

SEMINARY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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If you are interested in doing a peer study of your own, you may download our survey instrument at www.denverseminary.edu/giving/stewardship.

Building relationships and telling the story

by Daniel Aleshire

Editor's note: The following is an address delivered at the February 2006 DIAP Conference in Savannah, Georgia.

It was in the mid-1980s when I was teaching at Southern Seminary in Louisville that I spent a year as interim pastor of the Jefferson Street Baptist Church. At the time, Jeff Street functioned both as a congregation and a community ministry center. Located in one of the most economically stressed areas in Louisville, the center had several rooms for short-term housing of recovering addicts, and the church worked with the community to address the endless list of needs. Cindy Weber, a recent graduate of the seminary, was the full-time associate pastor who made everything work.

I preached to a congregation unlike any to which I had previously preached. It consisted of people who lived in the projects, residents from the short-term housing, homeless people, seminary students, and a few people from Louisville who expressed their religious commitment by being part of this congregation. Cindy was their pastor; I was a placeholder because those funding Jeff Street were not comfortable with formally appointing her to the role she already was filling.

Years after I left, the church still had not found a pastor who would do the work while satisfying the Baptist Association that owned the building. Cindy continued in her role as associate pastor until church members eventually concluded the obvious: she *was* the pastor and called her. That decision resulted in the congregation being forced to leave the facility. The congregation, as meager as its resources were, renovated a machine shop not far away and the members marched to their new location in a joyful procession. They also changed the name of the church to Jefferson Street Baptist Church at Liberty. It was already a pretty loose



DANIEL ALESHIRE is executive director of The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

congregation, as Baptist churches go, and it's hard for me to imagine it "at liberty!"

It has been twenty years since I was interim pastor. Cindy is still there: organizing the community, preaching on Sunday, taking care of people whom society has excused itself from caring about, and seeing that people get treated by the doctor and don't get mistreated by the government. Mark Constantine interviewed her for a recent book on pastors and asked why she was able to lead. She said: "Because I'm fun. Because what you see is what you get. People know I care about them, and that goes a long way. Because I have a real clear idea about what is right and what is wrong, and because I'm willing to get out there and fight for what is right...people trust me."

I would have said the same thing about Cindy, had Mark asked me. Cindy is a tender and sturdy witness to central affirmations of the Christian Gospel from which many of us want to keep a safe distance. She graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, where she learned about justice in the realm of God from some of my former colleagues. She continues to learn as she leads Jefferson Street at Liberty. There is a little more justice in the community because she has given more than two decades of her life to the ministry and witness of that congregation.

Tim Blackmon is a Calvin Theological Seminary graduate and serves as the lead pastor at the

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River Rock Church in Folsom, California, near Sacramento. He has imagination, humor, and—if I read him right—is a bit of a risk-taker. Tim grew up in The Netherlands, went to college in France, and then, after accepting the gift of a ticket to visit Calvin Seminary, decided to attend.

River Rock Church is brand new. The church's Web site tells its brief history this way: "The year Linux desktops overwhelmed UNIX desktops, the entire River Rock congregation sat in four vinyl bucket seats around a vintage 1970s card table." (This is the first time I have ever seen computer technology used as an ecclesiastical dating system!) The church was founded in 2001 and has been housed in a hotel, a nightclub, and an office building. It still uses rented space. Tim estimates that about eighty percent of the adults in the church had no previous church experience as adults. In this suburban California community, Tim thinks that people are dealing with problems that result from a worldview Ron Rolheiser describes as resting on a preoccupation with quality of life, upward mobility, excellence, and material comfort.

Tim defies easy categorization. While he would readily locate himself squarely in the Evangelical and Christian Reformed traditions, he has a critique of both. CRC churches, he thinks, can be too interior. He said that the church "should live beyond itself, not for itself....it is about the flourishing of the community." Evangelicals, he observed, can be too pragmatically focused. At the risk of being indelicate, I'll quote him verbatim: "The struggle [Evangelicals] consistently face is a very pragmatic approach to get more butts and bucks in the pews. We need to be able to plant a church and not sell our souls to the Devil."

When I asked Tim how Calvin Seminary had most influenced him, he responded in two ways. The first was his discovery of a Dutch Reformed theologian, Abraham Kuyper, whose theology helped him see how all of life could be authentically related to Christian faith. Second, he said that Calvin gave him a thirst for "a big vision, for broad-spirited Christianity," and nurtured him toward a "quest for solid thinking in ministry." Throughout our conversation, "solid thinking" was a theme and when a pastor is trying to nurture a new congregation into existence, I can't think of a more important resource.

Darren Eultgen is a graduate of Aquinas Institute in St. Louis. Like many theological students, Darren left a first career (a sports-memorabilia business) to earn the MDiv degree while his wife, Cindy, worked. Cindy then earned her Master of Pastoral Studies degree while Darren was working. They met in the St. Louis area in a Theology on Tap program for young adults. I wondered if this was one of those WWJD things—what would Jesus drink—then learned it was a very successful Catholic outreach program in many cities. Darren serves a parish in rural Southern Illinois, and Cindy serves another, similar parish. Both Darren and Cindy are pleasant, readily accessible, smart, and unassuming. Both grew up Catholic, were educated in Catholic schools, and are now exercising a form of ministry that neither envisioned while growing up. They are pastoral associates, living in a rectory next to the parish school, doing everything that a resident priest used to do in the parishes except sacramental ministry.

When I asked Darren and Cindy about what they had learned at Aquinas Institute that had most become a part of their perspective on ministry, Cindy said that she had to start with preaching, "and preaching in terms of how you live out your life." She said that she learned that "good preaching...is...communicating so people can understand." Preaching involves "walking together with people, not holding something over their heads." Darren said that Aquinas had taught him "to think about things theologically" and "to translate that into a language that people could understand." Theology is the story about the work of God and the meaning of human life, and to be able to preach that story, to communicate its nuance and elegance in plain, human language, is a good gift.

Lillian Daniel is a graduate of Yale University Divinity School and serves as the senior pastor of First Congregational Church in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. She is talented, spirited, imaginative, and bright. You might have read one of her devotional articles in *The Christian Century*. First Congregational was founded in 1862, and the church history notes that "Deacon Yalding, one of the charter members, said he was not going to raise his children in a village 'where there was no church, only saloons and houses of ill repute.'" Apparently, the church was good for the community. Glen Ellyn is classier these days,

with median home values now more than \$400,000. There may still be a fair share of saloons, but they're probably higher caliber, and I wouldn't be surprised if some members of First Congregational frequent them. I won't speculate about the houses of ill repute.

I asked Lillian what she carried from her Yale University Divinity School (YDS) experience into pastoral ministry. Her response was quick: Yale gave her a "spirit of intellectual inquiry" that helped her unite intellect and faith. She said that YDS gave her a sense of confidence. Ministry is a constant barrage of new issues and old problems in new guise. Lillian's years at Yale cultivated a confidence that she can do the complex tasks that ministry requires. "The church needs confidence," she said, "and pastors with a strong ego." I don't think she meant "egotistical," but rather pastors with the interior strength to do difficult work. She also said that Yale gave her a deep sense of ecumenism—a nonparochial way to envision the world's needs and guide her pastoral practice. It seems to me that these are wonderful resources for mainline Protestants and for ministry in general.

These kinds of stories [about seminary graduates] are at the heart of theological education.

Why have I chosen to tell you these stories about seminary graduates? You know the answer. It's why you have students tell their stories at trustee dinners and feature graduates in the seminary magazine. These kinds of stories are at the heart of theological education. You are not raising money to renovate old buildings and build new ones; you are raising money so that graduates will have "clear ideas about what is right and what is wrong, and be willing to fight for what is right." You are not raising money to endow professorships; you are raising money so graduates can go into ministry with a "broad-spirited Christianity" and engage a world with passion and "solid thinking." You are not raising an annual fund; you are raising money so graduates can understand things theologically and translate theological substance in ways that farmers and factory workers, executives and retirees, and teachers and at-home parents can have faith-formed lives. You are not raising money to pay this year's bills; you are raising money so graduates can have "faith united with

intellect" and the interior strength to do difficult work well.

Development begins and ends, in my judgment, by telling the story.

Although I have never been the development officer at a school, I have functioned in that role at The Association of Theological Schools for the past eight years. ATS does not raise money for its projects and programs the same way you raise money for theological schools, but there are three similarities between my work and yours.

The first is that I wake up many days with a thought about how much money needs to be put on the table each year. I imagine you have similar thoughts on many days. For me, it is seventy percent of the ATS budget, including funds to subsidize conferences like this one.

The second is a sense of gratitude for the funding partners that ATS has. None of them has a charter that requires it to support theological education. I'm sure your school depends on friends—some wealthy and some not so wealthy—who make gifts to the annual fund, and extra gifts for campaigns, and who you know have the school in their wills. Nothing requires them to give, but they do.

The third similarity is the fundamental need to find more funding partners. Maybe you have all the donors you want or need, but I suspect not. There is more work to do, and no school or organization can be overly dependent on any one source for its funding. ATS needs to convince other foundations that theological education is worth their grant-making—both to ATS and to member schools—and identify projects that both need to be done for the benefit of theological education and will interest the foundation.

Across these years and attending the previous eight DIAP annual conferences, I have decided that two agendas are central to development work at ATS, and from what I have heard at these meetings, they are central to your work as well. They involve telling the story and paying attention to relationships.

Telling the Story

Development begins and ends, in my judgment, by telling the story. For ATS, it involves telling

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the story about what needs to be done and the benefit of doing it. The story needs to be told to internal constituents and to external funders. The story needs to be told informally in conversations and formally in proposals. It needs to be told in program reports to foundations and in the Association's own publications. Telling the story is central to development work.

...telling stories about theological schools and the work of their graduates is part of telling a bigger story that originates in the heart of God.

Good stories have substance and spin. Substance is central but, by itself, can be boring and unrelated to the listener. Spin provides an angle on a story but, by itself, is a lie and unrelated to the fundamental purposes in theological education. Substance is part of the story but never all of it. For instance, *I was listening to Yo-Yo Ma while writing part of this talk, and I could tell you that I was listening to a digital reproduction of airwave movement caused by horsehair being pushed across tautly pulled strings of varying length.* That statement is substantive and truthful but not accurate.

Spin is part of the story; it is the slant; it takes the listener seriously. For instance, *I was listening to Yo-Yo Ma while writing part of this talk. The deep resonance of his cello somehow reaches my soul. There is depth without darkness in his playing. Somehow, his playing reaches my soul.* I wish I could do with words what he does with notes.

