TE | Theological Education

ISSUE FOCUS

What Would Kant Tweet?
The Utilization of Online Technology in Courses
Involving Formation, Meaning, and Value
Ron Mercer and Mark Simpson

Online Education and Curricular Design
James Spencer

The Itinerant Scholar-Teacher: Reflections
on Twenty Years as an Adjunct Faculty Member
Kathleen Henderson Staudt

A Future in the Hyphen:
The Dawning of the Faculty-Administrator
Michael R. Trice

What Is Expected from the Faculty of the Future?
Tightened Budgets, Curricular Innovation,
and Defining Faculty Identity at Luther Seminary
Matthew L. Skinner

Big Data for Faculty Development in Research
and Teaching
Andrew J. Peterson

A Pedagogy of Engagement for the Changing
Character of the 21st Century Classroom
Roy E. Barsness and Richard D. Kim

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(article list continued on back cover)

The Changing Character
of Faculty Work

Theological Education

The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits schools that are members of ATS and approves the degree programs they offer.

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The **ISSUE FOCUS** section of the journal contains articles that have been solicited by the editors or the editorial board. These articles address current topics and issues in theological education, identified areas of the Association's work, and/or reports of work undertaken by ATS projects.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to previously published articles in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to editors@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

Unsolicited submissions are generally considered for publication in the **OPEN FORUM** section. These articles may focus on any of a variety of subjects related to graduate, professional theological education in North America. The open forum may also include articles drawn from presentations at ATS leadership education events and other Association venues in order to make them more widely available.

Theological Education invites manuscript submissions that are consistent with the journal's purposes as enumerated in its mission statement. Unsolicited submissions satisfying initial review by the journal editors will be sent for blind peer review to members of the review board, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication. The editorial board will not consider manuscripts that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

Theological Education Mission Statement

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools and The ATS Commission on Accrediting, is devoted to the distinctive concerns of graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association and the Commission by providing those concerned with theological education—including administrators, faculty, and independent researchers—with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, provocative reflection pieces, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education.

Submission Guidelines

1. Recommended length is 3,750 words (approximately 15 double-spaced pages).
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed., using one-inch margins, left justification, footnotes, and 12 pt. Times New Roman.
3. Write in the third-person form when possible.
4. If quoting Scripture, include the Bible translation with each reference.
5. The latest editions of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
6. Provide a paragraph abstract of approximately 80 words at the beginning of the article.
7. Add a short (1–2 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution(s), current position(s), and, when appropriate, the author's relationship with the project/topic.
8. Bibliographies are typically not published, especially when they list sources already present in the footnotes.
9. Submissions should be emailed to editors@ats.edu.

Author's Checklist

1. The audience for *Theological Education* includes people from multiple academic disciplines and diverse religious traditions, who share in common their work as theological educators. Have you written with this audience in mind?
2. Is the article timely? Does the article contribute significantly to current interdisciplinary discourse about theological education?
3. Does the subject matter represent new ideas or experiences that colleagues at other theological schools can incorporate into their teaching or administration?
4. Will the article spark useful debate on the topic?
5. Is the article well-written with a clear focus and well-developed/supported arguments?
6. Is the research methodology sound and appropriate?
7. If applicable, does the article make accurate use of the data available from ATS and other sources?
8. Does the article conform to the submission guidelines listed above?

Editors' Introduction

The ongoing ATS work with faculty reveals that member schools and those who serve and study in them are truly blessed with extraordinarily gifted, dedicated, and collegial faculties. Both informal conversations and more formal studies and surveys show that the faculty members serving ATS schools today are the most academically qualified, most active in publishing, most creative in teaching, and most broadly diverse in the history of these institutions.

Yet faculty members are under increasing stress, and change is a strong undercurrent. In the midst of institutional downsizing, many faculty report increased and increasing administrative loads. In the midst of economic challenges, some schools are discussing larger teaching requirements and some are questioning the practice of tenure. A growing tension exists between the specialization required in PhD programs and the schools' need for teaching generalists. Assessment of student learning, while ultimately contributing to the effectiveness of the schools and beneficial to the students they serve, is a lot of work. Finally, new educational models and practices, many of them utilizing digital educational technologies, require faculty members to retool and adapt to new formats, approaches, and methods of teaching and learning.

It seemed appropriate, therefore, to dedicate an issue of *Theological Education* to "The Changing Character of Faculty Work."

The vocation of theological faculty has been explored at various times in *Theological Education* since the journal's inception in 1964. In the inaugural issue, John Bright, professor of Hebrew and the interpretation of the Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, offered reflections on how faculty members wrestle with "the tension between the intellectual canons of scholarship and the practical concerns of vocational training." A little more than a decade later, an issue of *Theological Education* published the report of the Task Force on Academic Freedom and Faculty Tenure, topics in the news almost daily four decades later. Issues in the 1990s addressed the composition of the faculty with respect to gender and ethnicity, and how a faculty's interpretation of the wider cultural situation might influence its criteria for excellence.

Significant change has occurred in society, church, and theological schools over the past five decades. For example, today about one in

five faculty members in ATS member schools are racial/ethnic persons, more than double the proportion a quarter century ago. Change has been gradual but promises to be more dramatic in the future.

Many of these topics continue to be of interest today, and others of import have emerged, prompting the journal's staff and editorial board to issue a call for proposals to hear directly from faculty about the changes they see in their role as theological educators. Of the many proposals received, the editors selected a representative group and asked authors to write full-length manuscripts for blind peer review. Seven of those articles appear in this issue. We hope you find them informative and thought pro-voking. If you would like to share those thoughts with us and your peers, we invite you to respond using the "Continuing the Conversation" forum (see page iii for details).

Finally, this issue would not be complete without expressing our sincere gratitude to three guest reviewers who helped process the larger-than-normal number of manuscripts being considered for publication. Many thanks go to Michael Attridge of the University of St. Michael's College and Steve Crocco formerly of Princeton Theological Seminary, both of whom served previous terms on the Editorial Board of *Theological Education*. Thanks also go to Dick Nysse (retired) of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, who brought his expertise in distance education to manuscripts dealing with online learning.

Stephen R. Graham
Senior Editor

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Issue Focus

What Would Kant Tweet? The Utilization of Online Technology in Courses Involving Formation, Meaning, and Value

Ron Mercer and Mark Simpson
Chapman Seminary of Oakland City University

ABSTRACT*:* *As the ATS Commission on Accrediting allows greater freedom for member schools to utilize online tools, it must also address the efficacy of online courses in fostering spiritual formation and the teaching of values. This article first discusses the abstract necessities in communicating transformative values as articulated by Immanuel Kant. Interestingly, these abstractions can be implemented in the online classroom wherein information dissemination can be balanced with courseware that provides an interactive immersive environment. This environment produces the milieu for real spiritual formation.*

During the 2013 Annual Research Symposium of Chapman Seminary, the professor of

> **KantTweetThis** @KantTweetThis · 5h
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> Online classrooms, properly designed, develop learning communities to nurture thinking, explore meaning, and value living theologically.

education and online learning presented a paper titled "The Challenge of Theological Education in the Age of Digital Learning." The thrust of the presentation endeavored to encourage Chapman seminary faculty and, by extension, the faculty of Oakland City University, to explore the value of active learning as it pertains to the success of online courses. The address was timely, for within the previous two years the university had begun offering online courses at various levels and in various degree programs, and several Chapman Seminary faculty had already been asked to create online courses at the undergraduate level. The ePromised Land with this endeavor was increased enrollment; the golden calf along the way was

increased revenue. After assessing the (dis)ease with which the online courses were created, implemented, and deemed successful, the neophyte online instructors began to wonder if the combination of professor of education and online learning was some sort of oxymoron. Even worse, the very idea of how such courses could be utilized at the MDiv level had become unthinkable. Fortunately, the lecture was educational, encouraging, and even enlightening regarding the potential for online courses to be legitimate college-level courses—in some cases.

The question and answer session began with Chapman's associate professor of philosophy expressing concerns regarding how well online courses could be utilized to convey information in classes that focused on the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. These higher levels (analyze, evaluate, and create) would seem difficult given what the presentation argued to be true about learners today:

> Students in the digital age are accustomed to acquiring and disseminating knowledge in smaller bits of information designed to be accessed quickly on electronic devices. . . . In digital learning, students look for answers via multiple forms of technology at times when it is convenient. Lectures at set dates and times are less attractive options. Digital learners tend to access knowledge in short video clips, sound bytes, terse blog posts, and brevity of web page content. The resulting decrease in attention span makes sitting through hour-long lectures almost painful for today's student.[1]

Is it possible to understand and analyze difficult material in such an apparently abbreviated medium? Can the intricacies of a Tillich or the difficulties of a Kant be communicated to students with a digitally induced short attention span? With resistance to the very idea that online environments could succeed in these matters, the question was asked during the symposium, What would Kant tweet?

Exploring the possibilities of imparting meaning, value, and spiritual formation to students in online classrooms is particularly relevant for seminaries today. Knowing how to foster these virtues—or even if we can do

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1. Mark E. Simpson, "The Challenge of Theological Education in the Age of Digital Learning," *Common Ground Journal* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 58–71, http://www.common-groundjournal.org/volnum/v11n02.pdf.

so online—is increasingly important in theological education, especially as the ATS Commission on Accrediting has allowed greater freedom in utilizing online learning. Chapman's own journey toward accepting the necessity of online learning at the MDiv level has taken several steps.

> 66 *After assessing the (dis)ease with which the online courses were created, implemented, and deemed successful, the neophyte online instructors began to wonder if the combination of professor of education and online learning was some sort of oxymoron.*

First, Chapman had to come to grips with the necessity of the program. Online learning is not just for undergraduates anymore; it is going to be an integral part of graduate-level degrees. Second, the seminary spent the remainder of the academic year after the symposium exploring how the online classroom could be designed to address the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. An inspirational model was needed. Interestingly, Kant's own discussion of how students should learn to philosophize helped to provide the necessary conditions for any such higher order goals. Inspired by that discussion, Chapman faculty worked on the practical design of an online course that could achieve Kant's vision. Overcoming the obstacle of how to provide community in an online setting became the preeminent issue, for it is only in a robust community that the interaction necessary for formation can take place. What follows is the chronicle of Chapman's journey through the realization of necessity, the discovery of inspiration, and the production of practicality.

One seminary's journey to the ePromised Land

Online courses had already been accepted as a part of Oakland City University's undergraduate curriculum, but Chapman faculty questioned the need for attempting anything online at the graduate level. The economic uncertainties and instabilities academic institutions have faced in the post-9/11 world, however, have forced some theological schools to explore the potential benefits of offering online courses and programs. This journey to the ePromised Land does not always begin with faculty being enthusiastic about expanding theological education opportunities through online

learning. The journey sometimes begins reluctantly as a result of regional accreditation pressures and board of trustee mandates to increase enrollments and strengthen institutional finances.

For example, Chapman Seminary, part of Oakland City University in southwest Indiana, is located in a rural community. The economies of the surrounding counties are largely built on farming, coal mining, small businesses, and an auto manufacturer. Over time, the pool of potential new students became somewhat limited given the low population density in the area. The administration and the board therefore explored offering online courses and programs as a way to invigorate enrollments and finances. The regional accreditation agency agreed and allowed the university to offer up to 20 percent of its programs fully online. Thus Chapman Seminary's School of Religious Studies was tasked to develop and offer the Associate of Arts in Religious Studies fully online with a vision to offer Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry courses online in the future.

But what would have to be present in an online class to produce the formation and value achieved in the face-to-face classroom?

The focus of the academy should be more than providing knowledge

> **KantTweetThis** @KantTweetThis · Jan 24
> Academies send more people out into the world with their heads full of inanities than any other public institution - Announcement [2:306]

The fear that the academy could use a method that fails to result in the proper education of students is not new. Immanuel Kant was sure that this was the case in 1765 and published his critique as part of an advertisement for lecture courses he was delivering the winter semester of that year.[2]

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2. Immanuel Kant, "M. Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Program of His Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765–1766," in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, trans. and eds. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 251–260. Pagination refers to the original German pagination given on the side of the text.

The short work has much to commend to educators regarding the role of teachers, universities, and methods, and has been described as, what we would call today, a statement of teaching philosophy.[3] Of prominent issue, Kant declared that education should first develop the understanding, then reason, and then learning, which, if done in this manner, would mean that the student would first learn how to comprehend and use information without piling material onto a mind ill-equipped to digest it. However, as was the case for universities in the blooming enlightenment, schools were expected to give all students some measure of philosophical education. The result was a reversing of Kant's prescribed order of learning, which he argued would conclude with that student's knowledge becoming a

> borrowed science which he wears, not as something which has, so to speak, grown within him, but as something which has been hung upon him. Intellectual aptitude is as unfruitful as it ever was. But at the same time it has been corrupted to a much greater degree by the delusion of wisdom.[4]

In other words, without the proper formation of the mind, the meaning and value of the education is lost and becomes only a cacophony of mis-understood shibboleths. While Kant directed this critique at schools trying to impart philosophical wisdom to unprepared students, seminaries find similar issues with preparing ministers by means of overemphasizing vocational techniques and underemphasizing spiritual formation.[5] This worry is heightened with online courses.

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3.   George MacDonald Ross, "Kant on Teaching Philosophy," *Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 65–82.

4.   Kant, "Announcement," (2:306).

5.   For our purposes here, we are ignoring the fact that Kant made a distinction between the teaching of philosophy and the teaching of divinity and other sciences. In Kant's "The Conflict of the Faculties," he specifically argues that the area of divinity merely provides vocational training that is built upon critical, philosophical learning. In his "Announcement," he claims that philosophy sits apart from other disciplines. Needless to say, we, as seminary professors, find the task of teaching divinity to be much more than a technical vocation, and, consequently, find Kant's discussion of teaching methods to be useful for divinity as much as they are for philosophy. There is simply no space to make that argument here. See, "The Conflict of the Faculties," *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and eds. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 233–327.

The 1990s saw an increased interest in distance learning with the technological advancements that the Internet and home computers provided universities. Supplanting traditional correspondence courses, the fully online course began to be offered at major, respected universities. But while there were many reasons for hope given the new technology, some were already voicing concerns at that time that mirror the concerns of Chapman Seminary faculty in the twenty-first century: "Some fields . . . will never be suited to extensive computer mediation, especially those concerned with questions of meaning and value, of culture and philosophy."[6] Perhaps the incredible advances that continue to occur in online learning should make us doubt the force of this statement, but when we compare the experience and questions of educators at the inception of the online boom with the experience and questions raised now, little difference can be seen.

Eugene Heath published an analysis of his own online course in Political and Social Philosophy in 1997, a course in which he—as many Chapman Seminary faculty have done—attempted to present content in a manner analogous to his traditional courses. The course featured reading books, writing essays, participating in online discussions, answering comprehension questions, and taking a final exam.[7] Regardless of how ancient technology was in the 1990s, professors still begin their online courses in much the same manner, modeled after their own in-class experience. Heath concludes that "learning is limited to what can appear on the screen, careful reading is replaced by colorful graphics, and thought and reflection is subordinated to the retrieval of information and the composition of brief comments."[8] These comments appear to reflect the problems noted regarding short attention spans. Second, Heath also questions the efficacy of online discussion:

> Is the online conference . . . an equivalent of a focused and engaged discussion that can occur in the face-to-face encounters in the classroom? . . . Indeed, in a classroom, one of the most important philosophical questions is that of meaning: "What do you mean by '_____'?" To pose this

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6.   William F. Massy and Robert Zemsky, "Information Technology and Academic Productivity," *Educom Review* 31, no. 1 (January/February, 1996): 13.

7.   Eugene Heath, "Two Cheers and a Pint of Worry: An On-line Course in Political and Social Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 20, no. 3 (September 1997): 279.

8.   Ibid., 293.

question online is rather inefficient: For this sort of question often presupposes some immediacy of context.[9]

The problem with meaning reflects Kant's criticism of adorning students with knowledge that they cannot internalize because there is no proper connection between the learner and the content.

Heath argues that using a computer to "deliver the course" is one thing, but for the computer to be the "focal point and process by which the course is conducted" is another.[10] Educators need methods for online delivery of courses without making the computer the end-all-be-all of class content. For this to be the case, online courses must not be constructed along the same lines as the traditional course, and in order to begin a new direction, Kant can be utilized once again. Kant first asserts that the understanding "must be brought to maturity and its growth expedited by exercising it in empirical judgments."[11] Here, *empirical judgments* simply means drawing conclusions from one's own senses and experience. Second, from these conclusions, a student begins to create concepts, which lead toward the understanding of guiding principles behind the concepts. Finally, these concepts are grasped in a coherent whole that goes beyond mere bits of knowledge to arrive at a practicable discipline: "The youth who has completed his school instruction has been accustomed *to learn.* He now thinks that he is going *to learn philosophy.* But that is impossible, for he ought now *to learn to philosophise*."[12] The discipline, itself, cannot be taught but must be achieved by the student, and the best method for doing

> 66 *Educators need methods for online delivery of courses without making the computer the end-all-be-all of class content. For this to be the case, online courses must not be constructed along the same lines as the traditional course . . .*

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9. Ibid., 294.

10. Ibid., 293.

11. Kant, "Announcement," 2:306.

12. Ibid.

so, according to Kant, is via the *zetetic* method. Zetetic learning calls for the student to confront multiple sides of an issue, turning over the possibilities in his or her mind, until there is a realization of the concepts, principles, and discipline that lie underneath the issue.[13]

For the philosopher, zetetic learning is embedded within the tradition of skepticism where it was first used by the Pyrrhonians to bring about a suspension of judgment, by arguing one side against another until one realizes that there are no solutions, and the mind should simply be at rest. Kant, however, famously goes beyond the irreconcilability of the antinomies and declares that it is possible to be awakened from one's dogmatic slumber as he does in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, but his journey was not an easy one. While introductions to philosophy paint Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) and *Prolegomena* (1783) as responses to David Hume's skepticism, they ignore the long and winding story that begins with the publication of Hume's *Enquiry* in German translation in 1755, follows Kant wrestling with similar issues throughout his career, and reaches a climax some 30 years later. The intervening 30 years show Kant reading and writing in fits and starts regarding the issues of Hume's skepticism until he can finally declare an awakening for himself.[14] While it is not the case that any university has 30 years to affect a student, it is certainly the case that a university can provide a community within which one can achieve awakening through not only gathering information but also trying out one's concepts in the marketplace of ideas. Herein it is possible to create an awakening from the zetetic.

But can you create that zetetic in an online classroom?

Lessons learned in designing online courses

As the task of developing online courses began, several things became clear. First, simply uploading campus classroom material and audio or video tapes of campus lectures is insufficient. An online course is not intended to be an electronic version of an independent study—it also needs to

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13. See Ross for a short, helpful discussion, 77–78 (see n. 3).

14. See for example, Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, trans. and ed. David Walford (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), specifically the two essays "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy (1763)" and "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics (1766)."

immerse learners in critical reflection of unit concepts, resulting in the formation of new insights and creating opportunities for spiritual formation. For this immersion and formation to be fostered, an online community of learning has to be developed. The resulting "interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions [creates] a learning community through which knowledge is imparted and meaning is co-created."[15] These interactions also increase the number of opportunities faculty and students have to explore spiritual formation as part of the learning experience.

> *An online course is not intended to be an electronic version of an independent study—it also needs to immerse learners in critical reflection of unit concepts, resulting in the formation of new insights and creating opportunities for spiritual formation.*

A significant part of forming this online learning community is using discussion forums. Discussions were routinely used by the faculty to discuss course subject matter, refine and share ideas, and explore meanings and values. But the faculty observed that students tended to wait until the end of the week to begin involvement in discussions in the online classroom. It therefore became necessary to add to the syllabus the expectation that discussion participation had to occur early in the week and throughout the week. While students were able to work ahead on course learning activities, interaction in the current unit was required, and only posts made in that unit when it was the current one counted for credit. Of all expectations in online instruction, this change had the most significant impact on the integrity of the online learning experience.

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15. Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Online Learning Communities: Effective Strategies for the Virtual Classroom* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 27. The works of Palloff and Pratt are notable in that they helped pioneer the theoretical and applied principles followed in the development of online learning.

Additional discussion forums for specific purposes were created to strengthen the online learning community and provide more opportunities for students and the instructor to interact, such as the following:

- **Online chapel discussion forum.** A discussion forum can serve as an online chapel. An online chapel allows students to share prayer requests, devotionals, links to campus chapel messages, and so forth. As faculty and students interact in the chapel, an opportunity for challenging spiritual formation outside the classroom is possible.
- **Journaling on formation via a discussion forum.** A discussion forum can function as a way for students to blog or journal about their spiritual journey. In the context of the course's subject matter, this journaling provides a way for students to share how they are appropriating course learning in life and ministry practice.
- **Refining concept formation through simulation and case study topics in a discussion forum.** A discussion forum can be used to present students with a case study or simulation of a course concept to explore the application of Christian principles.[16]
- **Tweeting concept summaries via a discussion forum.** A discussion forum can be used by students to post Twitter-like summaries of course principles in each unit of study. Condensing complex concepts in one's own words in the form of a single short statement limited to 140 characters involves a great deal of critical reflection.
- **Posting news, announcements, *and* reflections in a discussion forum.** A discussion forum for news and announcements is a common feature in a learning management system. Repurposing this forum to also include instructor posts of personal insights, observations, and lessons learned about the course subject matter allows students to glean additional insight from the professor's life and ministry experiences.
- **A discussion forum for students to ask the professor questions.** A discussion forum can be created for the purposes of student questions about the course and course learning activities. When questions are posted here, interruptions to the topic discussions in the units of study can be minimized. Students also have quick access to instructions from

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16. Kaye Shelton, George Saltsman, and Jekabs Bikis, "Can a True Faith-Based Education be Delivered Online?" *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* (Fall 2006): 191–196, http://www.cbfa.org/JBIB_2006.pdf.

the instructor rather than having to search for those answers embedded in other forums.

Through several discussion forums, the community of learning can be fostered, similar to how it is in a campus classroom using in-class discussions, small group activities, student presentations, and so on. In all of these discussion interactions, meaning and value can be explored. The Spirit also is present, forming and shaping each learner into Christlikeness, the true basis of community. Since we know we enjoy fellowship with Christ and now (1 Corinthian 1:9), we know community is not restricted to physical presence but rather is built on interacting with Christ and one another.[17]

As course materials were created for the online classroom, the seminary faculty faced two challenges. First, where course materials were placed in a classroom and within a unit needed to be consistent across units and across courses. Consistency in design helped create a predictable environment, which helped students and the instructor know where to look for specific course information and resources. While consistency may not seem to be a challenge, it was at first in creating the templates for course materials and the layout of the online classroom. Consistency can help or hinder learning, as inconsistent forms of interaction and classroom design can make it harder for both faculty and students to participate in the online community.[18]

A second challenge, and in many ways the most difficult one for the faculty and for the students, was the usability and availability of the technologies used in the online classroom. Within the school, some faculty were highly adept at creating and using audio, video, and other technologies in presenting course materials. Others who already struggled with technology in the campus classroom found the challenges in creating an

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17. Mark A. Maddix, "Developing Online Learning Communities," in *Best Practices of Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, eds. Mark A. Maddix, James R. Estep, and Mary E. Lowe (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012), 34.

18. Jakob Nielsen, "iPad Usability: First Findings from User Testing," *Nielsen Norman Group* (May 10, 2010), http://www.nngroup.com/articles/ipad-usability-first-findings/. The first iPad apps, for example, were sometimes difficult for users to navigate because of inconsistencies in design across apps. The same can be true in online courses if the design of the classroom and courseware is not consistent within the classroom and across classrooms.

online course daunting. Expecting IT to create courseware was unrealistic given the IT team's other technology responsibilities for the university. Thus course material was created either by those faculty who knew how to do so or by an outside vendor who packaged the courseware for the instructor.

In the early stages of courseware development, faculty tended to think of course units as the online version of a campus classroom. Thus presentations were sometimes created as one or more 50-minute long presentation(s). Unfortunately, students with limited bandwidth Internet connections reported that it was difficult, if not impossible, to view these presentation materials. To make the presentations more accessible, longer presentations were broken down into logical smaller chunks of material. An advantage to using multiple smaller-sized presentations was the ability to replace a section of content as textbook editions changed, rather than having to change the whole presentation.

