

# Celebrating a Win: TLAC's Carnegie Project for the Educational Doctorate (CPED) Awarded First Prize in 2024



On January 29, 2025, the Collaborative for Innovation in Teacher Education hosted a celebration in honor of TLAC's EdD in Curriculum and Instruction program, which was selected to receive the Carnegie Project for the Education Doctorate's (CPED) Program Award of the Year for 2024. The event, which was conducted via Zoom, brought together over 30 participants from across the United States and around the world, all of whom were eager to celebrate this noteworthy achievement. Dr. Radhika Viruru, Director of TLAC's CPED program, led the session. She emphasized its CIRCLE approach—Building Community, Supporting Individual Development, Respect, Creating Leaders, and Emphasizing Excellence—and detailed how students graduating from the program have helped propel the EdD program to such a remarkable success.

Throughout the celebration, Dr. Viruru emphasized the intentional design of the CIRCLE framework in cultivating a robust online learning environment where students feel thoroughly connected and supported. Drawing on anecdotes from faculty and students alike, she illustrated how each element of CIRCLE—particularly the focus on respect and community-building—fosters meaningful engagement and bolsters student motivation. This holistic approach, she explained, has not only enhanced the quality of the online learning experience, but it has also contributed significantly to the national recognition bestowed by CPED.

Alumni testimonies underscored these themes, as many praised the program's faculty for their unwavering mentorship and dedication to individual student growth. One participant noted that “although the program was online, I truly felt as if I were on campus.” She attributed much of her professional advancement to the program's rigorous coursework and collaborative culture. Several attendees further highlighted the seamless blend of theoretical scholarship and practical application. They remarked how lessons learned in the virtual classroom translated directly to improvements in their mostly school/school district contexts. Still others focused on the EdD program's influence on their career paths and lives. One noted he was at a low point in his career and that the CPED experience significantly turned his life around.

As the session concluded, Dr. Viruru encouraged participants to maintain the spirit of the CIRCLE approach, stressing that the program's continued success relies on ongoing collaborations between faculty and students. The evening's lively discussion affirmed that TLAC's EdD in Curriculum and Instruction program's 2024 CPED accolade is well-deserved—and a testament to its commitment to excellence, innovation, and community.