There is no substitute for telling the story with a truthful spin, and there is no excuse for telling a story that is only spin. The ultimate purpose that the seminary serves—the good of the church and the integrity of its vision of the Gospel—is the plumb line for determining integrity in communications.

Institutional stories are connected to a larger story. For me, telling stories about theological schools and the work of their graduates is part of telling a bigger story that originates in the heart of God. At their best, theological schools operate out of a theological vision that embodies a vocation. This vocation is the ultimate substance of the story; it is the deep narrative. The root of the mission of a theological school is in the mission of faith communities, and the root of the

mission of faith communities is in the Gospel, and the root of the Gospel is in God's own vision for the human family. Connecting a school's story to the large and wonderful story of our faith is crucial in the communication for institutional advancement.

Relationship

The best stories, I think, are the ones shared among friends. Relationship is central—that's not news and across the years at DIAP meetings, I have heard numerous references to relationships. They have been good references about how to cultivate relationships that are not blind to giving potential but do not focus exclusively on that, about cultivating relationships with the mission of the school and not just the needs of the school, and about cultivating relationships that care for the donor as intentionally as the school hopes the donor will care for it. Relationships, like communication, are central to development work, but tonight I want to comment about some other important relationships I think are crucial to your work.

The relationship between money and mission. You work at the wealthiest theological schools in the world. It probably doesn't feel that way, but you do. Wealth is always relative, and when you look at institutions focused on the education of church leaders, none of them in the rest of the world has wealth that compares to what we have in the United States and Canada. No matter how much wealth our schools have, it is not as much as they need to do the work well. Theological schools look financially poor compared to other segments of higher education in the United States and Canada. The schools need more money. However, the mission of a theological school is not to be wealthy. It is to educate, to research, and to serve the church and the broader public. This means that development work is always about the relationship of money and mission. Your task is to find and guide the acquisition of wealth that will best serve the school's mission for the longest period of time.

The relationship of the past and the future. Many of the largest gifts to theological education are deferred gifts. This means that many of the calls and conversations you have with prospective donors relate the efforts of the school in the past to the kind of work the school could do in the future. Theological schools are funding their future on the basis of their recent past.

Good development work depends on a thoughtful sense of the relationship of the past to the future. As you know, there is always a gap between the stories of the past and needs of the future, and development officers are the primary persons in a theological school to mind this gap. What a school needs for its future may not be what it needed in its past. Development officers guide people to think about new needs, while affirming the accomplishments of the past.

The relationship between gifts that provide help and those that reflect hope. Gifts to the current fund help. They support operations needed this year. Funds for endowment, for new facilities are, ultimately, about hope. People hope their gift to the future work of a school will strengthen it and the education it provides, which donors hope, in turn, will strengthen the lives of communities of faith. I think much of the giving to theological education is hope money. People hope for a better church, and for pastors and church workers who are capable, able, committed, and faithful. You need to raise the money that helps as well as the money that hopes.

. . .there is always a gap between the stories of the past and needs of the future, and development officers are the primary persons in a theological school to mind this gap.

The relationship of the \$100 giver and the \$1,000,000 giver. A theological school needs both givers who are capable of major gifts and givers who are not. If a seminary only has big givers, it likely doesn't have the constituency it needs for its mission. If a school has only small givers, it likely doesn't have the resources it needs to pay its bills and build a future. Development work is about the relationship of these two kinds of contributors and the irreplaceable importance of both. It is about nurturing both kinds of contributors and cultivating them all.

The relationship of institutions with needs and individuals with desires. After twelve years in an ATS member school and sixteen years at ATS, I have concluded that institutions, by their need and nature, are ultimately consumers: they

consume time, money, talents, and energy. Like buildings, institutions have a certain strength and stability, but they can't take care of themselves. They are consumers. Donors give out of desire, I think. They desire to contribute, or to honor someone, or even to identify themselves with the institution. Development work is thus about the relationship of institutions that are consumers and individuals whose giving reflects a wide variety of desires.

Thank whomever gave the gifts, and thank whomever raised the money. None of them is alive to hear this particular story tonight, but they gave to a bigger Story. . . .

Conclusion

I was in seminary in the late sixties and early seventies. It was a turbulent time in this country. The day after the shootings on the Kent State campus, the seminary declared a day of prayer. Some professors dismissed class; students gathered in the middle of the quad for impromptu discussions. It was a time heavy with worry about war in Southeast Asia and weary with struggles for racial justice in our own country. I went to Wayne Oates's pastoral care class that day, and wondered what he would do. He looked at us and said, "My son is in the Mekong Delta on a gunboat. My namesake, Wayne Barnett (son of ethics professor Henlee Barnett), has fled the country because he could not fight this war. You tell me how to pray." Then he walked toward the door, telling us that class was dismissed as he exited. At first, no one left. It was as if we had been captured by the complexity of prayer in morally ambiguous moments. Our moral certainty was stopped in its tracks. The fundamental need for humility in all prayer began to dawn on us. As you can tell, I still remember that moment. More than memory, I was shaped by that moment; I was changed by that moment.

It was a moment possible because someone had raised the money to build a classroom, endow a professorship, and provide financial support for students. Thank whomever gave the gifts, and thank whomever raised the money. None of them is alive to hear this particular story tonight, but they gave to a bigger Story, and that day, the bigger Story became part of me. SDN

From your Steering Committee: Our common commitment

by Kathleen Hansen

Greetings from the land of Lake Wobegon where, as we say, there are more Lutherans than people! The annual DIAP Conference in Savannah, Georgia, was a pleasing break—both climatologically and educationally—from the daily work of development in Minnesota. Rebekah Burch Basinger’s address and John Kinney’s inspiring noontime sermon remain two of the highlights of our time together.

