. PLU's Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs, Dr. Bridget Yaden ([byaden@plu.edu](mailto:byaden@plu.edu)), supports faculty development broadly at PLU. PLU's Dean of Inclusive Excellence, Dr. Jen Smith ([smithjb@plu.edu](mailto:smithjb@plu.edu)), is our leader in supporting and developing faculty in the areas of equity and inclusion. Bridget, Jen, and other colleagues have developed a host of workshops related to teaching during our pre-conference period (see below). Feel free to contact Bridget and/or Jen prior to – and after – your arrival at PLU.

Our Learning Management System (LMS) is Sakai. The following sources provide helpful starting points:

- Getting Started with Sakai for Instructors: <https://kb.plu.edu/sakai-instructors>
- Teaching and Learning with Sakai: <https://www.plu.edu/faculty-resources/teaching/technology/sakai/>

Our students have become accustomed to Sakai as the repository for class information. Even if you don't plan to use it for any other reason, I encourage you to publish a Sakai page for each course as a place to hold your syllabus and gradebook and as your mechanism for sharing announcements with students.

Please note the faculty approved [academic calendar](#) as you design your courses (particularly with respect to breaks, holidays, and final exams). The integrity of the academic calendar is maintained when we adhere to these dates.

## SCHEDULE OF BACK-TO-SCHOOL EVENTS

Wednesday, August 23 and Thursday, August 24: New Faculty Orientation

The Office of the Provost partners with the Wild Hope Center for Vocation to formally welcome new colleagues to campus through our annual New Faculty Orientation (NFO). The Wild Hope Center promotes and provides a range of opportunities to engage with, discern, and live out vocation, including our vocation as faculty. In the weeks ahead, you'll hear more about NFO from our Wild Hope colleagues: Director Antonios Finitisis (Professor of Religion) and Associate Director Laree Winer.

New Faculty Orientation will take place on campus in the [Hauge Administration Building](#) on August 23, and in the [Anderson University Center](#) on August 24. Orientation will conclude with a welcome luncheon for new faculty the afternoon of August 24. This event focuses on successful beginnings at PLU, especially with regard to our educational mission and commitment to excellent teaching.

A detailed schedule will be available on the [New Faculty Orientation webpage](#) later this summer. Please contact Laree Winer ([winerll@plu.edu](mailto:winerll@plu.edu)) with any questions regarding New Faculty Orientation or the follow-up series of New Faculty Development Workshops offered throughout the academic year (see below).

Monday, August 28 and Tuesday, August 29: Pre-Conference Workshops [*OPTIONAL*]

In the days leading up to our annual University Conference and Fall Faculty Conference, colleagues from across campus offer workshops on various topics of interest to faculty and staff. This year's schedule features workshops on designing a transparent research assignment, crafting an inclusive syllabus, and learning more about gender diversity, among other topics. Additional details will be available on the [Faculty Resources website](#) in early August.

Wednesday, August 30 and Thursday, August 31: University Conference and Faculty Fall Conference

University Conference and Faculty Fall Conference are key opening events each academic year. Additional details and guidance regarding these events [will be available online later this summer](#). For now, please save both dates.

## Tuesday, September 5: Opening Convocation and First Day of Classes

Opening Convocation is Tuesday, September 5 at 10 AM; faculty are expected to participate in this annual tradition, wearing their academic regalia. (Information about regalia rental will be available later in the summer). Classes for the Fall Term 2023 begin at 11:50 AM on September 5. Please mark this important date and draft your syllabi accordingly.

## Friday, September 15: First Faculty Assembly Meeting

PLU's faculty governance system is a critically important part of how the university conducts business, and faculty governance is an integral part of PLU faculty life. During the academic year, faculty convene monthly for Faculty Assembly from 4 to 6 PM; the schedule of meetings for fall semester can be found [here](#). The first Faculty Assembly of the year (September 15) will be held on campus; the remainder of the fall meetings will be virtual.

All faculty are encouraged to attend Faculty Assembly. Faculty in tenure-track lines and contingent faculty with full time (1.0 FTE) positions have voice and vote at these meetings. Faculty in part-time (less than 1.0 FTE) contingent lines have voice but not vote.

## New Faculty Development Workshops (ongoing throughout the academic year)

We take seriously the opportunity to welcome you into the university's distinctive educational mission, the faculty, and the larger university community. Thus, in addition to the initial two-day New Faculty Orientation, the Office of the Provost and Wild Hope Center for Vocation offer faculty development workshops on topics of interest to new faculty that are scheduled throughout the year (and into the second year for continuing visitors and tenure-track faculty). Most of this year's workshops will be based on *The Norton Guide to Equity-Minded Teaching*, which you will receive a copy of during New Faculty Orientation. You will hear more about these opportunities during New Faculty Orientation and [information will be posted online](#).

Please accept my best wishes as you prepare for the transition to Pacific Lutheran University and the Puget Sound region. If you have questions or concerns with which I might assist you, please contact me at [provost@plu.edu](mailto:provost@plu.edu). I look forward to seeing you in person soon!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanna Gregson" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joanna Gregson, PhD  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs