

TE | Theological Education

ISSUE FOCUS

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Theological Research for Theological Education and the Church

Craig A. Evans

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The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

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Frank M. Yamada, Executive Director

DEBBIE CREAMER
ELIZA SMITH BROWN
LISA KERN

Senior Editor
Managing Editor
Production Assistant

For subscription information or to order
additional copies or selected back issues,
please contact the Association.

Email: horton@ats.edu

Website: www.ats.edu

Phone: 412-788-6505

Fax: 412-788-6510

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 anonymous 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.

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***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 ATS Research Function— A New Strategic Direction

History

Until the last quarter century, theological education—unlike higher education in general—has not had the benefit of comprehensive research centers dedicated to exploring issues specific to “the industry.” There were occasional research projects and several dissertation projects, but no centers existed with a disciplined program of research focused specifically on theological education. The result was that theological education was informed largely by anecdotes and the perceptions of knowledgeable and influential people. ATS had begun to collect some data on students, faculty, and schools in the 1970s and began publishing the *Fact Book on Theological Education*, but limitations in the database precluded meaningful research. In the late 1980s, ATS began to develop the database so it could prove more useful for research. The information requested of member schools was expanded, and by the mid-1990s, ATS had a database that could be used somewhat efficiently in research.

In the early 1990s, Barbara Wheeler, then president at Auburn Theological Seminary, began conversations with ATS and Lilly Endowment Inc. about the formation of a research center dedicated to work on theological education. Auburn had conducted a major study of the history of Protestant theological education in the 1980s and also had conducted some research in various areas, such as the Doctor of Ministry degree. The decision was made that the Center for the Study of Theological Education (CSTE) be located at Auburn. The work of the center matured into a 10-year cycle of studies of major aspects of theological education: students, faculty, trustees, administrative leadership, and finances. While the strategy of the studies varied, each of these areas was investigated twice during the ensuing 20 years. Studies on other topics were undertaken from time to time, but for the most part, CSTE research focused on these primary areas and provided both a baseline for understanding these changing issues and a means of tracking changes over time.

In the late 1990s, ATS and Auburn developed several working relationships. The two organizations collaborated on strategies that would be employed in the conduct of the decennial cycle of studies and on identifying additional research topics. ATS did not conduct formal and systematic research during this period, with the exception of a project on women senior leaders, and in the case of that study, Auburn contributed analysis of the empirical information. Instead, ATS made its data available to Auburn in an exclusive way and provided access to participants from member schools. Auburn also depended on ATS leadership education events as venues to report findings of projects. The result was a tight relationship in which ATS provided data and participants, Auburn conducted research, and ATS provided the venue for disseminating findings. Lilly Endowment Inc. participated in the relationship by making grants to each agency; these grants were coordinated but reflected the discrete work of each organization. The most recent example of this kind of coordination was the grant that ATS had for the Economic Equilibrium project (formerly known as the Financially Stressed Schools project), which was executed in collaboration with a grant to Auburn to both participate in the project and address other funding issues in theological education.

Strategic commitment to research

In December 2013, the ATS Board of Directors voted to endorse a new strategic direction for ATS engagement with research, specifically to develop a research function under the auspices of the Association. The net effect of this decision is that ATS has assumed responsibility for (1) determining the research projects that it deems most crucial for the work of the schools and the Association, (2) identifying the research that it will perform through its own organizational resources, (3) identifying partners with whom it may contract to perform particular research efforts, and most importantly, (4) interpreting its own data. Given that the mission of ATS is to promote improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public, it makes good sense for ATS to have control and oversight over its own data, in service of the member schools.

This decision to develop a research function within ATS is possible, in part, by virtue of the ATS dual corporate structure, adopted in 2004, which more formally separates the program work of the Association from the

accrediting work of the Commission. The staff and the procedures of ATS and COA establish appropriate boundaries so that, in the case of research, respondents should not be hesitant to respond to research questions because of concerns related to accrediting.

In furtherance of this strategic directive from the board, in 2014 ATS hired two new staff members with significant empirical research skills and experience. The expectation is not only that these individuals will conduct research on behalf of the full membership but also that they may consult with member schools as they do their own institutional research. It is also anticipated that ATS staff will augment its internal expertise by availing of the research capacity within the schools, perhaps with a cadre of ATS research fellows or by assembling groups for research and conversation. An advisory committee for ATS research will maintain an ongoing research agenda with clear priorities to ensure timely completion of projects, to prevent “research creep,” and to ensure that the research function is meaningful and useful to member schools.

It should be noted that this is a *function* and not the creation of a center. The research function is not a freestanding entity; it is part of the extensive programs and services that ATS provides for member schools.

Research agenda

As a function, research is being implemented as part of the major projects that ATS undertakes with external funding. Specific lines of inquiry and research methods are now built into each new initiative as an integral part of the full scope of programs and services that the Association offers. In addition, as each research project is completed, it is being disseminated in a variety of ways to ensure maximum accessibility to the full membership of ATS. The dissemination strategy currently includes presentations at ATS education events, publication in this journal, highlights in the electronic newsletter, *Colloquy Online*, inclusion on the ATS website, references in blog posts, and additional sharing through social media channels.

This issue

What follows in this issue of *Theological Education* are the first fruits of this new ATS research function. They illustrate a breadth of methodologies and ways of reporting in which quantitative and qualitative research inform one another.

Five articles represent the research and analysis of ATS staff members, including Daniel O. Aleshire, Deborah H. C. Gin, and Stephen R. Graham, with the additional input of Barbara Wheeler, former director of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education; Willie James Jennings at Yale University Divinity School; Stacy Williams-Duncan, visiting faculty at Virginia Theological Seminary; and Jonathan P. Hill at Calvin College.

Citing three research initiatives on junior faculty, student debt, and fundraising, Barbara Wheeler's article on the *values* of theological education research sounds a strong case for challenging our assumptions and biases, which can surface even in empirical research and can have profound consequences for institutional practice.

An article prepared as part of the 15-year evaluation of the ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE) represents a collaboration of Daniel O. Aleshire with Willie James Jennings and Deborah H. C. Gin. Aleshire, who has worked with CORE for its entire history, provides important context of how the program has evolved in response to changing needs and perceptions. Jennings, who serves as the current CORE chair, joins Aleshire in offering conclusions and recommendations for future ATS work related to race and ethnicity. Gin's survey of CORE participants provides the empirical data to inform future CORE work.

Stephen R. Graham presents the first round of research findings of the Educational Models and Practices project, the largest project ever undertaken by ATS, including the results of a comprehensive mapping survey of educational activities taking place across the 273 member schools of the Association. The expectation is that these findings will inform the next redevelopment of the Standards of Accreditation.

Deborah H. C. Gin and Stacy Williams-Duncan highlight three insights that emerged from another collaborative study on faculty development in theological education. Their work provides useful data on faculty with regard to their sense of collective vocation, their research motivations, and their experiences with and attitudes toward online education.

As the culmination of a joint effort funded by the John Templeton Foundation, Jonathan P. Hill and Deborah H. C. Gin report on a faculty survey to study science engagement in North American Protestant seminaries. The survey captures current faculty perceptions about the extent of science engagement in the classroom, pedagogical resources, student interest in scientific topics, potential controversies at the intersection of faith and science, science and faculty scholarship, and institutional support for pursuing scientific topics.

Three articles link theological scholarship directly to the church and the public sphere. Craig Evans of Acadia Divinity College encourages scholars to become active members in their church congregations in order to connect their scholarly research with more popular audiences. Susan Garrett of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary shares a presentation she gave in 2012 as part of the Lilly Theological Research grants program in which she schooled theological scholars on what it takes to write for the church and how writing for the church can complement their work as teachers and as institutional citizens. Gabriel Said Reynolds of the University of Notre Dame Department of Theology shares a presentation from the same program, setting forth two ideas about the role theologians can play in educating the public, particularly in the face of fallacies created by the media or popular culture, and in demonstrating that commitment to a religious tradition need not lead to antagonism to other religious traditions.

Also contributing to this issue is Sondra Ely Wheeler of Wesley Theological Seminary, who spoke at the 2013 Lilly Theological Research gathering and writes about the distinctive craft of writing within theological schools and the practices that sustain it and make it productive.

Taken in their entirety, these articles offer a compelling case for thoughtful and thorough research into the field of theological education, some proven techniques for improving the craft, and some compelling results that can guide our continual collective striving for improvement in theological education, both at ATS and among its member schools. We commend them to our readers for consideration.

The research focus of this issue is augmented by one Open Forum submission in which Axel Schoeber, formerly of Carey Theological College, illuminates—in a supervised ministry course case study—how digital learning can be transformative.

With this issue, we also welcome the new members of the Editorial Board elected at the 2016 Biennial Meeting—Sandra Beardsall (St. Andrews College, Saskatoon), Kathleen D. Billman (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago), Stephen Crocco (Yale University Divinity School), Molly T. Marshall (Central Baptist Theological Seminary), and Temba L. Mafico (Interdenominational Theological Center)—who join returning member Sathianatian Clarke (Wesley Theological Seminary). We are grateful for their wisdom and guidance in this work.

Eliza Smith Brown
Managing Editor

Debbie Creamer
Senior Editor

Issue Focus

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the role of the researcher in this process. The second part of the paper presents the methodology used in the study, including the data collection methods and the analysis techniques. The third part of the paper discusses the results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The final part of the paper provides a summary of the key points and offers suggestions for future research.

The research was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of scientific inquiry. The data was collected from a representative sample of the population, and the analysis was performed using advanced statistical techniques. The results of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, allowing for a thorough understanding of the findings. The conclusions drawn from the study are based on the evidence presented and are supported by the data.

The study has several limitations, which are discussed in the paper. These limitations include the sample size, the duration of the study, and the potential for bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the subject matter and contributes to the existing body of knowledge. The findings of the study have important implications for practice and policy, and they provide a foundation for further research in this area.

In conclusion, the study has shown that the research is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a deep understanding of the subject matter and a commitment to scientific rigor. The findings of the study are significant and have important implications for the field. The study also highlights the need for further research in this area and provides a clear direction for future studies.

Truth with Consequences: The Values of Theological Education Research

Barbara G. Wheeler

Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education

ABSTRACT: This article offers the author's insights, gleaned from more than three decades of conducting studies of theological education, about the value of such research. She emphasizes the need to guard against biases in the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. Three projects—on junior faculty, student debt, and fundraising—yielded surprising findings that undermined prior assumptions. These findings challenged conventional wisdom and common practices and had significant implications for the quality of the educational work and institutional practices of theological schools.

Se non é vero, é ben trovato. This traditional Italian saying, which means something like “If it isn’t true, it ought to be,” sums up the greatest temptation for researchers, including those whose focus of study is education.

Most of us come to educational research with strong convictions about human nature, about the most effective ways to teach and learn, and about the institutional conditions that dispose to good educational outcomes. These convictions make us alert to data that fall into the patterns we expect to find, patterns that describe the way that we think the world works—or should work, if things are going right.

The *ben trovato* (“ought to be”) temptation is ever present for those doing qualitative research. If I believe that people are most deeply formed when they take an active role in their own learning and that, therefore, small seminars are generally more effective than large lectures, I may be primed to notice the profound connections that some students make between life experience and theological concepts in their seminar presentations. I will probably also take note of the fact that the entire back row of students in a large lecture hall is looking at something other than course materials on their computer screens. I may be less likely to see things that don’t fit into my framework of assumptions, for instance, small knots of students that

form after the lecture class to talk and argue with each other, sometimes heatedly, about what the lecturer has said, or the irregular attendance of several seminar students who feel that they cannot meet the high standard set by the best students in the class. I am not being deliberately dishonest. It is simply a human trait, to observe and remember the phenomena that fit our most certain beliefs about the way things are.

Qualitative methods may be especially vulnerable to the *ben trovato* problem, but those who work with numbers are susceptible too. Parker Palmer, trained as a sociologist before he became well known for his work on the spirituality of education, used to say that the whole point of a social science research project could be controlled by two little words: “fully” and “only.” Consider how interchanging them shades—indeed, changes—the meaning of a quantitative finding about student learning: “Five years later, *fully* [or *only*] 60 percent of students could remember the topic of the paper they presented in the seminar.”

Because of this strong tendency to discover what we are looking for, research findings that confound our expectations are unusual and deserve special attention. Results that undergird our assumptions also

reinforce our practices. Findings that we did not anticipate, however—and that are out of alignment with conventional wisdom about how things are or ought to be—shake us out of complacency. They may bring to light hidden, unintended, and even negative consequences of our habitual actions. They

“[R]esearch findings that confound our expectations are unusual and deserve special attention.

have the potential to change our ways—both educational practices and patterns of institutional life.

Over more than three decades of research, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education sought to increase the chances that unexpected results would not be overlooked. Two protocols proved especially effective. Whenever possible, topics were studied using more than one research method. A survey might be complemented by case studies, or an ethnographic investigation by research on the history of the facet of theological education that was the focus of the work of ethnographic participant observers. In addition, all studies were conducted by at least two researchers, preferably with different skills, disciplinary grounding, or theoretical perspectives.

The Auburn Center produced a score of projects in the “Auburn Studies” series, on a range of topics (faculty, doctoral students and program, seminary students, finance, student debt, trustees and governance, administrative leadership, and the public role of theological education). Not all of them yielded jarring findings. A majority, however, challenged some settled assumptions about theological education, and several surfaced facts that point to the need for major changes in the ways seminaries operate and educate. Three of the most surprising and consequential discoveries are described in this article.

Junior faculty

At the end of the twentieth century, North American theological schools underwent a massive turnover in faculty. In the early 1990s, one quarter of faculty in the member institutions of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) schools were “new entrants,” as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics, into the faculty pool, and projections suggested that by 2006 as many as half of the faculty who had been teaching in 1991 would have retired and been replaced. The rate of change was even faster in other sectors of higher education, and junior faculty became the focus of a good deal of educational research.

The research focused on why some new faculty fail and drop out of the profession, while others succeed and are promoted to senior and/or permanent status. Much of the research told the same story: new faculty come to their first positions, often in institutions very different from the kinds of colleges they attended and the research universities in which they were trained, with limited teaching experience. Many start out by replicating the kinds of teaching they experienced in graduate school. When that style of teaching fails to connect with students’ interests and needs, the neophyte teachers respond in one of two ways.

Some, gripped with anxiety, prepare more intensely, with counter-productive results: larger loads of information and more complex lectures or reading assignments alienate rather than engage their students. These new faculty spiral downward. The more effort they put into teaching preparation, the less well it goes. Meanwhile, other obligations, such as the publishing required by some institutions as a basis for promotion, go unattended. Many such faculty are not offered renewed contracts, and a significant number leave higher education altogether.

Others recognize that teaching may require resources they do not yet have. They consult mentors, find a training program for teachers, or use their imaginations (and their distant memories of how they learned before they were experts). Realizing that less is more, they relax in the classroom and measure success by the depth of student interest rather than the amount of information conveyed. They attend to other responsibilities—research, writing, committee service. The productive efforts of the new faculty in this group are recognized by promotion and, eventually, tenure or permanent status.

In short, the higher education literature confirmed the widespread view that primary responsibility for new faculty success or failure lies with the new faculty members themselves. Those perceptive enough to figure out that they needed to grow and change were likely to succeed; those stalled in their graduate school patterns of formation would not. The new faculty literature also urged hiring institutions to help, by providing programs of orientation, bearable teaching loads for new faculty, and mentorship and teacher training resources. But most researchers and most institutions were convinced that, in the main, the fate of a new faculty member rested squarely on his or her own shoulders.

In the early 1990s, the Auburn Center launched a comprehensive study of seminary faculty, with a special focus on the junior faculty who were such a large part of the projected faculty future. The preliminary phase of the study, a survey of all seminary faculty, showed that junior faculty in theological schools differed from their peers elsewhere in higher education in one significant respect: They had extensive prior teaching experience. Most of the Catholics had taught in high schools before they began doctoral work. Most of the Protestants had some combination of school teaching and ministry service that included teaching. As a result, almost all beginning seminary faculty were what one higher education researcher called “quick starters” in the classroom.¹ They were confident and competent teachers who already knew that student engagement rather than information transfer is the core of good teaching.

What, then, accounted for success or failure of new faculty in theological schools? Even though the higher education narrative did not fit the profiles of new seminary faculty, the common view in seminaries was the

1. Robert Boice, *The New Faculty Member: Supporting and Fostering Professional Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 75–76.

same as it was elsewhere: The future of new faculty would be determined by their performance.

To test this assumption, the faculty study included a qualitative research probe focused on junior faculty. It was simple in design. Three schools of different traditions (a Roman Catholic seminary, a freestanding Protestant denominational seminary, and a nondenominational divinity school lodged in a research university) that had substantial cohorts of non-tenured faculty were invited to participate and accepted the invitation. A total of 31 non-tenured faculty in these schools, 15 men and 16 women, were interviewed individually each year for three years by members of a research team. Additional junior faculty in several other schools were interviewed once, to widen the base of data. The researchers tracked how each new faculty member fared and tried to determine the factors that led to success, defined as promotion in place or in an equivalent position in a different school, noting also the factors that seemed to contribute to failure. The results were published in an Auburn Studies report, *Tending Talents: The cultivation of effective and productive theological school faculties*.²

Those results were a major surprise to the researchers. "Two factors," they reported, seemed to determine who fared well: "the value [the hiring institution] placed on the position occupied by the new faculty member, and the care exercised in the initial choice of the new faculty member." New faculty, the researchers found, occupied two very different kinds of positions. One, labeled "valued" by the researcher team, was viewed by the faculty as a whole as "both intellectually respectable and essential for the integrity of the educational program of the school." Other positions were created for other reasons. Some were devised in response to constituency pressures. Others were cobbled together to include administrative tasks that "other administrators did not have the time or expertise to carry out."³ New faculty were selected for these positions in two very different ways. Some were chosen with careful attention to how well they might fit with the school's culture and faculty ethos. These the researchers called

2. Barbara G. Wheeler and Mark N. Wilhelm, *Tending Talents: The cultivation of effective and productive theological school faculties*, Auburn Studies No. 5, March 1997. Cameron Murchison and Katarina Schuth, OSF, joined the authors in conducting the research. The report includes an extensive demographic description of the junior faculty members who participated in the study, 3–7.

3. *Tending Talents*, 16.

“sponsored” faculty. Others were hired quickly, to meet a deadline or to fill a slot that came empty unexpectedly.

The two factors were strongly associated. Valued positions were most often filled by carefully selected, sponsored new faculty members. In almost every case where the two elements were present, the position’s occupant thrived.⁴ In a few cases, a sponsored new faculty member in a valued position had a personal crisis that adversely affected both teaching and publishing; those faculty members survived. Where one or the other factor was missing—where the job was not viewed as a “real” faculty position by the rest of faculty or where the occupant was haphazardly chosen—a large majority of the new faculty members struggled and left the institution.⁵ Some left the profession as well.

In short, contrary to the widely accepted view that junior faculty members earn—or forfeit—their academic salvation by the quality of their efforts, the research suggested that *the fate of new theological faculty is largely determined before they ever set foot in the school that hires them*. It is true, in seminaries as in other kinds of institutions, that there are post-hiring measures that can make life and work easier for new faculty. Orientation and very practical advice are helpful. Fairness in the structuring of assignments, so that each task junior faculty members are asked to perform has the potential to add value to their resumes rather than divert them from the most important parts of their work, is a welcome kind of support. Special provisions for research, such as summer stipends so that moonlighting is unnecessary, may clear the path to advancement. But none of these is likely to determine a junior faculty member’s future. The status of the position and deliberate care in selection are much more decisive.

These findings have real-world consequences, especially in today’s constricted job market. Taking on a new faculty member is a major investment for a school. The chances of a long-term return on that investment are greatly increased if the school aligns every position with its most strongly held educational values and if it searches until it finds someone to occupy it who can thrive and grow in that particular school. Prospective faculty

4. Three-quarters had attained or were likely to attain permanent status in the schools in which they were first hired; the percentage would have been higher if one of the site schools had not experienced serious financial difficulties.

5. By the end of our study, only about one-third of this group was still in place at the original school.

should heed these findings too. Jobs are scarce. With so few opportunities for entry-level faculty, young scholars should seriously consider whether to take a less-than-ideal academic job that likely has a limited future. It may be more fruitful to look for alternate settings in which to use their knowledge and skill. And anyone who has a choice of positions should look for the one that offers both the prospect of forming deep relational ties and an assignment at the center of the school's mission. If the first job does not work out well, there may not be a second chance.

The study just described upended the researchers' best guesses about the ingredients of new faculty success and challenged much of the conventional wisdom about the topic as well. Two other studies had more mixed results. They confirmed some widely held impressions, but their final conclusions were counter-intuitive. Those conclusions, if taken seriously, might lead to major changes in institutional practice.

Student debt

Over the past quarter century, educational debt amassed by students in college and graduate school has become a prominent issue. The Auburn Center, alerted by headlines about rising undergraduate debt, conducted its first study of theological student indebtedness in 1991. Subsequently, it revisited the topic twice, in 2001 and 2011. The debt studies produced three research reports.⁶

As the problem of debt throughout higher education became more noticeable, educational leaders, journalists, politicians, and students and their families advanced several hypotheses about the drivers of student borrowing. Much of the blame was laid on tuition and other educational costs, which were rising faster than the rate of inflation. Some analyses suggested that increased borrowing was a result of expanded access to higher education for students with fewer family resources. Rising enrollments in graduate education seemed to be associated with high debt levels, especially for students who did not take time out after college to

6. Anthony Ruger and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Manna from Heaven? Theological and rabbinical student debt*, Auburn Studies, No. 3, April 1995; Anthony Ruger, Sharon Miller, and Kim Maphis Early, *The Gathering Storm: The educational debt of theological students*, Auburn Studies, No. 12, September 2005; Sharon L. Miller, Kim Maphis Early, and Anthony Ruger, *Taming the Tempest: A team approach to reducing and managing student debt*, Auburn Studies, No. 19, October 2014.

work and pay down some of their undergraduate debt. Some commentators pointed also to changing social norms—single parent families, with no spouse to provide support for a student-parent, and lifestyle choices of students, such as expensive cars and electronics—as factors that could lead to high levels of debt.

The Auburn debt studies both measured levels of student debt and tested these hypotheses.⁷ The first study produced some relatively good news. Seminary students were not borrowing at as high a rate as students in other branches of higher education. In 1991, the median amount borrowed by theological school students, as attested by the financial aid transcripts that their schools were legally required to keep, was 0. In other words, a majority of master's level students—52 percent—borrowed nothing.⁸ Of the rest, who were borrowers, a relative small percentage borrowed the large amounts that formed the basis for scary stories about debt that seminary leaders had begun to trade.⁹

The study's researchers noted, however, that relatively low interest rates on government loans and rising ceilings for borrowing presented a severe temptation to financially pressed seminaries: to load an increasing part of the costs of theological education onto students with limited earning prospects. And indeed, by the time of the next study 10 years later, the median theological debt was no longer 0: almost two-thirds of master's-level students were borrowers, and the amount of debt had sky-rocketed, increasing at several times the rate of inflation. The most highly indebted group had mushroomed: in 1991, fewer than 1 percent of students had borrowed more than \$30,000; by 2001, 14 percent had done so.¹⁰ Ten years after that, in 2011, amounts borrowed had continued to rise, well above inflation, though the rates of increase were less than in the decade before.¹¹ Most tellingly, much higher percentages of graduates in 2011 than in 1991

7. The scope of the studies was limited to theological schools in the United States that belong to ATS. Canadian schools were not included. Though educational debt is a growing problem in Canada, levels of debt there are much lower, largely because of state support of higher education, including a number of theological schools.

8. *Manna From Heaven*, 4.

9. *Manna From Heaven*, 7.

10. *Gathering Storm*, 3–5.

11. *Taming the Tempest*, 6–8.

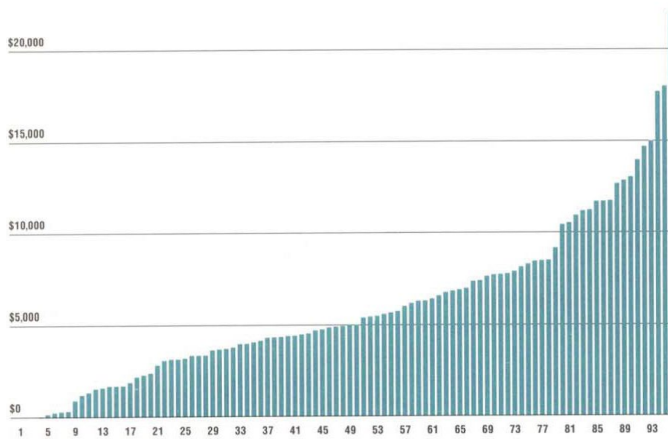
and 2001 said that they regretted borrowing so much and that repaying loans had become a factor in their personal and professional choices.¹²

All three studies reached the same conclusions about the causes of fast-rising debt. Foremost was simply the availability of funds: the ceiling on borrowing was set higher several times during this period. Even so, however, in 2011 some students had borrowed nothing and others a manageable amount, while still others borrowed so much that repayment will be a challenge, possibly an insurmountable one. Why the differences?

Some of the hypotheses listed earlier proved to provide partial explanations. Some categories of students were more likely to borrow, and to borrow more, than others. Younger students who had not had the chance to pay off undergraduate debt, women in denominations that would not ordain them and support their seminary studies, single persons, especially those with children, who had no spousal support, and students from families with low net worth—all borrowed more.

Offsetting these expected findings, however, was one that the researchers did not anticipate: a much stronger predictor than any of these factors was the particular school the student was attending. As the chart below from the first debt study shows, schools ranged widely in their levels of debt. And although schools with high tuition, low grant aid, and concentrations of students from economically challenged backgrounds often had higher average debt, not all

FIGURE 4: Average Theological Debt for 1991 Master of Divinity Graduates, by School. Schools With Five or More Graduates.



Source: *Manna from Heaven*, 10.

12. *Taming the Tempest*, 15.

schools in these categories were on the high-debt side of the chart. In other words, two students who are demographic twins could have vastly different levels of debt, depending on what school they attended; and two schools that had similar characteristics, such as high tuition and low aid, sometimes had very different average debt.

In order to ferret out what might account for these differences, researchers conducted qualitative studies of low-debt schools. They found that *schools that had a deliberate focus on restraining debt, whatever their characteristics and their students' characteristics, were most likely to have low average debt levels*. In such schools, decision makers knew the debt profile of their students. They made efforts to avoid passing new costs on to students, and they scheduled program offerings so that students could work for pay while enrolled. Some of these institutions declined to admit students until they had reduced prior educational debt to manageable levels. The single most effective measure, in almost all cases, was financial counseling. Before processing loan applications, schools required students to compute the amounts they would eventually have to pay to service their debt and the amount they would have to earn to do that. The schools also offered workshops in financial planning and management. A few institutions went even further. They declined to approve the loan applications of students who they could predict were likely to default.

Each of the three Auburn studies strongly recommended financial counseling as a primary debt-reducing strategy. To help in these efforts, the Auburn Center produced a video featuring students who had borrowed and then struggled to live with the resulting debt load. Other strategies were recommended too, including participation by churches and denominations in supporting students and helping to repay graduates' debt. Raising awareness of the future impact of debt, however, remained the centerpiece of each study's recommendations, and to the extent that schools responded with programs of counseling and planning, 30 years of research on debt has had beneficial consequences.

Fundraising

When a school gets into serious financial difficulty, the almost reflexive initial reaction of faculty, board, alumni/ae, and other outside constituents is to urge the president to raise more money. Is this the most productive response?

Several Auburn research projects produced information that addresses that question. Some of the studies demonstrated that other revenue sources are unlikely to produce growth. Decennial studies of seminary finances, for instance, showed that support from churches and denominations dropped steeply at the end of the twentieth century and has continued to ebb.¹³ Analysis of student headcount enrollments in a recent study showed that the decline that began for theological schools in 2006 has continued at the rate of about 1 percent a year overall, a trend that, for a variety of reasons, is unlikely to be reversed.¹⁴ The even steeper drop in full-time equivalent enrollments has had a negative impact on income from tuition in many institutions.

If church support and tuition are unlikely to provide badly needed additional revenue, and if reserve and endowment funds continue to be depleted by unfavorable markets and overuse, as has been the case in many institutions, then struggling schools have limited options. They can cut expenditures, but eventually they will reach a limit: they cannot operate without basic infrastructure and a core faculty. Therefore fundraising, for many institutions, is the only possible road to stability. For some, it is critical for survival. The faculty, board members, and supporters who believe the best solution to financial woes is deeper presidential engagement in fundraising seem to be looking in the right direction.

Armed with the evidence that there is no other way out, many hard-pressed institutions have produced plans designed to convince those concerned about their future (creditors and accreditors, for instance) that they can solve their problems by ambitious fundraising. Additional Auburn research, however, suggests that these institutions should be cautious about staking the future on big fundraising gains. In a study of seminary development efforts, researchers reported that one condition that clouds fundraising prospects is hesitations about fundraising on the

13. Anthony T. Ruger, *Lean Years, Fat Years: Changes in the financial support of Protestant education*, Auburn Studies, No. 2, December 1994; Anthony T. Ruger, *Seek and Find? Revenues in theological education*, Auburn Studies, No. 11, August 2005; Anthony T. Ruger and Chris A. Meinzer, *Through Toil and Tribulation: Financing theological education, 2001–2011*, Auburn Studies, No. 18, July 2014. See especially the summary charts in *Toil and Tribulation*, 15.

14. Barbara G. Wheeler, Anthony T. Ruger and Sharon L. Miller, *Theological Student Enrollment: A special report from the Auburn Center for Study of Theological Education*, Auburn Studies, No. 18, August 2013.

part of those whose job it is to do it. Both chief executive officers of theological schools and board members rate themselves as less well-equipped for raising money than for any other function associated with their roles.¹⁵

Even in those institutions where the level of expertise and enthusiasm for financial development is high, *there are predictable limits on the fundraising gains schools can expect*. The development study's research team analyzed a large amount of information collected by ATS from its member schools over a 10-year period. The data included both the results of year-to-year fundraising for operations and proceeds from capital campaigns. The analysis, which used various statistical techniques to minimize the effect of a few windfalls and catastrophic losses, shows what kinds of fundraising gains are realistic. For instance, although a majority of schools over a five-year period can anticipate an increase in fundraising for operations, only one in 10 is likely to see annual gains of 15 percent or more. Schools at the median point in the list of institutions increased annual giving by only 2.2 percent, and one-third of schools lost ground.¹⁶ As for capital campaigns, the best estimate of what a school can hope to raise will be based on a feasibility study of the donor pool of that school, but the researchers' data analysis showed that even the most successful campaigns were a predictable multiple of the annual amounts raised in previous years.¹⁷

The consequence of these findings should be clear. The all-too-common practice of schools in trouble—plugging into their projections whatever large amounts they need to raise in order to continue to operate—is very unwise. There is almost no chance that a struggling institution can achieve unprecedented increases in gifts in a short time. Meanwhile, as it tries to achieve the unachievable and fails, it will grow weaker. Better to project realistic results, and if these do not solve persistent problems, to consider alternative plans for the school's future, such as major changes in institutional structure and program or new partnerships and alliances.

15. Sharon L. Miller, Anthony T. Ruger and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Great Expectations: Fundraising prospects for theological schools*, Auburn Studies, No. 14, August 2009. A subsequent survey of seminary board members found that board members rate presidents lower on fundraising ability than any other function, and they rate development directors lowest of all members of the senior administrative team. Barbara G. Wheeler and Helen Ouellette, *Governance That Works: Effective leadership for theological schools*, Auburn Studies, No. 20, March 2015, 9–11.

16. *Great Expectations*, 10–11.

17. *Great Expectations*, 15.

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The series of Auburn Studies research projects and reports extensively cited in this article came to an end in 2015, but theological education research continues. ATS, long the collector and repository of most of the data on which the referenced studies were based, has appointed its first-ever director of research and is increasingly active in data analysis and original research. Projects carefully designed to test presuppositions and strong convictions are underway at ATS and in other settings as well. Theological school leaders should seek out, read, and inwardly digest such studies. The truth they convey has real consequences for the future of theological education.

Barbara G. Wheeler is Founder and Former Director of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education in New York City.

ATS Work through the Committee on Race and Ethnicity, 2000–2014

Daniel O. Aleshire and Deborah H. C. Gin
The Association of Theological Schools

Willie James Jennings
Yale University Divinity School

ABSTRACT: After 14 years of sustained effort surrounding the issue of race and ethnicity in theological education through the Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE), The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) paused programming in 2014–2015 to evaluate the impact of these efforts and to identify issues for future efforts. In this article, the authors summarize the program's history, share findings of a mixed-methods research effort, and make recommendations about strategies for future ATS programming and activities in this area.

Background

The work of the Committee on Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education (CORE) has been evolving since its original appearance in 1978 as the Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies. The initiative began as an effort to encourage inclusiveness in institutional and educational standards. In the ensuing decades, it has responded to the changing needs of the communities it was intended to serve by expanding its scope and shifting its focus, from curricular change in the 1980s, to the lived experiences of racial/ethnic individuals in theological education in the 1990s, to institutional capacity building in the new millennium.¹

1 For a brief summary of the 15-year review, see Janice Edwards-Armstrong and Eliza Smith Brown, "Committee on Race and Ethnicity completes 15 years of work," *Colloquy Online* (January/February 2016). For a more complete overview, see Janice Edwards-Armstrong, "CORE: An Evolving Initiative," *Theological Education* 45, no. 1 (2009): 71–76.

Summary of program activities

2000–2014

The programming of the past 14 years since the founding of CORE can be divided into three major units. The first involved an extensive range of conferences designed to support racial/ethnic faculty and administrators, with some attention to institutional capacity issues. The second cycle of programming focused on informational approaches to increase institutional capacity regarding race and ethnicity through educational conferences. The third cycle of work also focused on institutional capacity-building, but through a focus on strategic diversity planning.

First cycle: nurturing racial/ethnic faculty and administrators

2000–2005

Between 2000 and 2005, ATS hosted an extensive series of consultations and seminars with the intention to provide space for participants, mainly racial/ethnic faculty and administrators, to exchange stories of their experiences in predominantly white institutions. No programming on race and ethnicity had been attempted in more than a decade, and these early meetings were designed to identify issues of concern for racial/ethnic persons in ATS schools and reasons why some ATS schools had a greater percentage of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators than others as well as principles about institutional change evident among these schools and best practices concerning appointment and support for racial/ethnic faculty. Participants chronicled experiences of isolation, marginalization, and perceived lack of institutional support and identified recurring challenges in areas such as promotion and tenure, development of junior faculty, mentoring, visibility, and institutional hospitality. The results of these initial conferences led to the production of the *ATS Diversity Folio*.²

This cycle of work continued with the first of two cross-racial dialogues among African/African American and Hispanic/Latino(a) faculty and administrators in ATS schools. It continued with a series of two conferences for faculty and administrators from historically black theological schools, two conferences for Hispanic Latino/a faculty and administrators,

2 The portfolio, a collection of materials produced by ATS without copyright, contains essays, statistics, case studies, and other resources for use by ATS member schools. It is expected that the current study will produce new resources to supersede the *Diversity Portfolio*.

and two conferences for Asian/Asian North American faculty and administrators. This series of six conferences was designed to provide support and nurture for racial/ethnic faculty and administrators. In one way or another, all of them sought to provide a venue in which participants could engage in constructive dialogue about the contributions, challenges, and opportunities of constituents from each of these racial/ethnic groups and identify ways in which ATS programming can support these constituents. CORE also collaborated with the Women in Leadership program to sponsor a major conference for women of color.

Second cycle: informational capacity building 2006–2008

The second cycle saw a shift from individual care and support toward institutional learning and building capacity for diversity, inclusion, and excellence through information. In this segment, the Association provided racial/ethnic individuals with opportunities to explore the dynamics that influence their work in theological schools and strategies to cope with difficult institutional realities and to grow professionally. And for institutions, ATS hosted four events to share best practices for healthy, inclusive campus climates, employment, faculty development, and cross-racial dialogue.

The first event was jointly sponsored by ATS and The Fund for Theological Education (FTE)³ and sought to identify successful strategies and best practices leading to racial/ethnic diversity among ATS institutions. Following this conference, ATS sponsored a series of three conferences, “Enhancing Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education,” which focused on white privilege, employment of racial/ethnic faculty, and developing educational capacity for racial/ethnic students. Unlike the conferences in the first cycle of work, these conferences included white representatives from participating schools in addition to racial/ethnic constituents.

Although these conferences were evaluated positively by participants, there was little evidence that educational conferences contributed to institutional change. ATS had been working with other schools on developing skill in the assessment of student learning, and it was increasingly clear that information about assessment was an inadequate predictor of whether an institution was able to implement effective assessment strategies.

3 FTE is now known as the Forum for Theological Exploration.

Information-focused conferences were replaced with workshops in which teams from schools worked with coaches on very practical issues.

Mid-point evaluation

2008–2009

At the conclusion of eight years of programming, ATS commissioned a peer review of CORE work to date. Terrell Jones, vice provost for educational equity, and Mike Blanco, senior diversity planning analyst, both of Pennsylvania State University, conducted the peer review. They evaluated materials developed as part of the program, interviewed staff involved in the programs, and conducted a conference call interview with members of the Committee on Race and Ethnicity. Their written report identified strengths of the programming and areas where new strategies might be attempted. Chief among the recommendations was that ATS work with schools on strategic planning efforts that would focus on institutional issues related to diversity. In planning for the third cycle of work, ATS combined this recommendation with what it had learned from efforts to help schools develop capacity related to assessment of learning, which involved teams from schools working with a coach.

Third cycle: institutional capacity building through strategic diversity planning

2010–2014

ATS programming in this segment was structured as a four-year program entitled “Preparing for 2040: Enhancing Capacity to Educate and Minister in a Multiracial World.” In the Preparing for 2040 project, ATS worked with 40 schools that had expressed some desire or commitment to increase their capacity to educate for ministry in a multiracial world. Specifically, participants from these schools sought to work on issues of faculty culture, reframing teaching and learning, understanding race and ethnicity, and conflict resolution.

The program utilized a process approach to help schools develop strategies, approaches, or techniques that would optimize institutional change in the area of each school’s choosing. Participating schools were divided into four groups; each followed the same pattern of work, beginning with a weekend conference during which teams from each school met with a coach to identify issues and consider strategies for addressing them. Consultants were also present at the conference to make presentations and facilitate discussions. Each school team then worked for two years on its issue, consulted its coach as helpful, and at the end of the two

years, returned as a team for a second conference to work with coaches and consultants one more time and report on the overall results of their collective efforts.

Evaluation of this effort led to the following conclusions, among others: (1) that some schools are further along in their capacity to address diversity issues than others; (2) that most schools had chosen to work on issues of “faculty culture” and “reframing teaching and learning”; (3) that the two conferences served as important framing and reference points for the overall school efforts; and (4) that small institutional achievements in this area contributed to strengthening overall institutional capacity.

At the conclusion of these four years of work, institutional teams asked for ongoing support as they continued either to develop strategic diversity plans further or to implement the plans that had been developed. In response, ATS conducted a series of web-based meetings to provide ongoing coaching and guidance for the schools to solidify the gains that had been attained and to help schools take necessary next steps. The initiative concluded with institutional teams preparing brief reports on what they had accomplished, what they had learned that could be of benefit to other institutions, and what they planned to work on next.

Research and evaluation

2014–2015

After 14 years of sustained effort surrounding the issue of race and ethnicity in theological education, ATS paused programming in 2014–2015 to evaluate the impact of these efforts and identify issues for future efforts. The year involved four major evaluative activities—both qualitative and quantitative research—involving past participants in CORE programming as well as current students and recent graduates.

The impact study was rooted in the following questions:

1. How has the Association’s programming to address issues related to race and ethnicity influenced the life of the schools?
2. What difference has the programming made?
3. What has been effective? What has been ineffective?

Methodology: three phases

As has been typical of ATS research, this study utilized a mixed-methods approach to its data gathering and analyses and demonstrated how lived experience and empirical research can inform one another.⁴ It incorporated (1) focus-group conversations around the study's design and methodology; (2) a comprehensive survey, structured according to the cycles of work, to capture effectiveness and impact of the programming; and (3) interpretive consultations with faculty and administrators who were past participants in CORE programming and with students from Preparing for 2040 schools.

Phase 1: CORE focus-group conversations

Members and consultants of the Association's Committee on Race and Ethnicity met in fall 2014 to determine both *what* kinds of information to collect and *how* best to collect such information. Early questions that were formulated include the following, among others: How do institutions measure success in their diversity work? And what has been the effect of CORE work on member schools and institutional relationships to faculty of color, as well as to white faculty?

Phase 2: Survey

In 2014–2015, a survey was sent to all known participants in all years of programming soliciting their reflection on the effects of the programming on their work individually and, where appropriate, on their institutions.

The need for advanced quantitative analyses. In the world of theological education, quantitative research reports typically center round what statisticians refer to as frequency analysis. This would include answers to: "How many faculty of this race do we have?" or "What percent answered a certain way to questions about effectiveness?" For example, if we asked what percent agreed/disagreed on the item: "I was satisfied with the ATS programming to support racial/ethnic faculty and administrators in theological education," then what does it tell us about the work when results were skewed to the right, other than the conclusion that survey participants were happy with the work? Or, if asked whether participation in

4 See the methodology section of "Three Insights about Faculty Development," *Theological Education* 50, no. 2 (2017): 81–85 for a rationale on mixed-methods approaches.

CORE programming contributed to institutional change and responses landed in a “normal” distribution (about the same number agreeing as disagreeing, in a bell-shaped curve), does this tell us anything?

Could we ask other types of questions of the data? The following are some of the questions that advanced quantitative analyses are able to address:

- Group differences—Would faculty have experienced institutional change the same way? Would perceptions of that institutional change differ by race, gender, or type of program they participated in? Or would such perceptions differ by various attributes of the *institution*?
- What’s related to what—In what ways are institutional learning and individual benefit related? *Are* they related? Can we assume that an institution’s increased capacities around diversity are trickling down to benefit the constituencies for which the learning was designed?
- Ensuring program effectiveness—If we were to do a certain programming again, what would predict our success? Which components do we keep, and which do we let go? Are there certain conditions under which programming would be more successful? Could we figure out *in advance* who would most benefit, be most satisfied, have the greatest learning, or see the most lasting institutional change?

Asking other types of questions of the data help to tell a more complete story, paint a more complete picture, from responses that survey participants provide. Advanced quantitative analyses are tools we use to answer these questions.

Characteristics of the final sample. The final response set includes 86 useable cases, corresponding to a 33 percent response rate. While the response rate is acceptable (25–30 percent being the current standard for

online surveys), the number of cases is small, which may limit generalizability of conclusions.⁵

The final sample comprised 40 percent female respondents; 20 percent African/African American/black, 20 percent Asian/Asian North American, 20 percent Hispanic/Latino(a)/Latino(a) American, <5 percent Native American/First Nations/Alaskan Native/Inuit, and <5 percent international respondents.⁶ About 52 percent of the sample held an administrative position at the time of the survey, and >95 percent of those were in either executive or academic administrative roles. About 90 percent indicated they were members of the faculty, with the following distribution by rank: 2 percent non-ranked, 2 percent assistant professor, 39 percent associate professor, and 56 percent professor.

Institutionally, the final sample consisted of 37 percent participants from evangelical Protestant schools, 51 percent from mainline Protestant schools, and 12 percent from Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools. About 10 percent were from smaller schools (1–100 students by head count) and approximately 30 percent from each of mid-sized (101–200 students), large (201–400 students), and largest (>400 students) schools.⁷

Phase 3: Faculty, administrator, and student consultations

Faculty and administrators. In February 2015, 38 invited administrators and faculty gathered for an interpretive consultation (1) to reflect on the results of the survey research, (2) to seek an enhanced understanding of the issues that impact theological education, and (3) to identify future programming options in light of the research and understandings of theological education. They met in variously constructed focus groups (by separate and mixed racial groups) to discuss *why* and *in what ways* the data surface

5 It is also important to note that the number of faculty and administrators of color in ATS schools is still very small (e.g., approximately 700 racial/ethnic faculty in 2013), which limits the number of potential respondents to any survey of ATS constituents on this or related topics.

6 While response patterns of two groups, Native American/First Nations/Alaskan Native/Inuit respondents and international respondents, are important to identify, because of the small numbers in this response set and in the interest of confidentiality, these responses were not included in most analyses.

7 Institutional percentages are only for those who disclosed their institution's name, which was 75 percent of the final sample.

underlying realities. Consultation participants discussed findings in each cycle of work, addressing the following three questions:

- Cycle 1—In what ways does support and nurture of individual racial/ethnic administrators and faculty contribute to positive institutional change? Groups were to consider the effect of the individual's race and the institution's size and other characteristics in their discussions.
- Cycle 2—Given ATS/CORE programming, why do constituents report not benefiting from institutional efforts to professionally develop racial/ethnic constituents? Groups were encouraged to consider the impact of the institution's best practices and the individual's use of resources on race/ethnicity in their conversations.
- Cycle 3—Institutional change appears to be taking place as a result of the Preparing for 2040 programming. What, if anything, has ATS/CORE contributed to this change? Groups were asked to consider the role of the individual's race and the institution's ecclesial family.

In each discussion, participants were also encouraged to consider (1) the strategies used in that cycle's programming and (2) how the particular discussion would inform recommendations for future work in this area.

Students and recent graduates. Also in spring 2015, 40 students and recent graduates from schools that had participated in the "2040" program of the proceeding four years were convened as consultants to the Association, each receiving a small honorarium for participation. They were asked to assess their educational experiences, especially in the context of their racial/ethnic identity and the ministry settings in which they anticipated serving or had just begun to serve. The conference agenda placed participants in a series of small group discussions that varied by composition and focus questions.

Findings and discussion

Key survey findings will be reported by cycle of work, incorporating consultation reflections throughout, with substantive discussion sections at the end of each cycle.

Cycle 1: Support and nurture

Findings. The three items with the strongest agreement in this section referenced the personal benefits experienced from participation in programming:

- helped me to make/renew **meaningful connections** with other theological faculty/administrators of color⁸
- contributed to a sense that **my race/ethnicity is a value** in theological education⁹
- encouraged me to revisit or continue to **emphasize issues of race/ethnicity in my role** as faculty/administrator¹⁰

The item with the least agreement was “My participation in ATS programming contributed to positive institutional change related to race/ethnicity at the theological school . . .”.¹¹ When we crosstabulate responses by race, statistically significant patterns emerge.¹² As seen in Table 1,

8 Mean response 3.34, on a scale of 1–4, strongly disagree to strongly agree.

9 Mean = 3.24, same scale.

10 Mean = 3.28, same scale.

11 Mean = 2.66, scale of 1–4.

12 Differences were statistically significant at the .05 level ($\chi^2 = 23.338$, $df = 9$). Note: results should be read with caution, as nine cells returned with expected values less than 5. T-tests were also run to compare average responses between groups (White group mean = 3.21 and group of color mean = 2.42). Mean differences were statistically significant ($t(62) = 3.774$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $D = 1.05$).

responses from participants of African descent¹³ are fairly evenly distributed; responses from participants of Asian descent are situated around the middle; responses from participants of Latin descent skew toward disagreement; and responses from white participants skew toward agreement. And looking across rows for each type of response, we see that almost half of those who marked “Disagree” were respondents of Asian descent, that strong agreement was limited to white respondents or respondents of African descent, and that strong disagreement was felt only among respondents of African or Latino descent.

Table 1 My Participation Contributed to Positive Institutional Change by Race

	African/African American, Black (N=12)	Asian/Asian North American, Pacific Islander (N=18)	Hispanic, Latino(a)/ Latino(a) American (N=15)	White, Anglo/Euro North American (N=19)
Strongly Agree	25%	0%	0%	37%
Agree	33%	44%	40%	47%
Disagree	25%	56%	40%	16%
Strongly Disagree	17%	0%	20%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

A second item in this section addresses the impact of the institutional change. Here also, significant patterns emerge when we crosstabulate responses by race.¹⁴ Four responses were possible for the item “The changes I implemented/tried to implement [related to race/ethnicity] at the theological school . . . as a result of participation in ATS programming:

13 For better visual accessibility, the following descriptors will be used for corresponding racial categories throughout the remainder of the article:

African descent (Afr) for African/African American, Black
Asian descent (Asn) for Asian/Asian North American, Pacific Islander
Latin (Lat) descent for Hispanic, Latino(a)/Latino(a) American
White (Wht) for White, Anglo/Euro North American

14 Differences were statistically significant at the .05 level ($\chi^2 = 20.697$, $df = 9$). Note: results should be read with caution, as 12 cells returned with expected values less than 5. Group means (White = 3.28, Of color = 2.47) were statistically significant [$t(58.6) = 4.662$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $D = .99$].

1. . . were major, lasting changes in the school”
2. . . were small but signified enduring forward movement.”
3. . . eventually faded away.”
4. . . were never implemented.”

Table 2 shows a different kind of distribution. Within racial groups, among respondents of African descent, many more indicated some kind of enduring change than did not; among those of Asian descent, more responded that change did not endure; respondents of Latin descent were split, with about half indicating enduring change and half not; and for white respondents, all respondents reported change that endured.

Table 2 Impact of Institutional Change by Race

	Afr (N=14)	Asn (N=18)	Lat (N=15)	Wht (N=18)
Were major, lasting changes in the school	21%	11%	0%	28%
Were small but signified enduring forward movement	57%	33%	47%	72%
Eventually faded away	7%	39%	27%	0%
Were never implemented	14%	17%	27%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Finally, reports of the impact of institutional change also differed by size of the participant’s institution.¹⁵ Table 3 reveals additional patterns, but most notable are two: (1) responses among those at mid-sized and large schools tended toward lasting change, and (2) major, lasting changes were found almost exclusively in large schools.

Table 3 Impact of Institutional Change by Size of Institution (Number of Students by Head Count)

	Size by Head Count			
	Small 0-100 (N=2)	Mid 101-200 (N=16)	Large 201-400 (N=17)	Largest 401+ (N=15)
Were major, lasting changes in the school	0%	6%	41%	0%
Were small but signified enduring forward movement	50%	56%	41%	73%
Eventually faded away	0%	31%	12%	7%
Were never implemented	50%	6%	6%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

15 Differences were statistically significant at the .05 level ($\chi^2 = 19.721$, $df = 9$). Note: results should be read with caution, as 13 cells returned with expected values less than 5.

Discussion. The goals of this cycle of work were to provide racial/ethnic faculty and administrators a venue to discuss challenges experienced in their contexts and to provide them with the opportunity to connect with senior racial/ethnic faculty and administrators at predominantly white institutions for support. Considering these goals, it is important to note that respondents felt that they had meaningfully connected, that their race/ethnicity is valued, and that they had been encouraged to attend to race/ethnicity in their roles.

It appears, however, that participation in programming during this cycle did not necessarily translate to lasting institutional change. Survey participants' responses differed by race and by size of institution. What is unclear, however, is what combination of institutional capacity for change, racial group social construction, and individual sense of agency is at play in the response patterns. Literature is abundant in its claim that institutional realities present double, triple, multiple binds for constituents of color and women constituents: there are almost always too few individuals committed to institutional change around diversity, and the limited decision-making positions that constituents of color and women constituents hold further accentuate power asymmetries.¹⁶ Interpretive consultation focus group notes highlight this structural inequity:

Whose voice makes change? How is a new voice welcomed/valued/honored in the context of the host tradition? Do participants have significant voice coming back from CORE events? We need to consider how to help schools evaluate and reformulate structures of power and leadership, how to get new faces and new voices at your tables.

16 See Estela M. Bensimon, "Making sense of administrative leadership: The 'L' word in higher education," *The ERIC Digest*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports, ED316074 (1989): 1–5; Phyllis Bronstein, Esther D. Rothblum, and Sondra E. Solomon, "Ivy Halls and Glass Walls: Barriers to academic careers for women and ethnic minorities," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 1993, no. 53 (1993): 17–31; S. M. Lee, "Do Asian American faculty face a glass ceiling in higher education?", *American Educational Research Journal* 39, no. 3 (2002): 695–724; Laurence Parker and Octavio Villalpando, "A Racialized Perspective on Education Leadership: Critical race theory in educational administration," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 43, no. 5 (2007): 519–524; and Kristen Betts, David Urias, Jose Chavez, and Keith Betts, "Higher Education and Shifting U.S. Demographics: Need for Visible Administrative Career Paths, Professional Development, Succession Planning & Commitment to Diversity," *Academic Leadership* 7, no. 2 (2009): 1–6.

Might there also be differences, by race or other individual and institutional characteristics, in what constitutes “change” and how “lasting” is defined? What does it mean, for example, that among those who reported their institutions experiencing major, lasting change, half were white respondents and none were of Latin descent? What may be understood as lasting change by one may not be experienced as lasting change by another. And who determines the definition of change at a given institution? How do institutions determine what is success; who gets to speak into those definitions? It should be noted that, while institutional change was not an explicit goal of the work in this cycle, the responses to these survey items provide a helpful lens for interpreting benefits for the individual.

Cycle 2: Informational capacity building

Findings. Responses in this section of the survey reflected less agreement overall than responses in the first section. The item with the strongest agreement was “Participation in ATS programming contributed to my increased understanding about dynamics (e.g., related to power, peer collegiality, racial/ethnic underrepresentation) influencing my work in my institution.”¹⁷ The items with the least agreement were “I benefited from the institution’s . . . best practices for professionally developing its racial/ethnic faculty”¹⁸ and “I utilized ATS resources on race/ethnicity that were available to the institution . . .”¹⁹

Building informational capacity involves at least two realms, the individual and the institutional, and success in building such capacity is based on achieving success in both realms. Success can be defined in many ways (e.g., sense of feeling valued, personal satisfaction, knowledge gained, ability to support target groups, enhanced reputation of the school). For this cycle of work, success was operationalized by two items:

- **I was satisfied** with ATS programming related to providing information to enhance capacity to address issues related to race/ethnicity.²⁰

17 Mean = 2.96, on a 4-point scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree.

18 Mean = 2.37, same scale.

19 Mean = 2.36, same scale.

20 Mean = 2.91, same scale.

- **The institution . . . has increased in its capacity** to meet the needs of racial/ethnic students and employees.²¹

The first deals with the individual; the second, with the institution (although both capture reports from the individual participant).

In order to determine what aspects of ATS programming point to these indicators of success, we ran two multiple regressions to predict success. The first predicted individual satisfaction with a series of variables that included background variables (e.g., gender, race, faculty/administrator status), attendance at particular events, benefits from participation, and other variables.²² Table 4 shows the two variables that entered the regression equation as significant predictors. Individual success (or individual satisfaction) is best accounted for by participation that leads to personal learning and by benefitting from the institution's use of diversity best practices. Recall that the first item had the highest average response ("Agree")²³ in this set of questions; however, the second item had one of the lowest average responses (between "Agree" and "Disagree" but closer to the latter).²⁴ Though it is a significant predictor of success, participants indicated they hadn't benefited from the institution's diversity best practices.

Table 4 Predictors of Individual Satisfaction

Individual satisfaction is most closely related to:	
Increased understanding about the dynamics of race (e.g., related to power, racial/ethnic underrepresentation)	$\beta = .624$
Sense of benefiting from institution's best practices for diverse populations (e.g., related to employment issues, campus climate, cross-racial dialogue)	.398

In the second regression to determine what points to success, we attempted to predict increased institutional capacity for diversity with a number of independent variables, including background variables,

21 Mean = 2.73, same scale.

22 We ran a stepwise regression with mean substitution for missing data. The R-square at the final step was .624, indicating that collectively the independent variables predicted 62 percent of the variation in individual satisfaction. We did not include "ATS established appropriate goals" or "ATS utilized appropriate strategies" to avoid possible multicollinearity; no excluded variable tolerances dipped below .30. See Appendix A for full regression results.

23 $\mu = 2.96$, on a 1-4 scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree, S.D. = .908.

24 $\mu = 2.37$, same scale, S. D. = .761.

participation, perceptions about goals, and others.²⁵ Table 5 lists the two strongest predictors entering the equation.²⁶ Of the possible variables, these two were significant and best account for the perception that an institution has increased in its capacity for diversity. The first item was expected; using best practices for professional development is naturally related to the perceived capacity of an institution to meet the needs of its racial/ethnic faculty. The second item, however, was unexpected and highlights the relationship between the individual and an institution's success in this area. It is also the item with the lowest response (between "Agree" and "Disagree" but closer to the latter).²⁷ Although it is a significant predictor of institutional success (or increased institutional capacity), participants indicated they hadn't used the diversity resources at their institutions.

Table 5 Predictors of Increased institutional Capacity

Increased institutional capacity is most closely related to:	
Institution's use of best practices for professionally developing its racial/ethnic faculty	$\beta = .694$
Individual's use of ATS diversity resources available at the institution	.474

Discussion. Goals for this cycle of work included providing individual racial/ethnic constituents with information (knowledge about systemic realities related to race/ethnicity and strategies to cope with those realities) and providing institutions with diversity-related resources. The work of CORE in this cycle appears to have met this goal for building informational capacity, particularly for the individual constituent member. However, the data suggest some disconnect between institutional learning and its impact on the constituencies such learning is meant to support.

As stated above, building informational capacity requires both cultivating individual understanding and building institutional capacity. Individuals can learn all they have access to, but as has been the lived

25 Stepwise regression, with mean substitution for missing data. The R-square at the final step = .817. No excluded variable tolerances below .30, and no correlations above .85. See Appendix A for full regression results.

26 Three variables entered the equation as significant predictors at the final step. However, using the 10 percent rule of thumb for variables considered (no more than 10 percent of the total in the sample), we eliminated the third variable for discussion.

27 $\mu = 2.36$, same scale as above, S. D. = .727.

experience of members of non-dominant communities in theological education, that is often not enough. The *institution* must also build informational capacity in order for individuals, groups, and the institution to benefit from that learning.

Findings in this section suggest a gap between institutional success (or increased institutional capacity to support racial/ethnic constituents) and individual success (or satisfaction about the programming). Individual satisfaction is most closely related to a sense of personal learning about dynamics of race and a sense of benefiting from the institution's use of diversity best practices, but participants didn't feel they benefitted in this way. In addition, an institution is seen as increasing in its capacity to meet the needs of its racial/ethnic constituents when it appears to be using best practices for professionally developing its faculty of color and when constituents of color use diversity resources that are available to the institution, but participants indicated they didn't use such resources. A gap appears to exist between increased informational capacity by an institution and the impact of that capacity, particularly the benefits to racial/ethnic constituents.

What remains unclear for both individual learning and institutional capacity is why: Why did participants feel they had not benefitted from the institution's use of diversity best practices? Is an institution's use of diversity best practices enough, or are more systemic and comprehensive strategies needed in order that constituents of non-dominant groups sense some benefit? And why did participants not use the resources on race/ethnicity at their institutions? Were they the right resources? Are "best practices" resources what is needed, or are more scholarly resources needed in this context of theological education, resources that address theologies of diversity or theoretical treatments of race?

Cycle 3: Strategic capacity building

Findings. The two items with which respondents agreed most in this section had to do with ATS establishing appropriate goals²⁸ and using appropriate strategies to help schools with strategic diversity planning (mean = 3.05, same scale). Respondents agreed least with the item "The institution . . . has enjoyed a measure of success in preparing its students to minister in a

28 Mean = 3.03, 4-point school from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

multiracial world because of ATS (Preparing for 2040: Enhancing Capacity to Educate and Minister in a Multiracial World) programming”²⁹

A single item was used to operationalize the programming’s effectiveness in this cycle of work: “I witnessed some institutional change as my school participated in the Preparing for 2040 phase of ATS programming related to race and ethnicity.” The mean response for this item was 2.89.³⁰

Group mean responses were compared on this item to determine the salience of the respondent’s race in programming effectiveness. A comparison between white respondents (mean = 3.13) and respondents of color (mean = 2.62)³¹ showed the difference was not significant.³² However, when groups were adjusted, based on findings not presented in this article, analysis indicated there is a significant difference:³³ the non-underrepresented minority group’s mean was 3.18³⁴ and the underrepresented³⁵ minority group’s mean was 2.45. Responses by racial group differed significantly, with respect to witnessing institutional change from the Preparing for 2040 program: on average, white respondents and respondents of Asian descent felt (between agree and strongly agree) there had been institutional

29 Mean = 2.58, same scale.

30 On a 4-point scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree. $\mu = 2.89$, same scale as above, S.D. = .786.

31 μ (White) = 3.13, same scale as above, S.D. = .516; μ (Of Color) = 2.62, same scale, S.D. = .961.

32 $t(26) = 1.811$, $p = .05$, Cohen’s $D = .66$

33 $t(26) = 2.619$, $p < .05$, Cohen’s $D = .96$.

34 μ (non-URM) = 2.89, same scale as above, S.D. = .529; μ (URM) = 2.45, same scale, S.D. = .934.

35 The “underrepresented minority” group included respondents of African descent and Latino descent only. It is noted that the category has not historically been used in theological education. Group labels that use “minority” are inadequate and do not reflect the minoritized status such labels continue to perpetuate. In addition, the term “underrepresented” has not been used consistently to reflect that certain racial/ethnic groups—a term suggested by ATS’ Committee on Race and Ethnicity—such as Asian/Asian North American students, are over-represented in ATS schools, as compared to percentages in US higher education. In this report, we use “underrepresented minority,” in alignment with diversity literature in higher education, to refer to historically underrepresented groups, namely groups of African descent, Latino descent, and indigenous peoples. See, for example, Daryl G. Smith, *Diversity’s Promise for Higher Education: Making It Work*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015). Even so doing, we recognize that the labels remain complicated, as Asian/Asian North American faculty and administrators occupy a minoritized space in theological education, in both number and power.

change, while respondents of African and of Latin descent were between agreement and disagreement.

Skip logic was inadvertently not enabled for this item in this section, which allowed non-participants of the Preparing for 2040 program the opportunity to respond. The average response of participants of the 2040 program was 2.90 (on a 4-point scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree), and the average response of non-participants was 2.13 (same scale). The mean difference was statistically significant.³⁶ Preparing for 2040 participants felt they had witnessed institutional change at their schools, whereas non-participants felt they had not. It could be argued that disagreement was more a reflection that the institution had not participated than that the participant had not witnessed institutional change; however, it is an interesting finding that the views of participants and non-participants of the Preparing for 2040 program differed on this effectiveness item.

An open-ended item prompted respondents to name evidence of the institutional change they observed. These were coded for themes, four of which emerged: hiring practices, faculty/administration formation or training (ranging from diversity awareness training to providing safe spaces for difficult conversations), curricular changes (from systematic syllabus review to complete overhauls of curricula, all with an eye to be diversity inclusive), and structural changes (related to board actions, faculty evaluation/tenure, and adopting an institutional theological rationale for diversity). Table 6 lists examples of the type of institutional change reported on the open-ended item.

Table 6 Types of Institutional Change Reported from Preparing for 2040 Program

Type of Change	Implementation
Hiring practices	"Establishment of new policies to enable greater multiracial diversity in student recruitment and in all hiring (faculty, staff, and administration)"
Faculty/administration formation or training	"Faculty professional growth sessions with members of racially non-dominant communities"
Curricular changes	"Holding seminary chapel in congregations of color"
Structural changes	"Collaborating with the dean's office, faculty members led a new project . . . creating new spaces to have on-going and generative conversation on race."

36 $t(52) = -3.604$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $D = 1.12$.

Discussion. The main program of this cycle of work was Preparing for 2040. The goal of this program was to assist schools in constructing and implementing strategic diversity plans toward enhancing institutional capacity to educate students for ministry in a multiracial world. Plan foci included faculty culture, reframing teaching and learning, understanding race and ethnicity, and conflict resolution. The program involved schools working with diversity coaches identified from among ATS schools. According to survey self-report, both the goal and the strategies used were appropriate in this cycle.

Though causality cannot be claimed, there seems to be good indication that participation in the Preparing for 2040 program corresponds to institutional change. Those who participated in the program witnessed institutional change; those who did not participate did not see change. The types of change witnessed fall into four categories: hiring practices, faculty/administration formation or training, curricular changes, and structural changes.

Perception of impact, however, was mixed among those who had participated. On average, according to white respondents and respondents of Asian descent, there was institutional change related to the Preparing for 2040 programming. For respondents of African and Latina descent, however, institutional change was not as apparent. Reasons for the difference in perception remain unclear, though interpretive consultation focus group notes suggest ways forward:

Change for what racial/ethnic group? We need to collaborate with change management consultants/leaders inside and beyond higher education to build the capacities of institutional leaders to lead change within already stressed institutions and overextended leaders, with regard to mission, values, policies, and practices; board structures; and faculty and staff.

I strongly recommend [that we] shift our thinking on programming from a primacy on (a) acquiring knowledge or (b) analyzing situations (both of which are essential) to a primacy on (c) reconstructing our communities.

