THANK YOU.

It is a privilege to serve the Wilkes University doctoral community and celebrate this milestone for the Ed.D. program. As I reflect, I am grateful for the courage and vision of the program creators who pushed the School of Education into a new and unchartered scholarly environment. In their steadfast devotion to improving education, they created an opportunity for educators and emerging leaders to build leadership capacity through the highest level of education. From the start, their collective wisdom and hard work developed a quality program that was grounded in theory and scholarship, but singularly focused on leadership practice and the competence to produce sustainable and systemic educational change.

I also am proud to be just one of the many faculty members who have been trusted to lend our passion, expertise and experience to this program. The full-time faculty members and our valued adjunct instructors continuously challenge us to imagine new levels of excellence as we learn together in powerful communities of practice. At the same time, I am humbled by the unwavering commitment of administrative staff without whom this complex program would not operate.

And lastly, I am hopeful and genuinely excited by the trajectory on which the doctoral program is now positioned after 10 years of learning and growing together. The doctoral program's mission and vision now touch four continents, 12 countries, seven states, hundreds of leaders and thousands of children. With intentional and refined program design, with innovative minds and an authentic global reach, and with a community of learners who are courageous enough to believe in the transformative power of learning – I know that we will, in fact, make a difference together. Thank you for being a part of our 10-year journey, and please stay connected with us as we begin the next 10 years.

Karim Medico Letwinsky, Ed.D.
Chair/Assistant Professor, Doctoral Department
Coordinator of International Programs
I am pleased to extend my congratulations and thanks to everyone in the Wilkes University community who helped us achieve an important milestone—10 years of innovation, educational leadership and academic excellence in our Doctor of Education degree.

Our Ed.D. faculty members challenge and facilitate the personal and professional growth of the next generation of educational leaders both locally and globally. Under the direction of Dr. Karim Medico Letwinsky, doctoral faculty members distinctly combine research with practice as the framework for scholarship, innovation and strategic organizational transformation.

But it’s our doctoral students and alumni who deserve the most recognition. We intimately understand that education is a calling. Our doctoral graduates become change agents and transformational leaders, dedicating their lives to the students by courageously leading institutions and redesigning education for a better tomorrow. I’m proud that you chose Wilkes to cultivate and advance that lifelong passion.

In 2015, I chose to join Wilkes because of its demonstrated commitment to small-campus relationships while offering big-world opportunities. This vision has become action with the Wilkes Ed.D.

I hope you will read on to celebrate where we’ve been and where we’re going. Thank you for being part of our success story.

Sincerely,

Rhonda M. Rabbitt, Ed.D., CMQ/OE
Dean of the School of Education
Wilkes University
Our Ed.D. faculty and staff have over 150 years of combined K-12 and higher education experience.

**Rhonda M. Rabbitt, Ed.D.**  
*Dean of the School of Education*

**Karim Medico Letwinsky, Ed.D.**  
*Chair of the Doctoral (Ed.D.) Department Coordinator of International Programs*  
Research areas include professional development of mathematics teachers, mathematics anxiety, mathematics self efficacy.

**Joy Mao, Ph.D.**  
Research areas include learning technologies, teacher education, assessment, open education and systems thinking.

**Pam Koslosky**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Lori Cooper, Ed.D.**  
Research areas include social and emotional development, classroom management, teacher efficacy and burnout.

**Blake Mackesy, Ed.D. ’13**  
Research areas include academic advising, appreciative education and non-cognitive factors for success.

**Kurt Eisele, Ph.D.**  
Research areas include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and educational leadership.

**Ty Frederickson, Ed.D. ’16**  
Research areas include social justice education and inequality issues related to educational access, student leadership experiences in educational institutions, and migrant labor.