While at the conference, I was struck by the theological diversity represented by DIAP and, of course, ATS in general. We on DIAP’s Steering Committee rightly consider how we might make our organization more diverse ethnically, but we need to remember that we are already home to incredible diversity that is, perhaps, just as challenging to maintain: the diversity of folks who think differently about things. We have an awful lot of variety in how we think about God and church and Jesus.

In a culture that is increasingly fractious and hostile to those we see as “different” from ourselves, it is quite amazing that we can gather Unitarians, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, non-denominational fundamentalist Christians, and even Lutherans together without blood being shed. It’s enough to make you believe in God!

It is even more amazing when we consider that what brings our motley crew together is money. Talking about money, at least in Lake Wobegon circles and perhaps in many of yours, is one of the more difficult things most people do. It is one of those weighty subjects like sex and politics whose very introduction into the conversation is almost guaranteed to generate a fight.

Yet, there we were in Savannah, talking about money—what it means, how to raise it, how to steward it, and how to get people excited about giving it. Our churches’ various theological positions on the meaning of the sacrament of communion, ordination, or the doctrine of justification didn’t seem to get in the way. Those things matter, of course, but they didn’t keep us from gathering together, developing friendships and professional support systems, and learning from one another.



KATHLEEN HANSEN is vice president for seminary relations at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, executive director of the Luther Seminary Foundation, and a member of the DIAP Steering Committee.

Perhaps it’s because we weren’t merely talking about money.

Perhaps it’s because we were talking about biblical stewardship. As those of us in development have come to know, the theme of stewardship is a “golden thread” that runs throughout Scripture, beginning with the creation story. God’s charge to us from the very beginning has been to be stewards of God’s creation, of all God has given us. Our happy calling as development professionals is to exercise the stewardship of our gifts in order to help others live out their callings as stewards. We do all of this in support of the missions of our various institutions.

Understanding true biblical stewardship helps us to live out a “theology of abundance.” Once we realize that God has given us more than enough to fulfill our God-given callings, we can let go of the fear of scarcity, of not having enough. When we’re fearful, we can become protective, hoarding what we think is ours. We begin to draw lines between us and them, between ours and theirs. Maybe that fearful protectiveness is what turns our theological differences into active hostility. How wonderful, though, that those who understand biblical stewardship understand that God’s gifts are not scarce and we need not live in fear.

In the words of Dr. Rolf Jacobson, associate professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, “God invites us to live differently. To live in God’s abundance. Not to live in fear, but in trust. When God intrudes into our lives, it is strange to say, one of the things God does is intrude into

of the Development and Institutional Advancement Program

Heather Cooke
Director, Finance, Administration, and Development, Queen's Theological College, Kingston, ON

Richard Eppinga
Senior Development Officer, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI *ex-officio*

Howard Freeman
Chief Development Officer, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA

Kathleen Hansen
Vice President for Seminary Relations and Executive Director, Luther Seminary Foundation, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Gary Hoag
Vice President of Advancement, Denver Seminary, Littleton, CO

John V. Puotinen
Senior Vice President for Advancement, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA

Daniel Schipp
Vice President for Development, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN

Scott Sheldon, Chair
Skillman, NJ

Anne Marie Tippet
Director of Advancement, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge, MA

Elizabeth L. Visconage
Vice President for Administration and Advancement, St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, MD

David Wicker
Vice President for Advancement, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO

our fear and offer us another way to live—one that is not in fear, but in trust of God's abundance. A way that trusts this word from God: Enough."

I am thankful for the rich diversity of theological traditions represented in DIAP. I am thankful that our common commitment to biblical stewardship helps us move beyond our differences into a celebration of God's abundant goodness. I am thankful that God has given us

enough, even more than enough. Please know that you, with your unique tradition and experiences, add to the richness and diversity of each DIAP Conference.

I look forward to being with you next year at our annual conference in Orlando, Florida. In the meantime, that's the news from Lake Wobegon, where Father Emil and Pastor Ingvist regularly host their own ecumenical gathering at the Sidetrack Tap. *SDN*

2005-06 Data Tables now on the ATS Web site

Total giving to all member schools totaled \$412 million for operational and \$232 million for capital purposes in 2005-06. Individuals continued to be the largest source of gifts for both operations (31.5%) and capital purposes (47.9%). Giving by religious organizations accounted for 31.1% of gifts for operations, followed by foundations (21.4%). Among

organizations, foundations were, by far, the largest source of funding for capital purposes at 26.0%.

The complete set of 2005-06 Annual Data Tables may be accessed from the home page of the ATS Web site: www.ats.edu. *SDN*

TOTAL GIVING BY SOURCE - ALL MEMBER SCHOOLS

	Operational		Capital	
	\$000	% of Total	\$000	% of Total
<i>Individuals</i>				
Alums	31,664	7.7	26,478	11.4
Others	129,872	31.5	110,968	47.9
Subtotals	161,536	39.2	137,446	59.3
<i>Organizations</i>				
Foundations	88,252	21.4	60,326	26.0
Corporations	20,583	5.0	12,013	5.2
Religious organizations	128,043	31.1	16,894	7.3
Consortia	4,972	1.2	585	0.3
Other	8,823	2.1	4,398	1.9
Subtotals	250,672	60.8	94,216	40.7
Number of respondents	251			

Called to raise

by Sandra Yates

Like most professional fund-raisers, I stumbled into the profession. Having failed to complete my undergraduate degree while in the Air Force and having a young family, I needed to work, so I sought full-time employment in colleges that offered educational benefits. When my family moved to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware in 1990, I found myself at a small private college as an alumni relations secretary. This was to be a means to an end. Finally, I would get my degree. Instead—or rather, in addition—it became the beginning of a new and exciting career and relationship with fund-raising.