As we saw in the findings from the first cycle of work, perspectives vary by race. This leads us to consider what focuses would be appropriate for the future work of ATS around race/ethnicity. It appears that different

racial/ethnic groups benefit in different ways from institutional change around diversity issues. Why is this the case? And how might future work attend to appropriate focuses for *each* racial/ethnic group? In what ways could ATS learn from organizations that are already effectively addressing the needs of various racial/ethnic groups? And what might be learned from change management leaders in order to cultivate lasting missional change to the benefit of students and employees of color, as well as to the schools?

The Phase 3 consultation for students and recent alumni/ae provided some of the most useful outcomes, which were related to two primary question areas.³⁷

How have ATS schools attended to racial/ethnic persons? The first question sought participants' perceptions regarding how they were cared for as racial/ethnic students in the schools they attended. The conversation ranged widely, but a cursory content analysis of notes suggests that many of the perceptions could be grouped in one of four categories or themes. One category of perceptions was quite positive, indicating that some schools had done well with its care of racial/ethnic persons. ("The school has worked hard to institutionalize care"; "There is a tradition of hospitality"; "African American staff and faculty have paved the way for students.") A second category of perception indicated that, while some schools were working to care for racial/ethnic persons, there were lacunae the school appeared not to have noticed. ("Resources were present, but there were no explicit courses with race/ethnicity"; "the school was silent about racial/ethnic diversity, but the library collection made the difference"; "diversity should not just involve students, it should be reflected in the staff and faculty"; "the school gets you to the school, but . . . no real effort to include diverse perspectives in the classroom.") Still another category of perceptions suggested that schools need to give attention to issues related to educational or formational issues. (Schools "need to acknowledge the complexity of diversity"; "it is important for students to have space and time to reinvent their identity when arriving at the seminary"; "presence of mentors is important"; "can feel very lonely at these

37 Other discussion questions focused on issues such as "what ATS should do," and while this focus was extremely helpful in the consultation with faculty and administrators, students' and recent graduates' lack of familiarity with ATS patterns of work or limitations made these perceptions less helpful for future planning.

institutions.”) Still another category of responses reflected truly negative perceptions about how schools had cared for racial/ethnic persons. (“Schools protect their ‘brand,’ so underrepresented faculty who bring different methods and questions are not taken seriously”; “seminary not involved in the [racial/ethnic] community surrounding it”; “retaining students of color is a problem.”)

How have seminaries prepared students for future work? The second question area provided important perspectives about how well racial/ethnic students perceived themselves to be prepared for their future work. Once again, while perceptions varied, some common themes were evident. One theme identified what participants thought were the needed pedagogical practices for preparing students for future work. (“Need to listen to students’ views of new ways of doing ministry”; “connect education for ministry with actual career opportunities—tangible career path”; “importance of partnership with external programs like Hispanic Summer Institute”; “bringing multicultural education from the peripheral to focus.”)

Not only did this conference include a new group of participants (current students and recent graduates), but their discussions also pointed to a significant issue that had not been addressed in previous ATS work on race and ethnicity: educational effectiveness for racial/ethnic students. Educational efforts in the first 14 years of programming had explored issues such as institutional practices and culture, employment practices, nurture of racial/ethnic faculty, and white privilege and diversity. While the “2040” cycle of work had focused on strategic planning issues that in some schools had given attention to educational issues, ATS efforts had not directly addressed issues of pedagogy or educational effectiveness for racial/ethnic students.

Conclusions and recommendations

In reviewing CORE’s 14 years of work, ATS engaged the Committee on Race and Ethnicity and its consultants, 86 participants in the constituent survey, and consultations with faculty, staff, students, and recent graduates. Their shared wisdom points toward a number of conclusions and recommendations for future ATS work related to race and ethnicity. Some of the conclusions were expected, while others were surprising. The

evaluation also shed light on some issues that will require further clarification and study.

Flexibility

ATS programming in the first cycle of work, which successfully provided nurture and support for individuals, and in the third cycle, which used school teams and coaches, may have contributed more effectively to institutional change than did the informational approach of the second phase.

Efforts that contribute to institutional change require strategies that are iterative over time, that invite schools to work on specific issues, and that provide coaching and consulting along the way. ATS may need to develop certain “courses” on issues related to diversity that need to be learned by successive generations of leaders of ATS schools, but participants perceived this kind of education as being less effective at achieving institutional change than strategies that help schools work on certain issues in a coaching model.

ATS as an agent for change

Institutional change that is not demanded by external forces is difficult for ATS schools. The research suggests that a gap exists between increased informational capacity by an institution and the impact of that capacity, particularly to racial/ethnic constituents. The schools will need to change, however, with regard to their institutional capacity related to race and ethnicity. The rapid change in the North American population and the student bodies of ATS schools demands commensurate change in how schools do their work.

ATS can be an agent for change in the schools (1) by advocating on behalf of racial/ethnic issues to institutional leaders and boards, (2) by identifying and recommending change management consultants who can work with the schools, (3) by helping schools develop and enact practices and habits that contribute to institutional change, (4) by contributing to the capacity of faculty and institutional leaders to lead institutional change, and (5) through accreditation, holding schools accountable for the change they claim that they need to make or are in the process of making.

Cultivating curricular and educational capacity

Many schools are re-evaluating curriculum design and educational strategies. ATS can both advocate for and help schools to address issues of

race and ethnicity in curricula and educational practices. This effort would need to give special attention to faculty, especially majority faculty who often hold senior positions and influence faculty governance.

Resources

ATS should develop and disseminate resources to be used by schools as they encounter different institutional tasks related to race, ethnicity, and diversity. The resources, both print-based and online, would provide the basis for ongoing support for schools and their leaders.

The first of these resources would be a tool for defining an institution's "success" in its institutional and educational efforts related to race and ethnicity. What is the goal that theological schools should strive to achieve in this area? If a definition of success can be attained, ATS should develop and encourage the use of some form of audit instrument and process that would help schools determine where they are on a continuum from present reality to the goal as represented in the definition of success.

The second would be scholarly articles on issues of diversity in theological education. These would include presentations that have been made across the past 14 years of conferences as well as newly commissioned articles.

The third would be a set of "best practices" documents related to various diversity issues, such as identifying, employing, and retaining racial/ethnic faculty and administrators; strategic diversity planning and implementation; institutional support and effective educational strategies for racial/ethnic students; patterns of institutional connection with racial/ethnic communities in the school's own neighborhood, etc.

Strategic initiatives

ATS should work with an identified group of member schools on educational effectiveness with racial/ethnic students. Teams of faculty and students from participating schools would work with coaches and consultants over a two-year time period to identify educational issues of importance for each participating school and then develop strategies that address those issues. (The strategy would follow the one developed in the "Preparing for 2040" cycle of work.) This major effort would focus exclusively on educational issues with the goal of enhancing educational capacity with students of color and cultural competence of all students.

Collaborative relationships

ATS should engage activities to strengthen collaborative relationships with the Asociación para La Educación Teológica Hispana, the Forum for Theological Exploration, the Hispanic Summer Program, the Hispanic Theological Initiative, the In Trust Center for Theological Schools, Louisville Institute, The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning, and other entities with regard to overall systems of support and engagement for racial/ethnic seminary students, PhD students, faculty, administrative staff, and institutions committed to serving racial/ethnic constituencies.³⁸

Ultimately, all of these strategies should maximize effective engagement with issues of race and ethnicity, responding to an increasingly multiracial world and benefitting not only the member schools and their faculty, administrators, and students but also the communities of faith their graduates will one day serve.

Daniel Aleshire was Executive Director of The Association of Theological Schools until his retirement shortly before this article went to press. Deborah H. C. Gin is Director, Research and Faculty Development for The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Willie James Jennings is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale University Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut.

38 At the conclusion of the work that has been completed, it is appropriate to express gratitude to the members of the ATS professional staff who have guided this work for 14 years. Marsha Foster Boyd led almost all of the work described as the first cycle, William Myers led much of the work associated with the second cycle, and Janice Edwards-Armstrong led all of the work of the third cycle and supported the conferences involved in this evaluation. Deborah Gin conducted the survey research for this evaluation. Stephen Graham has provided oversight and support for all the areas of ATS leadership education for the past several years. In addition to the participation of ATS director-level staff members, a large number of racial/ethnic faculty members and administrators have served on the Committee on Race and Ethnicity, providing leadership and guidance to the entire effort, and a still larger number have made presentations, planned conferences, led groups, provided coaching and consultations, and in other ways, made this work possible. All of this work has been supported by grants from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Appendix A

Stepwise Regression—Prediction of Individual Satisfaction

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig.t</u>
Increased Understanding about Dynamics of Race	.624	4.603	5.966
Benefit from Institution's Best Practices for Diversity	.398	2.933	.000

Dependent Variable = I was satisfied with ATS programming related to providing information to enhance capacity to address issues related to race/ethnicity.

R = .789

R² = .623

F = 17.371

Sig. F < .001

N = 24

Stepwise Regression—Prediction of Increased Institutional Capacity

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig.t</u>
Institution Professionally Developed R/E Faculty	.694	6.802	.000
I Utilized Diversity Resources Available at Institution	.474	4.743	.000
Faculty	.292	2.939	.008

Dependent Variable = The institution where I was faculty/administrator has increased in its capacity to meet the needs of racial ethnic students and employees.

R = .904

R² = .817

F = 29.843

Sig. F < .001

N = 24

The ATS Educational Models and Practices Project: Wide-ranging Research to Address Challenges and Embrace Opportunities for Theological Schools in North America

Stephen R. Graham

The Association of Theological Schools

ABSTRACT: The Educational Models and Practices in Theological Education project is the most comprehensive such effort ever undertaken by the Association. In its initial work, the multifaceted project has involved more than 80 percent of member schools generating a significant amount of data about the work of the schools. This article is an initial report of the project's research, presenting and analyzing data from surveys of academic deans and program directors, who reported on their schools' work to engage a range of challenges and opportunities.

In 2007, as I was pondering the call to join the ATS staff, Executive Director Daniel Aleshire spoke to me about some of the changes underway in theological education. I remember clearly his statement that for decades the unifying center of theological education had been an *educational* center. The schools were different in so many ways, but they shared certain assumptions about theological education that had united them in common purpose.

Dan said that the educational center was shifting and that the work of ATS in the coming years would be to collaborate with the schools to understand the changes, to adapt to new realities, and to embrace new educational ways appropriate to changing times and conditions. I had experienced a version of those changes during my service as chief academic officer at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. I was intrigued and excited about the possibility of assisting in that challenging

and potentially fruitful work with the broad range of schools within the Association, and I decided to come to ATS.

The Educational Models and Practices project is part of the Association's response to those challenges and hopefully fruitful opportunities for theological schools. Schools have experienced significant changes in recent decades, to the church, in higher education, in the larger society, and in the students they educate and form for religious leadership.

In some ways, the Educational Models and Practices project can be viewed as a large and varied research project driven by broad questions about the work of graduate theological schools in North America. Some of these questions shaped the initial work of the project. The first led to the surveys reported in this article. An appendix gives the additional questions and the forthcoming work to address them.

The Association gathers information about what the schools are doing in developing degree programs, online programs, and extension

“*In some ways, the Educational Models and Practices project can be viewed as a large and varied research project driven by broad questions about the work of graduate theological schools in North America.*

sites, for example, through annual reporting, but what are the schools doing in addition to these efforts? What are some of the schools' educational efforts that do not show up in the annual reports? Why did the schools engage in this work? How effective has it been?

To find out, the project launched a comprehensive “mapping” study to gather information about educational activities in the schools, to convene peer groups to analyze particular educational models and practices, and to share all that is learned across the membership.

The mapping survey included two phases: a survey of academic deans to gather information about educational activities not included in the annual reports and a survey of program officers to gather more detailed information about particular educational models and practices.

Mapping survey—academic deans

Association staff knew that the schools were busy and working hard to fulfill their missions. We knew that professional MA degrees had increased in recent years to the point that the 273 ATS member schools now offer more than 250 different professional MA degrees.¹ But what were the schools doing in addition to those degree programs?

The initial survey, sent to chief academic officers of all ATS schools, received responses from more than 80 percent of the deans.² The survey asked the deans to report on a wide range of possible activities and gave them an opportunity to add other curricular innovations as well.

It included question sets in six categories: course delivery methods, class schedule or academic calendar modifications, educational partners, alternative tuition/fee structures, programs serving particular constituencies, and curricular innovation. Possible responses included “currently doing,” “about to implement,” “seriously considering,” and “formerly, not now.” The deans responded that collectively their schools were involved in hundreds of such activities and programs beyond their degree offerings.

Obviously, these activities range from relatively minor adjustments to major initiatives. Each, however, requires development, implementation, and administration at some level. Each of these modifications requires considerable energy and time: from faculty (revising courses and developing new rhythms of work), from student services (providing registration, support services, and worship), and from other institutional resources. Most of these activities are good, and many are relatively low cost in themselves, but they may absorb resources that *might* be better utilized elsewhere, perhaps collectively exhausting resources that could be used to make the larger *adaptive* changes the schools need.³

1. Of course, many of those programs are very similar in content, but their differences in name reveal differences of emphasis or language that reflect different approaches and values.

2. Except for some over-representation of larger schools and under-representation of small schools, responding schools provided a strongly representative sample of the full ATS membership. See Appendix 1.

3. The language of “adaptive” change comes from Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

The categories with selected results

Course-delivery methods. The survey suggested a range of course delivery examples, including fully or partially online courses, fully online degree programs, extension sites, forms of contextual education, and other methods.

Sixty-four percent of the respondents said their school currently offered fully or partially online courses. Twenty percent noted that they offered fully online degree programs, with an additional 28 percent seriously considering or about to implement such programs. If all of those schools follow through, almost half of the membership would offer fully online degrees.⁴ Of the 20 percent currently offering fully online degrees, evangelical Protestant schools are a significant majority (70 percent), and two-thirds of all the schools offering fully online degrees are freestanding.

One third of the responding schools have extension sites, with another 11 percent seriously considering or about to open sites. More than half of the responding schools are involved with “contextual education.”⁵

Class schedule or academic calendar modifications. Schools are also developing a range of class scheduling options, with many schools offering a broad variety in order to serve the needs of students. Most include the new options along with existing patterns, but some schools have moved to offer the new patterns as their only model. The deans were asked to describe their innovations in this area, and the following examples were provided: intensive course scheduling, year-round study, weekend classes, evening classes, block scheduling, and other methods.

More than half of the responding schools currently offer block scheduling, and more than 80 percent of the schools with a majority of “local commuter” students accommodate those students by offering block scheduling. Almost one-fourth of the responding schools said they were offering their courses *exclusively* through block scheduling. Of those schools for whom a majority of students are “non-local commuters,” 85 percent offer

4. Schools that have an approved comprehensive distance education program are allowed to offer the academic Master of Arts degree without additional action. Approval by the Board of Commissioners is required for those wishing to offer the professional master’s or the Master of Divinity degrees fully online.

5. “Contextual education” was not defined by the survey, but two examples were listed: educational programming “offered in a congregational setting,” and education through “immersion courses.”

intensive course scheduling.⁶ Schools have used scheduling options both to accommodate the requests and needs of existing students and to attract additional students.

Educational partners. Schools are also involved in a wide variety of “collaborations for educational purposes.” Examples provided for the deans included partnerships with church or denomination, institutions from other religious traditions, colleges or universities, other theological school(s), institutes or centers, international partners, or other educational partners. Table 1 lists the types of institutions with whom schools are “currently doing” collaborations, as well as those with whom they are “seriously considering” and “about to implement” collaborations. While it is not surprising that such a large number of schools work educationally with church or denominational partners, nor that nearly half of those responding have arrangements with colleges and universities, it is striking how many schools currently have international partners and the additional numbers that are seriously considering or about to implement such partnerships. The survey revealed remarkable consistency of church or denominational partnerships across the three ecclesial families within ATS, with three-fourths of schools from each family having such partnerships.

Table 1 Partnerships

Partnership with:	Currently Doing	Seriously Considering	About to Implement
Church/denomination	76%	7%	4%
College/university	47%	10%	4%
Other theological school	35%	11%	2%
Institute/center	31%	10%	4%
International partner	28%	20%	2%
Other religious tradition	19%	8%	1%

Mainline Protestant schools are much more likely (52 percent) to have partnerships with other theological schools than are either Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools (39 percent) or evangelical Protestant schools (18 percent). Schools in Canada are significantly more likely to have

6. “Local commuter” and “non-local commuter,” along with “live on or adjacent to campus,” were categories in a question about the residential character of the student body.

partnerships with a college or university (72 percent) than are schools in the United States (42 percent).

Alternative tuition/fee structures. The costs of pursuing a theological education have significant impact on the ability of schools to provide and the ability of students to access educational programming, even though those costs are not exclusively attributable to education. The survey asked deans to identify “alternative tuition/fee structures” being used in their schools, including these examples: fully funded degree programs, loan forgiveness, local church subsidy, tuition charge by program (rather than by credit hour), tuition cap/reduction for each subsequent year, and other structures. Interestingly, in addition to the approaches being tried by the schools, many responses identified approaches that they had tried but discontinued. By far the most common funding practice of those listed was “local church subsidy,” being used by more than 40 percent of respondents. Nineteen percent said they had implemented “tuition charge by program” rather than charges per term or per course. Ten percent provided fully funded degree programs (tuition funded for all students in the specific program), but 11 percent said that they formerly offered full funding but had discontinued the practice. Another 12 percent responded that they were seriously considering or about to implement full funding. If they all follow through, about one in five ATS schools would offer full tuition funding for students in certain degree programs. Similarly, nearly equal numbers of schools reported that they had implemented a tuition cap (18) as those reporting that had abandoned that practice (16). Three percent offered some form of loan forgiveness, but three times that many responded that they once offered loan forgiveness, but no longer do so.

Programs serving particular constituencies. The survey asked whether the schools had developed programs to serve particular constituencies, giving as examples ethnic-specific cohorts, women students, age-specific cohorts, students with distinctive vocational goals, alumni/ae, laity, students without baccalaureate degrees, or underserved populations. The responding deans listed 20 different groups for whom their schools had developed programs, 86 of them to serve particular racial/ethnic constituencies. Nearly 40 percent of those 86 programs were created to serve Latino/a constituencies, about one-fourth of the programs were to serve Asian/Asian North American populations, and just under 20 percent were to serve African American constituencies.

Additionally, 30 programs are in place or being developed to serve laity and 29 for those with distinctive vocations.

Curricular innovation. The survey asked the deans to list “other curricular developments” and gave a somewhat lengthy list of examples: change in total degree program hours, bachelor’s-to-master’s combination, dual/joint degree, non-degree programs, competency-based education, contextual education, continuing education/non-credit courses, expanded internships, post-MDiv internships, synchronous video teaching, team teaching, integrative courses, and other curricular innovations.

Responses reflected the wide variety of activities underway and the busyness of most schools. Seventy-three schools (nearly one-third of those responding) offer, are seriously considering, or are about to implement dual/joint degree programs in collaboration with other institutions or departments. Ten percent of the responding schools offer accelerated bachelor’s-to-master’s degree programs, with another 11 percent seriously considering or about to implement such programs. Roughly 20 percent of the respondents were involved with at least one of the following: reduction of program hours, certificate programs, contextual education, continuing education, or technologically-enhanced innovations. Ten percent of the schools noted team teaching in this context of curricular innovation.

Deans also identified their schools’ “most effective” innovative efforts. The responses were spread across a large number of developments from particular partnerships to programs for particular constituencies to non-degree programs. The most commonly named programs clustered around the uses of educational technology. Eleven percent named fully online courses, with another 2 percent naming partly online courses and 4 percent citing fully online programs. Nine percent described technologically-enhanced programming, normally using synchronous video. Somewhat smaller numbers of respondents named intensive courses, partnerships with churches or denominations, programs for racial/ethnic students, contextual education, team teaching, and dual or joint degree programs as their most successful innovative ventures.

Demographics, educational character, and process of innovation. A final set of questions probed general questions about the school’s demographic profile, educational character, and process of innovation.

While understanding that definitions of “formation” can be remarkably fluid and varied, the survey asked the deans to rank their schools’ emphases on four areas of formation, drawn from the 2005 version of the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *Program for Priestly Formation* and described as follows:

Human formation

(e.g., character, integrity, sense of justice, personal relationships)

Intellectual formation

(e.g., scholarship, research, knowledge)

Pastoral/professional formation

(e.g., preaching, pastoral care)

Spiritual formation

(e.g., personal devotion, spiritual disciplines)

The question assumed “the importance and interrelated nature of all four,” but deans were asked to rank them from “most emphasized” to “least emphasized” in their institutions. Nearly equal numbers of deans identified “intellectual formation” (37 percent) and “pastoral formation” (34 percent) as the school’s most emphasized areas of formation. Smaller but significant numbers of schools said their “most emphasized” were “spiritual” (15 percent) and “human” (14 percent) formation. While these responses are not necessarily surprising, the spread highlights the differences of self-understanding and purpose among ATS schools.

Since much of the attention of this survey was on assessing the creativity of schools, the survey asked the deans to indicate, from the following list of groups, both the group primarily responsible to *initiate* innovation in the school and the group primarily responsible to *develop and implement* innovations:

- Administration-academic/educational
- Administration-institutional
- Board/trustees
- Church or denomination
- Existing committee (e.g., finance committee)
- Faculty
- Larger university
- Students and/or alumni/ae

Nearly 60 percent of the deans responded that academic administration initiated innovative ideas, while almost 30 percent said faculty put forward innovative ideas. Eleven percent cited institutional administration

as the source of innovative ideas. It is significant that academic administrators and faculty are directly responsible for the creative ideas schools are pursuing. Certainly there are outside pressures urging the creation of the ideas, but the ideas themselves are coming from within the academic and educational heart of institutions.

Development of the ideas for educational programs is necessarily collaborative work; three-fourths of the deans responded that academic administrators “often” lead the way, and 60 percent cited faculty as “often” charged with developing the programs. Almost 30 percent said the institutional administration was involved in the development, and another 14 percent utilized task forces that included representatives from multiple constituent groups.⁷

From widespread reports, it was clear that for many schools the pattern of residential theological education had changed, with more students commuting to campus, many students utilizing online programs, and fewer living on campus. Data from the survey confirmed that belief. Deans responded to two questions about the residential character of their students and how students access the school’s educational offerings. The survey asked for percentages of students who are “local commuter,” who are “non-local commuter,” and “who live on/adjacent to campus.” It also asked for proportions of students who take courses, “on campus,” “off campus (at extension sites),” and “online (through distance education).”

Respondents categorized more than half of the students as “local commuters,” with about a quarter “living on or adjacent to campus” and another quarter being “non-local commuters.” These numbers reflect an

“It is significant that academic administrators and faculty are directly responsible for the creative ideas schools are pursuing. Certainly there are outside pressures urging the creation of the ideas, but the ideas themselves are coming from within the academic and educational heart of institutions.”

7. This question allowed multiple answers, repeating the list of groups above and adding “Existing committee” and “Task force.” Possible responses about a group’s involvement were “Never,” “Seldom,” “Sometimes,” and “Often.”

array of significant changes in student demographics, academic programming, uses of educational technologies, the character of faculty work, adaptations to student services, and use of facilities, as schools adapt to the needs of those they serve and find the best ways to serve them.

Despite the dramatically changed location of students in relation to the school's campus, the great majority of students continue to take at least some of their classes on campus. Eighty-five percent of deans responded that their students take "most" or "all" of their courses on the school's main campus. Nearly five percent take "all" of their classes online, and 13 percent take "most" of their classes via the online format. Twenty percent take "none" of their classes online, and another 45 percent take "a few" online classes. Only 2 percent take "most" or "all" of their classes through extension sites, while more than half take no classes through those sites.

Finally, the survey asked the deans about the location of their school. Fifty-two percent said that their school is in an urban location, 35 percent are suburban, and 12 percent are rural.

Mapping survey—program directors

The second phase of the mapping survey asked program directors the following questions:

- For what main purpose(s) did your school engage in this development?
- What particular student audience or constituency was this development meant to target?
- How effective has the development been?
- Which of the following challenges has the school encountered?
- Was a program implemented and discontinued? Why?
- What unexpected positive outcomes emerged from the development?

The survey also asked program directors to give a narrative description of their program, describing seven particular characteristics.⁸

Because of the extremely broad scope of the survey and the number of programs about which the directors reported, this summary will be restricted to five types of programs: contextual education, fully online

8. Overall, the sample of respondents was satisfactory and strongly representative of the ATS community of schools. See Appendix 3.

degree programs, partnerships with churches and denominations, partnerships with international partners, and programs for those with distinctive vocations. Across those five types of programs, this report will analyze five areas of response: purposes, effectiveness, challenges, discontinued programs, and unexpected positive outcomes.

Purposes

The survey asked *why* the schools are doing what they are doing with particular developments of educational models and practices. Across all programs, schools’ responses emphasized the need to increase enrollment and attend to the needs of constituencies current and new. Across the program types, “to recruit students” and “reach a new constituency” consistently appeared as the most frequent responses. “Responding to student requests” was particularly important for those schools modifying course-delivery methods and course schedules. Schools with partnerships and programs for particular constituencies highlighted their responsiveness to requests from church/denomination/community as well as their attempts to increase diversity within their schools. As some traditional programs and constituent numbers decline, schools are hard at work to fulfill their missions by reaching new audiences.

Table 2 Purposes of new programs

Purposes	Percentage of respondents
To reach a new constituency	20.1
To recruit students	18.7
To respond to student requests	14.4
To respond to requests from church/denomination/community	12.2

Effectiveness

The survey asked program directors to assess the effectiveness of their programs with respect to eight possible areas of impact:

1. Improved school’s financial picture
2. Lowered costs to students
3. Enrollment growth
4. Greater access for prospective students
5. Strengthened school’s reputation or increased awareness of school

6. Clarification of school's mission/identity/charism
7. Enhanced student learning (educational effectiveness)
8. Facilitated faculty's teaching

Program directors provided effectiveness ratings on these eight measures as "very ineffective," "ineffective," "effective," or "very effective." Because of the very large number and categories of responses, this report will note four measures that emerged as particularly significant related to overall program effectiveness: enhanced student learning, improved the school's financial picture, clarified the school's mission/identity/charism, and enrollment growth.

Two educational practices stood out as most effectively enhancing student learning: contextual education and team teaching. Respondents believed that their school's reputation was enhanced and its mission and identity were strengthened through partnerships with institutes and international partners, through the development of integrative courses, and through continuing education programming. The program directors attributed enrollment growth to a range of program types, including fully online degree programs, fully funded degree programs, programs for particular constituencies, and competency-based education. These programs also were effective in providing students greater access to theological studies.

The survey revealed no "standout" program for improving the schools' financial picture. Effective approaches included curriculum development (specialized degrees and integrative courses), fully online degree programs, fully funded degree programs, contextual education, an academic calendar enabling year-round study, programs designed for particular constituencies (chaplains and permanent deacons), and subsidies from local congregations. This finding reinforces the assumption that there is not a "silver bullet" solution to the financial challenges of theological schools. Schools have implemented a broad range of educational models and practices that attend to financial concerns, but to date no single approach has emerged that fully addresses the challenge.

When segregated according to ecclesial family, the responses reveal that evangelical Protestant schools have found international partnerships and curricular innovations that utilize educational technologies to be effective, while mainline Protestant schools have implemented effective programs for racial/ethnic constituencies, and Roman Catholic and

Orthodox schools have developed effective programs for the training of permanent deacons. While these examples reveal some variations in assessments of effectiveness when the data are divided according to the schools' ecclesial families, perhaps the most important finding is that across *all* the ecclesial families the program directors said that contextual education was educationally effective, it strengthened the school's reputation and clarified its mission, and it helped improve the school's financial picture.

While it is important to think about understandings of "effectiveness" that strike a balance between missional values and institutional finances, in general there appears to be a heavier emphasis among the schools on fulfilling their missions than on the financial implications of educational activities and programs. That is, effectiveness was regularly rated more highly for missional aspects of programming than for the impact of the activity or program on the school's financial situation, the effect of cost to students, or, more particularly, the impact on levels of student educational debt. Certainly schools must be about mission, including strengthening their reputation and public perception, but schools must also attend to the financial bottom line.

According to the respondents, three programs that attend to *both* mission and finance most effectively are competency-based education, contextual education, and curricular innovation using integrative courses. Interestingly, each of these educational forms implies closer relations between schools and communities of faith as well as perhaps a blurring of disciplinary boundaries within schools. These three also have high ratings on effective student learning.

Challenges

The survey of program directors asked about the challenges their schools faced as they developed and implemented the particular programs in question. The survey listed nine potential challenges:

1. Insufficient financial resources to make needed changes
2. Insufficient staff/human resources to invest in this program
3. Lack of technological or physical resources
4. Lack of clear understanding of what is needed among target constituency(ies)
5. Lack of adequate enrollment
6. Lack of adequate student preparation prior to admission

7. Lack of sufficient planning
8. Inability/unwillingness of faculty to be agile/adaptive
9. Restrictions in the standards of accreditation

An “other” category allowed respondents to name challenges not included on the list.

Program directors consistently named insufficient human and financial resources (24 and 16 percent respectively) as the most significant challenges faced by their programs. Another 10 percent named lack of adequate technical resources as a challenge. These are obviously related to one another and confirm the financial and resource challenges faced by schools across the Association. Twelve percent noted “lack of clear understanding of what is needed among target constituency(ies)” as a significant challenge, and another 9 percent named “lack of enrollment.” These are particularly notable when related to the most common purposes of innovative programming, to increase enrollment and meet the needs of students and educational partners. Activity is widespread, but objectives may not always be clear.⁹

Somewhat surprisingly, given widespread understandings and anecdote-based assumptions, in most program areas respondents did *not* regard faculty nor the ATS Standards of Accreditation as significant impediments to their work of innovation, with both being named by fewer than 5 percent of the respondents. “Inability/unwillingness of faculty to be agile/adaptive” and “restrictions in the standards of accreditation,” *did* appear as a challenge (named by 13 percent of respondents) when discussing course delivery, particularly in online programs. Since the responses came from program directors about programs already underway, they may not have viewed the standards as much as a hindrance as would those seeking to implement new programs. Generally, though, the leaders of ATS schools view revising the standards as a high priority.¹⁰

9. An important next part of the Educational Models and Practices project will gather more data about graduates from ATS schools and will help schools understand better their “target constituencies.”

10. In a recent survey of the membership about priorities for new executive leadership at ATS, respondents named “revision of the ATS Standards of Accreditation” as one of the highest priorities for the new leader.

The challenges faced varied somewhat by the nature of the particular program. For example, while in many schools faculty are remarkably engaged in developing new educational models and practices, faculty resistance appears greatest in those programs that require new ways of teaching and unfamiliar technologies, such as online courses and those programs using synchronous video.

Also, while “restrictions in standards of accrediting” was lowest rated overall in the list of challenges, the standards were named as a challenge for educational models that push against a number of traditional paradigms, such as educational programming based on credit-hours, assumptions about the values of residential theological education, faculty qualifications and roles, or other educational structures. Low enrollment was a significant challenge for a number of programs, and as might be expected, lack of student preparation was a particular challenge for those programs serving students without bachelor’s degrees.

Table 3 Challenges by ecclesial family

Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic
Human Resources	Human Resources	Human Resources
Financial Resources	Understanding Target	Technological Resources
Understanding Target	Financial Resources	Financial Resources
Enrollment	Enrollment	Enrollment
Faculty Resistance	Technological Resources	Understanding Target
Accrediting Standards	Faculty Resistance	Faculty Resistance
Technological Resources	Sufficient Planning	Student Preparation
Student Preparation	Student Preparation	Sufficient Planning
Sufficient Planning	Accrediting Standards	Accrediting Standards

When categorized according to *ecclesial family* of the school, the top challenges are remarkably consistent. Given their more entrepreneurial character, evangelical Protestant schools found the Standards of Accreditation somewhat more restrictive than did either mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools. Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools were less challenged by understanding their target audience but more challenged by lack of sufficient technological resources. Table 3 lists challenges from most- to least-named by the three ecclesial families of ATS schools (with significant differences in bold type).

The survey also revealed some variation in challenges faced according to *school size*. Lack of sufficient human resources was named as the

top challenge for schools of all sizes, but the challenge of low enrollment increased in significance as the size of the school decreased. Conversely, smaller schools experienced less faculty resistance than schools of other sizes.

The largest schools experienced greater faculty resistance and slightly less confidence about clearly understanding their target audiences. Table 4 records challenges by school size in the order in which they were ranked, from most- to least-named, by the respondents from those schools.