Additional courseware developments were found to enhance the student online learning experience.

- **Resources need to vary.** Classrooms become boring if every unit offers only the same types of content. Providing a variety of types of resources that collectively meet course learning objectives increases student exploration of unit concepts. Faculty were encouraged, for example, to add audio podcasts, classroom and conference videos available on YouTube or other prominent websites, slideshow presentations (preferably with audio), handouts saved in PDF format (for increased accessibility), and links to subject-related websites to address the various learning needs and styles of students in the classroom.

- **Quality and consistency in the presentation of learning materials is important.** Neat and clean formatting of course content presents material professionally. Such packaging, though, does not mean the professor has to be an artist. For online students, this is the physical "presence" they have with the institution. Programs like Word, Pages, PowerPoint, and Keynote provide templates that create consistent and professional-looking learning resources. These resources should be placed in the classroom units in the same structural locations. (See Figure 1: Sample Online Classroom Design.)

- **Focus on the learning in community must be intentional.** Learning in community does not just occur on its own. An online learning

FIGURE 1. Sample online classroom design

community in theological education must be nurtured and grown under the mentoring of the instructor. Students will not feel comfortable sharing experiences and forming relationships that encourage the development of *understanding* if they do not see the instructor also engaged in that process. The more the instructor participates, the more students are encouraged to reflect on their learning and integrate the knowledge of faith as belief with the understanding of faith as practice. Integration does begin with the online courseware itself, but its value is increased when undergirded and strengthened through student-to-student community and the formation of student-to-faculty relationships.[19] Collectively these interactions, relationships, and experiences shape the growth and development of the individual online learner. (See Figure 2: Facets of an Online Community of Learning.)

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19. Shelton, Saltsman, and Bikis, "Can a True Faith-Based Education be Delivered Online?" 191 (see n. 16).

FIGURE 2. Facets of an online community of learning

Facets of an Online Community of Learning
Instructor-mediated, learner-focused *koinonia* that utilizes digital technologies to share knowledge, promote dialogue and reflection, encourage collaboration, and mentor whole person formation through an individualized, interactive learning environment

Instructor
Colleagues
Resources
Learner
Faith
Values
Belief
Practices

By Mark E. Simpson, PhD

- **Course objectives define courseware needs and learning outcomes.** As the seminary began to offer online courses, the institution was also beginning the process of aligning course objectives and learning outcomes, and developing rubrics to measure those outcomes in assignments and assessments. The faculty approved guiding principles behind this alignment using the idea of a tapestry. The tapestry was created to provide a way for campus and online student learning to be evaluated in an equivalent fashion. The tapestry also allows the faculty to compare and contrast the effectiveness and integrity of the instructional delivery systems.

In this tapestry, three different types of objectives are to be observed across three main themes of emphasis within the seminary programs: thinking theologically, living faithfully, and serving effectively. Cognitive objectives (remembering, evaluating, and creating), affective objectives (receiving, valuing, and characterizing), and behavioral objectives (imitating,

performing, and adapting) are addressed in each of the three dimensions. When laid out as the warp and woof of a tapestry, the result is nine different areas of student achievement. As a result of the tapestry, courseware needs can be determined when an online course is first developed and later refined over time.

Some courseware development issues were challenging to resolve. Faculty compensation for course development in the form of release time from teaching or additional stipends had to be determined by the administration. Similarly, compensation for needed changes to course content as a result of broken web links, changes in learning objectives, and textbook changes became an issue as courses were reoffered. Intellectual property rights were also an ongoing concern of the faculty. While the intellectual property belonged to the instructor, questions arose about what happens to that property when another instructor is asked to teach the online course.

Lessons learned in teaching online courses

Once an online course was designed by a faculty member, he or she was given the right of first refusal to teach the course before other instructors were engaged. This right of first refusal allowed the course designer to make refinements to the instructional materials if necessary. Since the faculty usually had not taught online courses previously, the temptation existed to add synchronous learning activities to the units of study as a course unfolded. One of the reasons online courses are attractive to non-residential students, though, is the convenience of studying any time from any location. But when instructors required real-time learning activities, such as chat rooms or web conferencing, these conveniences were lost to the online student. When faculty are teaching online courses, they must constantly remember that online students take online courses because of the flexibility in scheduling studies around employment, life, and ministry obligations.

Occasional synchronous activities like chat rooms and web conferencing that were not required for participation, attendance, or grading became popular for some. Providing alternate opportunities to view these synchronous sessions had to be offered. Usually this involved simple text copies of chat room conversations or recording the web conference and

posting it online for later viewing. As a result, the flexibility and convenience of online learning was maintained.

Additional teaching strategies were shared with online instructors to enhance overall satisfaction with the learning experience. These strategies included the following:

- **Schedule online classroom involvement like campus class time.** Because online learning is asynchronous, it is easy to let the week slip by without interacting with the online students early in the week. One way to prevent this from happening is to schedule consistent times throughout the week to go online to read forums, grade assignments, provide feedback, and so forth. Protecting that time to be online also can be announced to students as potential office hours to call the instructor or use online messaging to make contact.

- **Expect a learning curve in teaching online.** Teaching an online course is different from teaching a residential course, and using online technologies can be awkward at first until faculty get used to how they work (and don't work). Remember, students may also be facing similar learning curves.

- **Common courtesies diminish potential sterility in online communications.** Online forums, posts, and announcements can easily be misunderstood as negative or indifferent given the brevity usually involved in those messages. The lack of body language clues in messaging may also inhibit or obscure intended meanings. Remembering to say please and thank you and the occasional smiling face emoticon :-) adds personality to online communications. Also alerting students that opposing views are being presented as a discussion generator (i.e., playing devil's advocate) helps prevent misunderstanding.

- **Online policies and procedures often need to be modified from residential protocols.** What works on campus does not necessarily work well for the online student. For example, daytime office hours frequently are inconvenient for the adult learner who is working those same hours. Therefore, anything that involves face-to-face contact on campus needs to be made accessible to the online student at other times or in other ways. These services need to be user-friendly and provided quickly given the rapid unfolding of online course units of study. Waiting a week or longer to provide assistance to campus students may not significantly hinder their course completion, but the

compressed nature of online learning makes delays in services problematic to course completion for online learners.

- **If you build it, they don't just come.** Avoid the false assumption that offering online courses and programs will result automatically in increased enrollments and revenue. These outcomes may occur only after the institution provides for continuous marketing support for online studies, which includes developing and deploying marketing collateral through postal mailings and email campaigns, informing employers about online offerings, using social media, and so on. It also means enhancing the institution's website for search engine optimization so that the institution's online offerings appear as high up as possible on the first page of hits in search engine results. Without intentionally marketing online programs, the enrollment and revenue growth hoped for is likely not to be experienced.

- **Avoid cannibalizing residential classroom enrollments.** Residential students may be tempted to take one or more online courses alongside their campus courses in order to complete degree requirements quickly. When residential students are allowed to take online courses, the same course offered on campus may not meet minimum enrollments. Faculty have also observed that residential students often have difficulties with the time management differences involved in an online course versus the campus course. Residential students faced with demanding online course schedules wedged into residential course studies often set themselves up for unintentional failure.

What would Kant tweet?

KantTweetThis @KantTweetThis · Jan 23
It is not thoughts but thinking which the understanding ought to learn - Announcement [2:306]

Online learning should not be designed as just another modality for acquiring information. Instead, including a form of zetetic learning as proposed

by Kant can make the classroom a dynamic formative environment for the fully online student. As Jerome Bruner once observed,

> To instruct someone . . . is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge. We teach a subject not to produce little living librarians on that subject, but rather to get a student to think . . . for himself . . . Knowing is a process, not a product.[20]

Challenging students to move beyond knowledge of theological concepts to thinking and living theologically requires an interactive learning community. Online theological education can provide that opportunity, but it does so in ways that are different from the face-to-face classroom. Those differences are neither superior nor inferior to face-to-face instruction, but they do require the instructor to modify the presentation of curriculum as well as instructional strategy to support the online community of learning. Doing so presents theological educators with the opportunity to mentor and shape the lives of students beyond the four walls of the campus classroom, reaching those who desire to learn from faculty wisdom and expertise but are unable to come to campus to do so.[21]

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20. Jerome S. Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), 72.

21. Snap shots of an online classroom using multiple discussion forums to foster online community and provide opportunities for spiritual formation can be found at http://www.edcot.com/zetetic.html.

Online Education and Curricular Design

James Spencer
Moody Distance Learning of Moody Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: *Design-thinking approaches to problem solving and product development offer opportunities to supplement current disciplinary and ecclesial concerns already factored into the curriculum. They allow a greater focus on student needs in relation to curricular arrangement, content, and delivery, as well as on more collaborative processes in which faculty work closely with other institutional personnel, including recruitment and marketing, in the design of the curriculum. These approaches may require faculty to develop new orientations and competencies in curricular design.*

Changes to the ATS Commission on Accrediting Standards of Accreditation regarding distance education allow seminaries to deliver degrees, including the Master of Divinity, fully online.[1] While questions concerning the ability of online programs to effectively deliver residential theological education outcomes have dominated discussions related to online education, there has been relatively little conversation related to the connection between learning outcomes and curricular design in online programs. Seminary education, for many years, has been done in face-to-face settings offered across a full semester or in intensive sessions with only supplemental offerings provided online.[2] The shift to fully online programs is a shift both in modality and in audience behavior. Such a shift requires that seminaries interested in serving this audience rethink the

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1. The changes to ATS Commission on Accrediting Standards of Accreditation have not provided blanket approval for schools to offer degrees fully online, as all degree programs still require a residential component, with the exception of academic MA degrees. Schools may be granted permission to offer the Master of Divinity fully online after demonstrating "how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with residential theological study" (Standard A, section A.3.1.3). For a list of approved exceptions and experiments, please see http://www.ats.edu/member-schools/approved-exceptions-and-experiments.

2. Reformed Theological Seminary's MA in Religion and Fuller Theological Seminary's MA in Global Leadership are examples.

curriculum delivered to it in order to take into account the unique challenges and potentials associated with part-time, nonresidential study.

Online education, as a disruption to residential higher education models, offers faculty the opportunity to reconsider the manner in which the curriculum is designed. Part-time, nonresidential online student bodies often take fewer courses at any one time, thus extending the time to completion. They also generally have less time than full-time students to devote to their studies due to full-time employment and other responsibilities. While staff specifically devoted to enrollment management must continue to do their part to ensure that seminaries are providing necessary supports for this student population, evaluating curriculum and academic policies is also necessary to take advantage of the potential of these students.

Utilizing design thinking in curricular design could allow faculty to discover new ways to deliver curriculum to students with enrollment patterns and life situations different from those who have traditionally engaged in theological education. Such approaches could help to preserve disciplinary and ecclesial concerns already influencing curriculum while maximizing the effectiveness of the curriculum for part-time, nonresidential students.

Design thinking

Design thinking is making inroads into a variety of fields spanning business, healthcare, technology, and education.[3] Tim Brown, CEO and president of IDEO, one of the world's leading design firms, describes design thinking as "a set of principles that can be applied by diverse people to a wide range of problems."[4] IDEO has tackled problems from bike saddles to retail strategies to patient experiences in healthcare to South American educational systems. The diversity of the fields within which IDEO applies design thinking underscores the potential for the application of design thinking to theological curricula.

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3. Instances of design thinking are not easily found in higher education, though some instances may be found. See Gavin Melles, "Curriculum Design Thinking: A New Name for Old Ways of Thinking and Practice?" Proceedings of the 8th Design Thinking Research Symposium, Sydney, Australia, October 19–20, 2010, 299–308.

4. Tim Brown, *Change By Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2009), 7.

Stanford University's Institute of Design ("the d-school") offers students within the various schools at Stanford the opportunity to participate in design thinking. The d-school does not grant degrees but pulls forward-thinking individuals from within the Stanford academic community to participate in design thinking processes. Design thinking offers students a cross-disciplinary experience in which wicked problems—"a complex issue that defies complete definition, for which there can be no final solution, since any resolution generates further issues, and where solutions are not true or false or good or bad, but the best that can be done at the time"—are scrutinized via the group's collective intelligence.[5] Wicked problems are "strongly stake-holder dependent" and "highly sensitive" from a political perspective, meaning that solving these problems requires greater degrees of coordination and collaboration with stakeholders, as well as thinking through the implications of decisions made from a political perspective.[6]

> 66 *Human-centered design offers a way for individuals, groups, and organizations "to hear the needs of constituents in new ways, to create innovative solutions to meet those needs, and to deliver solutions with financial sustainability in mind."*

Design thinking is a highly creative, human-centered approach to product and service development normally performed within a collaborative, multidisciplinary team. Human-centeredness lies at the heart of design thinking. The human-centered nature of design is not intended to be a softened code word for "market driven," nor should it be identified as a strategy for increasing profits, though feasibility and sustainability are certainly in mind in design thinking paradigms. Instead, human-centered design offers a way for individuals, groups, and organizations "to hear the needs of constituents in new ways, to create innovative solutions to

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5.   Valarie A. Brown, John A. Harris, and Jacqueline Y. Russell, *Tackling Wicked Problems: Through the Transdisciplinary Imagination* (New York: Earthscan, 2010), 4.

6.   Tom Ritchey, *Wicked Problems—Social Messes: Decision Support Modelling with Morphological Analysis* (New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2011), 3.

meet those needs, and to deliver solutions with financial sustainability in mind."[7] Design thinking is contextual in nature, recognizing the patterns of behavior, expectations, and desires of those who will use the product or service.

Design thinking involves a series of techniques used to observe human behavior, values, structures, cultural norms, and so forth, in order to gather data for analysis and interpretation, which is then used to better an existing product or service or to create and deliver a new, high-value product or service. By evaluating one's constituency in this fashion, design thinkers learn how to better deliver a product, a service, or even information, to their constituents. The goal is to improve their constituents' experiences and increase the value of the product or service being offered.

> *Applying design thinking to curriculum isn't just about integrating disciplines or innovating instruction, but about creating viable, sustainable, effective structures to address the student experience more broadly.*

Take, for instance, the use of the SmartGauge® with EcoGuide developed by Ford Motor Company in conjunction with IDEO. Used in Ford's Fusion hybrid car in order to help hybrid car drivers realize the value of their hybrid vehicles, the SmartGauge® provides visual cues to empower drivers to make better decisions while driving. The image of a plant on the right side of the instrument panel either blossoms or wilts depending on the driver's actions. If the driver revs the engine, the plant wilts and gives the driver a visual reminder that he or she is not driving the car in a manner that will produce optimal gas mileage. Even acceleration and deceleration make the plant graphic wilt or blossom. The information is delivered at the right time and in the right way to effect change in driving behavior.

One example drawn from higher education may be seen in Moody Bible Institute—Distance Learning's Bachelor of Science in Biblical Studies

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7. *Human Centered Design Toolkit*, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto: IDEO, 2011), 3.

curriculum. When the faculty convened to revise the curriculum, it was clear that more was at stake than creating a coherent scope and sequence with strong course content if online students were to meet appropriate learning outcomes. Online students needed more than just solid course work. They needed guidance related to career services, communication that would inspire persistence and retention, assistance in utilizing and understanding library services, an orientation to receive essential skills for online learning, and the cultivation of Christian character.

Although the cultivation of Christian character is a staple within theological curricula, career coaching, persistence/retention efforts, library services, and orientations to learning are often considered to be cocurricular, and supplying the needed resources for such services can be challenging financially. Recognizing the wicked problem represented by the multifaceted needs of online students, the distance learning faculty took on the challenge of building elements related to several of the areas above into the curriculum. Initial results of this approach have proved effective, with students and instructors reporting positive experiences and strong evidence of student learning in the courses addressing the various areas noted. In addition, the average number of billable hours taken by students in the bachelor's program increased from the fall semester of 2013 to the fall semester of 2014, which has provided early evidence that student persistence is improving.

While there are variations in the actual process for engaging in design thinking, there are some common elements across most approaches. The process begins with learning. Design teams often include industry experts, yet design thinking requires that disciplinary assumptions be tested through the observation of the behaviors of individuals and groups that will be utilizing whatever is designed, as well as through the evaluation of boundaries such as regulatory requirements. Once design thinkers have engaged in observation, they begin to define and prototype. Various design solutions are set forth as the design team connects observations and insights from the previous step in the process to develop viable, sustainable solutions. The final stage tests the solution.

Design thinking processes differ from those in other curricular models. Backward design, for instance, begins with outcomes, but is more focused on the learning derived from courses across the curriculum proper rather than viewing student learning as a wicked problem involving not only instruction and course content but also student finance, persistence and

retention, advising services, and a variety of other institutional and noninstitutional factors. When student learning is viewed as a wicked problem involving multiple, varied issues, the curriculum may be reconsidered as a space for addressing student learning from a more comprehensive perspective. Applying design thinking to curriculum isn't just about integrating disciplines or innovating instruction, but about creating viable, sustainable, effective structures to address the student experience more broadly.

The three-phase approach of learning, definition and ideation, and testing provides a rough outline of the major aspects of the design thinking process. The execution of the process can be problematic if certain pitfalls are not avoided. Beginning with an open perspective is particularly important. There must be a recognition that "the clues to the new future lie in dissatisfactions with the present."[8] Successful design thinking requires a nondefensive posture aimed at improving services and products by leveraging customer insights and bringing services and products into alignment with those insights.

Design firms, such as IDEO, seek to develop interdisciplinary teams to more effectively foster cross-disciplinary collaboration and creativity. T-shaped people "enjoy a breadth of knowledge in many fields, but they also have depth in at least one area of expertise."[9] That they have "the capacity and—just as important—the disposition for collaboration across disciplines" is a significant component in the development of a "truly interdisciplinary" team versus a "merely multidisciplinary" one.[10] Brown notes, "In a multidisciplinary team each individual becomes an advocate for his or her own technical specialty and the project becomes a protracted negotiation among them, likely resulting in a gray compromise. In an interdisciplinary team there is a collective ownership of ideas and everybody takes responsibility for them."[11]

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8.   Jeanne Liedtka and Tim Ogilvie, *Designing for Growth: A Design Thinking Tool Kit for Managers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 23.

9.   Tom Kelley, *The Ten Faces of Innovation: IDEO's Strategies for Beating the Devil's Advocate and Driving Creativity Throughout Your Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 75.

10. Brown, *Change by Design*, 27 (see n. 4).

11. Ibid., 27–28.

The final aspect of design thinking that will be discussed in this paper is prototyping. Once an open, interdisciplinary team has been assembled and a problem defined, the team brainstorms solutions. The best of the solutions are seldom sim--ply verbalized or written down in a formal planning document. Instead, they are built. For example, when the mouse was originally conceived, designers "affixed the roller ball from a tube of Ban Roll-on deodorant to the base of a plastic butter dish. Before long Apple Computer was shipping its first mouse."[12] Prototyping entails the use of inexpensive, easily manipulated materials used to develop a mental picture. Once prototyping is completed, everyone on the design team has a far better idea of what they are actually creating.

> 66 *In a multidisciplinary team each individual becomes an advocate for his or her own technical specialty and the project becomes a protracted negotiation among them, likely resulting in a gray compromise. In an interdisciplinary team there is a collective ownership of ideas and everybody takes responsibility for them.*

Applying these three aspects of design thinking to theological education presents several challenges. First, unlike other industries in which design thinking might be applied, higher education's regulatory environment places constraints on the degree of creativity that may be exercised in design. Accrediting bodies, the US Department of Education, and various other entities set the boundaries within which institutions of higher education may create viable, sustainable, empathetic systems. Second, theological education, like many other types of education, has strong disciplinary commitments, which have served to preserve the integrity of the church's ministry. Adopting a design thinking approach may well require an evaluation of disciplinary commitments. Such evaluations are not foreign to theological curricula, as the fairly recent integration of technology into

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12. Ibid., 90.

theological curricula demonstrates.[13] Finally, change process can be difficult. While efforts should be taken to minimize adverse impacts on the various institutional constituents, committing to progress is paramount if institutions are to implement significant change.[14]

Orienting toward the future

After receiving the news that their MBA was seen as inferior to competitors by area businesses, the faculty at Babson College determined to rethink its curriculum to incorporate more relevant areas of study, such as technology, entrepreneurship, and leading collaborative teams, within an experiential learning model.[15] The MBA faculty approached their respective disciplines creatively and focused on the core issues facing the world of business rather than applying the disciplines in a traditional fashion. The result was an innovative MBA program with a unique emphasis that clearly differentiated Babson's program from MBAs offered at other schools.

The revision of the Babson MBA program demonstrates the sort of orientation needed if design thinking processes are to be implemented within theological education. The changing landscape of ministry has been the subject of several recent works.[16] Cultural and demographic shifts, the adoption of technology, increased responsibilities in administrative and leadership requirements, and various other shifts represent new challenges for seminary graduates entering ministry.

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13. Knox Theological Seminary is perhaps one of the most impressive examples of schools integrating technology within the theological curriculum.

14. Kotter's eight-step paradigm describing institutional change emphasizes the need for commitment in the change process. Steps 1–4 involve the development of a general context for change, including the cultivation of a sense of urgency, the development of a group capable of driving change, the creation of a strategy and vision prompting change, and the communication of that vision. See John P. Kotter, "Why Transformation Efforts Fail," *Harvard Business Review* (March–April 1995): 61.

15. Stacy Blackman, "Babson College Overhauls M.B.A. Curriculum" (June 3, 2011), http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/mba-admissions-strictly-business/2011/06/03/babson-college-overhauls-mba-curriculum.

16. Note the following examples: John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors that Will Crash the American Church . . . and How to Prepare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013); Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2010); David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

In addition to changes in ministry, seminaries must adjust to shifts in student enrollment. In "Theological Student Enrollment: A Special Report from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education," Barbara Wheeler, Tony Ruger, and Sharon Miller demonstrate that total head count and FTE are declining, though African American and Hispanic enrollment is growing.[17] While trends do vary by tradition, all traditions are seeing shifts in demographics.

Recognizing trends that will impact next generation ministers and those related to seminary enrollment could elicit the routine responses, such as increased marketing and recruitment efforts and expanded fundraising efforts. Perhaps such efforts are warranted, but reevaluating and reinventing theological curriculum could offer opportunities to reverse declining enrollment by reengaging

> " *Orienting toward the future with a nondefensive stance open to change could provide faculty with a creative outlet to reenvision next generation theological education.*

previous audiences or creating new ones. Orienting toward the future with a nondefensive stance open to change could provide faculty with a creative outlet to reenvision next generation theological education.

For instance, "Theological Student Enrollment" notes that, in evangelical schools, ". . . more students take longer to earn their degrees and some enroll in shorter M.A. programs and fewer in longer master of divinity programs."[18] Given that this is the case, why not repackage a degree that accommodates part-time students, leverages experiences outside the classroom, and recasts the disciplines in a more integrated form? Could the manner in which the MDiv is delivered or even the composition of the courses within it be recast to tie students more closely to their context, thus achieving the same outcomes in fewer credit hours? The immediate answer

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17. Barbara G. Wheeler, Anthony T. Ruger, and Sharon L. Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment: A Special Report from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education," (August 2013), http://www.auburnseminary.org/sites/default/files/Theological%20Student%20Enrollment-%20Final.pdf.

18. Ibid., 19.

to such a question may simply be "no." Pioneering faculty, however, may find a new way forward.

Interdisciplinary teams

A second competency that is essential to the design thinking process is the ability to think outside of one's own area of specialized expertise, or to be T-shaped. Deep expertise in one field, whether in a theological discipline or in teaching, is of greater value to the institution when exercised in conjunction with the expertise of other professionals within the organization or from external stakeholder groups. Working as part of an interdisciplinary team creates a fertile context for innovative solutions, problem solving, and adaptation.

Burt's analysis of social capital reinforces the significance of interdisciplinary and cross-group team building. In *Brokerage and Closure*, Burt demonstrates the value of structural holes, or "the empty spaces in social structure" that represent "a potentially valuable context for action."[19] Burt suggests that the value of brokers who bridge structural holes is related to their potential as opinion leaders. According to Burt, "It is brokerage beyond a group that makes for opinion leadership within the group . . . In addition to their advantage in detecting opportunities, people rich in structural holes have an advantage in seeing ways to launch projects that take advantage of opportunities."[20] Essentially, those adept at bridging the boundaries between groups are more capable of driving change within groups by carrying knowledge from across structural holes and adapting them to address challenges in new ways. In short, "people who live in the intersection of social worlds are at higher risk of having good ideas."[21] As student behaviors and preferences change, technology systems become more complex, and the public pressures placed on higher education continue to increase, collaboration among academicians, educational administrators, technologists, and instructional experts will be crucial if institutions are going to be at a "higher risk of having good ideas."[22]

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19. Ronald S. Burt, *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16–18.

20. Ibid., 86, 91.

21. Ibid., 90.

22. Ibid.

Prototyping

Developing prototypes of academic programs offers faculty the opportunity to visualize the way in which programs might be viewed as a cohesive whole. Prototyping allows for the conceptualization of an academic program, of different curricular configurations, and of how these might yield different student-learning outcomes. At times, the depth of faculty expertise and the commitment to a specialized academic discipline can fall prey to certain decision-making fallacies. Experts are certainly capable of making excellent decisions based on their experience and intuition. As Kahneman points out, however, expert decision making may also default quickly to established norms:

> We are confident when the story we tell ourselves comes easily to mind, with no contradiction and no competing scenario. But ease and coherence do not guarantee that a belief held with confidence is true. The associative machine is set to suppress doubt and to evoke ideas and information that are compatible with the currently dominant story. A mind that follows WYSIATI [what you see is all there is] will achieve high confidence much too easily by ignoring what it does not know.[23]

Prototyping multiple options offers a means for testing assumptions and breaking away from established thought processes and patterns. Perhaps more importantly than providing a means to challenge "the currently dominant story," prototyping "has proven to be an essential tool for establishing a common understanding within heterogeneous design teams, but also with and among end users. . . ."[24] Creating prototypes could give faculty the opportunity to test new ideas with other institutional stakeholders and with potential students.

The capacity to identify and question assumptions about theological curricula and programs is a capacity that faculty will increasingly need to develop. New entrants into the theological education space, including several not currently accredited by the ATS Commission on Accrediting,

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23. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 239.

24. Hasso Plattner, Christoph Meinel, and Larry Leifer, eds., *Design Thinking Research: Studying Co-Creation in Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2012), 107–108.

are making innovations in theological education. Liberty University has been offering a fully online MDiv degree for several years. Based on its reading of the theological education market, South University has developed a Doctor of Ministry program that students may enter without completing a master's degree. Multiple colleges are beginning to offer accelerated, fully online Master of Arts degrees. These programs represent new paradigms in theological education of which traditional theological faculty need to be aware. While there is not necessarily a need to adopt these new paradigms, it is important for faculty to be able to think beyond the more common theological traditions to ensure that the programs they are creating are still meeting the needs of students and church.

Conclusion

As the context of the church changes and new generations with new sensibilities and challenges arise, theological educators must respond with both conviction and creativity. Theological educators cannot surrender tradition. There must be an appropriate conviction about what aspects of theological education must remain in order to preserve the identity of the church. No matter what changes may come, the church must exhibit a real sense of continuity across generations. At the same time, theological educators must reenvision theological education in order to adapt to a new world.

> ❝ *As the context of the church changes and new generations with new sensibilities and challenges arise, theological educators must respond with both conviction and creativity.*

The processes and competencies associated with design thinking offer faculty some potential means for addressing the complexities and transitions occurring in the church.

As theological educators seek to address the wicked problem of educating students to serve the church with mounting financial pressures in an increasingly complex regulatory environment with multiple stakeholders, it will be important for educators to rethink the manner in which students are educated and how student learning outcomes are met. While this article has focused on online curricula, the use of design thinking

would be of great benefit to residential programs as well. Seminaries and the theological educators that serve within them will, at least in some contexts, need to face the realities of fiscal viability, the sustainability of programs and services, and the shifting needs of students and the church. Design thinking processes are well suited to address this complexity. The curriculum, as the primary context in which students, particularly online students, interact with theological schools, represents the area with the greatest potential to solve the wicked problems facing theological schools today.

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The Itinerant Scholar-Teacher: Reflections on Twenty Years as an Adjunct Faculty Member

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ABSTRACT: *Against the background of increasing media attention to the working conditions of adjunct faculty in higher education, this article reflects on the experience of an adjunct who has taught for decades in both secular and theological academies, and it outlines best practices that can help administrators and faculty to promote equitable policies and to recognize and affirm the shared vocation of adjuncts and regular faculty in the mission of theological education.*

More than 20 years ago, in the summer of 1994, I taught my first course as an adjunct faculty member at a theological institution. With a PhD in Comparative Literature and a focus on poetry and theology, I was qualified to offer interdisciplinary classes in religion and literature at a nearby seminary, and I have been teaching there most years, one semester per year, ever since. Soon afterward, I began teaching courses at another local seminary affiliated with my own denomination. I was already teaching in the Professional Writing program and later in the Honors program at a large state university nearby, so for more than a decade, I had one foot in the secular academy and one in the theological academy. In the context of theological education, I would like to reflect on my career as an adjunct faculty member, with a particular eye to the ways I have experienced my vocation as a scholar-teacher, appointed to this particular institutional status. I begin with some personal narrative because I would like to offer firsthand a sense of how it feels to be pursuing this vocation in this institutional role as it is currently constructed.

Adjunct teaching was initially a choice for me. I stepped off the tenure track after three years as an assistant professor, soon after the birth of my first child and in anticipation of my second. When I returned to teaching a decade later, with a "tenure book" newly published and a respectable resume of publications, I had some hope that all this adjunct teaching

might lead to one full-time position at one institution. But over the years, I have become reconciled to the itinerant scholar-teacher life, smiling in sometimes-rueful fellowship at the equestrian statue of John Wesley that I pass on the way to one of my teaching sites.

My choice[1] of adjunct status has also had its costs, rooted in institutional issues and injustices that often seem to deny or minimize the depth of vocation that has kept me and many other adjunct faculty teaching. One aspect of this cost became vividly clear to me some years ago when I attended the retirement party of a senior colleague in the English department, the former director of the creative and interdisciplinary Honors program in which I taught for many years. I was glad to be invited to the party because he was my friend and valued colleague, and we had shared

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good work over the years. The years in Honors had provided opportunities for innovative teaching and interaction with campus faculty. I had been made a senior lecturer and given a distinguished teaching award. I could not complain of lack of recognition. In short, my work with this colleague over the years had affirmed my vocation as a scholar-teacher of literature and interdisciplinary studies, using well the PhD in Comparative Literature I had acquired at Yale in the early 1980s.

Yet as we roasted and celebrated my friend, I was vividly and painfully aware that his would not be my future: I would not be having a retirement party looking back over 30 years of steady presence in an evolving

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1.   I am aware that the perception of "choice" for women in adjunct and part-time work is a complex one. For an article reflecting on this in the era when I was looking most consciously at these choices, see Sara Davis, "Women and the Tenure Track," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 13, 2001), http://chronicle.com/article/Womenthe-Tenure-Track/45500/. On gender issues in the current climate, see Kelly J. Baker's column "Introducing 'Sexism Ed,'" *Chronicle Vitae* (April 2, 2014), found online at https://chroniclevitae.com/news/421-introducing-sexism-ed. See also Pamela Stone, *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

institution to which I had contributed vision and substantive shaping. The ache was deepened on that occasion because I was myself effectively "retired"—if retirement were a category relevant to adjunct faculty—from the Honors program; that is, I was no longer teaching in the program where I had worked for more than 10 years. Two years earlier, following changes in leadership, budget, and vision at multiple levels of the university, I had learned that my courses would no longer be offered.

This scenario is, of course, the definition of being an adjunct faculty member: Nearly every appointment letter I have signed contains the obligatory clause stating that this appointment represents no obligation on the part of the institution toward the faculty member and that his or her teaching is just for this semester and course, with no expectation of future employment or advancement. Adjunct (or "contingent") faculty members know that we serve as the academy needs us. We are not consulted on curriculum development or our own place in the curriculum or the institution, so there is no opportunity to defend our contribution to a larger vision, and there is no job security. But even though these shortcomings were completely as contracted, the news was a blow to me. No matter how the position had been constructed institutionally, teaching in this program had become part of my vocation, part of how I understood who I am and what I bring to the world.

At the same party were several other colleagues, also long-term, dedicated adjuncts in Honors, who were still teaching. I was particularly glad to know this because I knew that these colleagues were career adjuncts, trying to make a living by teaching. They relied on carrying at least a 50 percent teaching load (2 courses per semester, including summer terms) year-round and thereby

> ❝ *As we roasted and celebrated my friend, I was vividly and painfully aware that his would not be my future: I would not be having a retirement party looking back over 30 years of steady presence in an evolving institution to which I had contributed vision and substantive shaping.*

qualifying for health insurance and retirement benefits—an unusual benefit for adjunct faculty that had been negotiated in the 1990s by the large cadre of adjunct faculty who staffed the English department's writing programs.

My situation at the university was different from these colleagues' in that mine was a second income and my spouse had health insurance and a pension. So the loss of my courses at the university was not the financial disaster for me that it might have been to many of my fellow adjuncts there. Sadly, theirs is increasingly the more typical position,[2] and it needs to be said that as currently constructed, adjunct faculty teaching in the humanities and in religion is not a profession at which one can make a living wage, even if one teaches many courses at multiple institutions. Most adjunct teaching in the humanities pays at best $3,000–$3,500 per semester course, with no benefits.[3] Seminary adjunct teaching, in my experience, pays about the same. So even a full teaching load of two courses a semester (the most that most institutions permit), including summer teaching, which many adjuncts do carry, will net an annual income of $18,000–$24,000 in a good year—provided that all the courses are offered. This is a stark fact that needs to be kept in mind as we read recent reports that the majority of courses taught at the post-secondary level in the United States are being taught by adjunct faculty.[4]

An adjunct in the theological academy: Living the vocation

When the opportunities were first offered, I jumped at the invitations to seminary teaching out of a sense of vocation. This was a chance to offer my skills as teacher and scholar to help in the formation of leaders in the church and to model for my students, as my colleagues did, a life lived in response to what I understood as my own call from God to serve as a scholar and as a teacher, and to help others to hear and shape their vocations through

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2. The economic situations of many career adjuncts, and the growth of movements toward collective bargaining, have been described widely in the media recently. See especially Elizabeth Segran, "The Adjunct Revolt: How Poor Professors are Fighting Back," *The Atlantic* (April 28, 2014), http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/04/the-adjunct-professor-crisis/361336/. Many issues related to adjunct faculty are explored on the website of the *New Faculty Majority* at http://www.newfacultymajority.info.

3. A panel discussion focusing on issues of salary and equity among adjunct faculties is offered on NPR's Diane Rehm show, "The Growing Reliance on Adjunct Professors," April 16, 2014. Transcript available online at http://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2014-04-16/growing-reliance-adjunct-professors/transcript.

4. Rachel L. Swarns, "Crowded Out of the Ivory Tower, Adjuncts See a Life Less Lofty," *New York Times* (January 19, 2014), http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/nyregion/crowded-out-of-ivory-tower-adjuncts-see-a-life-less-lofty.html.

learning. At one of the seminaries, the courses I teach count toward a requirement in Religion and the Arts, and I have a three-year cycle of courses that I offer, one each spring, so I have some expectation of job security, though it is not contractual. At the

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second seminary, my courses have mostly been electives, changing over the years to fill in gaps in the curriculum and offered when there is sufficient enrollment. In the early 1990s, I taught the course Women Writers as Prophets, when relatively little was being done in feminist theology at the seminary. I went on to teach a course on vocation and ministry from the point of view of the laity, drawing on my own experience and study of the ecclesiology that stresses the calling of all the baptized.[5] More recently, as my work as a poet has ripened, I have taught courses on praying with the poets, contemplative writing, and spirituality and the arts. Because I have a PhD and expertise in reading texts and advising students, I have also over the years directed or been second reader on independent studies and masters and DMin theses, with the approval of the academic deans involved. So my work, while adjunct, has contributed to the mission of the theological academies where I have taught, and most years I have been a presence on the campus and in the lives of my students at these seminaries.

I understand my call to be much the same as that of my colleagues in the theological seminaries—to be a "scholar-teacher for Christ." Cistercian scholar Jean Leclerc writes of "the love of learning and the desire for God," and that is the spirit that makes me love my work in theological education. It is affirming, moreover, to be among colleagues who share a similar vocation.[6]

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5.   See Kathleen Henderson Staudt, "Annunciations in Most Lives: Vocational Discernment and the Work of the Church," *Sewanee Theological Review* 43, no. 2 (Easter 2000), 139–143.

6.   For reflections on the "common vocation" in theological education, see Anne B. Yardley, "Scaffolding that Supports Faculty Leadership: The Dean's Constructive Role," and Dale R. Stoffer, "Faculty Leadership and Development: Lessons from the Anabaptist-Pietist Tradition," both in Kathleen D. Billman and Bruce C. Birch, *C(H)AOS Theory: Reflections of Chief Academic Officers in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdman's, 2011), 133–134, 144–148. I found no substantial consideration of the vocation or role of adjunct faculty in this volume.

We are part of a community engaged in theological inquiry and formation; we seek to build up the church in fresh ways for a new generation; and we walk with our students, challenging them to reflect theologically on both the tradition and their ongoing experience of life in the church and in the world. As an adjunct faculty member at both institutions, my vocation makes me feel that I belong.

Yet in important ways, this belonging is vocational rather than institutional. The definition of being adjunct is that one does not fully "belong" institutionally to the theological academy where one serves. We are available to teach as needed, or not. Our students experience us as their teachers, but there are roles in which we cannot always consent to serve because there is no structure for compensation. Or (more often) we serve informally in these roles without compensation, out of a sense of vocation.

> **"** *As pressures on clergy employment grow, we are likely to see more scholar-pastors who are crafting bivocational ways of making a living, as well as newly minted PhDs who hope that teaching at this level might be a stepping-stone to full-time employment—an expectation that is less and less realistic.*

In the theological academy, the model for adjunct faculty is the clergy person who teaches a course or two or supervises a student part time, but whose main job, compensation, and benefits are in a parish ministry. As pressures on clergy employment grow, we are likely to see more scholar-pastors who are crafting bivocational ways of making a living, as well as newly minted PhDs who hope that teaching at this level might be a stepping-stone to full-time employment—an expectation that is less and less realistic. *Bivocational*, like *adjunct*, can be a misleading concept. Both terms suggest that the main responsibility for the adjunct faculty member's job security, benefits, and living wage lies elsewhere—not with the institution defining them as adjunct. This raises justice issues, as institutions save money and faculty time by failing to pay a living wage or benefits to people who are nonetheless integrally part of the institution's work of formation, and who in reality have adjunct or bivocational status everywhere they are working.

Basic justice: Compensation, job security, and feedback

"What will it take to make an honest woman of you?" my colleague and supervisor at the university once asked me. I decided not to take offense at the metaphor—a strategy familiar to many in positions of limited power— though it was certainly offensive in its evocation of the power structures of prostitution and marriage. But I also recognized that what my colleague was expressing was his own discomfort with the inequality of our situa- tion, forced by institutional structures. He was trying to work out a way that he could ask me to do some additional and innovative teaching and course administration within the existing structure and wanted to know what would seem fair to me. My first response, job security, was some- thing he could not promise, so we went on to strategize about salary. I believe that his discomfort is likely shared by administrators and govern- ing boards of good will who are aware that tighter budgets are increasing reliance on part-time, undercompensated teachers who are in many ways vocational peers. As pressures on budgets grow and the need for flexibil- ity increases, and with online teaching and other cost-saving measures, a sense of justice demands that administrators and boards look at the actual experience of those they employ as adjunct faculty, and ask questions like the following:

1. **Is this faculty member making a living wage for the work he or she does?** Institutions need to provide transparency about compensa- tion structures, so that the whole faculty understands the differences between full-time faculty and adjunct compensation. Greater transpar- ency should lead, over time, to adjustment of compensation for greater equity.
2. **Does this faculty member have access to basic benefits (health care, pension)** through this job or some other job? At least be aware of the situation. A truly bivocational adjunct may have another job with ben- efits, but others may genuinely be relying on this position with other adjunct teaching to cobble together a living wage. For valued faculty in this situation, administrators should ask: Are there ways that these benefits could be provided under certain conditions? Could the institu- tion find ways, for example, to follow the spirit of the Affordable Care Act regardless of mandate (resisting the temptation that some institu- tions are embracing to thwart the intent of the law by reducing adjunct

faculty hours)?[7] Are there ways that full-time or permanent part-time positions, such as nontenured "instructorships," could be created out of the patchwork of adjunct course assignments, to provide a fairer and more predictable structure of salary and benefits to long-serving adjuncts?

3. **What kind of job security can be offered**, particularly for adjunct faculty who have a long-time connection with the institution? Part-time faculty, especially those who are piecing together a living wage at multiple institutions, need some predictability in their schedules. This may conflict with the institution's need for flexibility in hiring according to its needs, but justice demands that administrators weigh these competing demands. People who are part time or bivocational usually need to plan at least a semester, preferably a year in advance, particularly if they are coordinating multiple positions. Contracts over periods of two to five years, with provisions for feedback, renewal, and review of compensation, would provide greater security and fairness.

> 66 Bivocational, *like* adjunct, *can be a misleading concept. Both terms suggest that the main responsibility for the adjunct faculty member's job security, benefits, and living wage lies elsewhere—not with the institution defining them as adjunct.*

4. **Are there transparent structures for feedback, compensation structures, and mutual ministry review for adjunct faculty**, within the context of the institution's mission? Such structures would allow adjunct faculty to learn and share insights about how their teaching contributes to the mission of the seminary and would also keep before administrators the ongoing need to move toward greater equity in pay and benefits.

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7. See Sydni Dunn, "Colleges are Slashing Adjuncts' Hours to Skirt New Rules on Health-Insurance Eligibility," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 22, 2013), http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Curb-Adjuncts-Hours/138653/.

Affirming the vocational dignity of adjunct colleagues

Even beyond these issues of basic justice, there are a number of measures theological institutions could take that do not carry huge costs but that acknowledge the professional kinship among institution, regular faculty, and adjuncts and address the sense of vocation that we share regardless of institutional status.[8]

First are the basic amenities that make it possible for one to pursue the vocation of scholar-teacher. We all need the following:

1. **Office space** should be a defined and predictable place on campus that is private and professional, where we can meet students and do our own work while we are on campus. This can be shared space, but it is an institutional affirmation when a space is provided and set aside for adjunct faculty and an implicit denial of our vocation when there is no such space.

2. **Communication** through email or phone chains should keep us informed about major events in community life and of community and institutional news. When everyone else in the community knows of a recent tragedy or triumph or challenge that has happened, and we come to campus knowing nothing of it, real emotional harm can be done (especially if the news is of one of our own students). It is admittedly difficult to keep track of when adjunct faculty are teaching and who needs to know what, but it is important for the institution to communicate that we are thought of as part of the community. It may simply be a matter of putting someone officially in charge of keeping adjunct faculty informed and following through on important communications. The point is to affirm those important places where our vocation as pastors to our students intersects with institutional priorities and community life.

3. **Identified administrative support** (i.e., someone on the administrative staff) should be tasked with hospitality and administrative support for adjunct faculty, acknowledging institutionally that we are often on campus only sporadically. A mailbox, email account, and passwords

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8. See also Richard E. Lyons, ed., *Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty* (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing, 2007).

that enable us to access library resources and online teaching resources are all necessary support, as is an administrative support person to take and pass on phone messages. Access to campus directories and other means of communication, provided before they are requested, also communicates a sense of institutional connection. A mailbox with my own name on it communicates to the students a different kind of professional and institutional support of the adjunct faculty's vocation than a shared mailbox labeled "adjunct faculty." Institutions need to remember that the students do not experience adjunct faculty as different from their other professors, and separating us out anonymously by rank in this way sends a confusing and demeaning message.

Beyond these basic amenities are important intangibles that affirm the shared vocation of adjunct faculty and others in the theological academy:

1. **The invitation to share in regular community activities** such as lunch, chapel, and other parts of campus life should be offered, but it should be understood as an invitation, not an expectation. Adjuncts will not always be able to be present for everything, especially if they are juggling multiple positions. But the invitation is important. Also consider any structures of covenanted community life: For example, if regular faculty eat lunch on campus as part of their role, it seems reasonable that adjuncts should also be able to meet a student or colleague for lunch without having to fumble for lunch ticket money before sitting down.

2. **Invitations to join in ceremonial occasions**—to walk with faculty and honor our students at graduations, convocations, and so forth—offer a quiet and cost-free way that institutions can honor the vocations of their adjunct scholar-teachers. Attendance should not be an expectation, and the invitation may not always be accepted, but it will always be appreciated.

3. **Support of the independent scholar's vocation** affirms that many of us who are adjunct are trying to continue our work as scholars. Library privileges are a paramount benefit to adjunct work, and most places where I have taught have at least provided this. It would be an important benefit for a new PhD who is teaching a course or two and trying to get some publications out. A mailbox and institutional address help us to make our way in the scholarly world without drawing attention to our lesser institutional status. (And if we do publish, the institution where

we are adjunct gets named as our institutional address in the signature line).

Institutions also need to note that adjunct faculty never get sabbaticals and do not have the resources for professional development that are available to regular faculty. And yet many of us are still pursuing scholarly vocations, often in hopes of future advancement. What

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an affirmation it could be if some limited funds for travel to conferences or released time were made available to adjunct faculty with long standing in the institutions—or the opportunity to join in seminars and share scholarly conversations with colleagues on campus.

4. **Communications with adjunct faculty about their place in the institution's mission** is important. I sometimes quip that an advantage of being adjunct is that I'm not expected to attend faculty meetings, and it is true that any meeting I attend is uncompensated time. But steps can be taken by administrators and leaders to check in with adjunct faculty occasionally to communicate evolving developments in vision, mission, and curriculum. Simply addressing the question, How does this course you are teaching fit into the larger curriculum? or inviting the adjunct faculty member to answer it from her perspective, can communicate a fuller sense of connection to the shared mission. There were years at one institution where I learned my place in the curriculum by looking at my title in the catalogue—assigned to me by the curriculum committee without consulting me. So one year I was "Adjunct in the Ministry of the Laity," and another year I was "Adjunct in Theological Studies," and in another "Adjunct in Theological Aesthetics and Ascetic Theology." No one asked me what I thought my title should

be! Among best practices, on the other hand, I would commend one seminary's annual tradition of offering a luncheon in recognition of "partner faculty." Those invited include all adjuncts—those like me who are teaching in the academic curriculum as well as clergy who are supervising students. Regular faculty are also invited and expected to attend, and do. The president of the seminary guides introductions and words of appreciation and then shares with the adjunct faculty present the current state of the seminary's mission and their role in that. Such acknowledgment of adjunct faculty as vocational peers and partners in mission, despite the difference in institutional status, goes a long way toward building the healthy teaching that seminaries hope to offer and the healthy teaching communities that seminaries hope to be.

As I look ahead at a decade that will bring me closer to retirement age, I find that my sense of this call to the work of theological education and formation has not waned; it will probably be a long time before I choose to step back from my current practice of teaching whatever is offered to me at the seminaries, including some new opportunities for team teaching and online work that will raise new questions about fair compensation. Despite institutional obstacles of various sorts, my sense of vocation has deepened through friendships with colleagues, new opportunities for team teaching and course development, and always, of course, the work with students. The community and individual relationships have affirmed my vocation even when the institution has not. But the issues I have touched on do concern accreditors and those concerned with the quality of our communities of theological education going forward. Awareness is the first step toward lasting systemic change, and I have shared these personal reflections in the hope of raising awareness. As financial pressures and issues around adjunct faculty become more prominent in the news and the professional literature again, I would encourage administrators and faculty in the theological academy to find ways to lead on the justice issues that are raised by reliance on part-time and bivocational teachers. I hope that these reflections on the vocational identity of one itinerant scholar-teacher may help to provide a useful perspective for this important and ongoing discernment.

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A Future in the Hyphen: The Dawning of the Faculty-Administrator

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ABSTRACT: *North American theological education is changing dramatically. A hybrid of traditional faculty guild-related expertise combined with administrator skill sets is increasingly required in the emerging role of the faculty-administrator. Four essential issues that the faculty-administrator must recognize and address include the following: (1) the role of a theologian today, (2) targeting specific institutional response(s) to the general challenges faced, (3) putting institutional responses into day-to-day operations, and (4) the virtues of bridging or "living-into-the-hyphen" of the faculty-administrator position.*

North American theological education operates today amidst forces that dramatically influence its future. These include disruptive ingenuities (primarily technological) in society; the increasingly normative context of pluralism; shrinking faculty full-time employment opportunities and movements toward nontenure-track, full-time positions; modified nontraditional degree programs to accommodate current perceived student needs; sophisticated learning delivery systems (including asynchronous), which from a more classical perspective seem to violate key dimensions of established pedagogical methodologies; a broader crisis in higher education, which necessitates a review of the social contract on the meaning and purpose of higher education as a gateway to professional careers; and new pressures on delivering the MDiv, including the amount of time one can reasonably expect students to stay in school and amass educational debt. These changes substantially impact theological education today.[1] In addition, we know that theological education is about to

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1. For understanding the rise of religious pluralism in North America and abroad, see William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), and *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*, eds. Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

be impacted by fluctuations specific to its two partners: higher education and the churches.[2] What Daniel Aleshire reveals in his text, *Earthen Vessels*, Stephen Graham echoes in his synopsis of a recent (2011) ATS survey: "This is an era of unrest in both partners."[3]

"Unrest" is a euphemism for the seismic shifts occurring in higher education and the church, shifts that also shake up theological educa-

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tion. In the past 30 years, we and our professional forebears have spoken and written about our predicament well enough to know that neither nostalgia for what was, nor prognostications for what might be, should deter us in practical terms from getting about the work before us today.[4] We stand in the midst of paradigmatic change, with all that this entails. In terms of the church, Ted Campbell's recent article in *The Christian Century* turns the dial back on the decades to pinpoint when mainline decline began in earnest; his evidence suggests that North American churches have been declining since the mid-1920s.[5] Facts are stubborn things. Today we must deconstruct and reconstruct the very structure that holds our weight—theological

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2. Professional school enrollment—especially law and business—fell precipitously in the past two academic years, marking the single largest decline in the past four decades. See Catherine Rampell, "Enrollment Drops Again in Graduate Programs," *The New York Times* (September 28, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/28/business/new-enrollment-drops-again-in-us-graduate-schools.html?_r=0.

3. Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2008); Stephen R. Graham, "Changes in Faculty Work," *Colloquy*, (Fall 2011): 38–43.

4. Gordon T. Smith, "Attending to the Collective Vocation," *Theological Education* 44, no. 2 (2009): 95–111. "Higher education is changing in a manner that is fundamental and permanent; and, further, change itself has become a permanent feature of the landscape of theological schools," 101.

5. Ted A. Campbell, "Glory days? The Myth of the Mainline," *The Christian Century* (July 2, 2014).

education. Many of our organizational structures, pedagogical delivery systems, revenue needs and challenges, job descriptions, and areas of expertise on both the faculty and the administrator levels will be changing further. Such massive change is requiring a new evolution in the job description of the faculty-administrator.

Definition of a faculty-administrator

By definition, a faculty-administrator is an individual who teaches, who is attentive to one's guild, *and* who also provides executive-level, structural leadership that is essential to the direction of the institution.[6] This last contribution is appreciably more-than-expected service to the institution that is otherwise required in every core faculty portfolio. Within the current reality of leaner core theological faculties, I think the need for hiring a faculty-administrator will shift from being the exception to being the rule.[7] Contributing dynamics that necessitate this change include daily operations that thrive even as fewer staff populate the school or seminary; overstretched presidents or deans who are busy securing donor funds for the immediate future of the institution; historical and emerging external partners who require cultivation by ambassadors of the school or seminary; programming that must be created, refined, and integrated if the institution is to thrive; outreach that engages not just a region but the national and global contexts; and curriculum committees revising, if not reimagining, specific degree programs (including the MDiv) in response to new ecclesial needs, such as the desire for forms of credentialing made available to lay ministers.[8]

My own emerging career path seems to emphasize the impact of the changes—on young scholars—noted above. I began my current position

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6.   Aleshire's remarks in chapters five and six of *Earthen Vessels* assist us in recognizing multiple gifts necessary in academy and church for the success of theological education.

7.   Graham, "Changes in Faculty Work," 40. "Higher education experts suggest that smaller faculties and leaner institutions are the 'new normal.' The impact on theological schools is acute since, in their efforts to sustain the prevailing financial and educational models, most schools were small and lean before the downturn."

8.   Curricular reimagination is central to our future in theological education. Consider Robert S. Landrebe's reflections on how to jettison and reinvent degree programs in "To Create the Future, Selectively Abandon the Past," *In Trust* (Spring 2014): 16–21.

three academic years ago as a faculty-administrator. I was responsible for teaching in my field, publishing to make advancements in my areas of specialization and maintain good standing toward tenure, administrating a team tasked with accentuating ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and serving as principal investigator for two grants with important national foundations. Add to these the kinds of dean-cabinet structural discernments and management of the institution's future, and one has a very different animal from a traditionally anticipated teaching-scholarship-service set of professional expectations. These experiences, along with a network of colleagues in a similar professional track, teach me that these professional demands are part of a fundamental shift in organizational life that supports graduate theological education.

Essential tasks facing the faculty-administrator

What essential tasks face the emerging faculty-administrator in theological education? At least four suggest themselves; these are itemized here and discussed below. First, the faculty-administrator must be theological. The challenges of theological education are a theological problem first, and our responses to these challenges must be clear and inspiring to core constituencies. Second, however large the challenge to theological education, it is lived out within specific institutions. Each institution as a whole must respond to any challenge(s) by locating the pressing question(s) of the moment for the institution and thereafter crafting a strategic response. Third, the faculty-administrator bears responsibility for implementing and making operational the strategic response(s) to the question. And fourth, in continuous assessment, the faculty-administrator must "live into the hyphen," so to speak, by remaining attentive to the whole scope of theological education with a view to all aspects of one's position. Such hybridity necessitates careful integration and coordination among the main aspects of institutional life—teaching, scholarship, guild-management, and administration. I'll explain each task below.

First task: Be a theologian

The initial task of a faculty-administrator in theological education is to be a theologian. Contrariwise, the ambitious faculty-administrators I know never dissect the challenges to theological education first through an analysis of social science data. Our response begins theologically, because at

the axis of human life, theology is our native language that tries to put voice to the overwhelming mystery of holiness in the world. Theology is first and foremost a vocation in the face of the challenges of the world we inhabit. As a theologian, the faculty-administrator cares for the whole vocational discernment of the student, from teaching to making accessible the institutional resources needed for a viable future. Our constituencies trust us to provide for the formation of their students' vocations. Our students wonder how they will live out their vocations in a new hybrid of ministerial configurations. We recognize that theological education is a part of, and yet unique within, higher education. A trendy fix in the broader challenges to higher education might not work in every location. We take the noumenal seriously; to do otherwise is a false start for theological education.

As theologians, faculty-administrators are dedicated to student needs, to their own scholarship, and to the vocational narrative of their institutions. In terms of the institution, vocation is expressed in its historical identity and intended purpose, which are integrated in the mission statement of the institution itself.[9] The mission statement is our constant axis that reveals our vocational orientation.[10] That's what a mission statement does; it serves as the axis that orients our collective response (*vocatio*) in the world. The faculty-administrator must embody the mission of the school by fleshing out the vocational direction of the institution in creative ways.

To exemplify this point on the faculty-administrator in light of vocation and mission, consider my course on the ontology of evil and reconciliation in the twenty-first century. Normative student academic outcomes for this course are aligned to (1) our school's current grant for working on the societal injustices evident in homelessness, (2) a comparative inter-religious analysis on evil that is drawn from across the faculty, and (3) a cohort of key external religious leaders/partners who serve as a speakers bureau on the subject. Now, add the further niche role for the advancement of the theological institution, such as a short list of alumni who are organized to serve as a regional and national resource when radical evil takes place in local communities. In summary, academics, student

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9. Smith, "Attending to the Collective Vocation," 97–101, 109 (see n. 4).

10. See Thinandavha D. Mashau, "A Reformed Perspective on Taking Mission and Missiology to the Heart of Theological Training," *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 46, no. 2 (2012): 32.

formation, institutional grants, external partners, alumni, and advisory boards revolve on an axis of shared vocational identity framed in mission. It is a necessity of the faculty-administrator to align these elements of institutional life in explicit ways and for the greater advancement of the school.

Vocational identity also provides a safeguard for the faculty-administrator: Faculty lacking a shared vocation among colleagues cannot witness from the communitarian heart of theology. Likewise, administrators who lack a vocational heart will be distrusted as technocrats among faculty. In this way, the theological vocation of the faculty-administrator is the hyphen, or bridge, itself, but more on that later.

Second task: Locate the institution's pressing question(s)

The second task of a faculty-administrator is to locate the institution's pressing question(s) as it faces challenges to theological education today. In organizational life, our first question goes something like this: What do we as faculty-administrators need to know to meet the challenges before us? As an image to assist us, I recall a late-night commercial when I studied in Germany, which promoted learning English as a second language. In the commercial, a young German professional is placed at an emergency response station (presumably near the Baltic Sea), before a wall of intimidating knobs and dials. His employer slaps him on the back for encouragement (apparently this suffices for an orientation) and then leaves the room. The emergency channel crackles to life with the faint English voice of a desperate sea captain, calling into the static over and again his ship identification and coordinates. "We are sinking! We are sinking!" he exclaims. Eager, yet in deep water himself, the young professional presses the flipper on his standing mic: "What are you sinking about?" he asks.

What do we need to know to keep from sinking in theological education? As a first step, we need to take stock of the realistic strengths each faculty-administrator brings to the core team. I try to always begin with an appreciative inquiry of strength and thereafter note correctable disparities.[11] I try not to begin with any given problem or challenge that puts people second. People and their strengths matter infinitely more than the problems we face. Colleagues come first. Focus on the challenge as a

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11. Leona M. English, "An Appreciative Inquiry into the Spiritual Values of Christian Higher Education," *Christian Higher Education* 2, no. 1 (2003): 71–74.

secondary matter, and how you perceive it in light of strength will be more penetrating and courageous.

How do faculty members evaluate their own strengths—either singly or collectively—in theological education? An ATS survey and consultation in 2011 identified two important findings from faculty self-evaluation.[12] First, faculties report they are generally satisfied in their preparation as scholars. This is good news. Not such good news is the perception of a lack of effective training from their doctoral programs in the areas of teaching, service, student formation, and administration. In fact, faculty perception of

> ❝ *In fact, faculty perception of effectiveness of their doctoral training in student formation and administration was only 50 percent.*

effectiveness of their doctoral training in student formation and administration was only 50 percent. In this first finding we see strength in teaching, but, clearly, a gap exists between faculty perception of professional need and a lack of formative training in meeting that need.

Second, in the survey, faculty tended not to identify sweeping changes in ecclesial life today as having a clear and compelling impact on their work. This second point is a correctable disparity. As faculty-administrators, we lack every professional advantage when we are not deeply aware of our students' future places of employment, which for many will be located in ecclesial life. Without knowing, we will be unable to calibrate comprehensively useful degree or certificate programs, and in the longer term, we will have more difficulty nuancing the connection among the churches, the academy, and society. We will risk institutional credibility with core constituencies, and trust will diminish.

How do we bridge the gulf between faculty need and institutional competence? Again, every institution must assess how prepared it is to respond to this question. Faculty should learn from the same, albeit modified, in-service opportunities made available in emerging advanced degree programs such as the DMin or PhD. For instance, often university-affiliated, theological institutions offer cross-listed courses with business schools or

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12. Graham, "Changes in Faculty Work," 39–41 (see n. 3).

professional development centers in order for students to acquire skills in administration (budgetary acumen, leadership philosophy, team management, etc.). I advise those about to begin doctoral programs that if they graduate knowing only their guild, no matter how competent they are,

> ❝ *I advise those about to begin doctoral programs that if they graduate knowing only their guild, no matter how competent they are, they will limit themselves in light of the needs of theological education today.*

they will limit themselves in light of the needs of theological education today. Such a limitation can result in highly valued instructors who may reach tenure but remain effective administratively at a level that permits only a part-time work contract. One of my favorite and most knowledgeable instructors in her guild is now a part-time tenured professor. Let's talk again in another five years, amidst decreasing

enrollment, changes in higher education, and the complicated reality of organized church life. In the near term, many of tomorrow's new hires will arrive with increased training or experience, even if this is of little use to a sandwiched generation of faculty who have already completed their own doctoral training and plan to work for another decade or more.[13]

Third task: Make solutions operational

The third task of the faculty-administrator is to make solutions operational. For theologians who move readily between theory and praxis, this will sound familiar. Everyday life requires rapid response to any given problem. And yet, when we move into praxis, we focus on implementing a strategic response. Praxis is never about doing *one* thing; it is about a whole way of being and doing, with an accompanying methodology for

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13. See Robin Wilson, "Associate Professors: Academe's Sandwich Generation," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 29, 2011).

action and an intact pedagogy for assessment.[14] Put another way, an operation benefits the whole body or the entire system. The challenges we face require a strategic response for the whole body, and most institutions do well with a two- to three-year strategic plan buttressed by specific objectives and wide faculty agreement.

At best, faculty-administrators work collaboratively during ideation and then implement necessary solutions, without getting bogged down in the process. It requires an entrepreneurial spirit. I have never experienced theological entrepreneurs who were simply born that way. These are the ones who care about applied student learning in theological content and see structural analogues so that an emerging skillset in one area may be valuable to the whole institution in another area. Together with colleagues, they will develop a working idea. They will wear down the carpet in the long hallway between the idea and its potential implementation. Then the lights turn on. For our students as for us, that moment is one of the most edifying in theological education. It occurs when immediate illumination of the idea and its application align in a way

> **❝** *Statistics reveal that faculty and administrators will place the mission of the institution even above their own career development, particularly when it comes to difficult decisions for their collective future.*

that can be written into a strategic plan and shared with others. Bringing an idea into a concrete reality is about collaboration with colleagues and belief in the possible.

Whether in stressed organizational structures or in centers of theological formation, conflict takes place when constructing and implementing a strategic plan. This is the ground where classical faculty governance and administrative privilege often oppose one another. Beyond protecting

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14. Ronnie Prevost, "Creating The Undiscovered Country: Religious Education as an Agent of Forging the Third Millennium," in *Forging A Better Religious Education in the Third Millennium*, ed. James Michael Lee (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 2000), 226–242. Prevost's interpretation of praxis-based theology as a form of artistry is what I have in mind here.

perceived turf, statistics reveal that faculty and administrators will place the mission of the institution even above their own career development, particularly when it comes to difficult decisions for their collective future. My experiences teach me that there are often at least two distinct cohorts of faculty at work in the life of the school or seminary. First, more seasoned and cautiously optimistic colleagues will often include professionals who contribute institutional experience and accrued wisdom to the scrutiny of a new idea. Once in agreement, these colleagues prove to be true defenders of the emerging idea. Second, a less experienced cohort of faculty will bring well-intended enthusiasm and fresh, courageous insights. The payoff here is a focused commitment to the school or seminary where they may serve as leaders for decades to come. The strengths of these two cohorts will shape strategic objectives and anticipated outcomes. Comprehensive agreement is reached with concise criteria, scalable objectives, and anticipated outcomes that shape the future.

Finally, faculty-administrators can get ahead of themselves. First-rate entrepreneurial leaders, who are refined at implementing a new idea, may inundate an institution with novel approaches that are interesting but not integrated or right for the moment. This is precisely why an agreed-upon strategic focus matters. Too many nonintegrated ideas will simply feel wrong and deplete both staff and faculty morale. Focus matters. Sometimes in the face of collective effort, not a new idea but gratitude is best. Cyclists talk about the experience of the sweet spot at the crest of a hill following a strenuous climb. Gravity and pitch become liminal. In that moment, reward is expressed as personal accomplishment and self-assurance. Then together they sail down the other side. A faculty-administrator needs to slow down and revel with others at the crest of each success. Staff, faculty, students, and core constituencies emit true dedication in their efforts. In these moments, new ideas are never as important as an expression of gratitude.

Fourth task: Live into the hyphen

The fourth and most important overall task of the faculty-administrator is to live into the hyphen. Living into the hyphen means that a faculty-administrator is a hybrid reality, always a both-and. To be an effective faculty-administrator, one must seek to have ideas that are integrated in every professional way possible and that are congruent with the vocational heart of our *lingua franca*—theology. If we do not begin here, then

the tyranny of the urgent in theological education will divert our energies to essential but not primary ventures, for example, marketing. Disruptive marketing that is not theologically centered will mistake itself for both the medium and the message, and it will sour faculty responses when they no longer recognize themselves in the brand. Marketing is essential, but it must serve the mission and theological identity of the institution or risk appearing out of sync.

When faculty colleagues take on a role as administrator, we may sense they've joined the dark side of the force. In truth, neither Darth Vader nor Yoda, a faculty-administrator is the one tasked with endeavoring along-side colleagues to integrate student formation, teaching, scholarship, guild management, and executive responsibilities into a work-life that is committed to a coherent, lived mission. That isn't a set of simple tasks; rather, it requires a professional life that seeks congruence in every task. This professional life is a balancing act that necessitates knowing how to fail and succeed with dignity.

Conclusion

I'll end by setting below what I believe are a few key priorities for keeping our balance as faculty-administrators today.

First, on the road ahead, a vocation in theology is priority number one, but to proceed safely, keep an eye on your side and rearview mirrors too. The changes within higher education and the churches are around and alongside us. If we are aware, then upheaval may lead to interinstitutional cooperation that is creative in curricular advancement and even faculty sharing. Short-lived ideas like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are the antonym to what I'm suggesting. Steamroller strategies like MOOCs cannot be mistaken for creative disruptive ingenuities in course design and student offerings that truly advance our collective work. For instance, cooperation between church-based seminaries and university-affiliated ecumenical institutions can be one among many savvy ways of meeting core requirements and enhancing student formation.

Second, cultivate a culture of continuous self-assessment and refinement, aligned to the institution's missional identity. The changes identified above are a prelude to tomorrow's turbulence that we can only now glimpse. Cultivation requires a deep ready-bench of collaborators and advisors drawn from individuals ranging from students to external

partners. One of the best pieces of advice I received in the past academic year came from a secular humanist in the region who nevertheless values the role of religious leadership in the public square. An openness to all kinds of voices allows for this kind of rich diversity.

Third, care about the passion of your colleagues. A standing faculty colloquium for sharing recently published works will lead to conversations that nuance emerging interests. In the balancing act, faculty-administrators get it wrong if they turn every faculty meeting into an extended business update. Our life together requires elucidation about what we love or at least

> 66 *Cultivate a culture of continuous self-assessment and refinement, aligned to the institution's missional identity.*

what we're good at. Conversation furthers trust, sharpens our awareness of one another, and will be an incubator for essential strategic efforts in the future. Being a faculty-administrator is not fundamentally about strategy; it is about passionate vocation.

Finally, integrate everything that is relevant and weed out the extraneous. What is relevant will be clear, concise, and meaningful to our current mission; what is extraneous will appear as white noise—it will light up the room briefly but cast paltry shadows. Not every good idea requires development in the cost-ratio of energy, time, and capacity within centers of theological education. Living into the hyphen means knowing when to say "maybe later." Moderation and balance require it of us.

My reflections conclude with this question: What givens do we know? Here are a few: We have chosen this profession, or it has chosen us, and we are dedicated to it. Paradigms come and go even as we are in the midst of our own transformation. Cloistered, guild-specific futures for faculty in theological education will be less available and less needed. As faculty-administrators we have no reason to bemoan our vocations, although we may be anxious about the practical application of what we do. And finally, the quality of our students today is heartening. Their often unrelenting courage to a vocational response and their desire to be a voice of theological meaning in the world should be an unremitting source of inspiration to us all. The vocational heart of what we do resides in the hyphen, and from

that place of passionate vocation, faculty-administrators make it their responsibility to help our students and schools thrive.

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What Is Expected from the Faculty of the Future? Tightened Budgets, Curricular Innovation, and Defining Faculty Identity at Luther Seminary

Matthew L. Skinner
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ABSTRACT: *When financial hardship led Luther Seminary's directors to commission a task force to examine the faculty's composition and organization, the faculty set out to quantify and qualify not only instructional capacities but also its contributions to the seminary's identity and mission. The task force's recommendations aimed to promote financial sustainability and foster an institutional culture able to nourish faculty development and productivity appropriate to the seminary's mission. This article describes the seminary's ongoing realization that its way forward must be as much about recommitting to a healthy and prolific faculty culture as about fiscal discipline.*

The crises currently besetting theological education tell an increasingly familiar story. Many, if not all, theological schools are scrambling to address changing realities in enrollment and financial models. Without denying the complexity of the many, interrelated challenges, one key dimension receives particular attention here: the challenges' integral connections to faculty work. Can the current environment continue to support tenure, sabbaticals, pedagogical innovation, and faculties made up mostly of full-time academics who see their vocations as analogous to their peers in the humanities departments of research universities? Even more important to ask are questions such as, Are established models of faculty organization, culture, and work appropriate to the changing dynamics of effectively educating students for leadership in communities of faith? How do faculties best contribute to a theological school's chances for success?

The answers to those questions will vary depending on the institution asking them. For one stand-alone denominational seminary, the questions

recently imposed themselves with a particular immediacy. Even though the faculty and administration at Luther Seminary knew that concerns about financial models and their implications for faculty composition, work, and organization hovered on a near horizon, those concerns hit the seminary all at once when a financial crisis suddenly came to light in fall 2012 and required a rapid response. This article recounts the experience of the Luther Seminary faculty in confronting those issues and reflects on the decision-making process and its outcomes. The article summarizes a process that led to greater understanding about how a seminary might best quantify and qualify a faculty's work and rightly regard that work within a larger conversation about what most affects and promotes institutional vitality.

A snapshot of the Luther Seminary faculty

In July 2012, at the beginning of academic year 2012–2013, 48 people had faculty status at Luther Seminary. Of these, 33 were tenured and an additional 11 were tenure-track, on pace to receive a tenure review at a point in the near future. Therefore, 92 percent of the faculty was tenured or tenure-track. A standard teaching load for each member of the teaching faculty was 4.5 course credits per year.[1] Approximately 16 percent of the course sections the seminary offered that year were team-taught by two faculty members who each received a course credit counted against their teaching load. Faculty who performed significant administrative duties received credit against their teaching loads as compensation for that work.

A crisis emerges

In October–December 2012, it came to light that accumulating losses had exhausted Luther Seminary's unrestricted cash reserves and that, during academic year 2011–2012, the seminary had withdrawn an additional $4 million from its endowment to meet operating cash-flow needs. At the midpoint of academic year 2012–2013, the amount of borrowing from the endowment for operating purposes had climbed to $7 million total, reducing the endowment's value by approximately one-tenth over roughly an

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1. Not all of the 48 faculty taught courses. The work of some (e.g., president, academic dean, director of library services, and others) was entirely administrative.

18-month period.[2] These revelations shocked the seminary's trustees and directors, to say nothing of their effects on the rest of the seminary community.[3] Immediately the seminary put into place a plan to limit spending, and interim administrative leadership took charge, beginning to collaborate with the directors and trustees on a financial turnaround plan.

Among the many jolts the new financial reports delivered to the seminary was that the size of the current faculty was clearly too large as a percentage of the school's now greatly reduced total budget. It also appeared that this size threatened to impose a significant long-term liability upon the seminary, given the uncertainties clouding theological education's future and the privileges or constraints afforded by tenure.

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In March 2013, the seminary's interim president and academic dean asked the board of directors to commission a task force that would perform research, deliberate, and make proposals concerning ways in which the seminary could create the stability needed for the faculty to do its necessary work while also contributing aggressively to the seminary's efforts to progress toward financial sustainability. Several factors precipitated this request and lent particular urgency to the situation:

- First, a process of designing a new curriculum for the seminary's MA and MDiv programs was nearing completion and was scheduled for a final faculty vote during spring semester 2013 for launch in fall

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2. Subsequent investigation would discover that the seminary had, despite regular budgetary reports indicating otherwise, failed to maintain financial equilibrium for at least four consecutive fiscal years.

3. On contributing factors and Luther Seminary's leadership transition, see media reports in Libby A. Nelson, "The Struggling Seminaries," *Inside Higher Ed* (March 29, 2013), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/03/29/luther-seminary-makes-deep -cuts-faculty-and-staff-amid-tough-times-theological; and Bob Hulteen, "Luther Sem Makes Change at the Helm," *Metro Lutheran* (December 31, 2012), http://metrolutheran .org/2012/12/luther-sem-makes-change-at-the-helm/.

semester 2014. The faculty's commitment to instituting a new curriculum with very different course requirements and fewer credits earned in courses taught by Luther Seminary faculty left the institution not able to see clearly how patterns or estimates concerning class size, teaching load, anticipated enrollment, and range of course offerings would play out in the near future.[4] The seminary had plenty of data allowing it to make projections based on the previous curriculum but none on the new curriculum.

- Second, the institution needed to make decisions concerning a large number of tenure-track faculty. Of the 11 tenure-track faculty members at that time, five were scheduled for tenure reviews during academic year 2012–2013. While the seminary's directors and administration moved swiftly to delay those reviews for an additional year (at which time additional tenure-track faculty would also be contractually eligible to apply for tenure reviews), it was suddenly not clear to anyone whether awarding tenure or even renewing tenure-track contracts would be financially viable or in line with the seminary's interest in having the optimal number and alignment of faculty members to teach the courses the new curriculum would demand. Questions about the tenure-track faculty members' futures were quickly enmeshed in additional questions about how the new curriculum would and should affect the faculty's composition and expected workload.

- Third, a palpable sense of uncertainty fueled the sense of crisis. The seminary's research into its true financial condition remained a work in progress. The directors and administration continued to craft a turnaround plan to lead toward financial sustainability. More than a dozen support staff employees suffered layoffs, and several vacant positions were eliminated. As some faculty members announced early retirements or resignations to take other calls, concern grew that indecision

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4. Regarding the lower number of credits, taking the MDiv degree as an example: The previous MDiv curriculum consisted of 30 credits, plus an additional 1.5-credit Greek prerequisite, all covered in courses taught by Luther Seminary faculty or adjunct instructors. In the new MDiv curriculum (launched in fall 2014), students earn 3 credits toward their degree through CPE and a yearlong ministry internship (both overseen by site supervisors, not faculty), and a Greek course is included within the overall 30 required credits. The drop from 31.5 credits to 27 credits taught by the seminary's teaching staff resulted in a 14 percent reduction in the number of credits the seminary would need the capacity to offer. This fact alone would perhaps have warranted a reduction in the faculty's size, even if the seminary's financial picture had been rosy.

about matters of the faculty's stability would create additional or compounded negative effects.[5]

In May 2013 the seminary's board of directors voted to commission the task force on faculty structure and organization that would do what the seminary's adminis-tration had proposed and issue a final report to the board, administration, and faculty by the end of December 2013. The direc-tors stipulated that the task force should be chaired by the academic dean and further consist of the chair of the board of directors' Academic Affairs Com-mittee and as many as five faculty members chosen by the faculty. The faculty decided that the task force

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should include the full five-allowed faculty members and that one of them should be pretenured (on a tenure track).

The task force understood its charge as performing an investigation and offering proposals to answer this question: How does Luther Semi-nary attract and support the growth of strong faculty members, while establishing the flexibility needed to be institutionally sustainable? Clearly the flexibility sought by the directors meant a means of mitigating risk by avoiding future scenarios in which the seminary would be saddled by an inability to reduce (or increase?) the size of the faculty as a swift response to changing financial realities. But the board did not ask the task force to make purely budgetary proposals; the task force understood the leading

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5.   At the conclusion of academic year 2012–2013, the number of people with faculty status had declined sharply through retirements and voluntary resignations to accept other calls. Thirty-seven people had faculty status at that time (25 tenured, 7 more on a tenure track, plus 5 nontenured faculty with mostly administrative responsibilities). The proportion of tenured and tenure-track faculty was 86 percent of the total faculty, however, not much of a decrease from the 92 percent of a year prior.

clause of the question as a charge to commit itself also to matters of faculty development, to make recommendations that would allow the faculty to remain a key, effective, and efficient piece of Luther Seminary's commitment to influence church, academy, and other public settings. The issue was how the faculty would do this, and what commitments would best serve the institution. The task force began its work in June 2013 and submitted its final report in December 2013.

The task force's work

The initial part of the task force's work was investigative, allowing its final report to describe the seminary's current situation, its projected future, its historic and ongoing strengths, and observable trajectories and practices in the broader landscape of theological and professional education. This investigative work involved reading publications about enrollment trends and reflections on faculty work, tenure, and the nation's rising reliance upon contingent faculty (that is, adjunct and contract faculty).[6] The task force hosted occasional conversations with the wider faculty, especially in attempts to discern the faculty's values and priorities for its work in the seminary's shifting landscape. Members of the task force consulted

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6. A complete bibliography would be unwieldy. For representative examples, see (**on changing demographics**) Barbara G. Wheeler and Anthony T. Ruger, "Sobering Figures Point to Overall Enrollment Decline: New Research from the Auburn Center for Theological Education," *In Trust* 24 (Spring 2013): 5–11; and Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World," *Theological Education* 46, no. 2 (2011): 69–80; (**on tenure and related policies**) Richard B. McKenzie, "In Defense of Academic Tenure," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 152, no. 2 (June 1996): 325–341; H. Lorne Carmichael, "Incentives in Academics: Why Is There Tenure?" *Journal of Political Economy* 96, no. 3 (June 1988): 453–472; Cathy A. Trower, "Academic Tenure and the Traditional Assumptions Boards Should Question," *Trusteeship* 20, no. 6 (November/December 2012): 1–10; AAUP Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "Post-Tenure Review: An AAUP Response" (June 1999), http://www.aaup.org/report/post-tenure-review-aaup-response; and Michael Jinkins, "Why Tenure Matters," *Thinking Out Loud* (September 17, 2013), http://www.lpts.edu/about/our-leadership/president/thinking-out-loud/thinking-out-loud/2013/09/17/why-tenure-matters; (**on contingent faculty**) JBL Associates, Inc., "Reversing Course: The Troubled State of Academic Staffing and a Path Forward," http://www.aftface.org/storage/face/documents/reversing_course.pdf; Scott Jaschik, "Call to Arms for Adjuncts . . . from an Administrator," *Inside Higher Ed* (October 14, 2008), http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/10/14/adjunct; and various AAUP resources available at http://www.aaup.org/issues/contingent-faculty/resources-contingent-appointments; (**on another stand-alone seminary's visioning process**) Fuller Seminary's "Seminary of the Future" project (Fall 2011), http://future.fuller.edu/.

with representatives of other stand-alone seminaries and other kinds of professional schools. The task force met with other departments within the seminary, especially enrollment and finance, so as to coordinate and test various scenarios regarding future enrollment and budgeting, topics of considerable interest in light of the directors' and trustees' commitment to chart a course toward a financial turnaround.

This research was especially helpful in allowing the task force to quantify and map the connections among enrollment, course sizes, and certain revenue lines in the seminary's budgets. The task force's most notable discovery was that tracking enrollment by tuition units told a much different and more revealing story than student head count or FTE numbers did. Declines in course enrollment at the seminary, the task force revealed, had been much more pronounced over the latest five-year period than the modest declines in student head count. In fact, the head count numbers did more to mask the mounting financial crisis than they did to reveal it. Head count statistics proved virtually useless to efforts to quantify the seminary's needed teaching capacity. Tuition units, of course, are much easier to translate into tuition and financial-aid dollars, as well as into calculations of average class sizes. As a result of this discovery, the task force's research uncovered trends that had largely gone overlooked by the entire institution for years. The task force's conversations with various groups within the seminary became easier to conduct with this more revealing metric, a metric that made it much less complicated to posit future scenarios and their effects on the work and health of a range of the seminary's departments and functions.

> " *The task force's most notable discovery was that tracking enrollment by tuition units told a much different and more revealing story than student head count or FTE numbers did.*

The task force's research also involved plotting the new curriculum and its likely effects on tuition units and on the number of course sections the seminary should offer. Again, the task force weighed various scenarios that would be created by rises or declines in student enrollment (measured in terms of tuition units), optimal student-to-instructor ratios in each section, and the extent of the seminary's commitment to team teaching

certain courses. As a result, and in a short time, the task force generated a fairly clear and reliable scan of the seminary's teaching capacity, offering a picture of how the seminary's projected faculty—considered as an undifferentiated whole and also broken into discrete departments and disciplinary specializations—would match up to the new course offerings anticipated in the new curriculum. This data was easily integrated into the most current drafts of the seminary's financial turnaround plan, showing relative gains and losses depending upon adjustable projections involving numerous variables including student enrollment, size of the faculty, student-to-instructor ratios in an average section, each faculty member's baseline annual teaching load, the scale of the seminary's reliance upon adjunct instructors, and even tuition pricing. This integration and the ability to manipulate scenarios greatly facilitated conversations about the relative values of certain pedagogical commitments (e.g., team teaching and

> 66 *Too many reductions and too much focus on bottom-line accounting gains, without regard for the less quantifiable assets the faculty contributes to the institution, would inevitably limit the seminary's ability to attract new students and serve its constituencies' current and emerging needs.*

optimal class size) and larger questions about the faculty's size, organization, responsibilities, and privileges (e.g., amount of sections taught by adjunct instructors, various types of adjunct instructors, calculation of a reasonable and efficient workload for full-time faculty members, and the costs and benefits of sabbaticals).

The research yielded sketches of possible futures for Luther Seminary. But all of the task force's considerations had obvious implications beyond a spreadsheet, for everyone involved perceived the looming changes' potential impact on the institution's collective understanding of what should be expected from its faculty members, as individuals and as a collaborative body. Therefore, the task force also vigorously tended to the question of faculty development and what it would mean for the seminary to benefit from a strong faculty now and into its future. The task force's

work allowed the institution to get a sense for the number of course sections it would have to offer annually into the future, but the task force also sought to make the case for what kind of faculty could best do this work and how it should do it. For example, because Luther Seminary has a reputation for innovating to grow and refine its programs, the task force contended that the seminary should value a faculty with the capacity to do more of the same in the future.[7] Too many reductions and too much focus on bottom-line accounting gains, without regard for the less quantifiable assets the faculty contributes to the institution, would inevitably limit the seminary's ability to attract new students and serve its constituencies' current and emerging needs. The task force deliberated questions such as, What kind of faculty best serves the seminary's ability to innovate its programs, to serve its mission, and to attract future students? and What should the seminary expect from its faculty?

The task force offered an integrated set of recommendations. Taken on their own, each recommendation appeared unable to make a noteworthy difference in either the financial bottom line or the faculty's culture. Taken together, however, the recommendations aimed to accomplish three principal and essential goals:

1. The recommendations position Luther Seminary to meet the changing needs of the church and world by fostering institutional stability and renewing the seminary's long-standing commitment to attracting and nurturing a strong, stable, and imaginative teaching staff.
2. The recommendations urge and permit Luther Seminary to use its faculty's teaching capacity as efficiently as possible, while still providing opportunities for ongoing research that will enhance the creative character of the seminary's reputation and programs, as well as research that will influence theological scholarship more broadly.
3. The recommendations set Luther Seminary on a course toward a gradual transition into a future that will provide a more flexible faculty structure. While the recommendations recognize the value of tenured,

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7. Examples of previous innovations include the development of the seminary's successful distributed-learning programs, efforts to create and support multiple pathways (accelerated, part time, and other durations) for students through the seminary's degree programs, and research projects or new resources that engage the seminary's constituencies and the wider church for the sake of leadership development and lifelong learning.

permanent faculty members, they also emphasize the value of contingent faculty arrangements for some positions.

First, the task force recommended that Luther Seminary should continue the practice of placing some faculty members in tenured positions. Retaining a core tenured faculty, the task force argued, would remain an essential dimension of the seminary's ability to move forward in strength, with stability, and maintaining a clear identity. The task force's stated rationale for tenure focused entirely on the benefits tenure delivers to Luther Seminary's particular culture, capacity, and reputation—benefits that are not easily quantified yet still contribute to the institution's financial health.[8] This focus stemmed not from indifference about tenure's role in ensuring academic freedom but rather from a desire to explain tenure's institutional benefits in direct response to the specific concerns that were exerting the most pressure on the seminary in the acute stages of its crisis.[9]

The rationale paid explicit attention to the institution. Historically at Luther Seminary, tenure has helped build and keep stable institutional identity and public reputation, a reality clearly valued according to reports from external constituencies, graduates, and students. The seminary's tenure system has also consistently encouraged the faculty to commit themselves to the institution, its common good, and various responsibilities and functions crucial to the seminary's existence—all commitments that would need to continue for the seminary to complete a successful turnaround. Tenure also has promoted faculty development and would need to remain a means of doing so if it were to be retained. That is, tenure has been a key piece of the seminary's ability to attract and seek quality faculty; it also clearly encourages established faculty to invest vigorously in their newer colleagues' development, even as it empowers a wider range of faculty members to contribute to the seminary's common, expanding work in an era that demands fresh ideas and willingness to embrace new realities.

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8. See the essays by McKenzie and Carmichael cited in n. 6 above.

9. Many who criticize tenure systems in the mainstream media do so from an economic perspective and usually without sufficient regard for the clear differences among the types of institutions that constitute higher education. A response that took these criticisms, as well as their accompanying anxieties, seriously while demonstrating that some do not apply in simple ways to a school like Luther Seminary seemed appropriate to the task force.

The task force recognized that tenure benefits the institution only insofar as its tenured faculty can indeed deliver on the values that the task force recognized in the seminary's tenure system. The task force therefore recommended that the faculty institute a more rigorous process of regular reviews of all tenured faculty. This process would include a greater level of peer review (as opposed to a review process administered solely by the academic dean), so the faculty itself could take greater responsibility in this form of institutional accountability.

Of course, tenure obviously limits an institution's ability to reduce its instructional budget sharply when adverse circumstances might commend doing so. The task force therefore recommended that the seminary set as a long-range goal a lower percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty as a composition of the total faculty. This would result in some future faculty hires involving contract, not tenure-track, arrangements. The seminary's long-term financial turnaround plan would therefore need to account for—indeed, to *invest in*—a *gradual* reduction of the percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Likewise, the institution should recognize that the awarding of tenure in this interim period could continue, depending on the seminary's long-term strategic needs, the particular vision of the new curriculum, and the projected size of the faculty representing various academic disciplines.[10] Too rapid a transition into a faculty organization more evenly divided between contract and tenured (or tenure-track) faculty would risk further shocking an already shocked system, the task force reasoned, until the institution could pave the way for creating a fair and generous atmosphere for these different kinds of faculty members

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10. The task force recommended that the seminary gradually work toward a goal of having 70 percent of its faculty either tenured or on a tenure track. At the beginning of academic year 2014–2015, after additional retirements, voluntary resignations to accept other calls, and other changes, 30 people had faculty status at Luther Seminary (a total reduction of 37.5 percent of faculty size since July 2012). Of these, 22 were tenured and 5 remained on a tenure track. This resulted in 90 percent of the current faculty being tenured or on a tenure track.

Two members of the faculty received tenure, effective as of the beginning of academic year 2014–2015. During academic year 2014–2015, the directors approved three faculty hires: two contract faculty and one tenured. One of the seminary's contract faculty members will be retiring in June 2015.

through ongoing planning and revision of the seminary's policies and procedures.[11]

In addition, the task force recommended that the seminary should not significantly increase the number of courses taught by adjunct instructors as a long-term strategy. While fluctuations in the degree to which the seminary relies on adjuncts, especially in transitional periods, is understandable and sometimes salutary, the task force expressed grave concern about wider trends in higher education that show adjunct instructors suffering from exploitative employment practices. High reliance on adjuncts would put the seminary at risk of undermining its institutional stability and the durability of its reputation, all while this reliance would exacerbate temptations toward exploitative practices that could contravene the mission to which the seminary is committed.

Further, the task force commended the seminary's efforts to foster strong relationships with its emeriti faculty so that they might continue to teach occasional courses as available. Courses taught by emeriti represent the seminary's most cost-effective form of instructional delivery, because these instructors receive the same remuneration as adjuncts yet they require little or no orientation to the institution and its mission, ethos, and curricular goals.

Consistently, the task force's recommendations recognized the high value of the faculty's contributions to the seminary as teachers. While that might seem an obvious judgment, the task force's report noted an institutional tendency to take faculty out of the classroom so they might perform additional administrative duties. As salutary as these duties may be, excessive awarding of course reductions as compensation appeared too great a liability in light of the seminary's changing circumstances and smaller faculty size. Fewer reductions in professors' course loads would boost the overall faculty's instructional productivity, which the institution needed, and increasingly will need, as reductions in the size of the faculty from July 2012 to July 2014 have significantly outpaced the five-year decline in the seminary's enrollment. The task force therefore recommended that the

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11. Concerns exist about the prospect of creating, as a consequence of reckless haste, a "two-tier" system, which would potentially weaken all the task force's other proposals about how faculty can contribute positively to the seminary's identity and good functioning. See, for example, Keith Hoeller, ed., *Equality for Contingent Faculty: Overcoming the Two-Tier System* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014).

seminary sharply limit these course reductions and that the academic dean adjudicate all requests for reductions through a process made transparent to the whole faculty. The task force further recommended that modest financial remuneration would be a better means of compensating faculty members for performing significantly intensive administrative duties—a *better* means, insofar as prioritizing the faculty's work as instructors would prove more advantageous to the seminary and its students.

The task force made similar recommendations about team teaching, in an effort to reduce sharply the amount of team-taught sections. It asked the faculty's Educational Leadership Committee to set a strict budget for the number of team-taught courses the seminary would offer in a given academic year. It also

> 66 *While fluctuations in the degree to which the seminary relies on adjuncts, especially in transitional periods, is understandable and sometimes salutary, the task force expressed grave concern about wider trends in higher education that show adjunct instructors suffering from exploitative employment practices.*

directed this committee to review the new curriculum so as to determine which courses have intrinsic pedagogical or outcomes-based warrants for being team-taught. Decisions about team teaching would allow a now-smaller faculty to keep its overall instructional capacity as high as possible while asking faculty to make pedagogical decisions closely informed by the institution's budgetary limitations. The results of these decisions would promote a more sustainable academic budget while keeping faculty—who, as the task force's case for tenure emphasized, play critical roles in the seminary's ability to maintain its reputation and identity—as present as possible with students in instructional settings.

Also, the task force recommended that the faculty's annual teaching load remain increased from 4.5 credits to 5 credits, in agreement with a decision the full faculty had already made soon after the seminary's financial crisis came to light.

Taken together, these recommendations asked the faculty to do more work in areas of teaching and institutional service (e.g., increased annual

course load; more uncompensated administrative duties; additional involvement in peer-review processes; occasional team teaching or guest lecturing without compensation; and committing itself to shaping the faculty ethos and handbook to create an environment in which tenured faculty, tenure-track faculty, and contract faculty can collaborate in a healthy and just environment). But the recommendations also asked the faculty to take greater responsibility for the institutional climate, so pedagogical options can be considered in light of clear financial obligations and limits, and so faculty hires can more deliberately take account of the overall faculty ecology and the instructional needs in specific academic disciplines. The recommendations asked individual faculty members to consider their work as a more obvious piece of an organic whole. They asked that the faculty be empowered and held responsible to guide the seminary's educational mission and not to let the institution's financial pressures hastily lead to a situation in which faculty's work is defined as merely instructional.

What can be learned?

The wider faculty voiced strong support for the task force's report and its recommendations. In February 2014 the board of directors voted unanimously to receive the task force's report. In doing so, the directors also endorsed the basic direction the report proposed for the future of Luther Seminary; affirmed that the report's research should be used for faculty development, budgeting, and financial planning; and requested that the task force's recommendations be commended to faculty groups for action and developing policies. That work and other recovery efforts began in spring 2014, and they continue now.

The task force's work produced no silver-bullet solutions. Instead, the task force represents a process in which a faculty was asked, with much urgency and in a climate of significant anxiety, to provide institutional leadership through an investigation into how a seminary might quantify and qualify its instructional efforts through a thorough assessment of its faculty's purpose and shared work. The process allowed the faculty to interpret its work as a unique and core piece of any plan for the seminary to negotiate its way through limited resources and competing values. Through the process, the faculty did not necessarily find new work to do, nor entirely novel ways of organizing and compensating that work, but it found a way to

articulate its work within the scope of the seminary's overall ethos and educational mission, with clear acknowledgement of the financial challenges vexing theological education. Most notable were the following outcomes:

1. The creation of the task force and the seminary's directors' endorsement of the task force's proposals represent a way in which the board, administration, and faculty collaborated in the tasks of information gathering and decision making. In the end, the faculty's response—to the degree to which the task force's recommendations could be considered a response representing the whole faculty—was a pledge to tend to its own work with a renewed sense of cooperation and accountability. The faculty prioritized particular facets of its work and roles, as it

> ❝ *The process allowed the faculty to interpret its work as a unique and core piece of any plan for the seminary to negotiate its way through limited resources and competing values.*

also pledged to embark on a trail toward a more efficient and slightly reconfigured faculty, imagining a future in which tenured faculty would serve to a greater extent alongside various kinds of contingent faculty in a fair and effective manner.

2. While the task force's recommendations may have been conservative in nature, insofar as they did not propose a radically new way of imagining faculty composition, organization, and duties, nevertheless the recommendations reasserted the idea that a seminary's faculty remains vital to a school not only for the teaching it performs to "deliver" or "enact" a curriculum but also in defining a school's character, equipping it for a particular and durable mission, and innovating for the sake of refining that mission to serve an evolving church and world.

3. Most fundamental: In the midst of a complex crisis, Luther Seminary made a commitment to a way forward that would be as much about recommitting the institution to a healthy, efficient, scholarly, and prolific faculty culture as about instituting greater fiscal discipline. Exactly how those two things are balanced and creatively integrated might take different forms at different theological schools, but the obvious

need to integrate the two commends the importance of seminaries' efforts to (re)commit themselves to faculty development in the midst of this changing, challenging landscape.

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Big Data for Faculty Development in Research and Teaching

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ABSTRACT: *Big data has arrived due to the affordability of the volume of digital information; the velocity of its access, processing, and analysis; and the variety of its sources. Repositories of online texts and social media for contemporary theological research can be used now as part of the teaching/learning experience in the classroom and for personalizing distance education. Yet not all of these digital projects are worth the investment. This paper, therefore, proposes a set of criteria for effective decision making by faculty and administrators as to how big data can contribute to sustainable models for both research and teaching.*

Introduction

Is big data a productive theme or an expensive fad? Does it show helpful progress or innovation fatigue? Can it actually personalize our education and business processes? These questions are important for advancing the theological enterprise in scholarship and instruction. The human population of the earth is now seven billion, with more than two billion on the Internet and more than five billion with a mobile phone. The data accumulation is overwhelming. Predictive analytics and data inquiry can help formulate better questions and allow closer examination or changes in the angles of observation. And it applies to all fields and disciplines in education, counseling, seminary, business, and health care.