As my love for philanthropy developed over the years, I was fortunate to hold positions at organizations whose missions reflect my values. Yet one thing was lacking—the fusion of my belief in Jesus Christ and my work.

Although higher education, the environment, emergency services, and social needs all fit into God's plan as worthy and necessary, the reality is that any connection to God was never embraced in the workplace. Even in this day of acceptance, in the professional sphere, Christianity is generally frowned upon or avoided. It is considered intellectually limiting to believe in God. Expressing belief and commitment to Jesus Christ can even have damaging effects upon professional advancement. Consequently, as a seasoned Christian fund-raiser, much of my time was spent in an environment that did not fully deny, yet would not embrace the greatest of all—God our Father. That workplace was neither hot nor cold.

When the opportunity to take on the challenge of developing the advancement program at the Interdenominational Theological Center presented itself, it came through a kind of divine intervention. While I was in fact looking for a vice presidency, I was not looking to take a vow of sacrifice to do God's work at a seminary. Finally, God asked the question: "Will you go and pave the way for my under-shepherds?" He had to ask the question a number of times before I submitted. After struggling with all the human fears and concerns, I finally received the revelation that I had been *called to raise*.



SANDRA YATES, CFRE, is vice president for institutional advancement at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

What a high honor it is to have God entrust His work to me fully knowing that I am inadequate, while at the same time providing a wonderful opportunity to integrate my profession and my belief in God. When I am working, I am actually building something for an eternal life in which I hope the Lord will be well-pleased.

Lest I give the impression that this is all glamorous, it needs to be said that service to God does involve earthly sacrifice. The fund-raising environment at most seminaries is far less developed than at other institutions. Salaries and benefits reflect both the Christian trait of humility and the lack of economic resources. Christian development officers face the same challenges as employees in secular organizations.

Students—under-shepherds in training—are truly diamonds in the rough. Their honor easily could be lost in their sacrifice. Great effort must be taken to look ahead to the finish line rather than at the hills and mountains in the way. The finish line is not here but in Heaven. As I press on, I recognize that the work each of us is doing at our respective seminaries will contribute directly to many others being ushered across the line.

Consequently, I will look to the example of Nehemiah building the wall that will protect and fortify the Lord's people. Nehemiah had the faith of things hoped for yet unseen. "God, I humbly accept your *call to raise*. Lord, use me!"
SDN

On being a nosy parker

by Kenneth Fredrick

I am a nosy parker. So are you, or you should be.

An advancement officer for a seminary has a necessary function to fulfill that, almost certainly, goes unmentioned in his or her job description and that assignment is to be a nosybody.

I know that, in my case, as someone who more than most is out and about on behalf of Concordia Lutheran Seminary, I need to be a seeker, a listener, and an observer. I need to be inquisitive, attentive, and discerning. I need to notice, sound out, and research, and I need to report back my findings, whatever they may be.

It was in April 2001 at the end of an evening spent with supporters Elmer and Jeanette, chatting at their dining room table in their home in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, that Jeannette looked at me and exclaimed, "You've become the eyes and ears of the seminary!" An apt description, I concluded upon reflection, and so necessary.

What an organization needs to cope and progress is an organizational capacity to listen. The orientation and disposition, the language and motivation, and the values and beliefs of constituents are learned through empathetic listening. Don't dispute, don't lecture; be still, and listen!

An organization needs to give ear to its publics so it will concern itself with those matters that, in their minds, matter especially. Effective policy, action, and communication all begin with listening—which requires openness and systematic effort—and then responding to the interests, needs, and aspirations of stakeholders.

The trouble is that what you'll hear and read and then share with the powers that be sometimes will be bothersome to them, and your message will be shrugged off. Be prepared. In a text now three-dozen years old, *Christian Communicator's Handbook: A Practical Guide for Church Public Relations*, Floyd Craig explains why: "Denominations and churches tend to be more interested in their own motives."

In a book much more recently published, *Messy Spirituality*, Michael Yaconelli puts it this way: "It is the nature of human beings, the nature of modern life, to silence those who interrupt our



KENNETH FREDRICK is the director of seminary development at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta. He is a thirty-year veteran of advancement assignments in several Canadian post-secondary institutions.

routine activities and understandings. We don't like those who speak up, who leave the status quo, who refuse to keep quiet, who reject compliance as a way of life. We would much rather have people shut up than say disturbing things."

Still, the writer of 1 Chronicles singles out for mention the men of the tribe of Issachar because they "understood the times, and knew what Israel should do." As the authors of the current book *The Externally Focused Church* observe, "Knowing what to do seems to be correlated with understanding the times."

Why, Jesus himself wants us to know our own times according to Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson. They tell how Christ, after complimenting some followers on their ability to forecast the weather, asks: "How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time?"