Table 4 Challenges by school size

Small	Mid	Large	Largest
Human Resources	Human Resources	Human Resources	Human Resources
Enrollment	Financial Resources	Financial Resources	Understanding Target
Understanding Target	Enrollment	Understanding Target	Faculty Resistance
Financial Resources	Understanding Target	Enrollment	Financial Resources
Technological Resources	Technological Resources	Technological Resources	Technological Resources
Sufficient Planning	Faculty Resistance	Faculty Resistance	Enrollment
Accrediting Standards	Sufficient Planning	Student Preparation	Student Preparation
Student Preparation	Student Preparation	Sufficient Planning	Accrediting Standards
Faculty Resistance	Accrediting Standards	Accrediting Standards	Sufficient Planning

Challenges also differ based on the *school structure*, whether freestanding or embedded/affiliated with a college or university. Again, while lack of sufficient human resources heads the list for both types of institutions, lack of adequate financial and technological resources are somewhat more significant problems for freestanding schools than for those embedded or affiliated with a larger college or university system. “Lack of adequate student preparation” emerges as a more significant issue in embedded/affiliated schools than in those that are freestanding.

Table 5 Challenges by school structure

Freestanding	Embedded
Human Resources	Human Resources
Financial Resources	Understanding Target
Understanding Target	Enrollment
Enrollment	Financial Resources
Technological Resources	Faculty Resistance
Faculty Resistance	Student Preparation
Accrediting Standards	Technological Resources
Sufficient Planning	Sufficient Planning
Student Preparation	Accrediting Standards

Discontinued programs

While programs in theological schools are notoriously hard to kill, schools reported ending a number of programs. Most commonly named were extension sites (32 schools) and weekend courses (22 schools). After experimenting with particular funding models, a number of schools ended fully funded degree programs (23 schools), loan forgiveness programs (21 schools), and plans that charge tuition by program rather than credit hour (21 schools). Interestingly, 22 schools currently have fully funded degree programs, and another 27 are “seriously considering” or “about to implement” such programs. If all of those schools follow through, almost a fifth of the schools in the Association would offer fully funded programs.

Schools also ended partnerships with international partners (17 schools), colleges and universities (16 schools), and other theological schools (15 schools).

Table 6 Top four reasons for discontinuing programs

Reason for discontinuing program	Percentage of respondents
Lack of adequate enrollment	28
Insufficient human/staff resources	19
Insufficient financial resources	17
Lack of clear understanding of target audience	15

Unexpected positive outcomes

Among the positive outcomes that program directors had not anticipated in pursuing new program developments, the most common was the way those innovations had required attention to pedagogical matters such as adaptation to adult-learning approaches that ended up benefitting on-campus students as well as those studying online. Other respondents noted the enhanced relationships with denominations and congregations that flowed from educational partnerships and extended to ordination processes and donor relationships. International partnerships both provided benefit to students and faculty from other countries and enhanced the global understanding and cultural sensitivity of students and faculty from the ATS schools.

This report provides a snapshot of some of the things being learned through the Educational Models and Practices project. Over the coming months, the Association will continue to analyze the data and report what

is being learned through a variety of means, including meetings and a variety of print and digital publications.

Concluding reflections

There is a lot in the media about crises facing theological schools and their shortcomings. It would be foolish to underestimate the extent or depth of the challenges faced by theological schools. Those serving in the schools know them too well for anyone to risk credibility by downplaying them.

The staff at ATS, however, are *greatly* encouraged by our interactions with a large number of people in the schools. The challenges are real, but graduate theological schools in North America have been blessed with abundant resources. It is easy to forget those resources in times that reveal so starkly what is lacking.

The schools are led and staffed by a truly remarkable group of **people**:

- Faculty who bring outstanding training and intellectual power, dedication, passion for their work, and a deep love for students
- Administrators and staff who serve with commitment and skill
- Boards of dedicated, skilled people serving out of gratitude, not self-interest
- Donors who support the work generously
- Partners in education, including congregations and denominations, colleges and universities, churches and schools outside North America, volunteers who bring various gifts to the work, and a growing array of institutions created and dedicated to the support of theological schools

The schools are blessed by **diversities** that bring richness and strength:

- People from different backgrounds, cultures, theological perspectives, gifts, and passions, with a willingness to confront tough issues and speak honestly with one another
- Schools that range across ecclesial families, types and sizes, emphases, and gifts
- New member schools who bring vitality and new perspectives to the conversation
- A range of educational models and practices

The schools and their people give witness to a remarkably collaborative spirit and willingness to share with one another. As this report shows, they are already engaged in an amazing amount and array of work that will inform the common task. They are served by an accrediting agency whose *primary* attitude is aspirational. The heartbeat of ATS accreditation is to help *every* school become the best it can be, including by being open to innovative ideas, according to each school's distinctive mission. Philanthropic organizations that affirm the importance of theological education and the work done by theological educators have provided generous and faithful support for decades.

And finally, but certainly not least, the schools serve the mission of a God of grace and provision whose work this is and in whom the whole enterprise consists. This God has called people to service to engage the unique challenges and opportunities of this time.

At the conclusion of his book, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools*, Daniel Aleshire reflects on John 3 with the text from the King James Version of the Bible his parents had given him as a boy: "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" ¹¹

Aleshire recalls that he struggled to understand the verse. Even after removing the "eths," its meaning remained a mystery. After decades of work in theological education, Aleshire reflected, "I have discovered that my not understanding was, in some ways, an accurate understanding. God's presence, like the wind, does not reveal its origin or destination; its movement can be felt, and its effect experienced, but the ways of God are, from beginning to end, mysterious. The God of ages past is the God of ages to come. The wind will blow." ¹²

God is at work and will continue to be at work among us, calling people into communities of faith and God's own delightful and surprising variety of ways of living and serving. God's people will need leaders, and many of those leaders need the education and formation that is best provided by ATS schools.

11. Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 172.

12. Ibid.

As Aleshire concludes, “The Spirit of God moves, and we do not know ‘whence it cometh or whither it goeth,’ but we can be confident that God will be up to something, working out God’s purposes, calling into being what those purposes require for any age.”¹³

Much has been discovered, and much more remains to be explored. The schools are hard at work, and opportunities for new and effective work are there to be grasped.

Stephen R. Graham is Senior Director of Programs and Services for The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

13. Ibid.

Appendix 1
Educational Models and Practices Mapping Survey
Part 1 – Participating Academic Deans

	<u>ATS Membership</u>
N = 226 (83% response rate)	271 (2015)
Size of school:	
• Small (1–75 head count) = 45 schools (20%)	40%
• Mid (76–150 head count) = 63 schools (28%)	30%
• Large (151–300 head count) = 67 schools (30%)	15%
• Largest (301+ head count) = 51 schools (23%)	15%
Ecclesial family of school:	
• Evangelical Protestant = 46%	45%
• Mainline Protestant = 35%	33%
• Roman Catholic/Orthodox = 19%	22%
Denominationally affiliated:	
• Denominational = 61%	55%
• Independent = 20%	23%
• Roman Catholic/Orthodox = 19%	22%
Country of school:	
• Canada = 14%	15%
• United States = 86%	85%
Embedded/affiliated and freestanding schools:	
• Embedded/Affiliated = 34%	35%
• Freestanding = 66%	65%

Appendix 2

Educational Models and Practices Mapping Survey, Part 1—Academic Deans' Responses

	Formerly, not now	Currently doing	Currently doing some	Currently doing exclusively	Seriously considering	About to do/ implement	Grand Total
Course Delivery							
Fully Online Courses	11	140			19	11	181
Partly Online Courses	7	147			25	8	187
Fully Online Programs	15	46			49	14	124
Extension Site	34	74			16	9	133
Contextual Education	11	118			34	4	167
Other Delivery	1	22			5	4	32
Partnerships							
Church, Denomination	5	172			15	8	200
Other Religious Body	11	42			19	3	75
College or University	15	107			22	9	153
Other Theological School	15	79			25	5	124
Institute	12	70			22	8	112
International	17	63			45	5	130
Other Partner	7			1	1	9	
Funding							
Fully Funded Degree	24	22			22	5	73
Loan Forgiveness	22	7			7	3	39
Local Church Subsidy	13	92			11	2	118
Tuition Per Program	22	43			16	4	85
Tuition Cap	16	18			14		48
Other Tuition	2	12				1	15
Schedule							
Intensive	5		154	22	11	4	196
Year Round	13		80	18	19	1	131
Weekend	22		96	10	21	3	152
Evening	9		154	31	5	2	201
Block	9		120	54	3	1	187
Other Schedule		7		2		9	

Programs for Particular Constituencies

Responses

	Formerly, not now	Currently doing	Seriously considering	About to do/ implement	Grand Total
Constituency					
Alumni/ae		9	1	5	15
Chaplains		7	1		8
Denomination	1	9		1	11
Diaconate		15			15
Distinctive vocation		24	3	2	29
Gender		19	2	2	23
Global	2	13	3	1	19
Intentional Community		1	1	1	3
Interreligious	1	9		2	12
Laity		25	4	1	30
LGBTQ		1		1	2
Missionaries		1			1
Students without BA	1	11	2		14
Public Theology		4		1	5
Racial/Ethnic	3	65	7	11	86
Religious Orders		1			1
Rural		2		1	3
Seminarian Couples		1			1
Underserved (Prison, Disability)		5	2		7
Urban	1	13	2	1	17
Youth	1	4	2		7

Curricular Innovations

Responses

	Formerly, not now	Currently doing	Seriously considering	About to do/ implement	Grand Total
Curricular Innovations					
Accelerated	2	22	14	10	48
Certificate Program	2	32	3	5	42
Change in hours	3	22	8	8	41
Competency-based		6	5	1	12
Contextual Ed		34	6	4	44
Continuing Ed	3	33	4	2	42
Dual/Joint Degree		56	13	4	73
Expanded internship		3		2	5
Integrative		14		6	20
Non-degree	1	27	1	1	30
Post-MDiv internship		1		1	2
Reduced Core		1		1	2
Specialized degree		12		2	14
Team teaching		24	2	1	27
Technology	3	31	2	6	42
Unique, Core Course Model		1			1
Unique, All MA's				1	1
Unique, Dual-Track Academic MA				1	1
Unique, Required Courses in Contextual Factors				1	1

Appendix 3
Educational Models and Practices Mapping Survey
Part 2—Program Directors’ Responses

	<u>ATS Membership</u>
N = 440 participants (200 different schools)	271 (2015)
Size of school:	
• Small (1–75 head count) = 24 schools (12%)	40%
• Mid (76–150 head count) = 56 schools (28%)	30%
• Large (151–300 head count) = 52 schools (26%)	15%
• Largest (301+ head count) = 70 schools (35%)	15%
Ecclesial family of school:	
• Evangelical Protestant = 43%	45%
• Mainline Protestant = 41%	33%
• Roman Catholic/Orthodox = 16%	22%
Country of school:	
• Canada = 13%	15%
• United States = 87%	85%
Embedded/affiliated and freestanding schools:	
• Embedded/Affiliated = 27%	35%
• Freestanding = 73%	65%

Appendix 4

Next Phases of the Project's Work

Looking ahead, the next phases of the project will include studies of peer groups of schools on particular educational models and practices, research into what is being learned in other graduate professional education, the work of graduates of member schools, and grant support for innovative projects and faculty development.

Peer groups

As an additional step in information gathering and analysis, the project has convened groups of schools to study particular educational models and practices.

The work of the peer groups is based on some foundational assumptions:

- Much of the wisdom about the work of theological education resides in the schools.
- A *lot* of good work is underway.
- Much of that work is being done in relative isolation.
- Collaboration can make the work more creative and fruitful and give an opportunity to share what is learned with the membership.

The project has formed 18 different groups involving more than 110 schools to study a range of educational models and practices. Their completed work will provide a comprehensive review of some of the most important educational models and practices underway within the Association, as well as generating a number of new ideas to explore.¹

Questions guiding future work will include the following:

Are the challenges being faced by theological schools unique to them, or are other graduate professional educational programs facing similar challenges, and what are they learning?

1. The peer groups are listed in Appendix 5.

A comprehensive study of legal education completed about a year ago, for example, identified many challenges very similar to those facing theological schools. Other professions are wrestling with similar issues, and theological schools may learn much from their efforts. The project will convene a study group to explore other graduate professional education to learn what their studies are finding and how those findings might inform theological schools.

Where are theological graduates finding employment, and what are they doing? How suitable is their training for their work?

In order to get a snapshot view of where graduates are serving and what they are doing, the project will survey two classes of graduates, ask them about the work they are doing, and also ask them about the educational expectations for others working in those organizations. This knowledge will help schools in their strategic planning to meet the needs of constituents and provide training for the positions available to students.

How might financial support assist the schools in their development and implementation of innovative models and practices as well as in the development of faculty to support those models and practices?

In 2017, the project will distribute a request for proposals to all ATS member schools for “innovation” grants. The program will award as many as 40 grants of up to \$50,000 each to help schools explore innovative possibilities. The project will seek proposals that are truly innovative in concept and/or application and not simply additional examples of things that have already been tried. The project will favor proposals that include interaction with constituencies (for example, enhanced communication and collaboration with partners in program design and execution) or that include voices from a range of stakeholders such as boards, educational partners, host colleges or universities, students, and student services personnel.

Many of the models and practices that are being studied create challenges for faculty, requiring them to do their work in ways not always anticipated in their training. The project will distribute a request for proposals to all member schools for faculty development grants. As many as 30 schools will receive faculty development grants of up to \$15,000 to help faculty retool to serve new educational models and practices. In this area

as well, the project will prioritize proposals that give evidence of collaborative work between faculty members and other personnel within the institution.

Schools receiving innovation and faculty development grants will report what they have learned for the benefit of the Association's membership.

Redevelopment of the Standards of Accreditation

Ultimately, the Educational Models and Practices project is directed toward a possible comprehensive redevelopment of the Standards of Accreditation. Based on what has been learned through the project, how should the Standards of Accreditation be redeveloped to maintain rigor and flexibility while recognizing educational models not imagined or implemented in previous versions?

Some of the findings of the project will be of immediate benefit for the Association's schools and have little impact on the standards. Other information will be crucial for the redevelopment process and will inform those engaged in that important work.

Appendix 5

Educational Models and Practices Project Peer Groups

- 1 Formation in Online Contexts**
 - Catholic Theological Union
 - Gateway Seminary
 - Lexington Theological Seminary
 - Moody Theological Seminary
 - Shaw University Divinity School
 - Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University
- 2 Educational Values of Online Education**
 - Anderson University School of Theology
 - Carey Theological College
 - Chicago Theological Seminary
 - Erskine Theological Seminary
 - Fuller Theological Seminary
 - Northwest Nazarene University School of Theology and Christian Ministries (Graduate)
 - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- 3 Duration (Reduced Credit MDiv)**
 - Azusa Pacific Seminary
 - Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School
 - Franciscan School of Theology
 - North Park Theological Seminary
 - Perkins School of Theology Southern Methodist University
 - United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
- 4 Accelerated Bachelor's/MDiv**
 - Columbia Biblical Seminary of Columbia International University
 - Denver Seminary
 - Saint Paul School of Theology
 - St. Andrew's College
 - University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
- 5 DMin Admission**
 - Aquinas Institute of Theology
 - Drew University Theological School
 - Fuller Theological Seminary
 - New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
 - St. Mary's Seminary and University
 - Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry
 - Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International University
- 6 DMin Identity**
 - Knox College
 - Lincoln Christian Seminary
 - Tyndale University College & Seminary
 - United Theological Seminary

7 Permanent Diaconate Program

- Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology
- Immaculate Conception Seminary of Seton Hall University
- Pontifical College Josephinum
- Saint Meinrad School of Theology
- St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry
- St. Mark's College
- University of St. Thomas School of Theology

8 RC Schools Formation of Laity

- Augustine Institute
- Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry
- St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto
- St. John's Seminary (CA)
- University of St. Mary of the Lake Mundelein Seminary

9 Programs for Latino/a Students

- Barry University Department of Theology and Philosophy
- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Denver Seminary
- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Oblate School of Theology
- Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University
- Western Seminary (OR)
- Western Theological Seminary

10 Global Partnerships

- Ambrose Seminary of Ambrose University
- Asbury Theological Seminary
- B.H. Carroll Theological Institute
- Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond
- International Theological Seminary

11 Global Partnerships

- Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
- Carey Theological College
- Nazarene Theological Seminary
- Oblate School of Theology
- Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University
- Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International University

12 Asian Schools

- China Evangelical Seminary North America
- Georgia Christian University School of Divinity
- Grace Mission University Graduate School
- International Theological Seminary
- Logos Evangelical Seminary
- Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America
- Shepherd University School of Theology
- World Mission University School of Theology

13 Historically Black Schools

- Hood Theological Seminary
- Howard University School of Divinity
- Interdenominational Theological Center
- Payne Theological Seminary
- Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University
- Shaw University Divinity School

14 Competency-Based Education

- Grace Theological Seminary
- Hazelip School of Theology of Lipscomb University
- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
- Northwest Baptist Seminary
- Regent University School of Divinity
- Sioux Falls Seminary
- Talbot School of Theology of Biola University
- Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University
- Western Seminary

15 Programs in Prison

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Candler School of Theology of Emory University
- Chapman Seminary of Oakland City University
- Drew University Theological School
- Duke University Divinity School
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- New York Theological Seminary

16 Students w/o Bachelor's

- American Baptist Seminary of the West
- Briercrest College and Seminary
- Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology
- St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary
- Taylor College and Seminary

17 Residential Theological Education

- Concordia Seminary (MO)
- Concordia Theological Seminary (IN)
- Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- Princeton Theological Seminary
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Virginia Theological Seminary

18 University Divinity Schools

- Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
- Boston University School of Theology
- Catholic University of America School of Theology and Religious Studies
- Candler School of Theology of Emory University
- Duke University Divinity School
- George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University
- University of Chicago Divinity School
- Vanderbilt University Divinity School
- Wake Forest University Divinity School
- Yale University Divinity School

Three Insights about Faculty Development in Theological Education

Deborah H. C. Gin

The Association of Theological Schools

Stacy Williams-Duncan

Virginia Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: This article builds upon more than 20 years of other studies about faculty by introducing a new focus on faculty development. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research addressed three questions: How do theological school faculty understand faculty development? What motivates faculty to engage in research? What are faculty members' perceptions of online teaching in theological education? The findings are instructive for those charged with building and overseeing theological school faculties and engendering in them a sense of collective vocation.

This study grew from a series of conversations between two practical theologians who shared the vocational goal of using the tools of educational research to benefit theological education. One of us is a quantitative researcher who wanted to determine how The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) could best use its resources to support faculty. The other is a qualitative researcher who wondered how the experiences of theological school faculty members were similar to and distinct from the general population of higher education faculty. In fall 2014, we began a collaborative effort to investigate the faculty development needs of theological educators. The work was grounded in a commitment to build upon the foundation of previous research, to use empirical social science methods to benefit theological education, and to ask theological school faculty directly to identify their needs.

For the last 20 years, the majority of the research on faculty working in theological schools was done by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education and focused on who the faculty are. Its first study, while addressing faculty preparedness (in terms of earning the MDiv) for

teaching in theological schools, focused more intently on the demographics of faculty in theological schools and evaluated how the retirement of baby boomer professors would impact their institutions.¹ In 2005, an Auburn team identified how theological school faculty had changed over the previous 10 years.² In its most recent study, the Auburn Center collected defining information on 24 doctoral programs whose graduates regularly became theological school faculty.³

The studies conducted by the Auburn Center provided a wealth of historical data on the demographics of theological school faculty and their doctoral training, but they did not directly address faculty development. In 2011, ATS surveyed faculty members who had either attended an ATS program or received an ATS grant and invited 36 faculty members to talk about the changing nature of the work required of faculty in theological schools and of their preparation for this new work. Stephen Graham, ATS senior director of programs and services, reported four main areas of faculty concern that were identified by participants in this consultation: (1) increased emphasis on evaluating student learning and questions about effective ways of measuring student achievement; (2) increasing pressure to use more educational technology and to teach online; (3) changes to seminary culture stemming from increased financial pressure; and (4) the impact of changes in church demographics on theological education.⁴

While foundational, both the Auburn and ATS studies did not provide a complete picture. The Auburn studies focused on collecting descriptive data. Graham's data were based on a small, self-selecting sample. The Auburn and ATS studies could be used to infer faculty development needs, but we were interested in a more direct investigation. Failing to locate any other studies on faculty development in theological schools, we concluded that there was a need for current, more robust research in this area, bringing together both quantitative and qualitative methods and

1. Barbara G. Wheeler, *True and False: The First in a Series of Reports from a Study on Theological School Faculty*, Auburn Studies (1996); *Tending Talents: The cultivation of effective and productive theological school faculties*, Auburn Studies, No. 5 (1997).

2. Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth, *Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty*. (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary, 2005).

3. Helen M. Blier and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Report on a Study of Doctoral Programs that Prepare Faculty for Teaching in Theological Schools* (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary, 2010).

4. Stephen R. Graham, "Changes in faculty work," *Colloquy* 20:1 (2011): 38–43.

exploring a larger sample of theological educators. This article reports the findings from this research focused on three questions:

1. How do theological school faculty understand faculty development?
2. What motivates faculty to engage in research?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of online teaching in theological education?

Methodology

We chose a mixed-methods approach to the study because, for each of our questions, we were interested in the broader perspective the quantitative data would provide, the more nuanced narrative data the focus groups would provide, and how they would inform our understanding of the other.⁵ The design, collection, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data were empirically based, rigorous, and comprehensive. We followed a qualitative-quantitative-qualitative sequence (initial focus groups, random sample survey, and regional focus groups) to gather data, adjusting the focus group protocol midway, based on early survey findings. This approach, an exploratory sequential research design, allowed us to use initial data to inform later phases of the study.⁶

Initial exploratory focus groups

In order to identify the areas this study needed to address, we convened seven focus group sessions at four events that were already part of ATS leadership education programming. The initial focus groups involved convenience samples, meaning participants were already in attendance at these events. The groups included 55 faculty attending the 2014 American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature meeting in San Diego and eight academic deans gathered at the 2014 ATS School for New Deans. At each event, an open invitation was sent to all faculty or deans who were in attendance. These focus groups were facilitated, but not structured,

5. We chose the methods outlined in J. W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013).

6. Ibid.

discussions about the areas of faculty development that participants thought the study needed to explore.

Survey participants and sampling method

The population studied in this project was full-time faculty at ATS-accredited institutions. ATS currently services more than 270 seminaries/schools of theology in the United States and Canada, with nearly 3,500 full-time faculty teaching at these institutions.⁷ Studying a subset of this population, which was randomly selected, justified the generalization of the survey results to everyone who falls within this population.⁸ To build the sample for the survey, we determined a final target size of 225 participants and assumed a response rate of 30 percent, so we agreed on an invitation list of 750. Table 1 shows various demographic characteristics of the final sample.⁹ To guarantee representation of the various populations within ATS membership, we drew a stratified random sample based on

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Final Sample (N=782)

Demographic Characteristic (T=Institution, D=Individual)	Actual % of Sample	% in ATS Database
Roman Catholic/Orthodox (T)	22%	22%
Mainline Protestant (T)	37%	35%
Evangelical Protestant (T)	40%	43%
United States (T)	88%	85%
Canada (T)	12%	15%
Deans	12%	14%
Faculty	88%	86%
Male	60%	60%
Female	40%	40%
Racial/ethnic	31%	30%
White (D)	69%	70%
Unknown (D)	1%	—

7. For this study, we used counts from the 2013–2014 ATS Annual Data Tables: <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2013-2014-annual-data-tables.pdf>.

8. We chose the methodology in L. M. Rea and R. A. Parker, *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014).

9. The final number of useable cases returned was 242, corresponding to a 31 percent response rate.

demographics.¹⁰ This resulted in a total sample of 782 (22 percent of the original list of faculty in ATS member schools).

Survey design and construction

The survey contained 50 items concerning institutional faculty development, individual engagement and preferences in faculty development and research/scholarship, perspectives on recent shifts in theological education, and demographic items.¹¹ Descriptives of key variables can be found in Appendix A. To increase the validity and usability of the survey, we refined it by having it expert-reviewed by two theological educators and a survey methodologist.¹² After this, we field-tested the survey with three faculty members who were not part of the random sample.

After the survey was administered, we scrubbed the data to improve the quantity and accuracy of the results presented. Rank order items were first reverse coded so that “1” designated the least rank, then recoded to name the “Top” or “Top Two” responses, based on greatest frequency (e.g., “The types of faculty development that most interest me are . . .”). Responses for mark-all-that-apply items (e.g., “Faculty development resources at my institution include . . .”) were recoded into dichotomous variables in order to use them in regression analyses. In addition, when we determined that responses to two items—“At my institution, participation in faculty development is mainly seen as a reward (e.g., for those who have already secured book contracts)” and “At my institution, participation in faculty development is mainly seen as a form of remediation (e.g., for those who need to boost teaching evaluations)” —were significantly skewed, we omitted them from any subsequent analyses, including regressions. Finally, responses to nominal variables (e.g., race) were recoded into dichotomous variables for use in regression analyses.

Regional focus groups

While surveys are very effective in providing large amounts of data about a specific population, they do not provide rich understandings or

10. We chose the methodology in R. M. Groves, J. Fowler, J. Floyd, M. P. Couper, J. M. Lepkowski, E. Singer, and R. Tourangeau, *Survey Methodology*, 2nd ed., (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

11. Please contact the authors for the complete survey or list of items.

12. Groves et al.

explanations of the responses.¹³ In order to provide greater insight and context to our survey data, we held 10 regional focus groups in eight cities across the United States and Canada. As demonstrated in Table 2, we selected cities based on concentrations of ATS-accredited schools, partnered with a theological school in each area to host the focus group, and invited all full-time faculty from ATS schools within driving distance. We planned for 15 participants at each site and closed the online RSVP when we exceeded this number. A grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation allowed us to provide each focus group participant with a \$100 stipend.

Table 2 Focus Group Participants

City	Host	Participants	Institutions Represented
Atlanta	Candler School of Theology of Emory University	17	6
Chicago	Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary	15	5
	Catholic Theological Union	16	7
	ATS Deans' Meeting	9	9
Dallas	Dallas Theological Seminary	11	4
Orlando	ATS Mid-Career Faculty Event	18	18
Seattle	Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry	10	3
Toronto	Wycliffe College	17	9
Vancouver	Carey Theological College	13	8
Washington DC	Howard University School of Divinity	12	4

The focus groups were structured, recorded, transcribed, and coded. We each facilitated a focus group at each location, so group size varied from five to nine persons. Using a formal protocol, we systematically

13. Ibid.

moved through a series of questions that fell under four categories: general faculty development, research motivation, shifts in teaching and learning, and online education. After the audio recordings from each focus group were professionally transcribed, we de-identified all the transcripts by removing references to specific people or institutions. The transcripts were coded using a three-step process: (1) an open-coding approach was used to develop a running list of themes;¹⁴ (2) the themes were condensed into categorical codes; and (3) the transcripts were recoded according to the categorical codes.¹⁵

Faculty development as a collective endeavor

At the beginning of this project, we discussed how we each understood faculty development. In recognition of our own differences, we did not impose a formal, previously articulated definition to guide our work. Instead, we chose to see what would emerge from the focus groups and how participants' understandings would relate to the survey data.

While participants raised the need for financial support of independent research and conference attendance, there was also a great interest in the collective benefits of faculty development and a strong belief that these benefits should be an institutional priority. Within the focus group transcripts, we found 64 references to the "collective nature" of faculty development. These references emphasized the role of faculty development in creating alignment with an institution's mission, building greater cohesiveness, and addressing the changing academic environment. The three statements below are representative of the observations of the focus group participants.

I think faculty development also for me involves what the institution [does] to help the faculty member settle into the processes in the institution and the environment in the institution [to] be as successful as possible. Certainly teaching and research are part of those, but every institution has its own culture.

14. We chose the methodology in C. Marshall and G. B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2010).

15. We chose the methodology in J. W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012).

Not so much in our specific disciplines, but how we can work together as a cohesive, coherent, trusting [faculty], and not be quite so silent. That's another element of faculty development that I think of.

The fields in which we are active are changing so quickly that we have not really trained for what we're doing today, much less what we may be doing 10 years from now. We have to constantly be retooling and relearning and gathering, not only new data, but [new] skillsets. For me, it's this constant evolution or morphing of who we are that has to happen, and in order for us to keep up with the changes that are happening and going to happen.

Based on the importance attached to this element of faculty development by focus group participants, institutions would be wise to ask the following questions. Do your faculty have a sense of a collective vocation? And are they being socialized into a collective vocation?¹⁶ In other words, do they have a sense of shared responsibility for the good of the institution and the faculty body, not just for individual professional agendas, and are they being "integrated into the institution's culture"?¹⁷

Survey items addressing collective vocation

This notion of developing a collective faculty vocation was not considered in our original survey design. We realized its importance after the topic was extensively discussed in our regional focus groups. When we were analyzing the focus group and survey data, we discovered we could operationalize the construct of a collective faculty by a series of topical questions. Theological conversation on, and useful tools for, assessment are relevant in theological education today; however, for this article, these were primarily meant to operationalize the notion of having a sense of collective vocation. To explore the concept of collective vocation, we looked at how participants responded to these three items on the survey:

16 Gordon T. Smith, "Attending to the Collective Vocation," *Theological Education* 44, No. 2 (2009), 95–111, reprinted from *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, ed. L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 240–261.

17. Barbara G. Wheeler, *Tending Talents*, 1997.

- At my institution, we have a shared understanding of the purpose of student assessment.
- At my institution, we have engaged in adequate theological reflection on assessment.
- At my institution, we have established useful mechanisms of assessing student formation.

By asking about the purpose of assessment, the survey moved beyond the act of assessment to a deeper layer of meaning and mission and allowed the responses to function as a concrete representation of a sense of collective vocation. According to faculty responses, having a shared understanding of the purpose of assessment is directly related to having engaged in adequate theological reflection on the topic and having established useful mechanisms of assessing formation. These items (see Table 3 for the list of top predictors) accounted for more than 47 percent of the variance.¹⁸ In other words, the faculty most likely to feel this shared understanding comes from an institution that has engaged in adequate theological reflection on assessment and has established useful mechanisms of assessing student formation. One resides in the realm of the philosophical; the other is more functional. A significant majority (66 percent) of respondents believed their institutions had established useful mechanisms for assessment. However, only 42 percent believed they had engaged in adequate theological reflection on assessment.

Table 3 Predictors of Shared Understanding of the Purpose of Assessment

Having a Shared Understanding of the Purpose of Assessment is Most Closely Related to:	
Adequate theological reflection on assessment	$\beta=.323$
Useful mechanisms of assessing student formation	.312
Access to FD resources is equally available to full-time faculty	.161
FD programs align with mission and institutional goals	.134

18. In this regression, we attempted to predict having shared understanding of the purpose of assessment with a number of specific independent variables. We ran a stepwise regression and used mean substitution for missing data. See Appendix B for full regression results. Four variables entered the equation, yielding an R-square of .472. The two most important predictors were having engaged in adequate theological reflection on assessment and having established useful mechanisms of assessing student formation.

So what did we learn about cultivating this collective vocation? The data suggest that, while integrating faculty into the collective through attending to functional needs (i.e., establishing useful mechanisms for assessing an institutional need) has been successful, guiding the faculty body through intentional theological reflection around the various needs of the institution would be even more effective.

What motivates faculty when choosing research areas?

Faculty research seems to occur outside the collective vocation. We found the majority of statements about research in the focus group transcripts focused on personal development as a scholar. Comments such as the following were common and highlighted the personal motivations regarding research: “I want to participate more in professional, academic guilds and make a difference there as well in terms of my own scholarly development.”

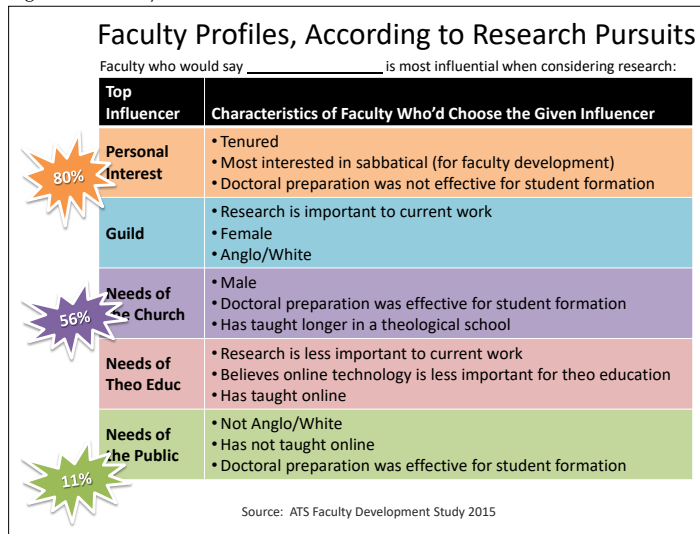
In the survey, we specifically asked which of the following would be most influential when considering a research project: personal interest, academic guild, needs of the church, needs of theological education, or needs of the public. Eighty percent named personal interest as one of the top two influencers. Roughly half (56 percent) indicated the needs of the church as one of their top two influencers, about 25 percent named disciplinary guild, another 25 percent named the needs of theological education, and only 11 percent of the faculty reported the needs of the public as one of their top two.