In this article, the term *big data* will focus on (1) the huge and growing databases and (2) the computer-based tools for numerical analysis and action. As the cost of digital technology decreases and its capacity increases, the domains of information and the processes for finding patterns become more powerful in the "digital humanities." The volume, velocity, variety, and value of big data are growing. It can be applied to all aspects of theological education. In particular, attention will be on the work of academic scholarship and teaching students for comprehension, application, and evaluation with the best of academic and biblical standards. While the cost

of the required interdisciplinary expertise may be high for smaller schools, perhaps coalitions can mitigate this expense.

Arrival of big data: Structured and unstructured

Over the past couple of decades, Moore's law, a computing term that states that overall processing power for computers will double every two years,[1] has led to increased computing power and the creation of tools for a qualitative change in lifestyles, workplaces, and the academy. The doubling of velocity of computing capacity continues to extend its arms around more and more data.

Psychologists and statisticians have long worked to predict events, but they have been limited by sample size and its inference to a larger

> *The digital activities of the scholar touch on all elements of research and publication and include every step of scholarship such as archival search, analysis, collaboration, presentation, and discussion of findings.*

population. Now the data set is the whole population rather than just a small slice.[2] Classic problems of reliability and validity have been addressed in new ways. Thus, big data is more than just a result of Moore's law. It is also the application of a variety of mathematical studies on questions about patterns in any data set. For theological faculty, data sets from the past and present are found in biblical studies, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology.

In every scholarly discipline, these tools are used to better assess the quantitative aspect of any topic.[3] As the professor walks around the numbers and images, insights are added to the literature. As new evidence is considered for the facts of the discipline, accepted or contested, the advance of knowledge is continued. The tools do more than count and

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1. http://www.mooreslaw.org.

2. Eric Siegel, *Predictive Analytics: The Power to Predict Who Will Click, Buy, Lie, or Die* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

3. Robert Nisbet, John Elder, and Gary Miner, *Handbook of Statistical Analysis and Data Mining Applications* (New York: Academic Press, 2009).

cipher. Unstructured data and textual archives are the target of big data analytics, too. Furthermore, these objects can be contemporary and even real time, for example, from the many social media forums. Collaboration can be rapid and very democratic.

More than structured data

One might expect big data to be limited to numbers, statistics, and numerical patterns in a uniform arrangement. While this is usually preferred, there is an opportunity to sift through the unsteady sequence of words and images that arise from conversation and dialogue. A great part of big data is unstructured information. For unstructured data production, the scaling is not just with numbers but, rather, with text or unorganized numbers. The algorithms can analyze records and social media whether or not they were intended to have numerical values. Thus, any individuals or institutions that have been collecting information among their constituents can return to the record with their research purposes and look for types, totals, and patterns of prediction.

Data preparation is tremendously important for any big data project. In fact, "data miners will spend 60–90 percent of their project time on these data preparation steps," according to Robert Nisbet.[4] First of all, there are the silos in most local area networks of an enterprise or academic database. As computer solutions were planned and even jerry-rigged year after year, the integration of one application or hardware network to another was omitted. Then there is data compression to handle huge amounts of evidence. With well-formed questions, the researcher applies apt mathematical and statistical tools to the body of numbers, text, images, and video. With unstructured data, the researcher must be resourceful to recompile the information for a meaningful pattern in answer to important questions.

It is not hard to think of the many ways that visual information can help in the theological disciplines. The mountain of visual information on the Internet grows quickly every day.[5] YouTube may be the best example

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4.   Robert Nisbet (researcher and independent data mining consultant), in personal communication with author June 2013.

5.   Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 8.

of the visual dimension of big data. And the statistics about the traffic of this visual medium continue to be amazing: 60 hours added every minute, 4 billion videos viewed per day, 800 million unique visitors per month, more than 1 trillion views in 2011 with nearly 140 views for every person around the world, and so forth. Visual literacy with images and video can be a primary key to understanding and communication in art, science, and the humanities.[6] Plus, the discipline of meta tagging adds a semantic component to the search.

Research and scholarship in the digital humanities

The digital activities of the scholar touch on all elements of research and publication and include every step of scholarship such as archival search, analysis, collaboration, presentation, and discussion of findings. Online conferences among peer intellectuals occur daily rather than just a couple of times per year. Digital humanities are assisting theological research in these many ways. Both traditional and nontraditional library sources are emerging as well as repositories in the field. With big data, the source can be located easily, and the object can be analyzed for patterns relevant to the theory of the research. Once the patterns are published, they are open to discussion from anyone on the Internet or in the member site.

Cross-cultural sources and audiences: Else-when

For example, the Ayers project at the University of Virginia was an early and excellent example of computer-based historical collection and analysis.[7] In the early 1990s, Edward Ayers began to accumulate the historical record of data from the battle areas in the Civil War, including two counties—Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in the North and August County, Virginia, in the South. By using four newspapers from each time and place, he was able to build a simulation of the situation. Then scholars and students could see that . . . "The *Valley of the Shadow* is different from many

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6.   John D. Couch, Kristopher Couch, and Andrew J. Peterson, "Interdisciplinary Study with Computer-Based Multimedia" (*Art, Science, and Visual Literacy. Selected readings from the 24th Annual Conference of the International Visual Literacy Association*, Blacksburg, VA, 1992), 289–295.

7.   Edward L. Ayers, *Valley of the Shadow* (Charlottesville, VA: Virginia Center for Digital History, 1991–2014), http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/VoS/usingvalley/valleyguide.html.

other history websites. It is more like a library than a single book. There is no 'one' story in the Valley Project. Rather, what you will find are thousands of letters and diaries, census and government records, newspapers and speeches, all of which record different aspects of daily life in these two counties at the time of the Civil War. As you explore the extensive archive, you will find that you can flip through a Valley resident's Civil War diary, read what the county newspapers reported about the battle of Gettysburg, or even search the census records to see how much the average citizen owned in 1860 or 1870. "

Literary analysis begins with usage of the original language. The Perseus Project is a long-standing effort to collect and study information from ancient

> " *The challenges in theological education are greater today for both traditional faculty and new learners, as diverse audiences come with new contributions and unfamiliar needs.*

Greece and Rome.[8] Here, with ancient documents, the researcher uses the original language as the starting point. Primary texts are made available for reading and analysis. The cultural analysis is helped by the art collection and archeology that is eager to receive more data for the local understanding of customs and patterns of life.

Gathering and studying mountains of data from the field is how we extend our knowledge of the past. Sometimes the ancient past is unexpectantly similar to the present. In an archeological study by Eric Powell,[9] it was important to see the similarity of the growth of cities in the ancient area of Mayan culture in Mexico. The extension of suburbs follows routes that look like today's urban sprawl. Rather than technology, there are commonalities in human and family interaction in the distribution of the population. This was affirmed by a look at the relevant data set.

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8.   Gregory R. Crane, *Perseus Project* (Medford, MA: Tufts University, Perseus Digital Library, 1987–2014), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/.

9.   Eric A. Powell, "Big Data, Big Cities," *Archaeology* (April 8, 2014).

Cross-cultural sources and audiences: Elsewhere

The challenges in theological education are greater today for both traditional faculty and new learners, as diverse audiences come with new contributions and unfamiliar needs. Contextualization is required for communication. Effective communication is needed to ensure an apt application of the affective and cognitive objectives with the students. We can know more of God's world in multiple languages as we extend research in light of a Christian worldview for analysis and recommendation.[10]

It is more difficult to take the time to reach into other cultures and to understand other worlds. To be ethnocentric is easy. But the Great Commission requires the excitement of the cross-cultural journey. For example, we need more studies of the effect of the Bible on all the cultures worldwide, including China. Computer-based libraries and forums allow access and help to hear from others outside our cultural circle. Online places of collaboration enable new dialogues across time, space, and culture. Even language instruction is made more democratic. Students will be better equipped to serve locally, regionally, and globally with a broader preparation. Globalization is a growing reality in Christian ministry and training.

Greater availability of sources for all the responsibilities in the job description of the teacher-scholar exists as does more information and less expensive access to the primary sources for research and writing. Likewise, there can be more affordable use of the primary sources for collaborative team exercises in the classroom. Even the role of Wikipedia in scholarship and teaching is instructive as studies attest to its validity in most content matters. Once forbidden in academic use, Wikipedia now offers the writer practical information such as birth dates, spelling of city names, links to primary sources, and so forth. Schools still range widely in permission for use and reference of Wikipedia, and the policies span from a ban on citations to unlimited use. But it is another example of the balanced use of big data where faculty leadership is required.

A natural place for the inspiration, model, and location of big data is the university library. With centuries of experience for information collection and application to learning, the library has traditions and systems that have been developed and evaluated over time. Just as it was central to

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10. Andrew Peterson and Hongjun Li, "The History of the Bible in China," in *The Bible and Effects in Societies Around the World* (New York: Bible Literacy Project, forthcoming).

the college in the past, the digital age has made it and professional librarians more important than ever. There is keen awareness at The American Theological Library Association (ATLA) of the relevance to strategic planning for the school and its library. "Theological education is changing and libraries must change, too," said Brenda Bailey-Hainer, ATLA executive director. "This conversation among three key leadership groups provides the opportunity to proactively shape future theological libraries and librarians in ways that will integrate them into the teaching, learning, and research processes of the academy." The conversation will be an important step toward understanding the roles of libraries and librarians in theological education as perceived by diverse stakeholders, including academic leaders, information technology officers, and librarians.[11]

> " *The big data environment can be utilized in a constructivist educational psychology as the faculty builds a domain where there can be self-pacing, exploration, discovery, feedback, and interrelation of content.*

Profiles and preferences in Amazon and Netflix are two other good examples of big data and provide a direct connection to research and teacher. These companies process the profiles of shoppers and information about books or videos, using their algorithms, to recommend titles to customers who can click to learn more about the book or video.

Despite the good and important progress for the digital humanities and theological education, the work of philosopher Hubert Dreyfus remains a reminder that the human element must be highlighted so as not to lose the real benefits of the digital. In three of his writings, *What Computers Still Can't Do*, *On the Internet*, and *Skillful Coping*, he shows how the phenomenology of scholarship is not just gathering more data to be interpreted

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11. Brenda Bailey-Hainer, "Twelve Institutions Selected for The Future of Libraries in Theological Education Conversation," (Chicago: ATLA, 2014), https://www.atla.com/about/pressroom/Pages/Twelve-Institutions-Selected-for-The-Future-of-Libraries-in-Theological-Education-Conversation-.aspx.

by set rules.[12] And, it is not even just about the more recent version of artificial intelligence such as networked communities in fluid collaboration within a set technological framework such as a learning management system (LMS) or a massive database. It is all about the judgment of what matters from beginning to end of the process. The discretion of relevance is something that cannot be reduced to statistical formulas regardless of the size of the population of responses. With a Christian worldview, the difference becomes even more profound.

Application of big data to teaching in higher education

The first task with big data for the classroom and training is discernment in how to use the new tools for learners. Equipping learners for scholarship and professional practice includes teaching the above digital skills with digital projects. The goal of the teacher is to teach the student well enough to do what the teacher does in professional practice. For effective instruction, the school must care about the availability of the platform for the student to teach, too. This platform is increasingly digital and online.

The big data environment can be utilized in a constructivist educational psychology as the faculty builds a domain where there can be self-pacing, exploration, discovery, feedback, and interrelation of content. In addition to programmed instruction and lectures, interactive exercises and social media allow for a more resilient sort of learning. A good exemplar of the constructivist environment for learning is the work of Omar K. Moore and his "Clarifying Environments Program."[13] His concepts about perspectives of learners, personalization of feedback, and productivity of content in the system guide the building of the educational domain.

Equipping for outcomes

The three main foci of theological education include character, skills, and facts. In best practices and official accreditation, the goal of character

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12.   Hubert L. Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do* (New York: MIT Press, 1992); *On the Internet: Thinking in Action* (New York: Routledge, 2008); and *Skillful Coping: Essays on the Phenomenology of Everyday Perception and Action*, ed. Mark Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).

13.   Omar K. Moore, "About Talking Typewriters, Folk Models, and Discontinuities: A Progress Report on Twenty Years of Research, Development, and Application," *Educational Technology* 20, no. 2 (February 1980): 15–27.

development is rightly elevated vis à vis learning facts and skills. Compared to the intellectual dimension, character education has been neglected at times in traditional education in the humanities and theology. The student may be attending lectures for the sake of information that is reported back without a long-term effect on the "habitus," (i.e., the dependable traits necessary for ministry and scholarship as would be described a la Pierre Bourdieau).[14]

> 66 *The resources of big data and related training can be provided to mentors to more easily fulfill some of the logistics of the coaching and to benefit personally and professionally from the content and tools.*

Adaptive assessment can be summative and formative along the way for the student's progress as well as program evaluation.[15] Based on "learning analytics," one of the new tools of big data, predictor variables are sought. In tracking student performance, there are measures to attempt to maximize learning in the course. Faculty with an interdisciplinary team can build learning analytics. The priorities for the course of study are the predicted results based on the most important factors in the student effort.

A recent example of the learning analytics of big data in teaching/ learning is CourseSmart, a consortium of publishers who aimed to find the most important predictor variables as students use e-textbooks (e.g., note taking, bookmarking, time on task). A learning engagement measure based on a proprietary algorithm is sought for each student in the class. The resource is the learner's work in the assigned e-textbooks. The original studies were with 100,000 e-books used by one million students across the major publishers (McGraw Hill, Pearson, Houghton Mifflin). Outcomes and retention were monitored. Prior to being acquired by VitalSource in 2014, CourseSmart conducted a study with 76 faculty members, 26

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14. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

15. Anthony G. Picciano, "The Evolution of Big Data and Learning Analytics in American Higher Education," *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 16, no. 3 (June 2012), 9–20, http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno= EJ982669.

administrators, and 3,700 students using the "learner engagement index," which measures recorded work in e-textbooks. The related report commends this tool as a "significant step forward" in helping students to succeed in their course work.[16]

Equipping in context

Spiritual formation, professional skills, and intellectual facts can be assessed using norms and personalized text questions for the classroom or the field.[17] One can even go outside the standard LMS to allow for more broadly found settings in which to learn and demonstrate competence as advocated by Groom and Lamb.[18] WordPress blogs and church-based assignments are good measures for alternative assessment.

One of the greatest demands for high-quality theological education is personal mentoring. Especially with distance learning, there is a need for local conversation about the material, teaching, and life along the way. Yet schools encounter the lack of available mentors to fill the gap. The resources of big data and related training can be provided to mentors to more easily fulfill some of the logistics of the coaching and to benefit personally and professionally from the content and tools. By a review of the studies on mentoring as well as the principles of the biblical text, the best practices for mentoring can be listed, applied, and evaluated. Student and coach at their convenience can consider written and video case studies. The leverage of this communication technology helps to address the real problem of availability of competent mentors.

Innovation with big data by faculty

The necessary disruptive innovation always begins with the "job to be done" as observed by experienced experts in the field. They see gaps for consumers who have a need but cannot afford to meet it with the usual

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16. Reynol Junco, *Evaluating How the CourseSmart Engagement Index Predicts Student Course Outcomes* (San Mateo, CA: CourseSmart, 2013). Junco is Fellow of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University.

17. Mary E. Lowe and Stephen D. Lowe, "Reciprocal Ecology: A Comprehensive Model of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 48, no. 1, (2013): 1–14.

18. Jim Groom and Brian Lamb, "Reclaiming Innovation," *Educause* 49, no. 3 (May/June 2014): 28–46.

and expensive products and services. In education there is a need for artificial and natural places for students to learn. More affordable platforms are needed for the instruction and publication of new works. The price must be low enough for even the lower-tier market and effective enough to do the job.

Groom and Lamb propose that education has been constricted by the adoption of the learning management system in almost all schools now. They suggest that the LMS restricts teacher-student learning to a linear march of media and assignments, preventing the student from using materials to learn and solve problems in innovative ways. The LMS, however, is helpful for the student to master the core of academic material. The caution is that it is a limiting factor for higher-level goals such as application in the field and personal evaluation by a standard. Adding field assignments by professors is important to bring the necessary validity to the instruction. Testing the LMS with predictive analytics by faculty will be important for these questions.

Criteria for big data projects in teaching

Big data projects can be quite expensive. In a sense, they need to be done anyway in order to "tune" the cyber network for the school. But they do require an expensive interdisciplinary team of experts: team leader, subject matter expert, database programmer, graphic artist, and others. Like any innovation or technical project, a good plan is critical to develop SMART steps—steps that are specific, measureable, agreed-upon, realistic, and timed.

The first move is for an astute needs assessment to verify the required benefits to pursue. Second is to complete an adequate SWOT analysis looking for the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This would include both audience and financial reviews. Third is to list roles and goals of the available team members and consultants. Faculty leadership is key at each point for an effective team. With these steps completed, an executive administrative report and plan can be written and discussed for institutional action. Additionally, with the right resources, and in possible coalitions among even smaller schools, faculty can do projects for their own scholarship and teaching.

To implement big data for instruction, the following seven steps apply.

Step 1: Review strategy
- Evaluate your legacy academic questions (sustaining operations)
- Evaluate your new questions for the current practice (sustaining innovation)
- Evaluate your new academic opportunities (disruptive innovation)

Step 2: Audit your data
- List the database silos with student data
- List the database silos with academic data
- List the database silos and interaction in your ecosystem

Step 3: Prepare your data
- Fill missing values
- Recode/Standardize
- Derive new variables
- Condition data set (e.g., balance rare categorical targets)
- Integrate data sources (data scientist vs. just IT)

Step 4: List your best predicted and predictor variables
- Rank predicted variables as outcomes (categorical, numerical)
- Add new and verified predicted variables
- List predictor variables (categorical, numerical)

Step 5: Build software/hardware platform
- Select analytic methods (statistics, algorithms)
- Arrange the hardware for a "datamart"
- Capture customer responses
- Analyze input data
- Design dashboard and training

Step 6: Build adaptive instruction
- Profile learners
- Explore an immersive story
- Discover productive insights

Step 7: Build adaptive assessment
- Make content interrelated
- Use self-pacing format
- Provide immediate feedback

Conclusion

As in other disciplines, big data for research and teaching in theological education will be part of robust strategic planning in the future. The seminary defines the goals and calculates the cost of technology advancement for the residential classroom and the online course. Big data is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. The professors and the schools collaborate on the front-end analysis for the right media. Better student assessment and learning analytics can be added to courses. Coalitions of scholars in the future will use a new technological process for teaching as well as for bringing more progress in the substantive disciplines. Especially where resources are fewer, focus must be on dynamic instructional design and collegial collaboration to mitigate risk and to open new vistas for seminary curriculum and training.

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A Pedagogy of Engagement for the Changing Character of the 21st Century Classroom

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ABSTRACT: *As seminary classrooms become increasingly representative of the diversity of current culture, faculty are challenged to rethink the Eurocentric theologies and the pedagogies that resist the varied hermeneutics that emerge out of the richness of diversity. This paper focuses on a* pedagogy of engagement *informed from a particular theological/ ecological anthropology that creates a posture of mutuality by identifying individuals as equally susceptible to culture's influence. Faculty who seek to implement these practices must be willing to engage in the messiness of open dialogue and acknowledge their own fears and subjectivity as an opportunity for engagement.*

Introduction

As educators, faculty are tasked with preparing graduates to meaningfully engage the world with intelligence and compassion. In a culture and context that is increasingly complex, where identity is considered as hybrid, dynamic, and open to construction, our once-proven practices and pedagogies are becoming less tenable. Though emerging concepts allow for more dynamic constructions of identity, a means of authentic engagement in multidiverse communities is still lacking. Diversity and pluralism are exposing the limits of deeply held Eurocentric assumptions of superiority that undergird many current pedagogies and conflict with the egalitarianism of contemporary culture. As a first step, educators and their institutions must be willing to critically rethink existing practices, standards, policies, and pedagogies in order to better equip graduates to meaningfully engage a culturally diverse and complex world. Second, they must find mutual partners of diverse backgrounds to engage in discourse and relationship.

Universities have historically relied on a model of education based on the transmission of formal knowledge, where learning has been content

specific, framing knowledge as an achievement rather than as a process. The problem with a knowledge-centric modality is that it holds the accumulation of knowledge as the central goal of education and draws students toward a common, static, sometimes dogmatic orientation. The

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hierarchical, power-laden structures of knowledge-centric pedagogies are easily threatened by critical engagement, when the questions shift to *why* knowledge is of value and *how* it is applied. Knowledge-centric models value objective knowledge, where data is privileged and the one who has developed the superior argument is admired. This stance perpetuates differences; values power; and excludes those who think differently, act differently, and exist in outside contexts.

A *pedagogy of engagement* is an experiential approach to education that invites faculty to meaningfully engage students in interpersonal relationships, rooted in the values of mutuality and dignity. By acknowledging an embodied, intersubjective, dialogical approach to education, faculty are able to engage the varied hermeneutics that emerge out of the richness of diversity while confronting the underlying objective and objectifying tendencies of a persistently biased, power-laden culture. By attending to the particular complexities of culture and diversity, faculty will be better able to equip all students to meaningfully engage a diverse and complex society.

Anthropology

James Smith suggests that behind every pedagogy is anthropology, and undergirding traditional pedagogies is a view of humanity as simply a collection of cognitive machines.[1] Theological educators, with the help of

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1. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 27–28.

education theorists such as Smith and Parker Palmer, have moved toward a view of education as not simply "informative" but "formative."[2] Formation sees knowledge not as an end unto itself but looks to the whole person, inviting experiences, emotions, hopes, and desires as "texts." According to Smith,

> Christian education would not be primarily a matter of sorting out which Christian ideas to drop into eager and willing mind-receptacles; rather, it would become a matter of thinking about how a Christian education shapes us, forms us, molds us to be a certain kind of people whose hearts and passions and desires are aimed at the kingdom of God.[3]

Undergirding a pedagogy of engagement is an anthropology rooted in contemporary theological, psychological, and social frameworks that honors dignity, mutuality, and community.

Faculty share a common humanity with their students as image bearers of the Divine Creator, fully aware that each was created uniquely, intentionally, and for a purpose. Just as the Triune God is distinct and united, humanity was created to be distinct and united—as individuals united within a common culture or distinct cultures among other human cultures. Whereas Babel stood against the imperial powers driving unity through uniformity, Pentecost accounts a miraculous Spirit-led unity, reimagining community, while maintaining cultural differences.[4] Paraphrasing

> 66 *A* pedagogy of engagement *is an experiential approach to education that invites faculty to meaningfully engage students in interpersonal relationships, rooted in the values of mutuality and dignity.*

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2.   For further discussion, see Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; and Parker J. Palmer, Arthur Zajonc, and Megan Scribner, *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

3.   Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18.

4.   Letty Mandeville Russell, "Encountering the 'Other' in a World of Difference and Danger," *Harvard Theological Review* 99, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 462–464.

the work of Justo González, Russell states, "the Spirit does not so much create the structures and procedures but, rather, breaks open structures that confine and separate people so that they can welcome difference and the challenges and opportunity for new understanding that they bring."[5]

As people of God, we are called to love one another in our difference, not in the remaking of the brother or sister in our own image, but as imaged by God; to be recognized in that image not superficially but deeply toward a *new* united community. God intended for us to be partnered with one another and to care and to nurture the other. In fact, to singularize the self, to make one over and above the other is, according to Hegel, the place of evil. For Hegel, "evil first occurs within the sphere of rupture or cleavage . . . being evil means singularizing myself in a way that cuts me off from the universal."[6] As the Apostle Paul reminds in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, the Christian community is built up of "varieties of gifts." Russell states, "It is the *koinonia* or community in Christ that provides unity, across the differing gifts; a community in which the Spirit inspires understanding across differences."[7]

> **"** *Students and faculty of the dominant culture [must] recognize the uniqueness of their own context and not assume it to be universal, while acknowledging that the understanding of all cultures adds value.*

We are people of embodiment. True community is marked not by whom it is willing to receive but how *all* are brought into a reimagined community—a place where the Other is seen, acknowledged, engaged, and received. This requires that students and faculty of the dominant culture recognize the uniqueness of their own context and not assume it to

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5.   Justo L. González, "Reading from My Bicultural Place: Acts 6:1–7," in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* vol. 1, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 146, quoted in Russell, "Encountering the 'Other'", 464.

6.   Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 151.