So it is that I question constituents when I'm on the road on Concordia Lutheran's behalf. What sort of pastors, I'll ask, do you typically want and need your seminary to fashion to shepherd and lead your congregation in this twenty-first century? So it is that I monitor the media, certainly the popular press: what's being said in our society about church and faith, religion and ministry?

What might such investigation turn up and what might such intelligence look like? Here, by way of illustration, are recent examples that arise out of the hundreds of development calls I've made upon supporters, pastors, and prospects from Ottawa to Vancouver Island.

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On being a nosy parker

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—Laypeople appear to want their pastors-in-the-making to obtain practical skills and know-how, if not in seminary, then beforehand or quickly after graduation. They need to be savvy about office administration, for instance, and to know human psychology and counseling techniques, I was told. For goodness sake, they need to be able to read and understand their congregation's financial reports: are we in the red? Are we about to be?

—From a pastor in Vancouver, I learned about the practices at a now defunct theological school in Brazil—he'd taught there during its heyday—that constituted an imaginative extracurricular program. Seminarians practiced all the time what was preached to them in their classrooms: they engaged routinely in hospital visits, for example, and especially evangelism efforts. All this was expected of them, though they received no credit for their endeavors.

—Surely, the most common lament among friends of the seminary is that their pastors do not come to visit them. One parishioner was especially disenchanted. In 2004, he'd had surgery for cancer, followed by frequent radiation treatments, and not once had his minister come to call upon him—not at home, not in the hospital. (At least this cleric is not a CLS graduate!)

—It was the wife of an elder in one British Columbia congregation—bereft of a minister and about to lose its vacancy pastor because of ill health—who urged that the church commission its best preachers to prepare sermons that could be faxed or downloaded for use by lay leaders in just such parishes as hers. This would be a truly useful service, she enthused, and were it offered, congregants might not be so apt to mutter: "What does the church ever do for us?"

—Of all the advice that I've brought back with me from the road, I think none is so simple and so wise as this one: the church should amend its Sunday school curriculum to include a component in which church work as a

worthwhile career would be highlighted. It should then reserve one Sunday a year when students would be acquainted—at a level appropriate for each class—with the various salaried church-work posts to which they might aspire someday. In short, we should grow our own church workers: plant the seed, nurture it, and then reap the rewards.

—As for that other aspect of surveillance to which I referred—monitoring the media—it led me last March to prepare a ten-page paper entitled *You cannot go where you want to go, and stay where you are*, that was circulated to CLS administrators, faculty, and regents. It distills materials from, among other sources, *The Globe & Mail*, Canada's national newspaper, George Barna's Web site, an Alban Institute research paper about the upswing of secular spirituality, and a particular issue of *The Christian Standard*.

These gleanings picture an increasingly unchurched society, itemize the "encumbrances" of organized religion that people find off-putting, suggest what, in contemporary life, churches must provide (or "risk becoming isolated from the culture, inviting stagnation and further decline"), point up churches that strive to "build bridges to the community, instead of walls around themselves," and, ultimately, call for "transformation" ("the church has to change, has to adapt").

I conclude this article with a few intemperate notions of how theological schools might respond. For example, acquaint seminarians with marketing principles, expose them to ministry that pushes the envelope, and develop a course in which students look to the future world in which they'll minister. They're only intended, however, to get us started in our thinking.

No, that's not quite right. It's with these few sentences that I actually end the article: we in our church smile when we hear the words "Lutheran" and "change" in close proximity, but it's no longer a laughing matter. Is it still a chuckle in *your* church? *SDN*

Another assessment, another advancement top-ten list

by Gary Hoag

Editor's note: This second peer-group study, presented at the February 2006 DIAP Conference in Savannah, Georgia, follows the initial study Hoag reported in the fall 2005 issue of Seminary Development News.

In the fall 2005 issue of *Seminary Development News*, I was invited to present the findings of a peer-group study performed early in 2005. Just before the 2006 DIAP Conference in Savannah, Georgia, our development office ran the numbers again. The same eight institutions participated in the study: Asbury Theological Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, our own Denver Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Western Seminary.

The purpose for conducting another assessment was to evaluate trends in various advancement "dashboard" gauges by comparing the new numbers to the benchmark findings from the previous year. The 2006 survey was another one-page instrument gathering data in the following ten categories:

1. **Giving:** category trends for unrestricted, temporarily restricted, and permanently restricted giving.
2. **Constituency trends:** individuals, foundations/organizations, churches, boards, alums, and faculty/staff.
3. **Acquisition/attrition:** two challenges to growing the support base.
4. **Budget:** two benchmarks—percentage of total institutional budget and cost of fund-raising.
5. **Mailings/research/marketing/advertising:** mostly new territory for development.
6. **Endowment:** size and percentage in relationship to total budget.
7. **Financial aid:** amount of aid distributed in relationship to funds raised and total institutional budget.
8. **Staff/volunteers:** general data gathered on workload and assistance in getting the job done.
9. **Estate planning:** keeping an eye on the future in the present.



GARY HOAG is vice president of advancement at Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, and a member of the DIAP Steering Committee.

10. **Events:** creating point-of-entry opportunities for people to connect with our mission and vision.

Upon receipt of the data from the participating schools, I compiled another extensive report for the participants. I also put together an executive summary for my DIAP workshop. Because the findings uncovered trends that *Seminary Development News* deemed helpful for a wider reading, I put together this follow-up article with another "Advancement top-ten list."