**Paul Reinert, Ph.D.**  
Research areas include school culture, school climate and K-12 educational leadership.

Research from the program has included a range of educational topics:

- The Influence of Grit on Career Decision Self Efficacy
- The Relationship Between Teaching Presence and Student Satisfaction in Online Learning
- Principal Experiences with Crisis Management Professional Development
- School Choice and Students’ Mathematical Performance
- An Investigation of Racial Bias in Early Writing Curriculum Based Measures
- The Impact of Type 1 Diabetes on the K-12 Educational Experience
- High-Achieving African American Male High School Students
- The Prevalence of Cyberbullying in a Sample Rural Middle School
- The Persistence of Black Women in Engineering
- The Impact of Academic Advising on the Success of the Undecided Student
- The Impact of Undergraduate International Students on U.S. Faculty
- The Value of Instructional Coaching
- First-Generation College Students’ Persistence at a Four-Year University
- Life-Sentenced Inmates and the Factors that Motivate them to GED Success
- Peer Tutoring with First-Generation College Students
- Conflict and Partnership in Special Education Administration
- Transition from Cyber School to Traditional Community College Education
- The Effect of Twitter on Secondary Student Engagement and Academic Performance
- Cumulative Tests and their Relationship with Academic Outcomes on External Exams
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning College Students
- The Effect of the Mathletics.com Technology on Basic Multiplication Fact Fluency
- School Transition for a Student Diagnosed with Selective Mutism
- Test-Optional Admission Policies and Their Effect on the University Student Body
When Alan Hack completed his doctor of education degree at Wilkes in 2014, he never guessed that two years later he’d be putting it to work as Pennsylvania’s youngest school district superintendent. In July 2016, Hack was selected to lead the Warrior Run School District, making him – at age 30 – the youngest to hold such a position.

Hack started his career as a middle school math teacher, teaching first in the Northwestern Lehigh School District and later at the Danville Middle School. While teaching, he earned a master’s degree in education in 2010 and his doctor of education in educational administration, both from Wilkes. He’d been serving as assistant principal at Warrior Run Middle School when he learned that the superintendent position was open in the rural district. Warrior Run includes townships in three Pennsylvania counties – Union, Montour and Northumberland.

“I am truly honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve Warrior Run in this capacity. Regardless of age, the position of superintendent is highly complex and requires support from others both in and outside the organization,” Hack says. “There is always something new to learn, and I will continue to learn from those around me – those who are smarter than me. My success as a leader will be dependent on the success of our board, administrative team, teaching staff and support staff all the way down to the individual students at Warrior Run.”
Diane Place Dissertation Award

The Diane Place Dissertation Award honors Wilkes doctoral graduates who exemplify the characteristics inspired by Diane Place, a 2014 graduate of the Wilkes Ed.D. program. These characteristics include:

- Perseverance in completing the doctoral study
- Commitment to lifelong learning
- Resilience in the face of adversity
- Strength of character to advance in life through education
- Collegiality with peers
- Leadership in education
- Excellence in academic standing

Wilkes University Diane Place Award Winners
Honorees earned a grade point average of at least 3.75 while presenting a dissertation that substantially contributed to educational leadership and advanced existing research in the field.

2014
Diane Place, Ed.D. ‘14
Rural Female Superintendents and Their School Boards: A Multi-Case Study of Perspectives

2015
Jolene Baron, Ed.D. ‘15
An Examination of Parent Perspectives Regarding the Influence of Speech-Generating Devices (SGD’s) on Family Life

2016
Jillian Mullen, Ed.D. ‘16
A Comparative Analysis of Nontraditional Students’ Perceptions of Mattering in Small Private Catholic Four-Year Academic Institutions

2016
Dawn Sutton, Ed.D. ‘16
A Phenomenological Study: Understanding the Experiences of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) in the Use of Virtual Reality (VR) Environments

2017
Sandra Pesavento, Ed.D. ‘17
Examining the Relationship between 1:1 Technology Initiatives and Student Achievement in Classrooms in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Mona Nashman-Smith Ed.D. ‘16
Recognized with Medal of the British Empire

In 2016, Wilkes University doctor of education student Mona Nashman-Smith received the prestigious Medal of the British Empire in London. The medal was presented by Queen Elizabeth in recognition of meritorious civil service.

Nashman-Smith was nominated for her years of service as chief executive officer and chief superintendent of the American British Academy in Muscat, Oman, an international baccalaureate school supported by the British embassy. She currently serves as chief executive officer and head of school for Edmonton Islamic Academy in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Completing her doctor of education degree in fall 2016, Nashman-Smith helped advocate and form the program’s first international cohort in Muscat, Oman. Her dissertation was a phenomenological case study on the transition from elementary to secondary study for a female selective mute.
The first Ed.D. dissertation award is granted to Diane Place. The Diane Place Dissertation Award is now granted annually in her memory.