Figure 1 shows the profiles of faculty members who identified one of the five as most influential in their research.¹⁹ Personal interest was the most influential among faculty who are tenured, most interested in sabbaticals for their professional development, and less prepared by their doctoral program for their role in forming students. The disciplinary guild was the most important influencer of research choices among white women for whom the role of research was important for their current work. Faculty who considered the needs of the church as the most influential were men with the longest time in theological education and whose doctoral

19. Stepwise regressions were run to predict each research area of influence, using mean substitution for missing data. Highlighted in this discussion and in Figure 1 are some of the strongest predictors among personal variables. Institutional variables that entered the equations at the final step were omitted from this discussion and figure. Contact authors for full reports.

program was effective in preparing them for their role in student formation. Faculty who said that the needs of theological education were the most influential are those for whom the role of research is less important for their current work and who feel online engagement is not important for theological education but who have taught online. And, finally, faculty who considered the needs of the public as the strongest influencer for their research are non-white faculty who have not taught online and whose doctoral programs were effective in preparing them for their role in student formation.

Figure 1. Faculty Profiles



What might these results mean? One way to read these findings is to conclude that, in order to strengthen research with a particular purpose, schools need to increase the number of faculty with the corresponding profile. Another way to understand these findings is to consider both the content of the profiles and the number of faculty reporting each of these as their top influencer. It is particularly interesting to note that having had a doctoral program that prepared a faculty member for the work of student formation is related to a commitment to research on behalf of the church as well as the public. It is notable that we have few who would choose either of these (56 percent and 11 percent, respectively). Given the rise of the religious “nones” or “dones” in society today, this information gives us reason to pause and ask: While “personal interest” for some may include the needs of various publics, what are the implications that only one in 10 faculty looks to the needs of the public for their research? What does this

mean for theological education? How might we get personal interests to intersect explicitly with the needs of the public?

Experience with online teaching

In his report, Graham identified a negative perception of the role of online education in theological schools.²⁰ Of the 192 people who completed his survey, 65 percent indicated a less-than-positive or a negative view of online theological education. One of our goals for this study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of theological educators' perspectives of, and experiences with, online teaching. Our survey results were unexpected and challenged several assumptions we held. While 58 percent of the sample had taught a hybrid course, only 43 percent had taught a fully online course. The faculty who had taught a fully online course did not differ individually by their tenure status, discipline, race, or gender, nor did they differ institutionally, by ecclesial family, size, or country of institution.

There were three areas of difference that surprised us. First, we expected most online teaching to occur in embedded schools, where infrastructures would be more available to support such engagement. This was not so. In fact, 72 percent of those at embedded institutions (as compared to 47 percent at freestanding institutions) indicated they had *not* taught a fully online course.²¹ Second, we expected to see online engagement at its highest among the younger faculty, assuming those newer to teaching

20. Stephen R. Graham, "Changes in faculty work," *Colloquy* 20:1 (2011): 38–43.

21. This drops to 66 percent at embedded institutions when faculty at research institutions are removed from the sample. While beyond the scope of this article, the picture of online engagement at research schools deserves further study. Not only does the frequency of faculty engagement with online teaching differ significantly, but perceptions of the importance of online technologies for theological education differ significantly as well. Mean responses for both items are lower among faculty at research schools; online engagement is less among faculty at research schools ($\mu = 2.78$, on a 4-point scale, versus $\mu = 3.04$ for non-research schools); and online technologies are perceived as not as important among faculty at research schools ($\mu = 1.11$, on a 2-point scale, versus $\mu = 1.47$ for non-research schools). While there is no statistical difference in mean response between faculty at research schools and faculty at non-research embedded schools on the item related to importance of online technologies, the presence of faculty at research schools in the "embedded" group does create a statistical difference between faculty at embedded schools and those at freestanding schools on the same item. Further study is warranted here.

were younger and therefore technological natives. In fact, most online teaching was done by faculty in mid-career (i.e., those with 11–15 years of teaching experience). Table 4 summarizes online teaching by faculty, based on years of experience. Last, online engagement was least among the newest and the most veteran faculty. Faculty with 11–15 years of teaching experience were the only group where more (55 percent) have taught a fully online course than have not. For comparison, only 29 percent of those in the group with 0–5 years of teaching and the group with 21 or more years of teaching reported they had taught a fully online course.

Table 4 Online Engagement by Teaching Experience

Number of years teaching in theological school (graduate level only):		0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21+ years	Total
I teach/have taught completely online course(s):	No	30	26	23	20	29	128
	Yes	12	26	28	20	12	98
Total		42	52	51	40	41	226

Single characteristics, both personal and institutional, are not the only ways in which online engagement differs. Asking “which faculty would be the most likely to teach a fully online course” calls for looking at multiple characteristics simultaneously and requires an analysis that goes beyond finding out how many said they had taught such a course. We analyzed the data to determine the profile of the faculty member who would be most likely to engage teaching online.²² The results are presented in Table 5. The three strongest predictors of positive perception of online education are the belief that online technologies are important, a doctoral program

22. For this analysis, we ran a stepwise regression where we predicted online teaching with a series of variables that included personal perceptions and faculty habits, background variables, institutional characteristics, and other variables, using mean substitution for missing data. Contact authors for full list of variables. Eight variables entered the equation as significant predictors. The R-square at the final step was .325, indicating that collectively the independent variables predicted 33 percent of the variation in online teaching.

that was effective in preparation for teaching, and confidence in the ability to assess outcomes-based student learning.²³

Table 5 The faculty most likely to have taught a fully online course is the one who/whose:

Believes online technologies in theological education are important	$\beta=.254$
Doctoral program was effective in preparing them for teaching	.197
Is confident in their ability to assess student learning based on outcomes	.195
Institution has a significant online presence (more than roughly 25% of courses)	.183
Institution has tenure	.181
Institution is freestanding	.171

Dependent Variable = I teach/have taught completely online course(s). (R^2 : .325)

Focus group insights about online teaching

The focus group conversations about online teaching included brief forays into the traditional debate about its appropriateness in theological education, but the participants very quickly shifted to embrace it as a reality. Faculty who had not taught online identified a lack of confidence and experience as hindrances. This was the case for older and more experienced faculty as well as for less experienced and younger faculty. The following two focus group excerpts, the first from an experienced faculty member and the second from a younger faculty, articulate this point effectively.

I think there are some things that I could do that would be engaging, but I can't even think about it because I don't know. I tell people, if you went to college with a slide rule, then they need to help you.

I feel a little embarrassed to say that I don't know how to do . . . some of this stuff. I really wish that there were some tech-savvy people who would tutor me and help me, get me going on this. There's an assumption that we all know

23. Two additional variables that entered the equation at the final step were: "My institution is [not] doing enough with respect to faculty development in research/scholarship" ($\beta = -.243$) and "My doctoral program was [not] effective in preparing me for the ability to serve the school/larger community" ($\beta = -.125$). These were omitted from the discussion above because of the unclear reality that the negative betas portray. It is likely that these predictors represent underlying factors that were not examined in this project. Further research is needed to understand fully the salience of these significant predictors.

how to do this. It's just not true. I wish someone would get me up to speed.

Focus group participants' most significant concerns about online teaching were pedagogical, not technological. Comments such as this showed that most support and training focused on mastering the technology without addressing the broader pedagogical issues: "She's [instructional designer] provided a lot of support. Some of it is just technical. Actually, more of it has been technical than pedagogical, I would say." There was also a concern that theological education is not keeping up with developments within the broader context of online teaching within higher education. "There are certain things that are going on in the larger online educational system that theological education just is not paying attention to yet because we're still caught up in the tools." Finally, there was a sense that faculty were left to their own devices to learn about effective online pedagogy.

I think faculty were left to discover or to figure out that online teaching is a completely different pedagogical environment from a four-walled classroom. Some of us got that pretty early on, and [others] of us [are] still very much trying to force online teaching into the four-walled classroom model. We have not had significant faculty development events or conversations that would help us share with one another what we've learned about this new pedagogical environment that we were in. We've had informal conversations and lunchtime conversations, but not anything that's been formal or intentional.

Conclusion

What are the faculty development concerns of theological school faculty today? How and why do they develop as teachers and researchers? They are motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically to engage in professional development, and they are well-, or over-, prepared for research and underprepared for administrative work and student formation. They are engaged in online teaching if in their mid-career as a theological educator at a freestanding institution. They are influenced by personal interest when considering scholarly pursuits, which means they are most likely tenured, didn't have a PhD program that prepared them for student formation, and

are most interested in sabbatical for professional development. They are aware of the need for collective vocation and for spaces for theological reflection about institutional needs, such as assessment. And, if given the opportunity, they would overwhelmingly choose theological education as their vocation again.

There are a number of ways to read the findings that gave rise to the foregoing conclusion, depending on the context of the readers and their institutions. If there is a concern that faculty are individuals who merely share an institutional home, these data suggest that faculty development is one way to develop a shared collective vision. If an institution wants to strengthen research in a particular direction, it could choose to

“ [F]aculty development is one way to develop a shared collective vision. increase the number of faculty with the corresponding profile. Research generated by the needs of the public would most likely come from an increase in the number of

non-white faculty whose doctoral programs were effective in preparing them for student formation. If a theological school wants to expand its online teaching presence, it would be most beneficial to invest in pedagogical and technological training for mid-career faculty.

A final piece that emerged from the data addresses whether faculty would choose teaching in a theological school again. Of all possible characteristics explored in the study, the profile of the faculty member who would choose this vocation again is the one

- whose institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in *research/scholarship*,
- who feels the recent shift in emphasis from evaluation of teaching to assessment of student learning has encouraged greater *attention to student formation*,
- for whom the *ability to serve* the school and larger community is important in her/his current work, and
- whose institution's *online structure* has made *global engagement* (e.g., wider reach for student enrollment, greater diversity of instructors teaching courses) more viable.²⁴

24. Contact authors for full regression results.

Faculty members who fit the mission of their institutions are happiest! The good news is that 90 percent agreed they would choose teaching in a theological school again as their vocation, with 50 percent strongly agreeing. As researchers committed to enhancing theological education through faculty development, we find this final piece of data very encouraging. It speaks to a positive overall morale of theological educators, which is an important foundation for all faculty development.

Deborah H.C. Gin is Director, Research and Faculty Development for The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Stacy Williams-Duncan is visiting faculty at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia.

Appendix A – Descriptives for Key Survey Variables

Item	N Mean S.D.	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree* 4
At my institution, faculty development is explicitly discussed and encouraged.	242 2.98 .797	14 5.8%	37 15.3%	131 54.1%	60 24.8%
At my institution, faculty development programs directly align with our mission and institutional goals.	242 2.87 .772	14 5.8%	48 19.8%	136 56.2%	44 18.2%
Engagement with faculty development is tied to performance evaluations at my institution.	238 1.64 .481	No 86 36.1%	Yes 152 63.9%		
At my institution, current resources for faculty development compared to what was available seven years ago are:	183 2.51 .725	Much less 17 9.3%	Less 64 35.0%	More 94 51.4%	Much more 8 4.4%
At my institution, access to faculty development resources is equally available to all full-time faculty.	238 3.20 .724	10 4.2%	13 5.5%	134 56.3%	81 34.0%
Getting faculty development approval/funding at my institution is:	237 2.45 .738	Impossible 35 14.8%	Difficult 60 25.3%	Easy 142 59.9%	Very easy 0 0%
My doctoral program was effective in preparing me for doing administrative work.	229 1.90 .843	Very ineffective 81 35.4%	Ineffective 101 44.1%	Effective 35 15.3%	Very effective 12 5.2%
My doctoral program was effective in preparing me for formation of students for ministries.	230 2.50 .975	43 18.7%	67 29.1%	83 36.1%	37 16.1%
My doctoral program was effective in preparing me for research/scholarship.	229 3.55 .602	1 0.4%	10 4.4%	80 34.9%	138 60.3%
My doctoral program was effective in preparing me for the ability to serve the school/larger community.	230 2.87 .850	13 5.7%	60 26.1%	100 43.5%	57 24.8%

Item	N Mean S.D.	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree* 4
My doctoral program was effective in preparing me for teaching.	230 3.01 .776	8 3.5%	44 19.1%	116 50.4%	62 27.0%
In my current work, doing administrative work is:	234 3.13 .874	Unimportant 9 3.8%	Somewhat important 49 20.9%	Important 79 33.8%	Very important 97 41.5%
In my current work, formation of students for ministries is:	234 3.71 .551	0 0%	11 4.7%	47 20.1%	176 75.2%
In my current work, research/scholarship is:	236 3.13 .885	11 4.7%	46 19.5%	81 34.3%	98 41.5%
In my current work, the ability to serve the school/larger community is:	235 3.23 .731	4 1.7%	30 12.8%	110 46.8%	91 38.7%
In my current work, teaching is:	236 3.78 .508	2 0.8%	4 1.7%	38 16.1%	192 81.4%
My institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in doing administrative work.	235 2.23 .740	Strongly disagree 35 14.9%	Disagree 118 50.2%	Agree 74 31.5%	Strongly agree 8 3.4%
My institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in formation of students for ministries.	236 2.82 .807	9 3.8%	75 31.8%	102 43.2%	50 21.2%
My institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in research/scholarship.	236 2.63 .858	27 11.4%	65 27.5%	112 47.5%	32 13.6%
My institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in the ability to serve the school/larger community	234 2.78 .723	8 3.4%	68 29.1%	125 53.4%	33 14.1%

Item	N Mean S.D.	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree* 4
My institution is doing enough with respect to faculty development in teaching.	235 2.95 .732	6 2.6%	51 21.7%	127 54.0%	51 21.7%
I am confident in my ability to assess student learning based on outcomes.	229 3.17 .652	4 1.7%	20 8.7%	137 59.8%	68 29.7%
At my institution, we have a shared understanding of the purpose of student assessment.	232 2.70 .775	18 7.8%	61 26.3%	126 54.3%	27 11.6%
At my institution, we have engaged in adequate theological reflection on assessment.	227 2.39 .847	31 13.7%	99 43.6%	74 32.6%	23 10.1%
At my institution, we have established useful mechanisms of assessing student formation.	227 2.70 .803	20 8.8%	57 25.1%	121 53.3%	29 12.8%
At my institution, there is an effective process to assess student learning for courses in online formats (e.g., completely online, hybrid/blended).	220 1.57 .496	No 94 42.7%	Yes 126 57.3%		
I teach/have taught completely online course(s).	229 1.43 .496	130 56.8%	99 43.2%		
I teach/have taught hybrid course(s), which combine online and traditional sessions.	229 1.58 .495	97 42.4%	132 57.6%		
Online technologies in theological education are:	227 3.11 .774	Unimportant 4 1.8%	Somewhat important 45 19.8%	Important 101 44.5%	Very important 77 33.9%
My institution has a significant online presence (more than roughly 25% of courses).	230 1.46 .500	No 124 53.9%	Yes 106 46.1%		

Item	N	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree* 4
My institution's online structure has made global engagement (e.g., wider reach for student enrollment, greater diversity of instructors teaching courses) more viable.	221 2.62 .958	Strongly disagree 32 14.5%	Disagree 63 28.5%	Agree 83 37.6%	Strongly agree 43 19.5%
If given the chance to do it over again, I would choose teaching in a theological school as my vocation.	230 3.39 .702	4 1.7%	17 7.4%	94 40.9%	115 50.0%

*Response options in this item category followed these column headers unless otherwise noted.

Descriptives for Demographics of Response Set

Variable	N, Mean, S.D.	Response Label	Frequency	Valid Percent
Years teaching	230	(1) 0-5	44	19.1
	2.93	(2) 6-10	52	22.6
	1.378	(3) 11-15	52	22.6
		(4) 16-20	40	17.4
		(5) 21+	42	18.3
Tenure status	230	(0) Institution does not have tenure	59	25.7
	1.87	(1) Non-tenure track/Short-term (1yr, 2yr)	22	9.6
	1.259	(2) Tenure track/Ext'd contract (3yr, 4yr)	40	17.4
		(3) Tenured/Tenure contract (5yr, 7yr)	109	47.4
Employment status	220	Part-time	9	4.0
		Full-time	201	96.0
Dean status	232	Academic dean	37	15.9
		Not academic dean	195	84.1
Gender	229	Female	109	52.4
		Male	120	47.6
Race	230	African, African American, Black	21	
		American Indian, Native American, First Nations, Alaskan Native, or Inuit	1	
		Asian/Asian North American, Pacific Islander	14	
		Hispanic, Latino/a, Latino/a American	21	
		Visa	3	
		White	175	
		Other	10	

Appendix B
Stepwise Regression—Prediction of Shared Understanding of Purpose of Assessment

Stepwise Regression—Prediction of Shared Understanding of Purpose of Assessment			
Independent Variable	Beta	t	Sig.t
Adequate Theological Reflection on Assessment	.312	.323	5.966
Useful Mechanisms of Assessing Student Formation	.161	5.535	.000
Access to FD Resources Equally Available	.134	3.219	.001
FD Programs Align with Mission and Institutional Goals		2.533	.012

Dependent Variable = At my institution, we have a shared understanding of the purpose of student assessment.

R = .687

R2 = .472

F = 34.964

Sig. F < .001

N = 242

Engaging Science in Seminaries: A View from Faculty

Jonathan P. Hill
Calvin College

Deborah H. C. Gin
The Association of Theological Schools

ABSTRACT: This article reports findings from a survey of faculty science engagement at Protestant ATS member institutions. On average, faculty report moderate-to-high engagement in scientific topics in both the classroom and research. While the social and behavioral sciences were most frequently referenced by faculty, the life sciences and cosmology saw the highest levels of engagement within the natural sciences. Theological tradition of the institution and faculty member were unrelated to science engagement. Finally, faculty expressed concern with seminary student preparation in the sciences and offered suggestions for improving scientific engagement within their institutions.

Are seminary graduates adequately prepared to engage our modern, scientific culture in their various ministries? What are they learning during their years in seminary about how faith and science intersect? To what extent are faculty engaged in scientific topics in their teaching and research? Are seminaries providing support for faculty and students who are interested in pursuing scientific topics? In fall 2015, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) was the recipient of a research grant from the John Templeton Foundation to study science engagement in North American Protestant seminaries. As part of this project, ATS fielded a survey of faculty at member institutions. The survey provides a baseline report of faculty perceptions about the extent of science engagement in the classroom, pedagogical resources, student interest in scientific topics, potential controversies at the intersection of faith and science, science and faculty scholarship, and institutional support for pursuing scientific topics.

This brief report provides a summary overview of findings from this survey. We begin with a brief description of the data, followed by a summary of the extent and nature of science engagement in the classroom, move to a section on student interest and preparation, and conclude with the professional and personal engagement of seminary faculty.

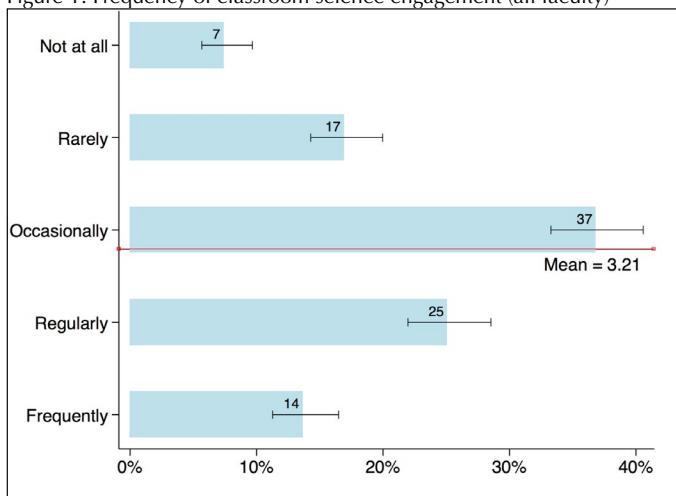
Data and methods

The survey described in this report is part of a larger project designed to generate a baseline understanding of how science is currently engaged in North American Protestant seminaries. In addition to the survey, researchers at ATS have scheduled interviews with key informants from 30 selected Protestant member institutions as well as a document collection and content analysis from the same set of institutions.

The survey itself was designed in fall 2015 and administered in January 2016. A random subset of faculty from all Protestant member institutions was selected for participation. Faculty from Canadian schools and racial/ethnic¹ faculty were oversampled to ensure adequate numbers in each category. The final response set included 739 faculty from 186 institutions, with a response rate of 32 percent.

The final response set included 28 percent women (slightly over-representing the ATS faculty population) and a racial/ethnic breakdown of 67 percent those of Anglo descent, 14 percent of Asian descent, 12 percent of African descent, 5 percent of Latino descent, and 1 percent of Native descent. Faculty of Asian and African descent were over-represented in the set. Fifteen percent of the final sample (an over-representation) were faculty from Canadian schools; 40

Figure 1. Frequency of classroom science engagement (all faculty)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

1 The ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity has determined that the designation "racial/ethnic" is most appropriate for use at this time in theological education. See Footnote 35 on page 38 in this issue.

percent of the final sample (a slight over-representation) were from embedded schools; and 59 percent of the final sample of faculty from Protestant schools (a near representation) were from evangelical schools.

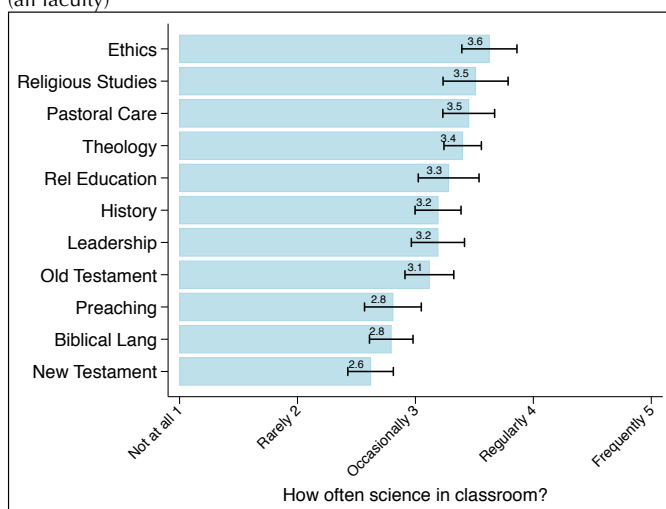
All analyses throughout this report account for the “nested” structure of the data (faculty nested within seminaries) to provide the most accurate estimate of the overall beliefs and practices of faculty at Protestant institutions. Most graphs show post-estimations from statistical regressions that accurately adjust for this nested structure (e.g., random-effects models).

Classroom engagement

Perhaps the most important area to begin with is the classroom. Toward the beginning of the survey, faculty were asked to gauge how often, if ever, they taught or discussed science or science-related information in the classroom with students (Figure 1). Very few faculty reported they “never” address these issues (7 percent), while about 1 in 7 (14 percent) say they address these issues “frequently.” Most faculty are somewhere between these two, with the most popular response category being “occasionally” (37 percent). On a scale from 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“Frequently”), the mean value is near the middle at 3.21.

This varies, however, by a number of factors. Figure 2 shows how this measure of classroom engagement breaks down by faculty area of expertise (faculty were able to select more than one area). At the top are

Figure 2. Classroom science engagement by area of faculty expertise (all faculty)



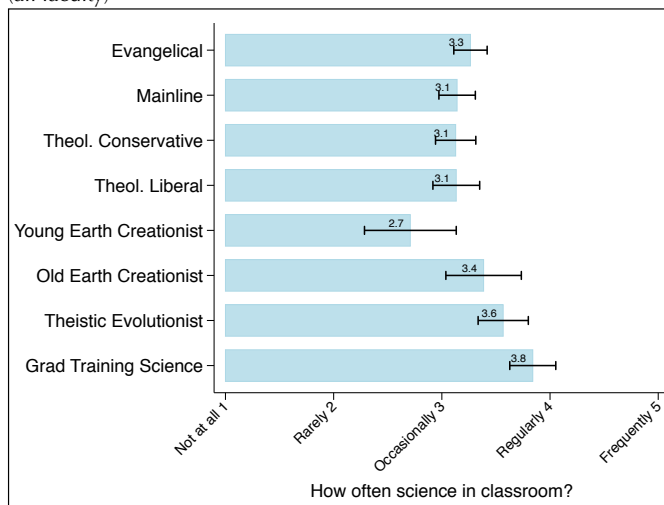
Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

ethics, religious studies, and pastoral care, all with a score of 3.5 or above on classroom science engagement. At the bottom are preaching, Biblical languages, and New Testament, with scores of 2.8 or below. Although it isn't entirely clear why these differences exist, it does appear that classroom science engagement is associated with areas that are applied or interdisciplinary in nature, while the areas scoring lower are more "pure," with clear disciplinary boundaries.

Theological identity seems to matter little (Figure 3). Faculty who reported that the label "evangelical" identifies them "very well" are essentially no different from those who strongly identify with the label of mainline Protestant. Likewise, those who claim they are theologically conservative are no different from those who are theologically progressive. Science in the classroom seems equally important (or unimportant) for those who differ in their theology. Both gender and race seem to matter little as well. Males and females both are near the mean with a score of 3.2. Likewise, responses for whites and nonwhites are nearly alike (3.2 for whites and 3.1 for nonwhites).²

On the other hand, position on origins *does* seem to matter. While both Old Earth creationists and theistic evolutionists rate above average in their frequencies of engagement with science in the classroom (3.4 and 3.6,

Figure 3. Classroom science engagement by faculty characteristics (all faculty)



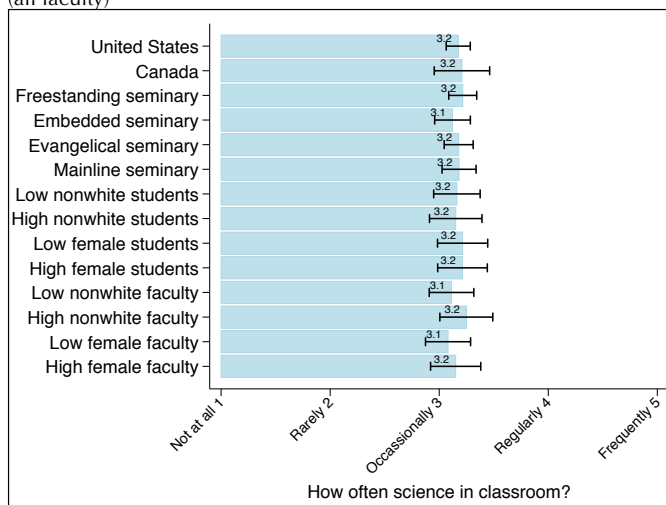
Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

2. More fine-grained analyses of racial and ethnic categories also found no statistically significant differences between categories. Differences between whites and non-whites are shown throughout the report to conserve space.

respectively), Young Earth creationists score substantially lower than the average (2.7). It should be noted that only 5 percent of faculty say that the latter category describes them “very well.” Additional analysis suggests these differences between positions on origins are not due to differences in areas of expertise, science training, or general theological orientation. Once these are controlled for, the gap between Young Earth creationists and others is virtually unchanged. This suggests that there is something related to holding this position that results in a lower likelihood of engaging in scientific topics in the seminary classroom.

Lastly, we can see, at the bottom of Figure 3, that faculty who reported having some type of graduate training in science (about 15 percent of all seminary faculty) are considerably more likely to address science in the classroom. What sort of scientific training do these faculty members have? Faculty members who reported having science training were invited to write in the degree or area of science. The training was overwhelmingly in the social and behavioral sciences (73 percent). Psychology, sociology, and anthropology were frequently mentioned by seminary faculty. About 21 percent reported that they had training in one of the natural sciences. The remaining (10 percent)³ had training in mathematics or engineering.

Figure 4. Classroom science engagement by institutional characteristics (all faculty)

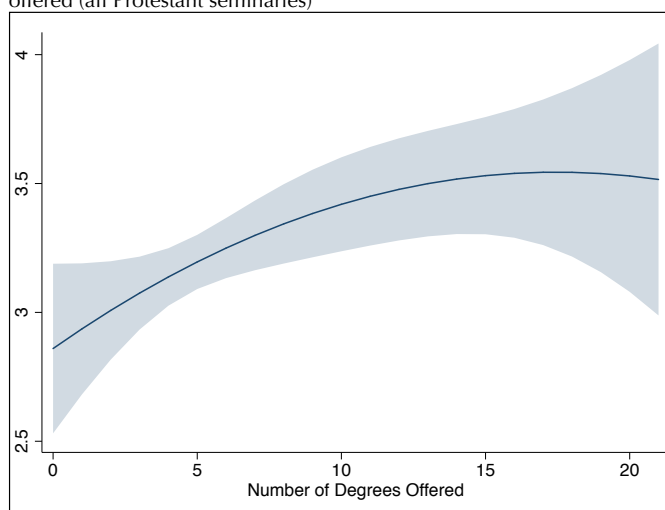


Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

3. Percentage points do not add up to 100 because a few faculty members reported having training in more than one field.

We also assessed if there were general differences by seminary characteristics. Figure 4 presents the results. In short, the institutional characteristics we measured had little impact on the average rates of classroom science engagement. This includes where the seminary is located (United States or Canada), whether it is freestanding or embedded in a college or university, whether the institution can be classified as mainline Protestant or evangelical Protestant, and the gender and racial distribution of students and faculty.⁴ One factor that appeared, initially, to be important, was the size of student enrollment. Larger seminaries, on average, seemed to report more engagement with science in the classroom. Upon closer inspection, it was not the size of the seminary that was driving this relationship, but the number of degrees offered. Once this was included, the size of the seminary no longer had an independent effect. Figure 5 shows the relationship between the number of degrees offered and the score on the classroom science engagement measure. Seminaries with 15 or more degrees (about 8 percent of seminaries) have faculty who report scoring about 3.5 on the engagement measure. Seminaries with three or fewer degrees (a little less than a quarter of seminaries) average scoring around 3 or below.

Figure 5. Classroom science engagement by number of degree programs offered (all Protestant seminaries)



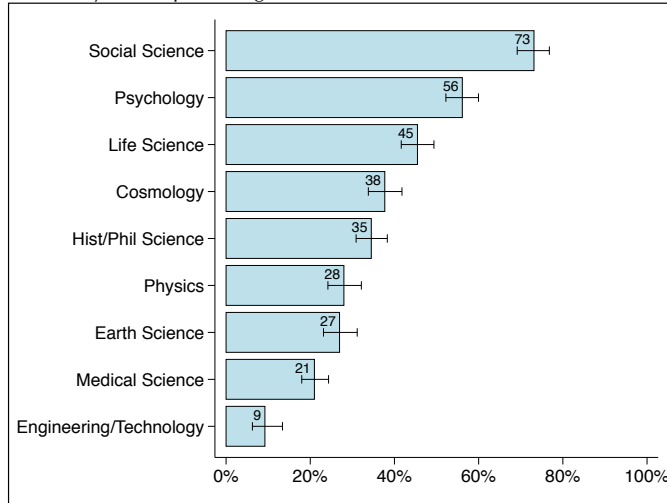
Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

4. Seminaries ranked as “high” scored in the top quintile on the measure of gender or race, while seminaries ranked as “low” scored in the bottom quintile on the same measures.

It is not initially clear as to *why* seminaries with more programs score higher on scientific engagement in the classroom. One possible reason might be that larger seminaries with more degree programs have a higher proportion of classes devoted to areas such as ethics and religious studies, which Figure 2 suggests is associated with scientific engagement in the classroom. But this turns out not to be the case. When the teaching area of expertise is controlled for, the basic association between number of degrees and science engagement remains virtually unchanged. Other factors, such as the religious and scientific beliefs of the faculty, are also not the reason for the difference. More investigation is clearly needed.