Advancement top-ten list

10. The schools that raised the most money posted extraordinary numbers in temporarily restricted giving. Unrestricted gifts and permanently restricted gifts may be increasingly more difficult for schools to secure in the years to come. As giving trends change, we should adjust our solicitations accordingly.

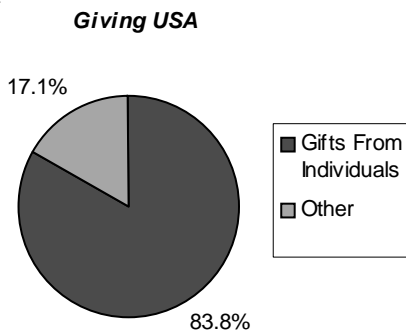
Temporarily restricted giving generally reflects expendable funds raised for things like capital projects and scholarships. The school that raised the most money in our study received 79% of its gifts for such projects. The number-two school in total giving received 42% of its funds for temporarily restricted items, while the other schools followed closely behind. The trend seems to illustrate that our constituents may respond more generously when we package our requests for financial support more specifically than merely asking for gifts to our annual fund or our endowment.

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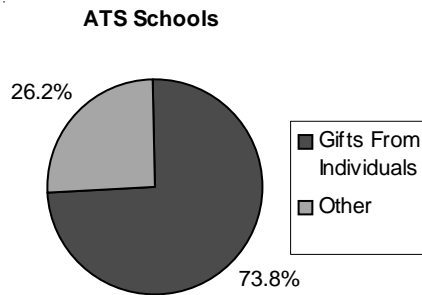
Another assessment, another top ten list

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9. The top source for gifts to all seminaries continues to be individuals, so our programs should make them our top priority. At the same time, we should not overlook foundations, other organizations, and churches, but rather target these constituencies with specific strategies learned from our peers.



Giving USA reports that non-profits receive 83.8% of gifts from individuals (including bequests); surprisingly, each of the respondents in this study came in well below that mark. The average was 73.8%, down from 77.4% last year. Foundation giving for one school represented 30% of gift income. Another institution received 28% of support from churches. The trend seems to show that specific strategies must be implemented to encourage each of our different constituencies to give.

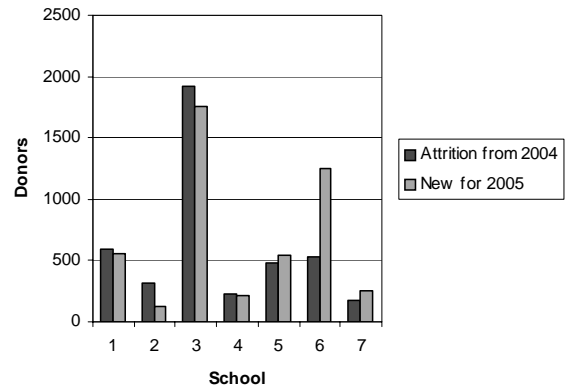


8. If doing *donor-acquisition* work is opening the front door to welcome new givers, managing *attrition* is closing the back door and encouraging them to stay. To grow a healthy and wide base of support, we must simultaneously manage donor acquisition and donor attrition.

Donor acquisition is hard work. Though every school saw new donors join their support team, only three schools reported having actually achieved a broader donor base. That's not a typographical error—only three grew. The school with the most new donors—1,753 giving units—actually had 1,919 stop giving, therefore its support base shrank. The average rate of attrition last year was 23%. This year the average moved in the right direction, dropping to 18%. Though the donor bases are not growing much, the schools have made some progress in slowing the shrinkage by giving attention to this trend and carefully managing acquisition and attrition.

7. The budget data illustrate a direct correlation between spending more department dollars on advancement and raising more money, although the income comes at a higher marginal cost.

Comparing Attrition with New Donors for Seven Schools from 2004 to 2005



Seminaries should be careful to build adequate budgets for funding programs.

The cost of fund-raising from all but two of the responding schools ranged from twelve cents to nineteen cents to raise a dollar. (All personnel and non-personnel expenses for development, alum relations, church relations, publications, and so forth were factored in the figures.) The two schools that posted a much higher cost of fund-raising experienced staff turnover on the executive level. As a percentage of the total institutional budget, advancement expenses ranged from 4.2% to 8.5%—perhaps a good range to consider in your own budget process—but remember, increasing budget dollars may not cause giving to go up by the same percentage.

6. Frequent mailings and seasonal magazines invite participation in our mission and may be our best marketing and advertising tools. Ironically, with or without prospect research, our best prospects may already be receiving materials from us.

Direct mail, magazines, and other publications encourage people to give. Though many schools think they need more prospects, the reality that rocked our peer group was that, on average, only 14% of the constituents who received our best piece—our seasonal magazine—were donors. Only 14%! Again, that is not a typo. The responses ranged from 2.7% to 27.2%. So, at the top school, 72.8% of magazine recipients are not donors, although they are encouraged to do so through the piece itself and other direct mail. The trend that seems to be surfacing here is that

we are hardly scratching the surface of the giving potential of our own lists.

5. As a general rule of thumb, a healthy minimum endowment is two or three times the total institutional budget, so that its earnings provide 10-15% of institutional income each year. Sharing the 2-3-times budget formula with givers may encourage their endowment support and provide leaders with a range for targeting growth.

Don't judge an endowment by its dollar value alone. Comparing the size of the endowment to the size of the institutional budget can illustrate how well the earnings from the endowment help supplement the overall budget. The schools in our study have endowments that measure as small as .17 times their operating budget to 2.61 times their operating budget. How much is enough? The trend our peer group seems to be targeting is this 2-3-times range.