The first collaborative research project, bringing together Ed.D. and Wilkes undergraduate students, is conducted in Bangladesh.

Now a low-residency experience, the Wilkes Ed.D. program hosts its first on-campus residency in August. Forty-five students participate in classes and activities, including a panel discussion with educational leaders from around the globe.

Seven members of the first international cohort in Oman complete their Ed.D.

Wilkes celebrates the largest Ed.D. graduating class with 23 total graduates.

The program’s second international cohort is formed in Dubai.

### A TIMELINE OF THE WILKES Ed.D.

**2007**
- The Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership is launched at Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Thirty students enroll in the first cohort, held primarily in a face-to-face format.

**2010**
- Wilkes University’s first Ed.D. graduate, Beth Rogowsky, successfully crosses the commencement stage.

**2011**
- The first international cohort launches in Muscat, Oman in partnership with the American British Academy. Thirteen students enroll in the program, including Mona Nashman-Smith.

**2014**
- The first Ed.D. dissertation award is granted to Diane Place. The Diane Place Dissertation Award is now granted annually in her memory.
- The first collaborative research project, bringing together Ed.D. and Wilkes undergraduate students, is conducted in Bangladesh.

**2016**
- Now a low-residency experience, the Wilkes Ed.D. program hosts its first on-campus residency in August. Forty-five students participate in classes and activities, including a panel discussion with educational leaders from around the globe.
- Seven members of the first international cohort in Oman complete their Ed.D.

**2017**
- Wilkes celebrates the largest Ed.D. graduating class with 23 total graduates.
- The program’s second international cohort is formed in Dubai.

### THE WILKES Ed.D. BY THE NUMBERS

- **100** graduates to date
- **3** United States
- **2** International
- **154** active students currently enrolled spanning 4 continents, 12 countries, 7 states
- Synchronous sessions are integrated into 7 different time zones around the world
Switching careers to teach computer science at the middle- and high-school levels has its perks. Just ask Melanie Wiscount Ed.D. ‘15 who won a Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics and Science in 2016.

Melanie Wiscount Ed.D. ‘15 is the educational technology specialist at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School. The all-male high school is the first of its kind in the city with a focus on increasing graduation rates and college readiness for black and Latino males. It opened in August with a class of 110 ninth-grade students, with plans to add another grade each year and graduate its first class in 2020.

The high school is a one-to-one school, providing one device—a laptop computer—to each student. The school refers to this policy as one-to-world, meaning they teach students to use technology responsibly to connect with a global community. Wiscount’s teaching philosophy encourages students to be creators rather than consumers. Why download an app when you can develop one? Why buy a video game when you can design your own? Her dedication gives her students confidence to try new things, make mistakes and figure out how to fix them. “They become the experts. That empowers them. It’s really magical.”

Wiscount completed her Ed.D. with a concentration in educational technology in 2015. Her dissertation examined the effects of kinesthetic learning, or learning through movement. As part of her research, she had students write a program using the Xbox Kinect camera to connect values to different body parts to help solve quadratic equations.

Portions of this article originally appeared in the Wilkes magazine, as written by Kelly Clisham MFA ’16.
Ty Frederickson’s Ed.D. ’16 history with Wilkes is long and storied. He was a member of the first international Ed.D. class from Oman, he served as the commencement speaker at the 69th spring commencement ceremony, and he recently joined Wilkes as a member of the Ed.D. faculty.

He’s also an expert in international education, having spent 20 years of his career teaching abroad. That experience allowed him to identify his passion for helping others and extend it to Wilkes undergraduate students.

Frederickson’s humanitarian work with a school in the Bangladeshi village of Gush Kande led to a project in which Wilkes engineering students built a solar generator for the school. Six Wilkes students traveled halfway around the world to complete the project in 2014, constructing a solar energy generator to provide electricity to charge iPads and other devices, making Internet access possible for the first time to children in the school.

The Bangladesh project served as the senior project for the students, who designed and installed the system. The students also handled the logistics of getting the equipment to the remote village after flying into Dhaka, some three hours away.

Certainly an experience, and a collaboration, that wouldn’t happen anywhere else.