While we know how frequently faculty report engaging science in the classroom, this does not tell us *what* scientific topics or fields are being addressed. Faculty who reported addressing scientific topics at least “rarely” were asked precisely this. Figure 6 presents the results. (They

Figure 6. Field used in classroom science engagement
(all faculty who report using science in classroom)



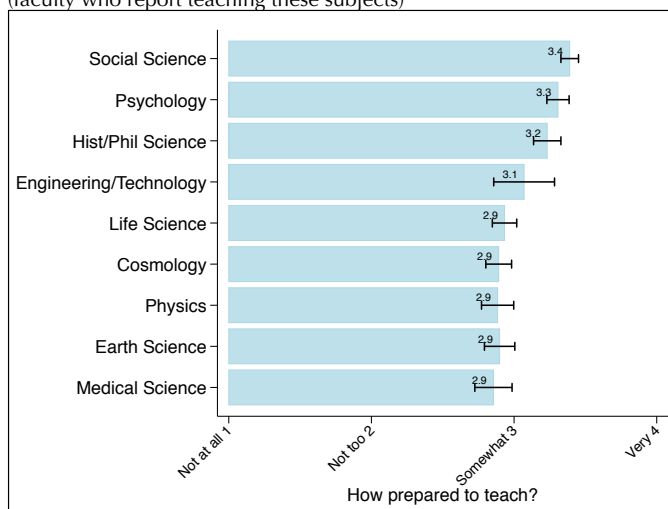
Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

were eligible to select more than one.) Of those who included some sort of scientific topic in the classroom, the social sciences (sociology and anthropology) came in on top, with 73 percent of faculty including these topics. Psychology (behavioral science) was next, with 56 percent. Perhaps it is not surprising that these are so frequently used, given the importance of these disciplines to aspects of biblical and religious studies as well as pastoral care. The next most common disciplines are the life sciences (biology, genetics) and cosmology (astronomy, astrophysics), at 45 and 38 percent

respectively. These fields have clear relevance to theological issues of creation and are likely addressed within these contexts. Fields such as medical science and engineering/technology are the least likely to be addressed in the seminary classroom.

If faculty reported engaging a particular scientific subject in the classroom, they were also asked to report how prepared they felt to teach in this area. These results are presented in Figure 7. In short, this follows a very similar pattern to Figure 6, with one exception: engineering and technology. This means that not only are topics like earth science and medical science rarely brought up in the classroom; faculty also feel less prepared to teach on these topics when they do arise. Likewise, the most commonly taught topics in the social and behavioral sciences are also the ones that faculty report feeling most competent about in the classroom.

Figure 7. Preparation to teach scientific subjects
(faculty who report teaching these subjects)



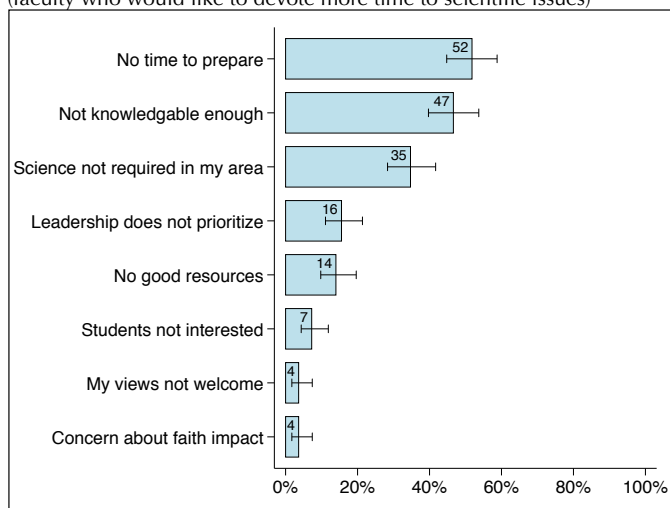
Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

We also asked faculty whether they would like to devote more time, would like to devote less time, or were comfortable with the amount of time spent addressing scientific issues in the classroom. The majority of faculty reported that they are happy with the amount of time they spend (69 percent), while most of the remainder wish they could devote more time to these topics (27 percent). Only 3 percent would like to spend less time on these topics.

The 27 percent of faculty who reported wanting to devote more time to scientific issues were of particular interest to us. If they wanted to do

this, what was stopping them? We provided a number of possibilities, and faculty who wanted to teach more science were able to indicate which ones were reasons and which ones were not. These are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Reasons given for not addressing science more in classroom (faculty who would like to devote more time to scientific issues)

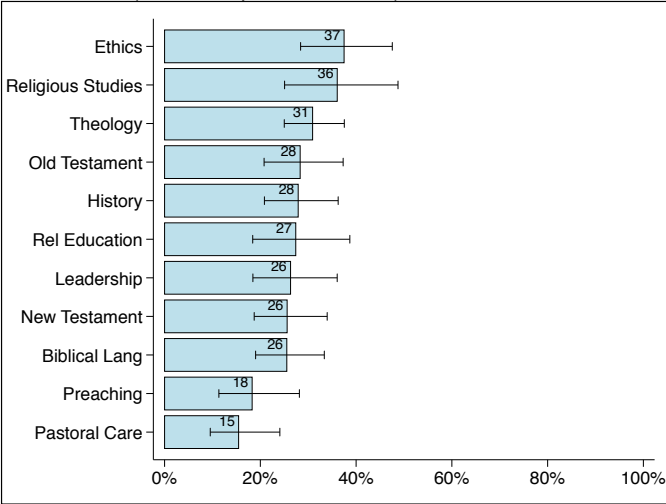


Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

The most popular answer was that there is simply not enough time, with a little more than half indicating this as a factor. Nearly this many (47 percent) also indicated that they do not think they are knowledgeable enough about scientific topics to include them. Very little of the reason is due to a fear of the consequences of incorporating more science. Only around 4 percent of these faculty indicated that they don't do this because their views on the scientific topics would be unwelcome or because they are concerned about how scientific issues might impact the faith of students.

Who wants to spend more time on scientific topics? If we separate out faculty by teaching area (Figure 9), we see that this follows closely to what we uncovered in Figure 2. Ethics and religious studies are near the top, with 37 and 36 percent wishing they could spend more time in the classroom on scientific topics. This means that faculty who are already spending more time in the classroom on these topics are the very same ones who think these topics are not addressed enough. There is one exception. Only 15 percent of faculty who teach about pastoral care issues want more time devoted to scientific issues, despite reporting higher-than-average levels of classroom science engagement (3.5 on the 5-point scale). Faculty teaching in this area use psychology in the classroom more than any other

Figure 9. Percent wanting to spend more time on scientific issues in classroom by area of expertise (all faculty)

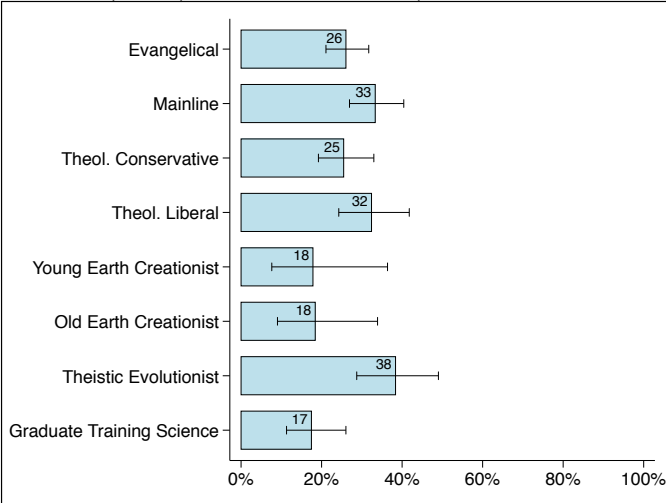


Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

group (85 percent). Perhaps they believe the behavioral sciences are already adequately integrated into their fields of study.

Looking at the set of faculty characteristics, we can see additional factors are important in predicting which faculty want more science (Figure 10). Theological orientation makes some difference, with evangelicals and theological conservatives slightly less likely to want more time devoted to scientific topics (about 1 in 4) compared to mainline Protestants or theological progressives (about 1 in 3). The larger difference occurs

Figure 10. Percent wanting to spend more time on scientific issues in classroom by faculty characteristics (all faculty)

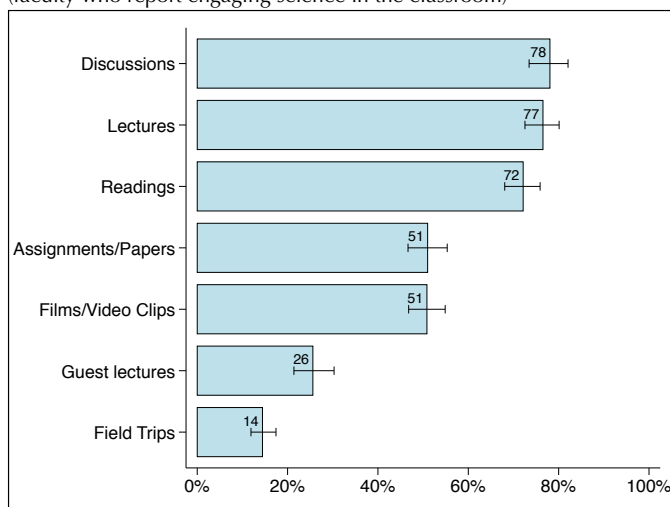


Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

between those who adopt an evolutionist position of creation and those who reject such a position. Those who strongly identify as either Young Earth or Old Earth creationists are less than half as likely to desire additional time devoted to scientific topics (18 percent) compared to faculty who strongly identify as theistic evolutionists (38 percent). Lastly, and somewhat surprisingly, those with graduate training in science are less likely to want to devote classroom time to science integration. Perhaps, given their backgrounds, they feel that they already do a good job in this area.

The survey included a set of questions about pedagogical method, preparation, and interest in teaching resources. Among faculty who reported engaging science in the classroom (i.e., excluding those who reported that they “never” addressed scientific topics), Figure 11 presents the preferred pedagogical method that faculty use. Unsurprisingly, discussions, lectures, and assigned readings are the most commonly used methods, with about three out of four faculty reporting that this is what they use. Written assignments and film/video clips are both used by about half of faculty, while guest lecturers and field trips are less commonly used (26 percent and 14 percent, respectively).⁵

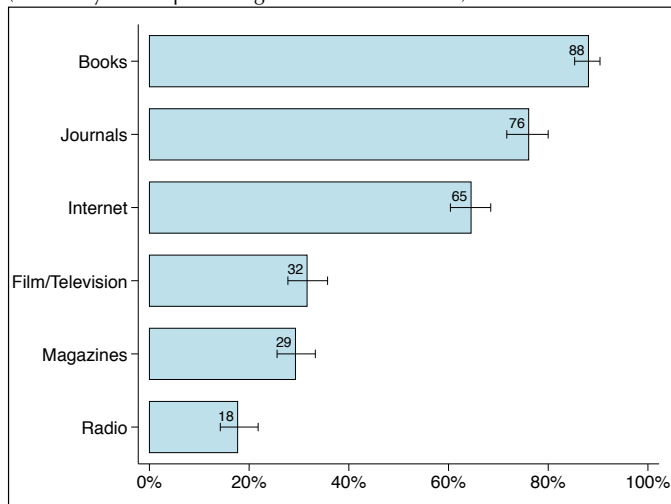
Figure 11. Classroom pedagogical method used to engage science (faculty who report engaging science in the classroom)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

5. Each of these pedagogical methods can also be broken down by the scientific discipline addressed in the classroom, although that would be cumbersome to include in a report such as this.

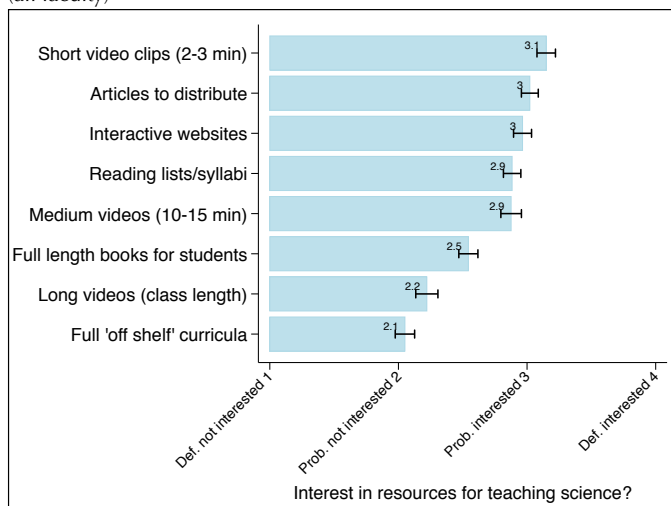
Figure 12. Resources consulted for classroom science material
(all faculty who report using science in classroom)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

What resources do faculty consult when preparing to address science material in the classroom (Figure 12)? Nearly all report relying on books (88 percent), followed closely by journals (76 percent). The Internet is also a useful resource for many (65 percent). Other resources, such as film/television, magazines, and radio, are less popular. This does *not* mean, however, that faculty are uninterested in resources like films. They are, but for a different purpose.

Figure 13. Interest in resources for classroom use on scientific topics
(all faculty)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

In a separate question, faculty were asked to assess how interested they would be in certain types of resources for classroom use (Figure 13). For this purpose, short video clips (two to three minutes long) topped the list. On the whole, faculty are most interested in flexible pedagogical tools such as short readings, videos, or interactive websites, and less interested in full-length books and fully designed curricula.

Summing up, we can see several important patterns emerge in the data on science in the seminary classroom. First, the vast majority of seminary faculty believe that science is being engaged in their classrooms. Only 7 percent say it is never addressed.

Second, faculty in fields that are more applied or interdisciplinary are more likely to report classroom science engagement (e.g., ethics and religious studies), while established, self-contained areas of study such as Old and New Testament or biblical languages are less likely to report engaging with scientific issues in the classroom.

Third, for many faculty—especially those with expertise in areas like pastoral care—scientific engagement relies heavily on the social and behavioral sciences (sociology, anthropology, and psychology) and very little on fields like physics, earth science, medical science, or engineering. Areas of science that deal with issues related to creation, such as the life sciences and cosmology, fall somewhere between these.

Fourth, a little more than a quarter of seminary faculty would like to spend more time covering scientific topics. (Nearly all the remaining faculty are happy with the amount of time spent.) The reasons they do not spend more time are primarily related to a lack of time to prepare and lack of knowledge. Notably, their reasons are not due to any fear that their own views are unwelcome or that student faith might be negatively impacted.

Fifth, the most important factors that predict classroom science engagement and the desire to spend more time on science are their position on creation and origins and their graduate level training in science. Theistic evolutionists are the most likely to engage with science and want more of it, while Young Earth creationists are the least likely. Those with graduate training in science are more likely to include it in the classroom but less likely to think more of it is needed. Other factors such as general theological orientation of the faculty or seminary, gender, and race or ethnicity tend to be unimportant.

Sixth, seminaries that offer more programs have higher overall rates of classroom science engagement, but this is not because they have more

faculty teaching in certain areas, or because they have more or less faculty with particular science or faith views.

Finally, seminary faculty tend to use conventional pedagogical methods such as discussion, lecture, and readings to engage science, although they express interest in new classroom tools such as short video clips and interactive websites to help supplement classroom learning.

Student engagement

A number of survey items asked faculty to rate their overall impressions of student science background, interest, and preparation.⁶ First, faculty were asked to approximate the proportion of students who come to their seminaries with a degree in the natural or social sciences. Faculty were also able to mark that they were unable to make this estimate. (A little over one-third indicated this.) The average estimate of students with a natural science degree is 15 percent (10 percent at the median); with a social science degree, 28 percent (25 percent at the median); and without any science degree, 59 percent (60 percent at the median). Just as faculty are more likely to have graduate training in the social sciences, faculty perceive that students are more likely to come in with backgrounds in the social sciences than in the natural sciences.

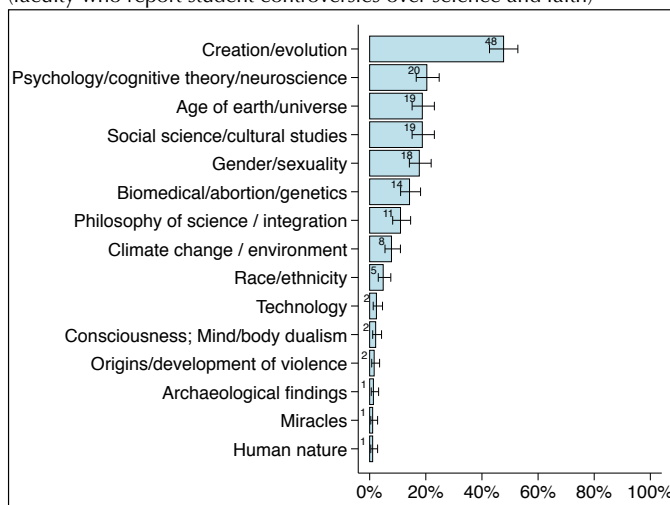
Are students interested in scientific topics? Most students are, according to 71 percent of faculty who taught on scientific topics in the classroom, but not more or less interested than in other topics. Eleven percent reported that students were *less* interested in science than in other topics, while 18 percent of faculty reported that their students were *more* interested in these topics than in other topics. This differs by faculty area of expertise in predictable ways (similar to what was found in Figure 2). For example, faculty whose expertise is an area like pastoral care report 25 percent of students being *more* interested in scientific topics than other topics. The same measure is less than 10 percent for those whose expertise is Old Testament.

This perceived lack of student interest by faculty teaching Old Testament is interesting in light of where faculty perceive controversy among

6. It is important to remember that these are *faculty* reports of their perceptions of students. While the ideal would be to have student self-reports, these items should still provide a rough approximation of the characteristics of students.

students. When asked whether any scientific topics provoked controversy among the students, 61 percent of faculty reported “yes.” When these 61 percent of faculty were asked what the controversy was about in an open-ended survey item, nearly half of the responses (48 percent) had to do with issues of creation and evolution (see Figure 14). In fact, no other

Figure 14. Areas of student controversy from open-ended coding (faculty who report student controversies over science and faith)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

single issue was raised more than 20 percent of the time (several faculty mentioned more than one issue). Outside of the centrality of the issue of origins, the list provided by faculty proved to be diverse. Issues related to how to incorporate psychological or social scientific studies into various theological fields occurred frequently. Gender/sexuality and biomedical issues were also frequently raised as potentially controversial topics.

Lastly, how prepared are students to deal with scientific topics in their future ministries?

Only 21 percent of faculty agree that their students are “well prepared” to address science. The remainder are split nearly evenly between

faculty who “neither agree nor disagree” (39 percent) and those who disagree with the statement (40 percent). By most accounts, faculty are not optimistic in how their graduates will fare in this area. Moreover, there are almost no variables in the dataset that clearly differentiate faculty

“Only 21 percent of faculty agree that their students are ‘well prepared’ to address science.”

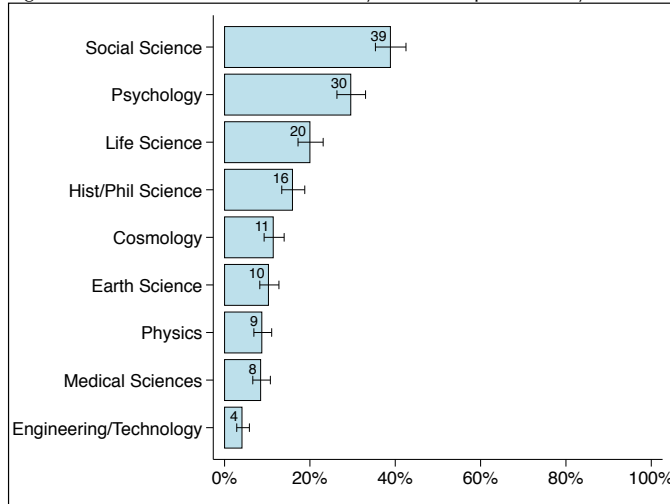
opinion on this. Seminary differences in size, number of programs, gender and racial composition of the faculty, gender and racial composition of the students, or ecclesial family (evangelical versus mainline) make little difference here, nor does the area of expertise of the faculty, individual faculty demographic characteristics, faith identity of the faculty, or position on human origins. The only factor that is significantly associated with believing that students are prepared is the level of scientific training the faculty member has received. Faculty who receive more training are more confident that students are ready to engage in science in their ministries. (Of faculty with graduate-level training in a scientific field, 32 percent believe students are prepared).

Consequently, using faculty estimates, we can say that most students do not come to seminary with scientific training, but if they do, they are nearly twice as likely to come with social scientific training compared to training in one of the natural sciences. Most faculty (7 out of 10) also believe that students are interested in scientific topics, but no more so than in other topics that might be covered in class. Despite this, a majority of faculty report that there is some controversy surrounding scientific topics, with the most dominant concern regarding the issue of creation and evolution. Although this issue is clearly the most common, there are numerous other points of contention at the intersection of science and theology. Finally, only one in five faculty members believe that their seminary students are “well prepared” to engage with science in their various ministries.

Professional and personal engagement

The third area this study investigated was the degree to which science fit into the professional and personal lives of seminary faculty. Faculty were asked whether they incorporated any scientific fields into their scholarly activities. The results, presented in Figure 15, are somewhat predictable by now. The social and behavioral sciences are at the top. (Nearly 4 out of 10 faculty report using a social science like sociology or anthropology, while 3 out of 10 report using psychology.) At the bottom are the medical sciences and engineering/technology (8 percent and 4 percent, respectively). This reinforces the taxonomy we have seen in terms of classroom science engagement. Fully 44 percent of all faculty do not incorporate *any* of the sciences into their scholarship.

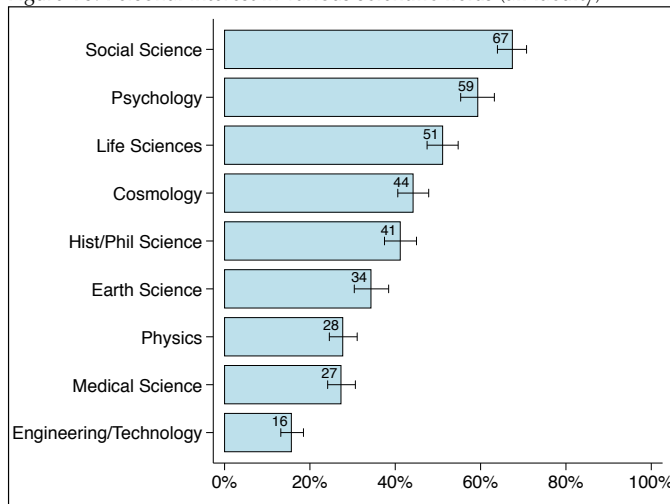
Figure 15. Scientific field used in faculty scholarship (all faculty)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

Personal interest in scientific fields follows a similar pattern (Figure 16). Not only are the social and behavioral sciences most likely to be used in scholarship and most likely to be addressed in the classroom, but faculty also say they find these fields personally most interesting to them (e.g., about two-thirds say they are personally interested in social science). The rest of the scientific fields follow a similar pattern, with medical sciences and engineering/technology holding little personal interest for seminary faculty.

Figure 16. Personal interest in various scientific fields (all faculty)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

Regarding their own reading patterns, faculty clearly expressed an interest in scientific topics. Nearly half (46 percent) reported reading a popular scientific magazine in the past month, while about half this number reported reading a peer-reviewed scientific journal (23 percent). Nearly all faculty claimed they would read an article about a new scientific discovery if they saw a headline. Only 6 percent told us that it is unlikely they would read such an article.

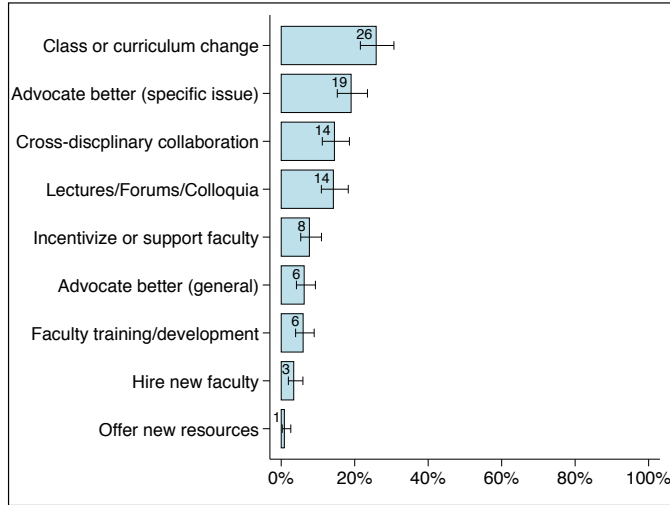
For the faculty who do incorporate science into their scholarship, how central is the science to their research and publications? Only 20 percent of this group (11 percent of all faculty) consider science to be central to their scholarship. For the vast majority of this group, science is one aspect among many (70 percent)—not central, but neither at the periphery. Only 10 percent who rely on science assign a clear minor or subordinate role to it in their scholarship.

A number of measures included in the study try to tap into the general sense of support and interest in the seminary as a whole. The results should be encouraging for those wanting to see more science engagement at Protestant seminaries. Only about 19 percent of faculty view their colleagues as uninterested in the intersection of science and religion. More than half clearly see interest in these issues by their colleagues. Likewise, the vast bulk of faculty feel institutional support for addressing scientific issues in both their teaching and scholarship. Nearly three out of four (74 percent) agree that teaching that addresses scientific issues is supported. Seventy-one percent agree with a similar statement about scholarship (only 4 percent and 7 percent, respectively, *disagree* with these statements).

Nevertheless, within this general context of interest and support, slightly more than half of the faculty indicated that the seminary could be doing more to engage scientific issues (52 percent). These faculty were asked to write in what they think their institutions should be doing to achieve this. The results were coded and are presented in Figure 17 (responses could fall into more than one category). No single suggestion dominates.

The most common response involves some sort of change to classes or curriculum (a little more than a quarter suggested this). A number of respondents suggested adding particular classes, incorporating more scientific issues into existing classes, or changing curricular requirements to ensure that more students take classes that deal with science. Nineteen percent of faculty named very specific issues that they would like to see

Figure 17. Faculty suggestions for further science engagement at their institutions (faculty who believe seminary could be doing more to improve science engagement)



Source: Engaging Science in Seminaries Survey, 2016

better addressed or advocated for at their institutions. These vary substantially from environmental issues to sexuality. Somewhat surprisingly, very few faculty members directly mentioned issues of human origins or evolution when they advocated for specific issues. Perhaps the advocates would hope to expand the science and faith conversation beyond this. A number of faculty suggested cross-disciplinary projects (especially with scientists), and a number indicated that lecture series, conferences, forums, or colloquia would be useful to help better engage science. If we move down to the bottom of the list, we can see that a few faculty suggested making special hires in this area, and a (very) few faculty suggested the need for new resources such as pamphlets or films.

Conclusion

It is clear that most Protestants seminaries have faculty who vary in their engagements with scientific topics, but a majority show moderate to high interest. Moreover, most faculty feel support from their institutions to explore these issues in the classroom and in their research. In terms of current engagement, it is clear that many faculty are at ease with the social and behavioral sciences. These dominate in both the classroom and scholarship. When it comes to the natural sciences, the life sciences and cosmology are most frequently addressed (likely because of theological

issues related to creation). Likewise, faculty recognize that issues of creation and evolution dominate controversies at the intersection of faith and science for many students. While the medical sciences and engineering are important to small groups of faculty, they are not widely engaged as a part of theological education at Protestant seminaries.

It is also important to reiterate what this report did not find. Science engagement is not an issue of theological tradition. There is no evangelical/mainline divide over science engagement (whether at the seminary level or the faculty level), nor is science something that male faculty engage at higher levels. Racial differences likewise do not impact engagement. At the institutional level, the only consistent factor associated with higher engagement is the overall number of degrees offered, with more degrees associated with more engagement (especially in the classroom). For faculty, those with science training and those who adopt a theistic evolutionist position on origins are consistently more likely to engage science in the classroom and in scholarship.

Finally, although science engagement is occurring at a number of levels, faculty expressed concerns when it comes to student preparation to deal with science in their future ministries. Only 20 percent believe their students are “well prepared” for this. Likewise, a majority of faculty have suggestions for their institutions to further improve engagement with science, the most common involving changing courses and curriculum.

Overall, these findings should encourage those who desire to see more and better science engagement in Protestant North American seminaries. While most faculty recognize there is much more that could be done in this area, they also report being personally motivated and supported to undertake the challenge.

Jonathan P. Hill is Associate Professor of Sociology at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Deborah H. C. Gin is Director, Research and Faculty Development for The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Theological Research for Theological Education and the Church

Craig A. Evans
Acadia Divinity College

ABSTRACT: The author describes publishing from both the scholar's and the institution's points of view. He cautions, however, that focusing solely on research and writing for academic purposes leaves a vacuum for untrained popular writers to educate the membership of the churches. While acknowledging scholarly research as essential to the theological school curriculum, the author urges scholars also to become active members in their church congregations, sharing relative insights in language that the congregations can understand.

As someone who has taught in both university and seminary settings and who has served two churches, I can appreciate the challenges and complexities that confront us regarding the role of theological research for theological education and the church. These challenges, I should add, not only confront us as teaching professors; they also confront the institutions where we teach.

I shall begin with a few observations concerning our training and our qualifications for securing a teaching post at a theological school. Most of us earn a BA or BSc degree at a university, either secular or church-related. Most of us then earn a theological degree at the master's level. Finally, most of us earn a doctorate, again either at a secular university or at a church-related university or graduate school. The doctorate is usually narrowly focused. The dissertation is especially narrowly focused. Most doctoral dissertations are highly specialized and highly technical. Those that are published are usually published in erudite academic series that find their ways onto the shelves of libraries that support graduate research.

Having earned the doctorate, we hope to find a full-time teaching post that leads to tenure. The fortunate who do find a post are soon confronted with a number of challenges. First, we usually are not given the opportunity to teach in the area of our specialty. Instead, we teach various introductory courses and core requirement courses that at best may only overlap a little

with what we studied in our doctoral programs. Second, most of those we teach are first- or second- year students who are hardly advanced enough to appreciate the intricacies and technical features of our doctoral research. Third, we find that many of our students are irritatingly preoccupied with practical questions and not so much with the hypothetical and theoretical aspects of our deep learning. This third challenge is especially applicable to those of us who find ourselves teaching in a theological school, a school whose primary purpose is to prepare people for vocational ministry of one sort or another.

A major part of this problem has come about because of the tendency over the last century or so to specialize. In the nineteenth century, it was not unusual for a professor of divinity to teach virtually the entire seminary curriculum, from systematic theology and church history to biblical languages and exegesis. This is rarely the case today. As seminaries expanded in the twentieth century, faculty appointments tended to become specialized. Today, we have professors of Old Testament, New Testament, church history, theology (systematic, biblical, or other permutations), preaching, worship, counseling, education, and the like. Even within these disciplines are various sub-divisions. In Old Testament, we have appointments in the Pentateuch, the prophets, and wisdom literature. In New Testament, we have appointments in Jesus and the Gospels, Paul and his letters, Revelation and apocalyptic, and, sometimes, the Catholic Letters.

We have hyper-specialization, which our doctoral programs strongly encourage. In my field (Jesus and the Gospels), we specialize in Matthew, Mark, Luke (with or without Acts), and John. We may specialize in different types of critical approaches and methods. We may specialize in Greek grammar and language or perhaps textual criticism. And on it goes. Scholarly publication adds to the tendency to hyper-specialize, as we seek to find a niche for our technical work. Professional societies, such as the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion, further encourage this specialization.

At this point let me say a little more about publishing. To obtain tenure and promotion we know that we must publish. There is still great truth to the oft-heard warning: "publish or perish." The beginning scholar will likely publish work that grows out of the dissertation and doctoral studies. This work, at the outset of one's career, has the greatest chance of being published in rigorous, refereed journals. In most cases, this means that in the four or five years of probation one will have published technical work

in scholarly journals in addition to one's dissertation in a learned and—in terms of distribution—very limited monograph series. Little, if any, work will have been published of a popular and practical nature. Tenure usually does not favor the popular, practical, or introductory; it favors the scholarly and the technical.

Thus far I have looked at the process of moving toward tenure from the scholar's point of view. There is also the institution's point of view, which must also be taken into consideration. Just as scholars compete among themselves, so institutions compete among themselves. Just as scholars work hard to make tenure and promotion, so institutions work hard to make and maintain accreditation, win grants, attract funding and endowment, and attract accomplished, veteran scholars whose addition—it is believed and hoped—will enhance the institution's reputation.