7.   Russell, "Encountering the 'Other,'" 464.

be universal, while acknowledging that the understanding of all cultures adds value.[8]

Social scientists also contribute significantly to our understanding of the nature of the human condition and how the formation of the self is situated in our capacity and ability to identify and be identified with difference. Mary Lowe and Steve Lowe explain that, "while reductionism with its accompanying fragmentation and specialization was the hallmark of scientific inquiry in the twentieth century, holism is the operating principle of science in the twenty-first century."[9] Contemporary classrooms require new attitudes about learning particularly as a *bidirectional ecological* (emphasis ours) endeavor, which "appreciates the similarities between the reciprocal interconnections of humans with one another in social ecosystems."[10] In this age of globalization, urbanization, and technology, anthropologists stress the importance of seeing cultures as "complex, with permeable boundaries, instead of as isolated, bounded entities."[11] Philosopher Jane Flax believes, "a unitary self is unnecessary, impossible, and a dangerous illusion. Only multiple subjects can invent ways to struggle against domination that will not merely recreate it."[12] When there is only one way to understand the self or the other, it results in domination. As culture trains us to singularize and objectify, realizing a multiple self offers us a category for relating to others and resists the escape to power and dominance. The interior life is actually steeped in sociopolitical forces, and the psychic life is made equally of inner and outer worlds. This new paradigm's premise is that the self is historical, linguistic, political, and contextual.

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8. *Dominant culture* here refers to all orienting structures of power and authority in a given context and not simply racialized categories such as "white dominant culture." This often refers to categories perceived as socially normative in a given context.

9. Mary E. Lowe and Stephen D. Lowe, "Reciprocal Ecology: A Comprehensive Model of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 48, no. 1 (2013): 3–4.

10. Ibid., 2.

11. Brian M. Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 30.

12. Jane Flax, "Multiples: On the Contemporary Politics of Subjectivity," in *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Philosophy*, vol. 16 (New York: Routledge, 1993), 93.

Pedagogy of engagement

Rethinking pedagogy, faculty must look beyond the acquisition of knowledge as the *sine qua non* of learning and lean into the paradox that recognizes multiplicity. A pedagogy of engagement creates a communal learning experience where information, knowledge gathering, and objective facts, though valued, are a means to a greater and deeper learning where both teacher and student are changed. A pedagogy of engagement is less interested in proclamation, declaration, and certainty as its primary teaching means and seeks to place invitation, story, and mystery as its primary learning tool. Learning is perceived not by how much one can know but by how one can live and is only useful as it brings us into community. With this in mind, we are urged to consider a pedagogy that does not submit to offering only information but understands its mission as the formation of a person. Teaching, therefore, must be conceptual and relational. Much can be taught through reading, analysis, and inquiry, but educators should seek to offer "an education that embraces every dimension of what it means to be human, that honors the varieties of human experience, looks at us and our world through a variety of cultural lenses, and educates our young people in ways that enable them to face the challenges of our time."[13]

Moving away from these long-standing pedagogies is difficult, as it forces us to turn away from a system that taught us how to think, oftentimes neglecting how "education shapes us, forms us, molds us to be a certain kind of people."[14] To remain relevant we must be willing to engage in open dialogue, acknowledge our fears, and engage authentically in the conflicts and controversies of our differences within our classrooms.

A case vignette

On one particular day, a diverse group of students expressed that they found my assigning articles on diversity and allowing space for conversations of difference with the classroom to be token gestures. They stated that I had no idea of the agony they live in, the pain of showing up for class on a day where difference is discussed, and the insensitivity of my place of privilege and of power. As the room grew tense, I tried to not react with

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13. Palmer, Zajonc, and Scribner, *The Heart of Higher Education*, 20 (see n. 2).

14. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18 (see n. 1).

my own anger or shame or to use my power by turning the conversation into a defensive debate.

A student spoke up, a gentle white man. He expressed his guilt of the harm that his race and gender had inflicted upon persons of color, women, and all persons deemed differ-ent. He apologized and hoped he could do better. The space only intensified. I could see him disintegrate as he heard the response: "We've heard it all before." In this moment he and many of us in the room had inadvertently been "caught" in dominant culture blindness. In the moment, it seemed as though all the lack of our recognitions, fears, shame, biases that exist among us were present, and the haunting question left unanswered was, "Do you really get it?"

> " *A pedagogy of engagement creates a communal learning experience where information, knowledge gathering, and objective facts, though valued, are a means to a greater and deeper learning where both teacher and student are changed.*

As the professor, I (Barsness) felt conflicted and began to wonder how to get out of this mess. I considered a number of responses such as "parading" my understanding of such things by highlighting *his* lack of cultural awareness; or pulling rank/privilege and redirecting the discus-sion to the readings of the day; or encouraging the students to take this very important conversation to their multicultural class; or doing as I teach and paying attention to the conflict that was in front of us, believing that, in working through the conflict, we would all become better formed.

At that moment, one of the students of color stated how powerless she felt and that I held all the power in the room. I responded that I was well aware of the power and privilege that I hold and that I was very tempted to use it. I added that at this moment, however, multiple subjectivities were at play and I too felt powerless, ineffectual, hopeless, and voice-less and that the student in this moment also held a great deal of power. I then asked, "would it be possible for us together to try and reimagine some other means, some other way to understand what we are doing to the other?" I stated that I felt that if together we could honestly speak, to our own experience and listen to the experience of the other, we might get

closer to each other's experience. And perhaps we could begin to find our way, arrive at a new knowledge of each other, informed out of our relationship rather than our biases.

As the last person left the classroom, I was not sure if we really had met with any success traversing these muddy waters of race, ethnicity, and difference. As we gathered the next week, it appeared that in working through our distortions and our biases, we discovered a modicum of integrity and were able to stay in range of each other with the hope of future growth and transformation. This experience also led to a deep reflection of my own positioning within this dramatic theater of learning we call the classroom, challenging me to value presence, conflict, and working through.

> 66 *When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly I cannot teach them well.*

An examined life

As we face the complexities of an increasingly diverse classroom and construct a model based on formation, the often-unexplored self becomes a starting point. Parker Palmer states,

> When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly I cannot teach them well.[15]

Faculty teaching in a diverse context must be sensitive to personal biases, the institutional biases we espouse, and the orienting influence of dominant cultural frameworks. If students distrust our motivations, experience us having given little thought to the dynamics of culture, or think that we have not examined our own values and biases, the default is to return to

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15.   Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 3.

the conforming orientation; a place of disembodied knowledge and persistent difference. As faculty, we must take the impact of ourselves within the classroom seriously, for it is not only our expertise that is being digitally recorded but also our attitudes, our presence, and our cultural awareness that are deeply imprinting and educating the students with whom we have been charged.

Six sensitivities of the examined life

In a move toward a pedagogy of engagement rooted from classroom experiences and the view of education as formation, we have been able to name at least six sensitivities[16] (and we are sure there are many more) that faculty have to be mindful of to work effectively within the classroom.

Privilege and power

Faculty must be aware of social structures of power and privilege *and* bear the responsibility to consciously steward their own privileged position within the classroom. From grading criteria to establishing the "rules of engagement," faculty hold a great deal of power to influence and counter socialized biases and establish a more equitable space for learning and relationship. As is evident in the case vignette, it was incumbent upon me to take into account my power and privilege and to find a means for dialogue and engagement rather than dominance.

Addressing categories of power and privilege, both socially and interpersonally, for student and teacher

> demand[s] a variety of lenses that must take into account intricate historical constructions that cannot easily shake off legacies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and colonialism embedded in contemporary contexts; theological formulations; and power and privilege differentials in church, academy, and society.[17]

16. The following sensitivities highlight a broad range of "awarenesses" in an attempt to highlight important sensitivities needed to navigate a complex sociocultural influence on diverse classrooms.

17. Carmen Nanko-Fernández, "Held Hostage by Method? Interrupting Pedagogical Assumptions—Latinamente," *Theological Education* 48, no. 1 (2013): 41.

Tacit ethnocentrism

Tacit ethnocentrism "is the assumption that one's own way of life is just normal, not cultural."[18] This way of thinking perpetuates what Letty Russell calls "othering," which consists of "social structures and interactions that divide the world into subjects and objects and often demean, disgrace, or destroy the ones who are objects or others."[19] Ethnocentrism, particularly from a dominant cultural context, can have far-reaching impacts. Russell connects the cognitive and emotional challenge of overcoming a propensity to "other" and be "other":

> Othering works through the internalization of fear: fear of being other, or being seen as other; fear for one's own identity and the need to conform to the dominant paradigm of those who fit in a culture. Those declared "other" are forced to internalize this need to conform in order to avoid being othered. In the same way, those from dominant groups also internalize the norms so that they will fit in and refuse to associate with those who are different.[20]

When we objectify the other, we make them into objects which predisposes us to adopt a depersonalized view toward others in which one is focused on what the other needs to do for the self, rather than what the self might do for the other.

Bias

In the field of psychology, Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald refer to two facets of the mind, reflective and automatic.[21] For example, the reflective side of the mind may express belief in diversity and acceptance of difference and otherness and honestly embrace Others and advocates on their behalf. This same individual, however, has grown up in a culture where Others have been viewed as a threat and consequently may harbor negative associations of difference as bad, and this other mind,

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18. Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, 34 (see n. 11).

19. Russell, "Encountering the 'Other,'" 458 (see n. 4).

20. Ibid., 458–459.

21. Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2013), 53–70.

the automatic mind, may elicit feelings of discomfort and even shame.[22] Because of the cognitive dissonance between the automatic and reflective sides of the mind, "checking" our biases requires awareness of our potential to harbor these blind spots and a willingness to confront them when exposed.

Historical legacies of bias along socially constructed lines of race, gender, religion, class, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, age, and others must be considered. Bias is largely implicit association generated from years of experience in a social context. Acknowledging bias as *normative* anticipates the eventual engagement with conscious and unconscious blind spots that occur as part of any and every social engagement. These unconscious biases are often expressed in today's society as microaggressions.

Microagressions

Egalitarian principles have proven to simply not be enough to quell the insidious and often unconscious internalized biases that were once overt but are still commonplace. A latent remnant of historical biases, microaggressions often unconsciously reveal *internalized* biases received through socialization. Microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults [that potentially have a harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on] the target person or group."[23]

Describing it as the "American dilemma," Gunnar Myrdal identifies a paradox between "egalitarian values and racist traditions in the United States."[24] The American dilemma "reflects the tension between central principles of equality and fairness in the society and the daily operation of systematic prejudice and discrimination, at an individual and societal

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22. Ibid., 54.

23. Derald Wing Sue et al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (May/June 2007): 273.

24. Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio, "Understanding and Addressing Contemporary Racism: From Aversive Racism to the Common Ingroup Identity Model," *Journal of Social Issues* 61, no. 3 (September 2005): 617.

level."[25] Socialization "culturally conditions racist, sexist, and heterosexist attitudes and behaviors in well intentioned individuals."[26]

Shame

Faculty have become savvier in language, and in some ways actions, when facing the complexities of difference, but in so many ways, many of us still don't get it. This not "getting it" creates a form of melancholia or shame regarding internalized fear, biases, and socialized hatreds toward the Other. Freud's definition of melancholia was a "mourning without ending, an irresolvable grief."[27] Faculty in their own humanity risk depression or melancholia when they grow weary of not getting it. Part of the shame I felt within the classroom on that day, and often feel, emerges when I privilege cultural competency over engagement. When cultural competency is sought as a way of knowledge gathering or skill building, faculty quickly realize the limitations. Consequently when things go awry in the classroom, teachers become frustrated and saddened by a lack of knowledge competency and a sense of hopelessness toward change. The problem with this hopelessness, however, is that faculty often withdraw and isolate from that which they cannot bear.

> 66 *When faculty are willing to face that which they fear and engage in authentic conversation evolving from their own self-examination, opportunities emerge for deeper learning.*

Melancholia is also related to shame, shame of misrecognitions, biases, and microagressions. The problem with shame, as Davies points out, however, is "that the most secret and shameful self is usually dissociated

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25. Ibid., 618.

26. See John F. Dovidio, Samuel E. Gaertner, Kerry Kawakami, and Gordon Hodson, "Why Can't We Just Get Along? Interpersonal Biases and Interracial Distrust," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 8, no. 2 (May 2002): 88–102.

27. Leticia Glocer Fiorini, Thierry Bokanowski, and Sergio Lewkowicz, eds., *On Freud's Mourning and Melancholia* (London: Karnac Books, 2009), Kindle e-book.

and extruded outward."[28] Judith Halberstram states that shame "records in dramatic fashion a failure to be powerful, legitimate, proper—it records the exposure, in psychoanalytic terms, of the subject's castration, be it racial, gendered, class-based, or sexual."[29] And back to Davies, "shame forces one to hide, to mask oneself as cover is sought from this sense of deep pain,"[30] and to project onto the one we cannot "get." Altman talks of projection in this way:

> [P]eople try to rid themselves of particular feelings and impulses by attributing them to others . . . to the extent that we wish to believe that our violence, our greed, our exploitiveness, our passivity, and our dependence are "out there" and not "in here" then the "other" group . . . come[s] to represent what Sullivan (1953) called the *not me*. Sullivan's locution is most felicitous: the *not me* is, of course, *me*—the disavowed me.[31]

The need to be liked

As faculty examine their lives, they must also take into account a deep need to be liked. To be the one who does not offend, the one who "gets it." This need to be idealized stands in the way of authentic conversation of our differences. Far too many prefer the position of the "good" teacher, and far too many classrooms remain stagnant because of an unwillingness to be the "bad" teacher. When faculty are willing to face that which they fear and engage in authentic conversation evolving from their own self-examination, opportunities emerge for deeper learning.

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28. Jody Messler Davies, "Whose Bad Objects Are We Anyway? Repetition and Our Elusive Love Affair with Evil," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 14, no. 6 (2004): 711–732, quoted in Melanie Suchet, "Unraveling Whiteness," in *Relational Psychoanalysis: Expansion of Theory*, vol. 4, eds. Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris (New York: Routledge, 2012), 202.

29. Judith Halberstam, "Shame and White Gay Masculinity," *Social Text* 23 (2005): 225, quoted in Suchet, "Unraveling Whiteness," 202.

30. Davies, quoted in Suchet, "Unraveling Whiteness," 202.

31. Harry Stock Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1953), quoted in Neil Altman, *The Analyst in the Inner City: Race, Class, and Culture Through a Psychoanalytic Lens*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 106.

Five dimensions of praxis

A good deal of a pedagogy of engagement starts and ends with the examined life of the teacher. In fact, in addition to our scholarship, the key to a successful classroom is the examined (or constantly examining) life. Palmer states, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher."[32] As faculty enter the classroom, they enter fully immersed in their discipline, but they must also enter with humility, with an openness to a genuine encounter with their students, and with a sense of courage that contends with the inevitable conflicts and a willingness to work it through.

To help faculty in the classroom, we suggest five dimensions of practice that flow from the six sensitivities of the examined life.

Scholarship

Although a pedagogy of engagement suggests that knowing primarily emerges from relationship, it also includes the rigor of serious study. The task of educators is to possess both the knowledge of their respective disciplines and the skills to evaluate and implement knowledge. As scholars, faculty must be well studied and passionate of what they know but also willing to surrender to the deeper knowing through dialogue and engagement. If faculty approach the classroom unprepared and do not know their subjects well, they tend to enter defensively, hindering the possibility for new learning to emerge. When faculty enter defensively, they enter isolated and unable to create and participate in communal learning affirming that knowledge outside the context of community is destructive.[33]

Humility

The classroom can be both frustrating and humiliating. Both are commonly experienced. Faculty entering the classroom must choose to enter with a sense of awe, not so much of what they have to give but of what they might also learn. As noted above, it is incumbent upon faculty to be well-prepared, to possess a high degree of expertise in their fields, and to have an inner confidence so that they can then be fully present in the classroom.

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32. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 10 (see n. 15).

33. Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 66.

Relationship

Thomas Merton has said, "the purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world."[34] Much can be taught through reading and assignment, but education without relationship results in "shape without form, shade without colour, . . . gesture without motion."[35] Faculty must hold that, "our prideful knowledge, with which we divide and conquer and destroy the world [must be] humbled."[36] "Knowledge [must draw] us into faithful relationship."[37]

Conflict

As stated in the beginning of this essay, if classrooms are not messy, it is most likely that faculty and students are not engaged authentically in the conflicts and controversies of our differences. The classroom is a lively place where students and faculty engage in rigorous discourse. As we get caught up in the complex dynamics of difference, we often *mis*recognize exposing our biases, privileges, and powers.[38] In a pedagogy of engagement, the classroom is a place of embodied difference. When differences are brought up, therefore, it is not just an academic question, as we were able to note in the classroom vignette; it sparks something deep within each person as to how we have been seen, recognized, or traumatized. For example, in the vignette

> 66 *Faculty entering the classroom must choose to enter with a sense of awe, not so much of what they have to give but of what they might also learn.*

we could have opted to objectively "talk" about race, gender inequities, or correct attitudes regarding difference in a disembodied way—as knowledge

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34. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979), 3.

35. T. S. Eliot, "Hollow Men," in *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909–1950* (Orlando: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1971), 56.

36. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known,* 125.

37. Ibid.

38. See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

or as information. But had we done this, we would have missed the real learning experience, that conflict in relationship challenges long-standing conceptions of identity. Conflict exposes our objectifying assumptions of otherness rooted in essentialist notions of identity, which are too often dismissed, ignored, or avoided. Staying disembodied keeps us safe and avoids entering into the messiness of knowing through engagement. It is through engagement that our values, beliefs, and prejudices can be re-imagined and where change and learning take place.

Faculty often misunderstand conflict in the classroom as failure. Mis-communications, or mishaps, are translated as mistaken pedagogy, and yet it is these moments that give traction toward learning and formation. Ogden states,

> It is essential to understand that enactments [conflicts] are not "mistakes" but rather mysterious, nonconscious striv-ings for a higher level of growth and organization, and their negotiations are a function of the developing and emerg-ing relationship. The processing of each person's implicit self/selves within the relationship provides the raw mate-rial for new experiences, new actions, and new meanings for both parties. The intersubjective process of joining and co-creation cannot be defined, identified, or predicted ahead of time, because it occurs within the context of what transpires unexpectedly . . . and thus requires a leap into the unknown . . ."[39]

Furthermore, conflict reveals places of misrecognition where not just relationship but also identity is challenged. When we reduce identity down to race, gender, sexual orientation, and other "objective" categories of identity, we perpetuate a model of socialized objectification of the other. Conflict challenges even emerging identity constructions such as hybrid-ity and other dynamic concepts of identity leaning more toward a sacred and elusive, but deeper, understanding of identity.

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39. Pat Ogden, "Technique and Beyond: Therapeutic Enactments, Mindfulness, and the Role of the Body," in *Healing Moments in Psychotherapy*, eds. Daniel J. Siegel and Marion Solomon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 46.

Dialogical space

To truly practice a pedagogy of engagement, it is not only the examined life of the teacher that results in formational learning, but also a necessary reorientation of students toward a dialogical learning process. It is incumbent upon the teacher to establish the dialogical space inviting students to become dialogical partners with them, emphasizing learning as a formational process that occurs through the interaction of the two, not in the presentation of the one. Students are invited to consider the other—both teacher and fellow students as partners in learning—a subject rather than an object,

> ❝ *It is incumbent upon the teacher to establish the dialogical space inviting students to become dialogical partners with them, emphasizing learning as a formational process that occurs through the interaction of the two, not in the presentation of the one.*

valuing diversity, ambiguity, and honesty. Students are invited to approach the content and the Other with curiosity, empathy, authenticity, and surrender of certainty. "Dialogue requires individuals to 'soften' their certainties and have a humble attitude for transformational learning [that] occur through reflection."[40] In this invitation, students will need to be made aware that, in an intersubjective dialogue, conflict is inevitable. It is expected of each of us that we will not shy away from our differences but push into them, holding to a value that learning occurs in the embrace of the complexity and richness in the multiplicity of ideas, persons, and experiences. As we enter together into the dialogical classroom, we will remind ourselves that "such an intersubjective educational community is not comprised of a knowing subject (the teacher) and known objects (the content and the students). Rather, teacher, students, and content are

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40. Donald Zauderer, "The Benefit of Dialogue in Public Management," *The Public Manager* 29 (Winter 2000–2001): 27–30, quoted in Izhak Berkovich, "Between Person and Person: Dialogical Pedagogy in Authentic Leadership Development," *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 13, no. 2 (2014): 252.

related as co-creative subjects in a hermeneutical conversation."[41] In the spirit of Martin Buber's I/Thou, dialogical learning happens when we then turn toward the Other, listen with an ear to confirm the Other, address the Other as a sacred subject and respond with our truest selves as entering into the demands and struggles that define the rigor of the learning process.

Conclusion

So what is the bottom line of a pedagogy of engagement? Given the complexity of culture, we have questioned the efficacy of knowledge-centric methodologies. By acknowledging an anthropological function of culture in the process of meaning making, we have proposed an embodied, intersubjective, dialogical approach to education. Culture viewed anthropologically creates a posture of mutuality by identifying the observer/observed as equally susceptible to culture's influence. By embodying culture, we have sought to transform intercultural engagement from an objective analysis to an intersubjective relationality.

> 66 *By embodying culture, we have sought to transform intercultural engagement from an objective analysis to an intersubjective relationality.*

Through a posture of humility, mutuality, and working through conflict, dignity becomes the standard that resists objectifying the cultural Other by affirming a common humanity. Faculty who seek to implement these practices and invite their students to join them must be willing to engage in the messiness of dialogue. Reimagining learning through dialogue, "we" enter the dialogical classroom with humility and open-mindedness toward the other, positioned to teach, to learn, and to be transformed.

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41. Kenneth Paul Kramer, *Learning Through Dialogue: The Relevance of Martin Buber's Classroom* (United Kingdom: Rowan and Littlefield Education, 2013), 27.

Continuing the Conversation

A Response to "Phased Faculty Retirement"

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Trinity Lutheran Seminary

The following is a response in conversation with "Phased Faculty Retirement: A Positive Solution for Faculty and Seminaries," an article by Janet Craigmiles, James Moore, and Tite Tiénou of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School appearing in Theological Education *48, no. 2 (2014): 69–82. The authors present a strategy for the phased retirement of seminary faculty in times of financial crises.*

"The markets can remain irrational longer than you can remain solvent."[1] These words exhibit a painful truth—a truth that in the first decade of the twenty-first century sliced the heart out of budgets at theological schools in North America. Hardly a school was immune from the irrational dive in the financial markets in 2009. Those schools hit harder than others lost much of the value of their endowments, plunging some into a mode of panic that forced decisions that too often bypassed strategic planning.

In "Phased Faculty Retirement," the authors present a response to the reality of "irrational" financial markets by posing the following question: Faced with financial challenge and cultural change, how then will theological education be resourced for tomorrow's world?[2] The article presents a case for phased retirement of faculty as a means of maintaining financial stability.

When financial challenges arise, what is a seminary to do? The mission of the school and the school's commitments made in accreditation call for the school to fulfill the expectation made to each student: the anticipated education will be delivered with integrity.[3] But, with a downsized budget—and faculty staying too long—how does administrative leadership meet that task? In the years following 2009, faculty often became a target. But that can prove problematic. The well-being and morale of a faculty is critical in that the institution claims a clear dependence on the teaching office. "Phased Faculty Retirement" offers consideration of the concerns in regard to faculty tenure and proposes a positive solution for faculty and seminary.[4]

It is established that 75 percent of current faculty in accredited academic institutions expect or desire to work past normal retirement age.[5] The principle contributing factor is economic. Faculties seek financial security in retirement planning. The downturn in the economy is negatively impacting retirement plans. The cost of health care in retirement years is an additional concern. These economic factors are real, but they are not the only reasons for faculty teaching into their 70s and beyond. Some fear personal and professional isolation and the loss of the collegiality of the academic community. Others hold positions of leadership in a denomination as a result of denominational faculty status. Retirement poses the threat of absence from these leadership responsibilities and the networking they provide. Still others fear that their absence will diminish the presence in the curriculum of an academic discipline to which they have devoted a lifetime of scholarship and teaching. Finally, personal and professional identity may be closely aligned with a faith-induced understanding of vocation and call.