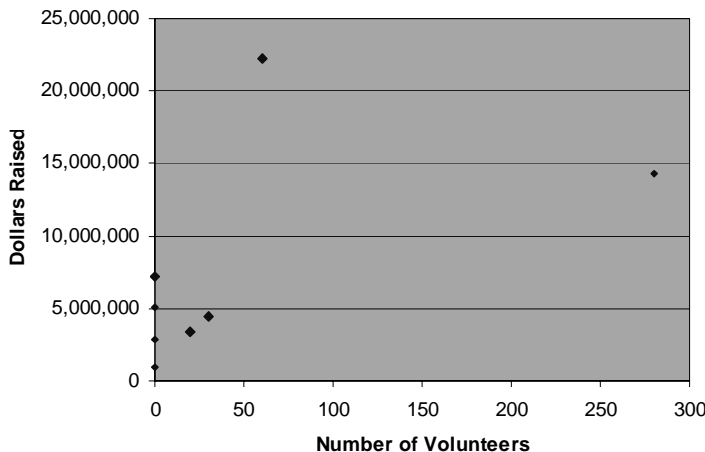
4. Financial aid figures submitted by schools were "all over the map." Funding financial aid and managing tuition discounting may best be done by setting the goal for financial aid at about 10% of the total budget and making plans to fund that aid through unrestricted, temporarily restricted, and endowment sources.

A dashboard indicator for managing financial aid can be to examine total aid as a percentage of the total institutional budget. For the five schools that communicated total budget information and total financial aid, the numbers ranged from 6.3% to 17.0% of the total institutional budget. So the trend may be that if financial aid represents about 10% of your total institutional budget and if there is growing popularity to giving for special projects, try to raise as much of that money as possible in the form of scholarships.

3. Regardless of the size of the staff, there is a strong correlation between raising more money and having more volunteers. Schools that led the way in total dollars raised mobilized the most volunteers. Because only four schools cited having any volunteers at all, there is much upside for growth here.

There is not much to add here. The numbers speak for themselves. If we find ways to encourage others to be involved in our

Total Amount Raised vs. Number of Volunteers for Eight Schools



advancement efforts, that likely will result in increased giving.

2. To see more matured estates, we must encourage people to include our institutions in their wills, trusts, and other planned-giving instruments. The schools that host estate-planning stewardship seminars and track future expectancies in the present were experiencing higher returns now.

Another trend arose here. The two schools that hosted stewardship seminars had the largest *Legacy Society* lists. *Legacy Society* lists include all people who have made a provision for their school in their will or trust documents.

1. Events help our schools raise awareness, mobilize volunteers, and generate givers. Two of the top three money-raising schools were two of the top three event-hosting schools. If each of our schools would host more point-of-entry events, more people may embrace the mission of advancing theological education.

Events may be labor-intensive, but they can expand your support base. Every institution reported doing advancement-related events and the ones that did so more often tended to raise more money through follow-up with attendees.

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Another assessment, another top ten list

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I hope these findings help you assess the effectiveness of your own efforts and make you aware of trends to address. If you are interested in doing a peer study of your own with similar schools, like we did at Denver Seminary, you may download our survey instrument at www.denverseminary.edu/giving/stewardship and adapt it as you wish.

As iron sharpens iron, may we work together to sharpen one another in our service to God. *SDN*

Don't miss your next issue of SEMINARY DEVELOPMENT NEWS!

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The mission of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public. *Seminary Development News* supports the mission of the Association by informing seminary personnel about current trends and issues in theological education institutional advancement. The newsletter is distributed to all ATS member school presidents and development officers, and to foundation personnel.

Seminary Development News welcomes submissions of unsolicited manuscripts on any aspect of development in theological education. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and 800 to 1,600 words in length (three-to-six typewritten pages) and if at all possible submitted via electronic mail to the address below. All manuscripts will be scheduled for publication at the editor's discretion and will be edited to conform to the newsletter's style and format. Unaccepted manuscripts sent to the editor via the postal service will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope, affixed with the proper postage. The deadline for submissions is eight weeks in advance of each issue, as follows: March 1 for the May issue and October 1 for the December issue.

Address all correspondence to Richard Eppinga, *Seminary Development News*, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 (616-957-8592, reppinga@calvinseminary.edu).

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Calvin Theological Seminary

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DIAP Conference 2006

Communicating the Vision

February 16 – 18, 2006
Savannah, Georgia



Featured speakers included (left to right) Rebekah Burch Basinger (*In Trust*), John Kinney (Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology), and Sharon Miller (Center for the Study of Theological Education, Auburn Theological Seminary).



Workshop presenter Barbara A. Chaapel (Princeton Theological Seminary) talks to Mike Colaneri (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) after the preconference workshop – *The Jawbone's Connected to the Hammer, Anvil, and Stirrup Bones: Communication as the Connective Tissue of Theological Advancement*.



The Steering Committee poses for a picture after its meeting. Members present included (left to right): Howard Freeman (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), Kathleen Hansen (Luther Seminary), Daniel Schipp (Saint Meinrad School of Theology), Leroy Solomon (Ashland Theological Seminary), Mary McMillan (ATS), Gary Hoag (Denver Seminary), Dick Eppinga (Calvin Theological Seminary), Scott Sheldon, and Bill Myers (ATS).



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