But in reference to theological schools and seminaries, this competition is not limited to the seminaries themselves, that is, seminaries competing with seminaries. Seminaries often compete with or at least compare themselves to their secular university counterparts. The standards and criteria for promotion and tenure at the universities often are adopted and applied at the seminaries. I understand the reasoning. After all, if seminaries, whose programs are primarily at the graduate level, claim that their programs and faculty truly reflect graduate-level research and teaching, then it is only right to compare their research and teaching with the research and teaching that goes on in the big universities and elite colleges.

Here, however, is where a problem can begin. Theological education, ultimately, has different purposes and goals. Narrow, highly specialized research often does not serve the purposes and goals of theological education. Yet the faculty of many seminaries labor away, working toward tenure and promotion, as though they are faculty of secular universities and high-powered graduate schools. Seminary faculty, like their secular counterparts in the universities, write learned studies that will be read by dozens of fellow scholars, not clergy and lay-friendly studies that will be read by thousands, even tens of thousands.

“If we do not write for the laity (and the clergy), others will.”

If we conduct our research and writing along the lines of the university model, then who will educate the membership of our churches, churches that support the theological schools where we teach? I fear that often unwittingly we leave the field to the untrained popular writers and quacks. If we

do not write for the laity (and the clergy), others will. These others include pseudo-scholars like Michael Baigent and his collaborators Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. In case these names mean nothing to you, let me update you. In 1982, these three men published the bestseller *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, in which they argued that the tradition of the grail, or cup, from which Jesus and his disciples drank on the eve of Jesus' arrest was, in reality, a reference to a holy bloodline that was preserved in a child that Jesus fathered with Mary Magdalene. This child made her way to France and became the matriarch of a royal line. Baigent and company argued for this theory on the basis of very questionable evidence and rumor, some of which was subsequently shown to be utterly false and fraudulent. No scholar accepts any part of this extraordinarily silly theory. Indeed, most scholars ignored it.

Yet in English alone, more than a million copies of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* sold. Regrettably, the book was translated into a number of other languages, and tens of thousands of additional copies were sold. We might be tempted to think that little harm was done. After all, scholars readily saw it for what it was. No academic journal reviewed the book. It was never featured in a program unit at any Society of Biblical Literature meeting. I doubt very much if the book found its way into syllabi in courses concerned with the historical Jesus and Christian origins! No scholar took it seriously.

Undaunted by the lack of scholarly endorsement, Baigent and company produced in 1991 yet another grossly misinformed and misleading book—*The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception*. This book offers fresh support for the hypothesis proposed in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by arguing that the true story of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is told in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which the Vatican has managed to keep secret from the public—at least until the intrepid Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh managed to expose the cover-up.

Ironically, 1991 was the year that the remaining many fragments of the yet unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls were finally published. There was a lot of excitement, and scholars had a lot to do. Several of the recently published fragments (mostly from Qumran's Cave 4) were very interesting. 4Q521, the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse*, envisions the coming of God's Messiah who would heal, proclaim good news, and raise the dead. 4Q525 contains a string of beatitudes, which invite comparison with Jesus' beatitudes in his famous sermon. 4Q500 alludes to Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah

5:1–7), linking it specifically to Jerusalem’s temple, which raises some interesting questions about Jesus’ parable of the Vineyard (Mark 12:1–12). When scholars convened in Jerusalem in 1997, as part of an international conference celebrating the 50th anniversary of the discovery of Cave 1, no one paid any attention to Baigent’s *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* or his earlier *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. No scholar took these books seriously. With the publication of the remaining fragments of the Scrolls, it became clear that there was absolutely no foundation for any of Baigent’s claims.

Unfortunately, several popular writers did take Michael Baigent’s books seriously. One of these popular writers, a former high school teacher with no academic credentials in history, biblical literature, biblical languages, or biblical interpretation, was Dan Brown. In his phenomenally and inexplicably best-selling book, *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown assumes the truthfulness and soundness of Baigent’s books and develops a murder mystery and thriller based on the idea that there really was a secret society (the so-called Priory of Sion) that kept records relating to Jesus’ bloodline. Of course, no one needs to tell you that *The Da Vinci Code* became a bestseller. More than 50 million copies sold, in English and several dozen foreign languages. It is estimated that as many as 100 million people have read the book. At its height of popularity, it was the number one abandoned book on Eurostar trains, with custodians collecting each month more than a thousand discarded copies left on seats, floors, and waste receptacles. (It gives new meaning to the “Left Behind” series.) When I learned of this dubious statistic, I had mixed feelings. I was glad the book was discarded in such large numbers but, at the same time, these numbers underscored the depressing point that the book was a wildly successful seller whose readers included professional commuters who were not ashamed to be seen reading it in public and whose reading it in public view more or less gave this dubious book an endorsement of sorts.

I have spent some time recounting this odd literary event because I am trying to make what I think is a very important point: If we do not educate the people in our churches, others will. If we make no effort to educate the general public, others will. If we fail to communicate clearly the expertise and riches of our scholarship, others will communicate very clearly their own ideas, whatever their merits.

Another way of putting it is this: Whom do you want to educate your congregation? Michael Baigent and Dan Brown, or you and your colleagues? We must address this question. Ignoring it, alas, is an answer;

in my view, it is the wrong answer. So how do we address this pressing question? In short, we must channel some of our research and writing energies into the presentation of lectures and the production of literature that is lay- and clergy-friendly. We must generate material that instructs and edifies our churches. We cannot ignore this responsibility in our quest for scholarly recognition and achieving standards and levels that are normally expected in secular university settings, settings that usually are not concerned with communicating with the general public.

How exactly do we go about this without neglecting our respective areas of expertise or lowering our academic standards? This is a difficult question, and I know that I do not have a definitive answer. But I can make a few suggestions, which I think many of you will find helpful. I shall make these suggestions under two headings: theological research in the seminary setting and theological research in the church.

Theological research in the seminary setting

When I went to seminary to prepare for a lifetime of pastoral Christian ministry, I was fascinated with Jesus of Nazareth and wanted to learn more about him and his teaching and his world. I looked forward to a lifetime in pastoral ministry. However, in seminary I discovered the academic side to theology and biblical studies. I loved it. Greek and Hebrew were not too difficult. Exegesis was fun. Historical and background studies were stimulating. While other students were attempting to avoid these subjects, I engaged them enthusiastically.

In my second year, I took an advanced course in Greek, in which we read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in one semester! That did it; I was hooked on the life, teaching, and world of Jesus. I was fascinated with the Gospels themselves and the questions with which scholars grappled then and still grapple today: What were the sources of the Gospels? How do they relate to one another? How much is history and how much is interpretation? I enjoyed it so much I decided to pursue a PhD. I graduated from seminary in 1977 and immediately began my doctoral studies.

I had the good fortune of entering Claremont Graduate University (CGU) at a time when its biblical studies faculty was at its greatest. CGU, along with Claremont School of Theology just up the street, boasted a powerhouse faculty in New Testament and related fields of study. In this faculty were Hans Dieter Betz, William Brownlee, Burton Mack, James

Robinson, James Sanders, and John Trever, among others. Claremont was a beehive of research and publishing.

Professor Betz chaired the Hellenism and the New Testament Seminar, which was favored with visits from Ronald Hock and Edward O'Neill, both on the faculty of the University of Southern California. During this time, the seminar was finishing its work on Plutarch and just launching its work on the Greek magical papyri. Important volumes on Plutarch were published, and the Greek magical papyri project resulted in a first-rate English translation, with notes. In every seminar, Professor Betz impressed me greatly with his attention to detail and high scholarly standards. In the 1970s, he was giving lectures on Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia and the Matthean and Lukan forms of the Sermon on the Mount. Years later, his impressive and well-respected commentaries on these materials appeared in the prestigious *Hermeneia* series.

James Robinson chaired the Nag Hammadi Seminar, dedicated to the publication and study of the Coptic Gnostic codices found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. I found his enthusiasm for fresh research, discovery, and publishing infectious. Entering Claremont was like walking into a publishing factory, and Robinson was in no small way the reason for this. I was overwhelmed by the activity. During my time with the Nag Hammadi Seminar, I became acquainted with Charles Hedrick (who taught me Coptic) and Marvin Meyer who, until his untimely death, was the research director for the Coptic Magical Texts Project at Claremont Graduate University and an expert on Gnostic texts.

At that time, Burton Mack was engrossed in Philo and Jewish wisdom traditions, and he was a warm-hearted Christian scholar. In 1977, I distinctly recall him telling me how happy he was that I was serving on the staff of a nearby church. "That is really good," he said. "What we need are more doctors of the church." Like Dieter Betz, Professor Mack had a keen eye for detail and yet at the same time could see the big picture. His graduate seminars were a joy.

William Brownlee was wonderful to work with. He was quiet, gentle, unassuming. Yet, he was one of the very first scholars to lay eyes on the Dead Sea Scrolls. He was in Jerusalem, doing a year of post-doctoral studies in 1947–1948, when the first cave containing scrolls was discovered. His studies in the book of Ezekiel and the ancient Ugaritic language were set aside. Professor Brownlee and John Trever rightly recognized that the scrolls they were shown were ancient, probably dating to the

Herodian period. Amazingly, Brownlee was given permission to bring the Great Isaiah Scroll back with him to Duke University in fall 1948, so he could use it in teaching Hebrew. (That, of course, is no longer allowed!) He published an early study of the Rule Scroll (1QS) and spent much of his career analyzing Qumran's commentary (or *peshet*) on the book of Habakkuk. I found him delightful to work with and eventually finished my doctoral dissertation under his supervision. It was from Brownlee that I learned much about the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it was with him that I studied Aramaic and Syriac. His sudden death in 1983 left me an academic orphan and ended plans that we had made for collaborative studies in Isaiah and Daniel.

I also had the privilege of making the acquaintance of John Trever, Bill Brownlee's longtime friend. Trever was with Brownlee in Jerusalem in 1947–1948, and it was he who took the very first—and quite excellent—photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Trever was also happy to give me a guided tour of his collection of photographs and artifacts, explaining where they were found and their significance.

Although I was very close to Bill Brownlee and he was my supervisor, the person who influenced me the most at Claremont was Jim Sanders, who joined the faculty in 1977—the year my doctoral studies commenced. It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the significance of his contribution to my understanding of biblical literature and its full context. Sanders introduced me to the versions of Scripture, such as the Old Greek (or Septuagint) and the Aramaic (or Targum). He led me through the rabbinic literature, taught me to appreciate rabbinic midrash, and transformed textual criticism and the study of manuscripts and their diverse readings and variants into a pleasure. Under his instruction, my appreciation of Scripture grew. Over the years, we have collaborated on a number of publishing projects and jointly chaired, from 1989 to 1996, a program unit in the Society of Biblical Literature. More than anyone else, Sanders planted in me ideas that would serve me well as I tried to bridge the gap between critical scholarship and the confessional setting of seminaries and churches.

As you may imagine, my transition from a seminary whose curriculum was conservative and traditional and with a purpose clearly focused on preparing people for Christian ministry, to a high-powered graduate university whose focus was on advanced research and publishing, was in some ways jarring and disorienting. Going into this program I knew

the standards would be tougher and the expectations greater, but I was hardly prepared for the degree of critical skepticism. Nothing got a pass; everything was rigorously scrutinized. It became clear to me very quickly that my seminary education had not prepared me for the kind of critical thinking I encountered at Claremont.

As I look back on it, more than 35 years after graduating from seminary, I do fault aspects of my seminary education. Most of the biblical studies faculty were in the habit of brushing aside critical questions as either unhelpful or perhaps not worthy of serious consideration because of an imagined underlying liberal and skeptical bias. I realize, of course, that the purpose of my seminary's curriculum was not to prepare scholars but to prepare pastors and missionaries. But the failure to address critical questions fairly and seriously was an egregious omission. I say this not simply because of my experience as a graduate who went on to pursue doctoral studies, but because of my observations over the years of seminary graduates who went into Christian ministry and then found themselves unable to deal with critical questions that they encountered in their own reading or that were brought to their attention by others. I have had many clergy ask me questions about the conclusions reached by the Jesus Seminar or a new book making novel suggestions. It has become clear to me that many of our seminary graduates are poorly prepared to address tough questions pertaining to Scripture and history or cognate fields such as archaeology or ancient manuscripts.

At first, I found aspects of biblical criticism unsettling. Over time, I realized that what biblical criticism challenged was not the essence of the Christian message but rather the baggage that many think is part of the message. Typically, this baggage included views of authorship and dates of given biblical books (that is, biblical books must be early and written by apostles), as well as assumptions regarding the nature of biblical literature (for example, the Gospels are history and nothing else) and the nature of Jesus' teaching (for example, that everything Jesus said was wholly unique, never before heard). Eventually, I was able to distinguish the baggage from the message. I can say that biblical criticism rescued the message and helped me see it and appreciate it more fully. I fault my seminary education for failing to make these important issues clearer. I have been very mindful of them in my own teaching of students.

Although I started out at Claremont as a New Testament student, I was so deeply influenced by Brownlee and Sanders that I wrote my dissertation

on the book of Isaiah. There are New Testament components in the dissertation, to be sure, but at the conclusion of my doctoral studies I was as much interested in a career in Old Testament as in New Testament. One of the ironies of my life is that 30 years ago, I interviewed for a position in Old Testament at Acadia University's Divinity College. I was passed over due to my youth and ended up at Trinity Western University instead—as an assistant professor of New Testament! This appointment guided me back to the New Testament, and, after 21 years at Trinity, I was appointed as the Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College, where I have been since 2002. It seems I was destined for Acadia after all—but in New Testament, not Old.

As I taught New Testament at Trinity, I of course began to shift my research and publishing away from Isaiah and the Old Testament to the New Testament. I focused on Jesus and the Gospels, which had been the focus of my interest back in seminary. An interesting thing happened. I realized that my work in Isaiah, the Greek and Aramaic versions of the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Coptic and Gnosticism, and early rabbinic literature was an enormous asset in the study of Jesus and the Gospels. These seemingly disparate subjects, in time, helped me greatly in my chosen field of specialty.

Another surprise for me was the discovery that even arcane, technical research could be translated into comments, lectures, and popular publications that non-experts and laity find very helpful. When I read Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, I immediately caught the numerous errors of fact with respect to the canonical Gospels, extra-canonical Gospels, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Coptic writings. Almost everything Brown's fictional character Sir Leigh Teabing said about these materials was false. My study of Coptic and Gnosticism came into play when I was invited to serve on a panel to discuss the significance of the recently published *Gnostic Gospel of Judas*. National Geographic's 2006 announcement of the existence and publication of this text—known to us from comments made by Irenaeus in the late second century—was an international sensation. All of us on the panel were inundated with requests for interviews and popular lectures and talks at a variety of settings. Needless to say, congregations and clergy alike had many questions. I never thought that study of such a technical, seemingly off-the-beaten-path branch of New Testament scholarship could become such a much-talked-about topic of interest. The staff at the National Geographic Society informed us that the Gospel of

Judas story was carried on the front page by more than a thousand print newspapers around the world. Online media coverage was beyond counting. The Society took great satisfaction in its observation that most of these newspapers placed the story “above the fold!”

The shock potential of Coptic Gnostic scholarship was not faded. It was only late last summer that Karen King of Harvard University Divinity School stunned the world by announcing the discovery of a fragment of Coptic papyrus, in which Jesus speaks of his wife, presumably Mary Magdalene. Once again, the world was abuzz with excitement and—in some circles—consternation. What could such a discovery mean? Many wondered. Well, we didn’t have to wonder long, for Coptic scholars and papyrologists began to suspect the fragment was, in fact, a modern forgery. Perceptive scholars soon noticed that this so-called *Gospel of Jesus’ Wife* fragment was, in reality, a pastiche of words and phrases drawn from the *Gospel of Thomas* and not just from the *Gospel of Thomas*, but from a specific modern edition of *Thomas*, complete with line breaks and misprints! Once again, technical scholarship rolled into action, clarifying and assuring the perplexed and eventually exposing the inauthenticity of the text in question. (I hasten to add that our honorable and respected colleague, Karen King, acted in good faith.)

Technical scholarship can come into play in the media as well. Some of you may recall the primetime news programs and documentaries of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. I had the opportunity to take part in a two-hour 2004 *Dateline NBC* program that addressed the factors that went into the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. What prompted *Dateline’s* interest in this topic was Mel Gibson’s widely watched and controversial movie *The Passion of the Christ*. In this case, our role as scholars was not so much to educate congregations and clergy as to educate a secular media. One potential minefield that had to be navigated with care was the sensitive question of just what role the Jewish authorities played in the arrest and execution of Jesus. I found working with Stone Phillips and his team very enjoyable. They asked good questions, were willing to do their homework, and were clearly committed to being fair and balanced. In fact, Stone’s assistants reminded me of busy graduate students functioning as research assistants for their mentor. In some ways, I felt very much in my element while working with them. The first airing of the *Dateline* program attracted an audience of 25 million viewers.

I have served as a consultant or as an interviewed expert in some 40 or 50 news programs and documentaries. But here is where it gets interesting—my theology students love it. And it is not so much that it is their own professor who is in the video; it is the simple fact, I believe, that it is a *video*. My students always thought it was great that their professor presented papers at learned conferences or published a book, but their interest and enthusiasm jumped several notches when their professor began appearing on television and YouTube.

Returning to the central question concerning theological research in the seminary setting, what is the place of serious theological research and scholarship in schools of theology? What contribution can and should it make to the curriculum?

I believe that fresh, critical, first-rate scholarly research is essential to the curriculum and classroom in seminaries and schools of theology. The fact that the primary purpose of these schools is the preparation of men and women for ministry in the church does not justify acceptance of lower standards or minimal interest in research and publication. Far from it. Because we believe that theological education is immensely important, we also believe that rigorous theological research and quality academic publishing are also very important. Without rigorous research, we would not be in a position to participate meaningfully in scholarly debate concerning biblical literature, Christian origins, theology, and other related areas, nor would we be able to educate properly our students who will eventually become the clergy of our congregations, nor would we be in a position to speak with authority to the questions and topics of debate that inevitably arise in the popular media.

Theological research in the church setting

Theological research is of great importance for the church. I believe in the “trickle down” dynamic—what we teach our theology students will eventually make it into our churches. But I also believe in the direct approach—we ourselves, we who teach in our seminaries and schools of theology, must take our theological research directly to the congregations. They really do want to hear from us.

Nothing keeps us more in tune with the needs and questions of our congregations than being a member of one and speaking to them. We must

never become an academic who teaches theology in a seminary but rarely participates in the life of a local congregation. We must be active members, ready to share with our congregations the relevant insights that grow out of our scholarly research and publication. We must guard against allowing a gulf to form between our scholarly work and the practical needs and popular questions of our congregations.

I return to Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* one more time. Along with the vast majority of teachers and scholars of theology, I initially ignored this work, even after it began to achieve unprecedented levels of notoriety. I recall being asked what I thought about this book. My replies usually were little more than brush-offs. Why would any scholar want to waste her or his time responding to a silly, misinformed murder mystery? But, in time, many of us learned to our dismay how much harm that silly book caused. I could go on and on recounting stories of people who either left the church or abandoned faith after uncritically accepting as "fact" some of the book's premise. Eventually I did join the debate, along with a number of other scholars of theology and other related academic fields, pointing out the innumerable errors and distortions. But by then a lot of damage had been done.

Brown's *Da Vinci Code* was not the first of the "junk books," nor has it been the last. They and their dubious documentary cousins will continue to appear. We must take them on one at a time, not necessarily in the academic arena but in our congregations. We must assist the clergy who are already serving in churches as well as the clergy in the making, our students in the seminaries and theological schools where we teach. We must show that our rigorous, learned scholarship can descend from the heavens above and enlighten the earth-bound mortals among whom we live.

In addition to responding defensively to the absurdities of the popular press and visual media, we must also proactively share the results of our

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scholarly research with our clergy and with our students in our seminaries and theological schools. Of course, we must be sensitive and sensible in how we share this research. Not all of it is necessary in a church setting, and much of it that is must be communicated in language that our congregations can understand. We must also remember our role as chaplains and pastors to our students, whose faith and academic journeys are often only at a beginning stage. We must not expect them to arrive at theological and critical maturity in a few months when, for most of us, this journey has taken several years.

Conclusion

There will always be a measure of tension between rigorous scholarship that comes to expression in the context of academic freedom on the one hand and in the context of faith-affirming, confessional settings on the other hand. It is incumbent upon us, as “doctors of the church,” to find ways of resolving this tension so that we might fulfill our responsibility as scholars who engage our disciplines at the highest level and educate our students, congregations, and clergy in ways that make sense in the setting of faith and church life.

If we are unable or unwilling to link our scholarship with the educational needs of our churches and our students who are preparing for ministry in our churches, our churches will suffer. Some of them will discontinue their support of seminaries and theology schools whose curricula and faculty seem not to be particularly relevant. (And, indeed, some large churches have done just that; they educate their own clergy “in-house.”)

So let us continue with our research. Let us strive for scholarly excellence. But let us not forget the purpose of research and teaching activities in the professional contexts in which most of us here find ourselves—in schools of theology and in churches. We must not let them down. If we do, they just might let us go and look elsewhere.

Craig A. Evans is John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins of the School of Christian Thought at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. He presented this plenary address at the 2013 Lilly Theological Research Grants Conference when he was Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies and Director of the MA program at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

The Craft of Being a Writing Theologian within a Theological School

Susan R. Garrett

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: Addressing her remarks to theological educators, the author discusses the many ways in which a theological writer develops the craft, what it takes to write for the church, and how writing for the church can complement the work of a teacher and good institutional citizen in a theological school. This article was adapted from a presentation at a conference for Lilly Theological Grant Recipients in 2012.

As theologians working within theological schools, perhaps some of you are uncomfortable with that word *theologian*. Maybe you are thinking, “No, no—I’m a biblical scholar,” or “I’m a historian,” or “I’m an ethicist—not a theologian.” But I use the word *theologian* as an umbrella term covering *all* of us who work at the task of preparing men and women for Christian ministry—preparing them to interpret the work of God and our traditions about God to a world in need. To the outside world, if not to the people in your institution, *you are all theologians*. So, please stop thinking that you are an imposter if you call yourself one. Your colleagues with PhDs in systematic or doctrinal theology do not get exclusive rights to the title.

I believe that to be an effective writing theologian you have to attend to matters both of the spirit and of the flesh. What I mean is that you must have a very clear sense of what motivates you, of other paths you could have taken (and may one day yet take), and of your concrete institutional context. I will begin by considering these other matters. Then I will turn to focus more pointedly on what it takes to write for the church, and how writing for the church can complement your work as a teacher and as an institutional citizen at your school.

Trace the trajectory of your development as a writer

My first of four exhortations is that you trace the trajectory of your development as a writer. How has your sense of yourself as a writer evolved? You will need to go back to a date well before you started graduate school and identify phases of your development. The following two questions can help you to crystallize your reflections concerning each phase: First, what role did outside circumstances play in shaping your sense of yourself as a writer? Second, what was your vision of success at that time? To model the kind of reflection I am suggesting, I will briefly examine my own development as a writer, addressing the questions about outside factors and changing visions of success. I invite you to find points of comparison and contrast with your own experience.

The first phase: aspiring creative writer

I first started thinking that I might become a writer when I was in seventh grade. The outside influence was an English teacher named Ms. Agostin. I had a girl-crush on Ms. Agostin, in part because she praised my writing effusively. I distinctly remember her saying, “The words flow from your pen.” That year, I submitted a short poem to a Scholastic Books publication called *Read Magazine*. It was published, and I was euphoric. For the remainder of my junior high and high school education I wanted to be a creative writer—a novelist. My vision of success was vague, but it involved large reading publics and substantial influence—whatever was the 1970s equivalent of the Oprah Book List.

This first phase lasted until college. During my freshman year at Duke University, my creative writing professor, Dr. Judy Dearlove, sharply criticized my writing because it did not meet her avant garde preferences. I became unable to write a single sentence without doubting myself, and I abandoned my aspirations to be a novelist. In retrospect, I view Dr. Dearlove as an agent of divine providence for my life. She made me begin to rethink my career plans.

The second phase: discovery of academic research

At the end of my sophomore year of college, at the urging of another Duke instructor, Dr. Barney Jones, I decided to become a New Testament professor. After my MDiv, when I was eventually admitted to a doctoral program, I assumed I would have to publish if I didn’t want to perish and,

indeed, I still loved to write. But my real calling, as I perceived it, was to teach.

The outside factor that would profoundly change my self-understanding and aspirations regarding writing was the PhD program in New Testament at Yale University. Over the course of my four years in that program, I was formed in a rigorous discipline and discovered the intense intellectual pleasure and aesthetic satisfaction of engaging in the investigation, exegesis, and exposition of texts. I began to yearn to be an important academic writer. My vision of success was to be like my teacher, Wayne Meeks, an exceptionally disciplined and original thinker who writes with impressive elegance and economy of style. I remember an incident in the Day Missions Library at Yale. I was reading an article by Wayne, and one of my peers in the graduate program walked up and asked me what I was doing. “Engaging in silent hero worship,” I answered. What would it mean to be like Wayne Meeks? It would mean teaching at a place like Yale and publishing books of powerful and widespread influence in the academic world—books with a little bit of crossover appeal, maybe something picked up by the History Book Club. I was soon on that path, teaching first at Emory University and then at Yale. But there was a slight problem—my position at the divinity school was nontenured and, therefore, distinctly insecure. When the central administration started making noises about retrenchment at the divinity school, I decided to look at job openings elsewhere. I ended up, again by the hand of providence, at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS).

The third phase: writing also for the church

The outside influence for the third phase was my present institution, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where I have taught since 1995. At LPTS, writing for the academy is rewarded, but so are speaking and writing for the church. Many of our students are heading toward parish ministry; others are directed toward counseling careers. Most all of our students feel a strong connection to the church. Our faculty members publish extensively for both the guild and the church. I think the difference from Yale is that at Yale, in my experience, the church could remain somewhat abstract; at LPTS, we are always acutely aware of denominational particularities and requirements, whether for the PCUSA or for the various other denominations represented among our students and faculty. There also have been more specific developments that have shaped my path. Around

1999, motivated by the needs of my own young daughter, I embarked on a project with colleague Amy Plantinga Pauw to write a children's devotional book. None of the devotionals I could find already in print actually talked about the Bible, and all were filled with what Amy and I called "fakey little stories" and another colleague called "object lesson crap-pola." Through the process of writing the devotional, mentored by Amy, I discovered my inner theologian. At LPTS, I also had the privilege, for 11 years, of directing the Grawemeyer Award in Religion, a \$100,000 prize to an outstanding work in the field. Through the process of reading and critiquing dozens of books each year, evaluating specifically their creativity and accessibility, I learned how inaccessible and narrowly directed most scholarly writings in theology and religious studies are.

During this period of my career, my vision of success was to write works that would be not only first rate academically, but also comprehensible and appealing to a wider public—not popular books, but books for all those intelligent lay people who supposedly exist out there in readerland. My secret wish was to have a book reviewed in the *New York Times* and to have it sell a lot of copies. With the incredible boon of a fellowship from the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology program, I began the nearly 10-year endeavor to write a book concerning ancient and modern beliefs about angels. It was published in 2008 by Yale Press as *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus*. I expected that this would be it! The big success!

The results, however, were decidedly mixed. On the plus side, it won a prize, and three of the scholars whom I most admire loved the book and told me why. I got emails from a few random people around the world who told me it changed their lives. I was invited to speak at churches, locally and further afield. But it did not get reviewed in the *New York Times*; it didn't even get reviewed in that many scholarly journals, and it certainly did not sell a lot of copies. Last I checked, its ranking on Amazon was 1,205,381. So I reevaluated my vision of success. I decided that the whole *New York Times* thing (symbolic as it was for public acclaim) was an insidiously harmful vestige from the first phase of my development as a writer. I was chasing after the wrong kind of approval.

In retrospect, I can see that outside factors played a huge role in my development as a writer and in my own shifting standards of success. I exhort you, too, to take an hour or two sometime soon to reflect on your own course of development. How were your aspirations as a writer born

and nurtured? What outside influences shaped your path? What was your vision of success at each stage? I suspect that many of your careers are (in a general way) like mine—they have had distinct phases, with good writing done in each phase, but with that writing serving different publics and appropriately measured by differing standards of success. That kind of evolution or change in a career is perfectly acceptable and should not surprise you. A vocation—including the vocation to be a writer—is a dynamic thing, shifting in response to the concrete circumstances in which we find ourselves and to those concrete needs of the world that we discover ourselves able and eager to meet.

Assess your institutional context

The second of my four exhortations is that you assess your institutional context. Consider the bearing that the seminary or divinity school where you teach has on your writing. What kinds of writing does your institution reward? Are a certain number of monographs necessary for tenure or promotion, and do they have to be from certain types of presses? What about articles in peer-reviewed journals? What about writings in publications that have broader circulation among ministers and lay people—will they be regarded as having enough gravitas to count toward advancement? How much freedom is there to branch out into different kinds of writing after you pass the next hurdle?

In addition to asking what kinds of writing your institution rewards, you should also ask about the kinds of writing that your teaching load, administrative responsibilities, and sabbatical policies realistically allow. It is always hard, no matter where you teach, to find enough time to write, but it is *distinctly harder* when you are teaching eight courses a year and required to attend daily chapel than when you are teaching four or five courses a year and have summers off.

How good is the fit between all of these institutional expectations on the one hand and your own interests and abilities on the other hand? Can you develop a pattern of writing that you find meaningful and sustaining while living within these parameters and meeting your various obligations, both institutional and personal?

When you were in graduate school, you no doubt envisioned a certain reality for yourself, and perhaps the reality you are now experiencing does not quite measure up. Perhaps you secretly think your status should be

higher—that you should have doctoral students, world-travel opportunities, and the other perks that go with a position at a high-flying institution. I caution you to beware of the idols that you learned to worship while you were in your PhD program. Ambition is a two-edged sword. When we were searching for an Old Testament professor at LPTS recently, I myself was looking in every application for signs of ambition. I want a colleague who is motivated—even driven—to participate in scholarly discourse and to publish as well as to teach. But, at the same time, I recognize that ambition can interfere with one’s thriving as a faculty member and as a servant of the church, if one measures oneself always and only against the guild’s standards of success. The guild’s standards of success are not the same as God’s standards of success. They probably are not exactly the same as your institution’s standards of success either. Do not cater excessively to your own ambition, lest it co-opt you and make you take your eyes off the true prize—a career that doesn’t just add line after line to your curriculum vitae, but that makes a genuine difference in people’s lives.

Recognize that there are multiple callings

My third exhortation is for you to recognize that there are multiple callings and multiple ways to fulfill a single calling. Above all, resist arrogance and keep Paul’s words from 1 Cor 4:6–7 ever before you: “Let none of you be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” If you have done the self-evaluation that I advocated in my first exhortation, then you have already realized that you are where you are in large part because of circumstances and people completely outside your control. Be thankful for the privilege and the providence that got you where you are and resolve to pay it forward. But please do not look down on those whose career paths are different from your own, or suppose (even subconsciously) that their contributions must necessarily be inferior. Respect the second-career PhDs and what my colleague, Dianne Reistroffer, calls the “blue collar PhDs.” Respect those who publish in venues other than university presses or who devote their lives to being outstanding institutional citizens, carrying, perhaps, a burden of labor far greater than the one you carry. Respect the book editors, and the administrators from The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), and your own institution’s administrators. Recognize that

just as God's hand has led you to your present circumstances, so it is with them.

In making this exhortation to respect those who labor among you, including those who have charge over you, I am still speaking out of my own experience and could probably be accused of special pleading, as I am myself about to enter into administration. Over the past year, as I wrestled with my own developing sense of call to be the next dean of LPTS, the biggest obstacle I had to overcome has pertained to my aspirations as a writer—how can I research and write if I am administrating? Everyone knows that being a dean is an all-consuming job. Everyone knows that deans have no time to publish. It took monumental effort to get myself past my own presumption that to decrease, or even to halt, my publishing would be to abandon everything for which I have worked.

From this new vantage point, I now see that the nonevent of my recent book also exhibits the hand of divine providence. It didn't get reviewed in the *New York Times*. It didn't sell many thousands of copies. The nonoccurrence of these expected outcomes has made me realize that I have been measuring myself by inappropriate standards of worth. I needed to let go of them and craft for myself a new vision of success. I cannot tell you how I will view this incipient phase of my life 10 years from now, but I can tell you that right now I am writing and editing all the time—just not things that will be published by notable presses or bring me fame. And it is all good.

My daughter told me of a three-way conversation about her favorite musician, Ben Sollee. Sollee is a cellist who has turned his classical training in cello to new ends using creative playing techniques and drawing on influences from folk, bluegrass, jazz, and R&B. My daughter's friend is a classical cellist and has nothing but disdain for Sollee "because he plucks." A teacher overheard the girls' conversation and asked rhetorically, "What, can a musician never use an instrument in a style other than the one originally intended? Then how would there ever be anything new?" So God may intend to do something new with you. Be open to that!