Each of the factors above and others—all personal rationale for the extension of faculty status—poses a challenge for schools in that any extension of faculty status beyond normal retirement age can contribute to potential stress on institutional budgets. In addition, a sometimes unforeseen reality is that continuation may impair the ability of the school to introduce the fresh scholarship of newly "minted" faculty candidates. To these realities Craigmiles, Moore, and Tiénou offer a reasonable plan for seminary boards to utilize.

Exhibit: One school's alternative

Urgency prompted at least one seminary to find an alternative proposal when there was no time for the board of directors to schedule a fully phased retirement program. Faced with the reality of potential exigency after the economic downturn of 2009 and into 2010, the board directed the president to immediately design a method for downsizing faculty in a concerted effort to relieve financial stress. The direction the president took was a "retirement incentive program" (or buy-out) that was offered to each tenured faculty person by letter and under the signature of the president. The retirement incentive offer was made after consultation with legal counsel and assent by same, and it was presented to the faculty with unknown expectation. The offer was as follows:

1. Separation with one year of full compensation to include all benefits (full pension and health care) for the next fiscal year.

2. The designated title of senior research professor. (Academic foundations often require formal title and a locus of place for the applicant before making awards).

3. Continuance of present office space for up to two years.

4. Teaching of at least two courses annually (if desired) at a defined rate exceeding the status of adjunct professor—and for a period of up to two years.

5. A time limit for consideration in order for the school to finalize future budget decisions.

It stunned the president, and surprised the faculty as a whole, when three professors accepted the offer. A fourth willingly moved into regular retirement. The outcome for the school was significant, offering the ability to stabilize the budget and establish "financial equilibrium."[6] However, before financial equilibrium was fully achieved, the payout of promised compensation and benefits for the next fiscal year was accrued back to the current fiscal year. Unfortunately, but necessarily, the budget loss then was applied to the current fiscal year in order for equilibrium to be witnessed in subsequent years.

The "retirement incentive" proved a positive plan. Senior research faculty for a large part remained on campus but without regular classroom responsibilities. The exiting faculty assumed no faculty committee responsibilities but voluntarily participated in the life rhythms of the community. The school benefitted significantly by the continuity of their presence and by the enhanced adjunct responsibilities that each offered. As one faculty person shared, "I didn't expect my teaching career to end in this way, but new avenues have actually presented themselves. I am grateful."

"After" Observations

1. The board of directors is the decision maker in any matter of downsizing and faculty realignment. In this circumstance, the board gained a new sense of empowerment for leadership to fulfill the mission and guarantee the delivery of theological education on behalf of the school.

2. One midcareer faculty person took the incentive, finding the offer to serve as an opportunity for the exploration of new vocational aspirations.

3. One faculty person who chose not to accept the buy-out offered to act as a resource in the classroom across a number of different disciplines, thus alleviating a potential absence in certain areas of the curricula caused by faculty departures.

4. The prospect of enhancing the offer for an individual and thereby "sweeten the deal" to accommodate individual circumstance was prohibited. The school remained firm in its commitment to equity and justice for each person.

5. The school was positioned to bring new faculty to the campus.

6. Faculty tasks, administrative and academic, needed realignment due to downsizing. The board and administration needed to attend to the new parameters of responsibility that were placed on a smaller faculty, giving consideration to what it meant to increase time commitments to faculty committees, peer and student mentoring, denominational accountability, and so forth.

7. Faculties remain the principle stakeholders in a theological school. Downsizing leaves wounds of absence and loss. But the resilience of faculties for accelerating the vocation of the teaching office and the mission of the school can never be understated.

Validation for the work of seminaries and their faculties

The dynamics of the North American culture and its "irrational" economies will continue to present immense challenges for theological schools seeking to secure a balanced budget. The proposal presented in "Phased Faculty Retirement" offers seminary boards one avenue of possible action. As shown, there are other avenues.

Nancy T. Ammerman, professor of sociology at Boston University and presenter to the Auburn Center summer Panel of Advisors in 2013, addressed the matter of "old assumptions and new realities" in theological schools.[7] Indeed, the old assumptions about faculty tenure and retirement timing are under review, with new realities being presented in a variety of contexts in theological education. Seminaries are committed to streamlining the delivery of education and to developing new protocols and policies that will challenge past and even present practices. Despite this reality, the new challenges, changed protocols, and variance in faculty definition will contribute to the sustained reality that "religious communities are more important than ever, as a place to belong, a place to provide services for those in need, and a place for spiritual engagement and growth."[8] That conclusion offered by the Auburn Center is a substantial validation for the continuance of the work of theological schools and faculties in the preparation of leadership for the world.

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ENDNOTES

1. John Maynard Keyes (1883–1946). Quotation attributed to Keyes but without specific placement. The quotation has been used and reused over the years by many—and without attribution.

2. Janet Craigmiles, James R. Moore, Tite Tiénou, "Phased Faculty Retirement: A Positive Solution for Faculty and Seminaries," *Theological Education* 48, no. 2, (2014): 70.

3. Commission on Accrediting, "Standard 2: Institutional Integrity," *General Institutional Standards* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools, 2014).

4. Craigmiles, Moore, Tiénou, "Phased Faculty Retirement," 70ff.

5. Paul J. Yakoboski, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? The Faculty Retirement Decision," TIAA-CREF Institute Trends and Issues (December 2011), https://www.tiaa-crefinstitute.org/public/institute/research/trends_issues/ti_shouldstayfacultyretirement_1211.html.

6. A definition of financial stability used consistently by Anthony Ruger, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education.

7. Nancy T. Ammerman, "Old Assumptions and New Realities," *theo*. (New York: Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, December 2013), 1–2.

8. Ibid., 2.

Open Forum

To the Ends of the Earth: Cultural Considerations for Global Online Theological Education

Melinda Thompson, Abilene Christian University
Meri MacLeod, Digital Seminarian

ABSTRACT: *The growing number of theological institutions offering online courses for global audiences raises concerns about potential problems related to culture. Various dimensions of culture are introduced, with specific attention drawn to differences in learning styles for Western and non-Western students. These differences must be taken into consideration when teaching online, where the potential for misunderstanding is higher. The Community of Inquiry instructional design model is suggested as a tool for culturally sensitive online course design.*

Abilene Christian University goes to Ghana

In July 2014, Abilene Christian University's Graduate School of Theology (GST) launched a new initiative to provide theological education for church leaders in West Africa. Using a combination of an educational exception to offer up to 75 percent of the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM) online[1] and approval of Heritage Christian College in Accra, Ghana, as an ongoing course extension site, the GST created a plan whereby faculty would travel to Ghana twice each year to teach the required residential classes for African students wishing to earn the MACM online. Students begin with a residential intensive in late summer on the Heritage campus that includes new student orientation and a first-year ministry course. They continue in the fall and spring semesters with online classes, participating alongside other GST students. Another residency in late spring or early summer rounds out the academic year with the possibility of a summer online class if it fits with students' schedules. Course materials are provided electronically where possible, with faculty

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1. This educational exception was approved by the ATS Board of Commissioners in August 2013.

or other stakeholders traveling between Abilene and Accra delivering text-books that are not available in digital form.

Abilene Christian University's (ACU) relationship with Heritage Christian College goes back many decades. Heritage graduates have a long-standing invitation to continue their theological education at the GST. While a few students have taken advantage of this arrangement, the vast majority are unable to meet the financial requirements to qualify for a US student visa. With rising costs and declining university resources to support international students, an increased financial burden has been placed on the few Ghanaian students who are able to come to the university campus. Offering the MACM online with residential intensive classes in Ghana was proposed as a response to these concerns. Additionally, offering online courses allows these students—leaders in their local congregations—to remain in their ministry contexts while continuing their studies.

> 66 *Offering online courses allows [Ghanaian] students—leaders in their local congregations—to remain in their ministry contexts while continuing their studies.*

The overall proposal seemed to make sense and was straightforward given the relationship between the two schools, but the actual implementation proved to be more difficult than expected. Admissions, student orientation, enrollment, textbooks, access to student email accounts, and the learning management system—practically every aspect of the program—was complicated by unforeseen issues. Some complications were the result of inadequate planning, and others were the result of international logistics, such as shipping textbooks overseas. Still other complications were the result of cultural misunderstandings, such as checking email every day for communication from the school or knowing that it was permissible to contact the professor to seek clarification on assignments.

A growing trend

Numerous factors are converging to make online teaching and learning across international cultures increasingly common. The concomitant factors of rapid penetration of mobile and communication technology

globally,[2] along with the unprecedented growth of the church across the Southern hemisphere, combine to stimulate a renewed vision for international theological education. Distance learning administrators at a number of ATS member schools confirm that their institutions are now offering courses online for an international audience. Joel Carpenter notes,

> Outside North America and Western Europe, higher education is expanding at an astonishing rate, and the main crisis in higher education worldwide is how to meet the huge and growing demand for a university education with anything resembling university-quality teaching and learning.[3]

Another reason to "go global" is in response to requests from international constituencies, such as denominational connections, mission organizations, or other existing relationships as international leaders acknowledge that their educational need far outstrips their available resources. Plus, a growing number of their church leaders are gaining access to the Internet and, with it, access to online education. In some locations, costs are dropping and a more reliable infrastructure is becoming available. Yet disparities in accessible and affordable technology exist across the globe. The Global Technology Revolution 2020 report reminds us that, "While extensive, this technology revolution will play out differently around the globe," and a wide variance of accessibility exists across many countries.[4] As digital theological books become increasingly available, more students will gradually have access to a variety of digital materials. These and other changes provide an opportunity for new forms of global partnerships. ACU's relationship with Heritage Christian College in Ghana looks very different today than it did just a few years ago, primarily due to regular communication made possible by improved Internet connections and more reliable electricity in Accra. Other schools

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2. Meri MacLeod, "The Future is Here: Changing the Way People Learn," *Common Ground Journal* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 72–77, http://www.commongroundjournal.org/volnum/v11n02.pdf.

3. Joel A. Carpenter, *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 8.

4. Richard Silberglitt, Philip S. Antón, David R. Howell, and Anny Wong, *The Global Technology Revolution 2020: Bio/Nano/Materials/Information Trends, Drivers, Barriers, and Social Implications,* Executive Summary (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006), 1.

report similar changes in relationship with new and existing global partners. Making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19 NRSV) seems much more feasible in the Internet age.

Elements of culture

The influences of culture—reflected in the online course platform and design, the nature of the instructor's expectations, and the background of students—adds substantial complexity to online education. Cross-cultural communication is challenging in a face-to-face context and all the more so in a virtual setting. The potential for misunderstanding is ever present; the high stakes of an academic context add to the potential for misunderstandings and student uncertainty. For example, in high-context cultures where nonverbal cues such as body language are used to interpret meaning, the lack of nonverbal cues in the virtual classroom can pose a challenge for these learners.[5] Students in China, Japan, India, or Arab countries in the Middle East may find the low-context nature of online communication unfamiliar to them and overly direct or impersonal, while students in Germany, Scandinavia, or the United States can find it to be quite comfortable. Understanding the various influences of culture, and increasingly of multiple cultures, that can influence learners has become important for educators concerned with the success of all students in their online global classrooms.

Foundational to many current understandings of culture, with implications for online course design, is the work of social psychologist Geert Hofstede, who identified four dimensions believed to be displayed in every culture: power distance (authority), individualism vs. collectivism, gender, and uncertainty avoidance (vulnerability).[6] Expanding on this, Marvin Mayers proposed six contrasting pairs of basic values: time/event orientation, task/person orientation, dichotomistic/holistic thinking, status/achievement focus, crisis/noncrisis orientation, and concealment/willingness to expose vulnerability.[7] More recently scholars such as Irene

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5. See Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

6. Geert H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).

7. This material taken from Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

Sanchez and Charlotte Gunawardena have begun to introduce new forms of cultural analysis. They suggest a contrast of the fundamental dimensions of non-Western versus Western worldviews:[8]

Nonwestern	Western
• emphasize group cooperation	• emphasize individual competition
• achievement as it reflects group	• achievement for the individual
• value harmony with nature	• must master and control nature
• time is relative	• adhere to rigid time schedule
• accept affective expression	• limit affective expression
• extended family	• nuclear family
• holistic thinking	• dualistic thinking
• religion permeates culture	• religion is distinct from other parts of culture
• socially oriented	• task-oriented

Each of these three models highlights how different cultures assign different values to certain modes of thought, expression, or interaction. When differing values are brought to bear on a specific situation, the likelihood for confusion and misunderstanding is present. Add to this the complexity of a classroom setting (performance/grade anxiety), an online classroom setting (anonymous, text-oriented), and especially a theological online classroom setting (religious values, questions of faith), and the potential for misunderstanding increases exponentially.

Culture in an online program

Culture's impact on teaching and learning is a growing focus of scholars. Clint Rogers et al. list four general categories for educators to consider when cultural differences are present: general cultural and social expectations, teaching and learning expectations, differences in the use of

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8.   Irene Sanchez and Charlotte Gunawardena, "Understanding and Supporting the Culturally Diverse Distance Learner," in *Distance Learners in Higher Education: Institutional Responses for Quality Outcomes*, ed. Chere Gibson (Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing, 1998), 47–64.

language and symbols, and technological infrastructure and familiarity.[9] In Hofstede's work, the social position of teachers and learners, perceived relevance of the curriculum, profiles of cognitive abilities, and expected patterns of behavior for teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions all influence cross-cultural learning.[10]

A number of these cultural factors were apparent in a qualitative research study examining students' experiences in a global graduate online program. The program was designed and taught by faculty from a Norwegian university, and students included Norwegian and African students from three different African countries. Researchers clustered the findings around three primary areas: social, technological, and cultural.[11]

> " *Several [African students] described "how support received from their family was entirely to be expected as the programme was of great importance for the [extended] family as a whole. To be a student was thus a family project."*

Social adjustments

Interviews suggested that the African students seemed to have wider family networks than did the European students. With little prior experience in online graduate education, these students were surprised at how much time would be required online and the expectations for collaboration. These academic demands resulted in the need to renegotiate one's many family obligations and expectations in order to have time to participate online. Students identified how difficult this was, and for some Africans, it

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9.   P. Clint Rogers, Charles R. Graham, and Clifford T. Mayes, "Cultural Competence and Instructional Design: Exploration Research Into the Delivery of Online Instruction Cross-Culturally," *Education Technology Research Development* 55 (2007): 197–217, http://adlawrence.blogs.wm.edu/files/2011/03/cultural-cometence-and-instructional-design.pdf.

10.   Geert H. Hofstede, "Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (1986): 301–320.

11.   Ståle Angen Rye and Anne Marie Støkken, "The Implications of the Local Context in Global Virtual Education," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13, no. 1 (January 2012): 191–206, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1010.

even meant the loss of personal friends. Yet, in contrast, several described "how support received from their family was entirely to be expected as the programme was of great importance for the [extended] family as a whole. To be a student was thus a family project."[12]

Technological adjustments

As would be expected, the study found a substantial difference in the ease with which Norwegian and African students accessed the Internet. One African student noted that her greatest challenge in the program was "access to the Internet . . . I'm often spending much time and money looking for a good place to [access the Internet for] study." Of the three locations available—home, school, and Internet cafes—only the school was free, but most African students lived too far away for that to be a meaningful option. Frequent electrical outages were an additional obstacle to their study and program participation. Differences in computer literacy between the Nor-

> ❝ *Students from historically oral cultures in Asia and Africa pointed to how mobiles, if integrated into a course, could enhance their learning in such ways as by providing an oral means to memorize the Greek alphabet or by listening to their professor's feedback rather than only reading a digital text version of the feedback.*

wegian and African students presented a challenge at the start of the program as African students often had little experience with a laptop or a learning management system. African students noted that the introduction to the online technology at the face-to-face meeting before the start of the online collaboration was "essential in enabling them to participate in the online discussions."

While Internet technology is developing more slowly across some continents, the rapid penetration of "mobiles" (i.e., cell phones) is pervasive. In a separate study conducted across nine theological schools in the majority world, students requested that other technology complement

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12. Ibid., 197.

the online forums, specifically mobiles or cell phone technology. Students from historically oral cultures in Asia and Africa pointed to how mobiles, if integrated into a course, could enhance their learning in such ways as by providing an oral means to memorize the Greek alphabet or by listening to their professor's feedback rather than only reading a digital text version of the feedback.[13]

Cultural adjustments

During the face-to-face introduction of the Norwegian program, "students confronted for the first time the cultural differences that would accompany them throughout the programme." African students were surprised at how the Norwegian students spoke with their professors. Their directness was seen as disrespectful, and it left the Africans uncertain regarding future course discussions. Respect for authority characterized the educational experiences of the African students, and to be successful online, they would have to revise what it meant to be a student. One student described the change process:

> To begin with, I only read [on the Internet forum] and did not understand how I could become a part of it. . . . I sneaked around and only took a peek at what the others [the Norwegians] did. But then I received a communication from one of the supervisors who both encouraged and required me to participate. I tried, and received a positive response from [one of the professors]. This was an important turning point. I understood then that I too had something to contribute.[14]

Cultural influences in the MACM program

After conducting an analysis of 27 research studies related to teaching online global courses, Sedef Uzuner distilled nine recommendations for faculty.[15] Four of the nine are highlighted here with an example of how each has been experienced through teaching in the global MACM program.

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13. Meri MacLeod, *Unconventional Educational Practices in Majority World Theological Education*, a research study conducted in 2011–2013, commissioned by Overseas Council International, Indianapolis, IN.

14. Rye and Støkken, "The Implications of the Local Context," 200 (see n. 11).

15. Sedef Uzuner, "Questions of Culture in Distance Learning: A Research Review," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 10, no. 3 (2009): 1–19, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/690.

Principle #1

Learners from strong uncertainty avoidance cultures are threatened by learning situations that are unstructured and unclear. They expect formal rules to guide their behavior. The Ghanaian students very much want to know what is expected from them. They set high standards for themselves and work hard to please their professors. At the same time, however, the professor needs to pay attention to power issues (principle #2).

Principle #2

Pay attention to power issues. The African students are often hesitant to seek clarification from the professor because they hold different viewpoints on the power distance between professors and students. This often leads to increased anxiety levels or the need for a third party with whom they have an existing relationship—the GST recruiter or their program advisor, for example—to serve as go-between for them.

Principle #3

In distance-learning contexts where active participation in discussions is highly valued, instructors need to make specific efforts to promote critique and divergence and encourage students to create a safe space where opinions, experiences, beliefs, and knowledge can be shared. During the first residency, five American students joined the Ghanaian students in Accra. The American students dominated class conversation on the first day or two of the course. It took some work on the part of the professor to persuade the African students to share their perspectives and to affirm that different viewpoints all contributed to the larger conversation.

Principle #4

Social presence is the key for the success of students from context-dependent cultures. It took several email attempts with limited response before realizing that the students' emails contained lengthy greetings, praises to God, and inquiries about health and family. While these introductory items seemed superfluous to the American recipients—possibly even intrusive into one's personal life—they formed the backbone of relationship building for the Ghanaian students. Caring about one's health and one's family members showed care for the person and the rest of the areas of their life, including their studies. When the Americans began adjusting their email communication to include some of these niceties, the response level increased dramatically. This same approach also helped to improve the communication and relationship building with the administration of Heritage Christian College.

A culturally supportive course design model

Course design can be key to create the online environment that provides the support students of diverse cultures and ethnicities often need. Faculty who teach online courses for a global audience may also teach online for only national students. However, utilizing two different course design models is unrealistic—and no longer necessary. The Community of Inquiry (COI) course design model is a research-grounded framework that has been growing in popularity globally. Foundational to COI is the conviction that "purposeful" interaction online is critical to learning and that conditions for inquiry and quality interaction need to be intentionally created. As a result, the model is based on incorporating three foci together: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. "Social presence is described as the ability to project one's self and establish personal and purposeful relationships. . . . Cognitive presence relates to the progressive development of inquiry in an online learning environment," and teaching presence includes the design, facilitation, and direct instruction within a course. "The body of evidence is growing rapidly attesting to the importance of teaching presence for successful online learning . . . Interaction and discourse plays a key role in higher-order learning but not without structure (design) and leadership (facilitation and direction)."[16]

> ❝ *While [lengthy greetings, praises to God, and inquiries about health and family] seemed superfluous to the American recipients—possibly even intrusive into one's personal life—they formed the backbone of relationship building for the Ghanaian students.*

The COI model lends itself to creating a supportive learning environment for all students by demonstrating the essential contribution social

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16. D. Randy Garrison, "Online Community of Inquiry Review: Social, Cognitive, and Teaching Presence Issues," *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 11, no. 1 (April 2007): 61–72, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ842688.pdf. D. Randy Garrison and Martha Cleveland-Innes, "Facilitating Cognitive Presence in Online Learning: Interaction is Not Enough," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 19, no. 3 (2005): 133–148.

presence makes to fostering online learning. Once faculty discover the importance of social presence online, including more than brief introductions, and how to design for it, their courses become a supportive learning context for all students regardless of their culture or ethnicity. Scholars[17] have noted that the COI framework stimulates a "culturally-responsive pedagogy," with its emphasis on "purposeful" interaction to increase students' cognitive skills, which seems especially pertinent to the graduate-level programs offered by ATS member schools.

The COI model provides useful suggestions for faculty to revise their online courses to better meet the learning needs of multicultural students. To increase the cultural responsiveness of the introductory Old Testament course for the MACM students, the following changes will be made:

Social presence

Guided conversations will be provided in the existing community forum to invite active participation and demonstrate good interaction between students and professor. Students will also be asked in their introductions to describe their ministry context and explain how the Old Testament is viewed/valued in that location. This information can be used throughout the course to think about ways the material in the Old Testament can impact their ministry or help change potentially negative perspectives about the Old Testament.

Teaching presence

Existing video lectures will be completely scrapped, opting instead for short introductory and separate summary videos. A discussion forum rubric will be implemented to provide more specific guidance regarding expectations for initial posts and responses to others. A seldom-used "How's it going?" discussion forum will be replaced with regular email or phone conversations to seek specific feedback on their experience of the course.

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17. Daniel R. Smith and David F. Ayers, "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Online Learning: Implications for the Globalized Community College," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 30 (2006): 401–415, http://www.tacomacc.edu/upload/files/accreditation/Standard%20Two-Evidence%202-9-12/Standard%201/Culturally%20Responsive%20Pedagogy.pdf.

Cognitive presence

Discussion questions will be revised to facilitate higher order thinking and real-life application. Students will also be invited to pose their own questions or observations about the text as a way to show progression from understanding to application. Certain historical settings in the Old Testament will be set up for students to envision themselves in that situation with specific roles assigned (prophet, king, Samaritan, priest/Levite, etc.) and questions asked about how they would respond in that setting.

Conclusion

Global online theological education is on the rise around the world, and multicultural online communities are having a transformative impact on students. As ATS member schools expand their embrace of culturally diverse online learning, an increasing number of students and faculty will gain a growing awareness of their own, and each other's, cultural contributions. Perhaps online learning might make a contribution to emerging new pedagogies that allow faculty to teach "for a culturally diverse and racially just world."[18]

In a recent collection of essays by ATS member school faculty, Eleazar S. Fernandez notes,

> With the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of our society brought about by the forces of globalization, greater sensitivity and responsiveness to our diverse student body is a demand of effective, empowering, and transformative teaching and is an act of justice. . . . Are we creating not just a *safe* environment but a *learning community* in which all members are committed to mutual learning and transformation?[19]

Teaching for student transformation doesn't ignore culture or seek to change it but, instead, embodies the courage to name one's own cultural assumptions and the humility to learn from others. It takes both courage and humility to teach online, as technology makes education easier and

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18. Eleazar S. Fernandez, ed., *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

19. Ibid., 10–11.

more complex at the same time. Transformation can happen in a seminary classroom, in an online discussion forum, and with ACU students in Ghana. May it be so for everyone who seeks to take theological education to the ends of the earth.

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