Whenever you are called upon to write for your institution, as you certainly will be, please do not suppose that you are wasting your hard-won scholarly capacities. Those ATS accreditation reports, those grant proposals, those institutional publications, and even those syllabi and comments on students' papers are not sidetracks or distractions from your path but, rather, equally essential parts of the journey. Use them as opportunities to

hone your craft, for these occasions are also part of what it takes to be a writing theologian in a theological school. This is part of why your institution pays you. You are not wasting all your fine training; you are simply repurposing it for a time, whether short or long. You are playing a different kind of music. So, let the habits of careful research and the attention to nuance and precision that you developed in graduate school serve other aims than the narrow ones you originally supposed. Marvel at your own adaptability and be glad.

Make a way to write for the church

My fourth and final exhortation is that you make a way to write for the church. I say “make” rather than “find” a way because writing for the church will not likely happen by accident; you have to make the effort. It is so much easier to stay in your academic comfort zone. In your comfort zone, you can keep using the familiar language and addressing the familiar questions. You can hedge your bets with caveats and conditions and to-be-sure’s and thereby avoid the risk that comes with making a genuine faith claim. I’ll address each of these issues in turn—first language, then questions, and finally faith claims.

Our prose

A fine PhD program instills a love for disciplined argument and rarified discourse that is both a blessing and a curse. It is an intrinsic blessing to be able to think critically, analyze, assemble and weigh evidence, measure impacts, attend to detail, and observe subtle gradations of meaning. Such skills can also be an asset when you come to preach, write devotionally, compose Sunday School curricula, blog, or engage in any of the other kinds of writing of interest to a wider church audience, but only if you have the discipline to excise every hint of what might be taken as jargon, didacticism, and intellectual arrogance and have the courage to live by the rule that—with respect to your prose—less is nearly always more.

My experience with directing the selection of the Grawemeyer Award winners in Religion persuaded me that there are quite a number of “Professor Pootwattles” among us. “Professor Pootwattle,” if you do not know, is a “virtual academic” on the World Wide Web. You click a button and the professor generates a syntactically correct sentence based on common phrases pulled from academic works. A few examples:

1. The logic of millennial hedonism is comparable with the hermeneutic of classification.
2. The sublimation of the unknown may be seen as the (re) invention of narrative qua narrative.
3. The de-eroticization of the master-slave dialectic does not undermine the totalization of materiality.
4. The differentiation of post-Hegelian criticism is indistinguishable from the emergence of teleological narrative.

Writing for the church requires that one expel “Professor Pootwattle” from the premises (and the academy would also be better off without him). I mentioned that Amy Plantinga Pauw and I wrote a devotional book for six-to-twelve-year-olds. Each entry included a Scripture passage, a meditation, and a prayer in 300 words or less. Writing this book was a fabulous way to train ourselves to focus on what counts most and to say it in a way that even a literal child could understand. My writing has not been the same since. When the book came out, Amy and I often received compliments from adults who said they used it not only for their children or grandchildren but also for themselves because it was something they could comprehend.

The questions we address

Writing for the church is not a simple matter of dumbing down what you would say to scholars. You have to rethink your driving questions from the ground up. The kinds of specialized and nuanced interrogation or historical construction that you and your disciplinary colleagues find fascinating will not cut it for a more popular audience, who will likely find such discourse to be pedantic or boring. You must ask yourself—what are the spiritual or intellectual hungers that I, with my highly specialized knowledge, can feed? Jesus said, “Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?” (Matt 7:9 NRSV). What bread will *you* offer?

The challenge for us as scholars is to find ways to speak from our strengths while addressing questions of genuine import for people’s lives. I had several false starts when I was writing my angel book, until I figured out that I needed to find the questions that mattered to readers—not the questions that mattered to me as a scholar intrigued by arcane texts and

obscure developments in the history of religions, but existential questions about the meaning of our living and our dying, the possibility of entering into awareness of God's presence, and the capacity of God to heal us of our pains and of our blindness to God's ways in the world.

I do not mean to suggest that you cannot speak of difficult topics. The complex problems facing the church and the world require complex solutions. Moreover, there are plenty of people in the church today who yearn to be taken seriously by professional thinkers like ourselves. Taking folks seriously, however, does not mean stubbornly insisting that they develop sudden interest in and capacity to understand the topic of our latest erudite monograph or foray into critical theory. Our challenge as writers for the church is not how to dumb down the topics we already know and love but rather how to *move ourselves* into new realms of discourse—discourse that is complex and nuanced, but with much of the complexity hidden from view, and written in a way that is beautifully clear and compelling to intelligent people who hunger for guidance on how to live faithfully in difficult and confusing times.

How do you figure out what questions will interest people in the church? One thing you can do is find opportunities to teach in local congregations. If you think about it in the right way, teaching in churches is not a *distraction* from your real work; it is *central* to your real work. I taught an adult Bible study at a church in Louisville every Sunday for about four years, and this experience shaped forever the way I now think about writing for the church. My imagined audience isn't vague; it is populated with real people whose names I know and whose questions and interests are familiar to me.

In order to figure out what interests people, another thing you can do is to read widely, including especially books and periodicals outside your discipline. To be an intellectual who can make a difference in the church, to be *wise*, you need to be conversant across disciplines and in the culture. If you don't have time to read, download books or podcasts onto your smartphone and listen to them while you do the dishes or take a walk. I generally resist the implication that the ivory tower is not the real world—it is certainly a part of the real world. But most people do not live there, and if you want to write for those other people, then you need to spend some time being where they are.

Making faith claims

The kind of claims you will be called on to make depends, of course, on exactly what it is you are writing and for whom. But many people do look to us as the experts and *want* us to share our best wisdom about what God requires of us. We were not taught how to do this in graduate school. Be bold, and allow yourself to make mistakes. Read and emulate books that address the audience you want to address in a way that you find attractive and useful. Speak from your strengths, but then venture further afield. Use your best creativity to help the church and its people to be better—better at thinking about religious pluralism, for example; better at relating to people who are different; better at coping with conflicts; better at responding to needs in their own neighborhood; better at unmasking the idols that surround us and tempt us every moment. When you make faith claims, do not worry if, at first, you feel like an imposter. It gets easier as you practice. You are probably doing this in the classroom as you seek to inspire your students to see how training in your discipline can be an asset to their work of ministry.

In summary, I have suggested that tracing your trajectory, assessing your context, and recognizing that there are diverse calls and diverse ways to fulfill a call will help you as you seek to find your voice as a writing theologian within a theological school. Once you have resolved to do that, you will need to pay attention to your prose, discover questions that you can address and that matter to the world, and have courage to risk putting on display not just your academic self but also your moral and spiritual self. These are not easy steps to take, but they may be what is required of you if you are to fully answer God's call. Make a way to write for the church!

Susan R. Garrett is Dean of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

ATS Publics of Theological Research

Gabriel Said Reynolds

University of Notre Dame Department of Theology

ABSTRACT: A Roman Catholic with a PhD in Islamic Studies examines the roles a theologian might play in the public sphere. One is to illustrate fallacies created by the media or popular culture. Another is to demonstrate that commitment to a religious tradition need not lead to antagonism to other religious traditions and that it might rather lead to greater appreciation for other traditions. The article was adapted from a presentation at a conference for Lilly Theological Grant Recipients in 2012.

The Christian Arab physician, mathematician, and theologian Ibn Abi Usaybi'a (d. 1270) tells us a story about his predecessor, a Christian Arab scholar from the eleventh century named Abu l-Faraj Abdallah Ibn al-Tayyib (d. 1043). Although we are living about a thousand years later than Ibn al-Tayyib, this story seemed to me a good way to begin this article on "the publics of theological research." Ibn al-Tayyib, was "one of the greatest polymaths of his era." He translated both the Old and the New Testaments into Arabic from Syriac, and he wrote Arabic commentaries on virtually the entire text of the Bible; he wrote a compendium of canon law (*Fiqh al-nasraniyya*), translated the Diatesseron ("The Harmony of the Gospels") into Arabic, and wrote commentaries on most of the works of Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates. For his day job, he worked as a medical doctor in a hospital in Baghdad. Ibn al-Tayyib was also a priest of the East Syrian ("Nestorian") Church; in fact, he worked as a secretary to the Catholicos, the leader of the church.

Ibn Abi Usaybi'a tells the story of two young Muslim students who desired to study philosophy under Ibn al-Tayyib and who traveled from the distant reaches of northeastern Iran to Baghdad (a journey of several months) to find him. Arriving in Baghdad, they asked for Ibn al-Tayyib in the university, but they did not find him there; they then went to the hospital, but they did not find him there. Finally, they went to the Christian quarter of Baghdad, where the residents told them to look for Ibn

al-Tayyib in a certain church. Entering into the church, they found Ibn al-Tayyib—the great rationalist, the medical doctor, and the translator of Greek philosophical treatises—celebrating Mass. To their great surprise, they watched as Ibn al-Tayyib prayed before various icons, processed around the altar—incensing it and chanting prayers—and finally brought bread and wine to the altar, which he later consumed with the others in the church. At the end of the Mass, Ibn al-Tayyib took off his priestly robes and met his guests at the back of his church. Examining their faces, he realized what the young rationalist Muslims were thinking. He said to them, “You are welcome to study philosophy and medicine with me, after you go to Mecca to perform the Islamic pilgrimage.” The two Muslims protested “We’ve just traveled months to find you here, and you want us to travel through the desert and back now before starting lessons!?!?” Ibn al-Tayyib, however, insisted on this condition.

When the two Muslims returned from Mecca, almost a year later, Ibn al-Tayyib began asking them questions about the pilgrimage: “Did you walk around the Ka’ba (the central shrine in Mecca) seven times?” “Yes.” “Did you get close to the black stone in its corner?” “Yes, we even kissed it!” “Did you run back and forth between the two hills Marwa and Safa?” “Yes, we ran.” “Did you spend an entire afternoon standing under the sun?” “Yes, it was hot, but we did it.” “How about the animal sacrifice, did you kill an animal?” “Yes we did the sacrifice.” “And shaved your head, did you shave?” “Yes, that too.” “How about the pebbles, did you throw pebbles at the stone pillars?” “Yes, we sure did.” Ibn al-Tayyib, finally, proclaimed “So friends, now you know that matters of religion come from tradition, and not from reason.” And the three of them sat down to study Aristotle.

For our purposes, it is noteworthy that Ibn al-Tayyib does not use his encounter with the two young Muslims as an opportunity to evangelize. Instead of sending them off to Mecca to perform Islamic religious rites, Ibn al-Tayyib could have sat them down and told them the stories of the saints represented in the icons, explained the significance of the use of incense as a sign of contrition and prayer, or described the Eucharist as a manifestation of God’s love. Yet he did none of these things; instead he sent his Muslim guests to Mecca.

Now, in the modern context, it would be tempting to interpret this act as a sign that Ibn al-Tayyib was a religious pluralist. We might say Ibn al-Tayyib was showing his Muslim friends that they have their own paths to

God, and commending them to follow those paths. But the end of the story seems to belie this interpretation. When Ibn al-Tayyib's Muslim friends return from Mecca, he does not ask them about the spiritual meaning of the rites of the pilgrimage, nor does he say something to the effect of "praise God, all paths lead to divine truth—you have your circumambulations of the Ka'ba, and I have my incense and my icons." Instead he says, "matters of religion come from tradition, and not from reason." In other words, he does not argue for religious pluralism. He argues simply that religions cannot be properly judged by rational standards and, therefore, that the Muslims should not think of him as a barbarian for performing his priestly ceremonies, and that he will not think of the Muslims as barbarians for their pilgrimage ceremonies; they should not discuss religion at all but, instead, stick to philosophy.

Now presumably, Ibn al-Tayyib believed that Christianity was the true religion and that Islam was not, but that this was the sort of thing that should not be said out loud. After all, Ibn al-Tayyib was living in the medieval Islamic world, where Christians were tolerated as *dhimmis*, non-Muslim subjects who were allowed to practice their religion but not to proclaim it publicly in any way. Both apostasy from Islam and the attempt to convince a Muslim to convert were punishable by death. It is perhaps understandable, therefore, that Ibn al-Tayyib did not ask his friends whether they were ready to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and savior. We might say that, according to Ibn al-Tayyib, the sort of a role that a Christian theologian should play in a public context is none at all.

In fact, the nature of Ibn al-Tayyib's theological corpus suggests that he was intensely aware of the social context in which he worked and that he took particular care not to write things that would invite suspicion or persecution from Muslims. Ibn al-Tayyib wrote a number of works in which he attacks the Christological views of the two other principal ecclesial communities of his context—the Melkites (Chalcedonian) and the Jacobites ("Miaphysites"). However, we do not have any work in which he attacks the Christological views of Muslims, views that are certainly less compatible with his own East Syrian ("Nestorian") Christology than with that of his fellow Christian believers. In fact, in none of his extant works does Ibn Tayyib mention Islam at all.

This particular concern with the social context of the medieval Islamic world is not unique to Ibn al-Tayyib. It was—and is—an almost universal feature of Christian theology in the Islamic world. In the Arabic account of

his eighth century dialogue with the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775–85), the East Syrian Christian Catholicos Timothy is careful not to offend the caliph's religious sensibilities in any way. This is a delicate task, for Timothy's very identity as a Christian implies his rejection of Muhammad's prophethood. Accordingly, when the caliph asks Timothy directly what he thinks about Muhammad, Timothy equivocates:

And our gracious and wise King said to me: "What do you say about Muhammad?"—And I replied to his Majesty: "Muhammad is worthy of all praise, by all reasonable people, O my Sovereign. He walked in the path of the prophets, and trod in the track of the lovers of God."

We have a sense that Timothy would have put things differently if he were not speaking to the Muslim caliph. In a letter to a fellow Christian priest, Mar Sargis Timothy describes Muslims pejoratively:

In the days of Herod, Pilate, and the old Jews, there was both defeat and victory, and truth and falsehood. So also now, in the days of the present princes, in our own time, in the days of the new Jews among us, there is the same struggle and the same context to distinguish falsehood and truth. The stumbling block of the cross has still not passed away.

Here, there is hardly any equivocation. The Muslim rulers (such as the caliph al-Mahdi) are Herod, and Islam is falsehood. It is no surprise, perhaps, that Timothy did not write this letter in Arabic but rather in Syriac, a language which Muslims as a rule could not read. In fact, today we know of many anti-Islamic writings—by Timothy and others—in Syriac, but the entire corpus of medieval Christian anti-Islamic writings in Arabic consists of one work (the famous *Risala* of al-Kindi).

It is notable to this same end that in later centuries, when the Christians of the Middle East had become further Arabized and fewer and fewer of them were able to read and write in Syriac, many still chose to use Syriac letters in writing Arabic. This peculiar literary phenomenon—known as Garshuni—was a convenient way to keep Christian theological discourse hidden from Muslim eyes.

Now the social context of Christian theologians in the medieval Islamic world is unlike that of Christian theologians in contemporary North

America. Theologians today are not obliged today to keep their thoughts on religion private. Thus we need not be guided by the approach of Arab Christian theologians who hid their theological thoughts in Garshuni. And, in any case, not many of us know Garshuni any longer (although I suppose we could use really complicated theological terminology to keep others from understanding our conversations). Therefore we are faced with the question of what role—if any—a theologian might play in the public sphere.

I have two ideas to share in response to this question, but I should warn you that both ideas emerge from my unusual profile as a theologian. My PhD is in Islamic Studies, and although I am a Catholic, I was never formally trained in theology. What I have learned about Christian theology I have learned from students and colleagues during my nine years in the Department of Theology of Notre Dame.

My first idea is that theologians might illustrate fallacies in religious categories created by the media or popular culture. To me, one of these categories is the notion of the “Muslim Martin Luther.” The crowning of a new “Muslim Martin Luther” seems to be an annual event lately. The Swiss scholar Tariq Ramadan was once the Muslim Martin Luther, as was Khaled Abou Fadl, a law professor at UCLA; Muhammad Shahrour, a Syrian scholar of the Qur’an; Abdurrahman Wahid, the former president of Indonesia; and most recently Abdolkarim Soroush, an Iranian philosopher. By this time, in other words, we should have had more Islamic protestant reformations than we know what to do with.

But the failure of these prognostications is not really my point; my point is that none of these Muslims says anything like that which Luther said. They do not believe in *sola fides*—that salvation comes from faith in the gracious sacrificial death of Jesus. According to Islamic teaching, Jesus did not die at all. They also do not believe in *sola scriptura*—that the Qur’an alone should be the source of Islamic religion (although there is, actually, a different Islamic movement shaped by this notion, the so-called “Qur’ān-alone” movement, in which none of these figures participates). They all acknowledge the hadith, the reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (whom they consider infallible and impeccable), as a second source of revelation; they simply prefer more liberal hadith. It is, in fact, liberalism on questions such as human rights, women’s rights, and religious pluralism that joins these figures. But then could we describe Martin Luther as a liberal in this way? Well, I’m hardly a Luther scholar,

and I probably should not try to answer this question in any detail, but I imagine you get the point.

The media's logic in crowning "Muslim Martin Luthers" seems to be the idea that before the reformation Europe was in the Dark Ages and the Catholic Church was a force of evil and oppression and that today the Islamic world is in the Dark Ages and that Islam is a force of evil and oppression, and if only Muslims had a Martin Luther, they might turn out okay. It is precisely on these sorts of matters that theologians can play a positive public role in educating the public by offering ideas that are based in reality.

My second idea is that theologians might demonstrate that commitment to a religious tradition need not lead to antagonism to other religious traditions and, indeed, that it might lead to greater sympathy or appreciation for other traditions. In the lecture Pope Benedict delivered at the University of Regensburg in 2006, he declares:

In the Western world, it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet, the world's profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.

Later, he continues:

For philosophy and, albeit in a different way, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding.

Benedict's arguments here have two implications that are relevant to our concerns. First, his arguments suggest that Christian believers are in a privileged place to have a positive dialogue with believers of other religions. It is believers in a tradition that has particular claims of revelation who are in the best position to appreciate the claims of believers of another tradition. If we take the case of Islam, it seems to me that secular humanists

can only fully appreciate those parts of Islamic teaching that are *not* organically connected to Islamic claims of revelation—that is, the sort of Muslims with whom they can dialogue are Muslims who are not very Islamic. Christians, on the other hand, could—and I believe should—appreciate Islamic teaching on things such as family life, marriage, divorce, just war, modesty, chastity, and religious freedom, even when Islamic doctrine may disagree with the particular Christian teaching on these matters. Christian theologians could, and should, appreciate that Islamic teaching on these matters developed through an analogous process of theological reasoning. In this regard, incidentally, the example of Ibn al-Tayyib is illustrative. Ibn al-Tayyib did not want to go to Mecca himself, but he presumably would not say that the rites of the pilgrimage are the sorts of superstitious things that brainwashed religious people do.

Second, Benedict argues that Christian theologians could—and should—listen “to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular.” This argument implies both that Christian theologians have something to learn from other religions *and* that Christian theologians have something to say about other religions. In the public sphere, it is often assumed that Christian theology should deal only with Christianity but not with the religions—that Christianity can be studied in a Christian department of theology but not, say, Hinduism or Islam, unless a Hindu or a Muslim is brought in for that purpose. But as long as Christians hold that there is something more than superstition in other religions, it seems to me that Christian theologians are called to study those religions in a theological manner. Even more, it seems to me that what Christian theologians say about the religions will be no less valid than that which scholars in religious studies departments might say.

“[D]eepening our commitment to the Christian faith is the first step to engaging in a meaningful dialogue with the faith of others.

Finally, I might add that when Christian theologians do say something about the religions, their goal should be to do so in a way that reflects Benedict’s first insight—that they speak about other religions with sympathy, and even admiration. In doing so, they will demonstrate that deepening

our commitment to the Christian faith is the first step to engaging in a meaningful dialogue with the faith of others.

Gabriel Said Reynolds is a member of the World Religions World Church program of the University of Notre Dame Department of Theology in Notre Dame, Indiana.

The Craft of Writing in a Theological School

Sondra Ely Wheeler
Wesley Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: A veteran teacher reflects on the distinctive characteristics of writing in a theological school context, the kind of knowing it requires, and the ways in which it is acquired, perfected, and transmitted. Characterizing the craft as a spiritual discipline that must serve both the academy and the church, she includes a discussion of some practices that make successful writing possible. The article was adapted from a presentation at a conference for Lilly Theological Grant Recipients in 2013.

H Having been a teacher for more than 20 years, I have a lot of experience with asking a question and receiving in return a lengthy essay that does not answer it. Therefore I try hard to answer the questions asked of me. And this assignment seemed like a reasonable enough request: “talk about the craft of writing as a person whose vocation is in a theological school.” A straightforward task, until you give it to an academic. Being trained as we are, we have to stop and query everything, so I first found myself wondering whether I actually thought of writing as a craft. I decided—after a week’s reflection—that the answer was “yes.” Perhaps the idea that writing is a craft is already obvious to some of you, but it took me a week to conclude that it was. And why. I hope sketching the course of my reflection will encourage, illuminate, and provoke you as you continue your work.

In the last 40 years or so, a rather long shelf of books has appeared to instruct, persuade, or remind us about the importance of the sorts of human endeavors we call crafts and the sorts of knowledge and ability that reside in those who practice them. These books range from erudite and esoteric to popular and practical, and they find their places in disciplines from history and philosophy to the burgeoning literature of leadership and professional self-help. They use somewhat various languages, they are in service of aims both religious and secular, and they find their sources and inspiration in everyone from woodworker Roy Underhill to Aristotle. (Within the broad field of academic and popular

theological writers, one might think of Alistair MacIntyre or Dorothy Bass, to name a few of the more widely known.) For our purposes, I need only sketch a few of the central characteristics of this kind of activity, the kind of knowing it requires, and the way in which that is acquired, perfected, and transmitted. Then I can say how it may be helpful to think of writing within theological schools as a distinctive sort of craft.

To begin with, a craft is an integrated body of acts of doing and making that are directed and governed by a single, overarching purpose. The fulfillment of that purpose provides both unity and a stable orienting point to all the diverse activities that together constitute the craft. It also provides the ultimate assessment of the knowledge and skill of the artisans in whom the craft as a human capacity may be said to reside. Thus, the purpose of the work provides a standard which can be seen as objective in some measure: there is more than one kind of goodness to be embodied in the product of any craft, more than one sort of excellent boat or building or book. Nevertheless, a boat that will not float or a building that will not stand up straight or a book that cannot engage any sort of reader may all be judged to have failed in their purposes. (Allow me to bracket the ingenious exceptions you are all thinking of, submarines intended to sink and buildings designed to rock in an earthquake and books meant as cures for insomnia.) Such exceptions notwithstanding, in craftsmanship there is a kind of constraint represented by the end to be served.

To be employed in a craft presupposes that one has acquired some level of knowledge (for instance, the boatbuilder knows what materials will make a boat float) but also some degree of skill, which is the concrete ability to make the knowledge serve the given purpose. No amount of understanding of hydrodynamics will help you in your boatbuilding if you cannot guide a saw to cut the desired curve. This means that craftsmanship represents a sort of embodied or inhabited knowing and requires not only the storage and retrieval of information but also the mastery of skills. A craft is acquired, developed, and perfected not solely by study—in the sense that can be done in a classroom—but also by practice of the kind that must be done in the place where the knowledge is put to material use. It is not a coincidence that crafts have historically been imparted through one or another form of apprenticeship, where instruction is given but also put to practical expression under supervision, where theory is integrated in a fluid way with application, and where the fully developed form of the craft is modeled for imitation by the student.

Although it is possible to speak of theory and application, that is a somewhat inapt way of speaking of the artisan's abilities. In truth, the capacities that make someone not merely a practitioner of a craft but rather a master of it cannot be understood as simply learning the rules and then applying them. The true craftsman is the one who can recognize what rules to apply in a new situation and how to adapt the rules to an unanticipated set of circumstances with flexibility and confidence. If there is a degree of constraint given in the aim of a craft, there is also freedom in the honed intuition and the genius of the individual artisan. In this, craftsmanship crosses the line from mere inheritance and preservation to innovation, from the skilled repetition and imitation of one's predecessors to creative continuation of a living practice that is not only applied but continually developed. A craft in which this process has ended is no longer an ongoing human endeavor in the same sense, but has slipped into an antiquarian function: it is the difference between a living community and the historic recreations of Sturbridge Village or Williamsburg.

“[A] craft is a particular and highly developed form of practical reason.

In sum, then, a craft is a particular and highly developed form of practical reason. It is developed in and over time, in a human community whose ends it serves. It must be continually refined and advanced as well as remembered and transmitted, as a set of practices and skills that have internal standards of fitness and excellence. Its master practitioners also serve as its custodians and guardians, inheriting and handing on insight and wisdom about the knowledge, dispositions, and capacities that sustain it as a form of human endeavor. Now they say that to a hammer everything looks like a nail: perhaps it is not surprising that to an ethicist, all the foregoing looks remarkably like an account of virtue. I realize, of course, that not all or even any of you may be doing your research in moral theology, and there is no special reason that this account should resonate with you or correspond to how you think about your work. Still, I am going to make a case for the usefulness of this framework as a strategy for sustaining and guiding the work of theological research and writing, at least as it is pursued by those whose calling is to theological schools. When I am done, I trust you to exercise your own roles as masters and guardians by telling me where I have gone wrong.

If a craft is a constellation of activities that together serve a definite purpose, what is our purpose? Why do we write? Early on, students generally suppose that the purpose of writing is to communicate what you know, to give others the benefit of what you have learned. They sometimes come to my office to bewail the fact that they can't possibly write the assigned paper because they haven't come up with the answer to the question yet. And so I tell them what those of us who write all the time have found out: that the purpose of writing is not in the first instance to tell other people what you think, but to find out yourself. That is to say, the activity of putting one's questions and the fruit of one's study into words is itself part of coming to clarity. It is in the effort to say clearly what it is that puzzles or intrigues you that your own questions come into focus. It is in the work of tracing the lineaments of what you have heard and read, of laying out the patterns that you have observed, of documenting the trends you have seen emerge in the process of bringing it to speech that the sudden startling convergence appears—here that the crystallization that moves one from inquiry to insight takes shape. Past a certain point of complexity, writing is how we think.

And then there is all the endless work—both maddening and gratifying—of reviewing, re-framing, reconsidering, extending, and testing the thought. How far does the trajectory go? How much will the paradigm cover? How illuminating is the linguistic analysis? How solid the historical conjecture? It is in the making of the argument that its usefulness and its limits are both discovered and displayed. The exposition of an idea is part of its construction, for it is only in full articulation that the thought is completed, and we find out what weight it will bear. Writing is how we assess the fruitfulness of our work.

And when we have come to clarity in our own minds, when we have tested and seen that the work can contribute something, then our work as writers is only well begun. Now come all the thousand iterations of drafts and redrafts, of visions and revisions that make up the bulk of the writer's work. As you all know well, it is not the writing that takes so much time, but the nearly endless rewriting. We struggle for clarity and precision, for accuracy and succinctness, for a vocabulary, style, and voice appropriate to our particular purpose and intended audience. We add and delete and add again, aiming for the perfect path between distracting detail and insufficient interpretive context. We work and rework the organization of a complex argument, trying to render the structure of our

thought transparent so that a reader who has not labored with us through the whole process can follow from a common starting point to a new destination. And here is the third level answer to “why do we write?” It is to contribute something to the ancient and ongoing conversation with people far and near, living and dead, that is intellectual life and, by our example, to prepare and invite new participants to enter that conversation, which is the heart of education.

We are not only researchers, not only scholars, not only experts in whatever abstruse thing we are experts in: we are teachers. And so partly we write to cultivate and to model for students the intellectual qualities we labor to instill in them: diligence in research, objectivity in evaluation, carefulness in reasoning, balance in judgment, clarity and vigor in expression, and a fine-grained sensitivity to what will reach and serve those who are addressed in a given text. Writing is how we who are professors practice what we preach and also how we open ourselves to the judgment of our peers on our successes or failures, submitting in our turn to the authority of the masters of our craft, the same authority we exercise in the classroom.

So if writing is a craft so central to our work, what are the practices that make it possible, that sustain it and make it productive? At the most mundane and material level, the indispensable (and often the most difficult) practice is simply taking time. On the part of institutions, this is embodied in the granting of periodic sabbaticals and by the provision of financial support for research. (Here we can all bow in the direction of Lilly Endowment Inc. and the Henry Luce Foundation, who have offered such support for many years.) But as anyone who has benefitted from such institutional gifts can testify, while they are vital, they are not sufficient. They have the crucial effect of removing barriers to writing in the form of obligations like having to teach classes or run committees, but those who would write must still establish and cling to the personal structures and disciplines that keep them organized, focused, and progressing. These vary widely, from the “work 14 hours a day and write in a mad rush until you collapse and have to recover in the Bahamas,” to the “write five pages every day, which you edit down to three you can keep.” I even have one professional colleague who gets up early and simply writes from 5 to 7 a.m. every day, whether he is teaching or not. I hate him, of course, but I have lost count of how many books he has published.

Even when other professional responsibilities have been lifted for a time, this personal taking and protecting of time to write is costly and

difficult. We all have competing tasks and duties, relationships and roles, needs and desires to negotiate and manage, and some of these cannot be deferred. (In chapter seven of my doctoral dissertation, for instance, I went into labor—try putting that off.) And beyond all that, there is the bare fact that writing, particularly writing well, is *hard*. A delicate transition can stop you in your tracks for days. There are times when you lose sight of the internal structure of a complex argument, and a whole chunk seems to dissolve into a muddle in your head. You can get stuck on how to express a nuanced distinction, and write and rewrite the same paragraph until you can no longer tell if it makes sense or not. And it is possible to get lost for a week, tracking down escaped footnotes. None of this is much fun, and none of it feels especially rewarding or even useful. As the son whose birth interrupted my dissertation used to say about getting up to go to high school, “some days, you’re just not feelin’ it.”

And here we observe that the craft of writing requires not merely knowledge and the skill involved in being able to do something. It requires a certain set of personal qualities that must be cultivated and exercised in a steady way until they become part of who you are—diligence and self-control, patience and the ability to defer gratification, even a sort of elementary fortitude, to sit down and face a process that will, at times, be almost physically painful in its frustration and slowness. Here we begin to talk about the internal dispositions and disciplines that enable us to fulfill our purposes, to exercise our gifts and make our contributions, and to find that what we think of as a basically intellectual activity requires capacities that are not themselves intellectual or technical but rather moral, not intelligence or even skill, aspects of character.

This is not at all a new observation. The medieval academy assumed it as a starting point, but they did not invent the idea; they inherited it from Aristotle, as he, in turn, had received it from his predecessors. Delineating the distinctive ends of the human being as a rational political animal as “to know the truth and to form a good society,” Aristotle understood the cardinal virtues of classical tradition as those capacities and dispositions that enabled the fulfillment of human ends. So he took for granted that the kinds of knowing and doing that human rationality made possible and human flourishing made necessary would require not just reason, but certain crucial kinds of excellence—forms of goodness that cleared the path for knowing and doing.

Beyond the forms of discipline and patience needed to forego normal life for months or years on end in favor of sitting in front of a laptop with a stack of books, there are other requirements. We naturally think of the quality of academic work as principally a matter of intellectual ability, but a moment's reflection reminds us that when we evaluate such work, we are looking for more than brilliance. We look for fairness in evaluating the evidence, justice in assessing the contributions and arguments of others, candor in acknowledging difficulties and ambiguities in one's position, and appropriate modesty in the claims the researcher's own work can support. Without these qualities, brilliance may not serve you or your readers well, nor will it reliably contribute to the shared enterprise of an academic field. (I remember Brevard Childs at Yale a generation ago; if he called your exegesis paper "brilliant," it was not praise; he meant that you had made the stuff up because it wasn't in the passage.)

So it's hard to get yourself to write at all, harder still to write well, and hardest of all to write in a way that advances one's discipline, whatever it might be. In fact, everything I have said so far would apply if we were all writing about particle physics. But my assignment was to examine the craft of writing in a theological school, and it is time I got around to answering the question.

Now, as all of you know, a theological school is a fascinating and idiosyncratic place in crucial ways distinct from a university department of religious studies. There, scholars may regard religion with sympathy and respect, but professionally, at least, they view it essentially from the outside. The theological school, by contrast, is an institution poised between two communities, two kinds of human endeavor, and two somewhat divergent fundamental commitments. (As a result, it is sometimes a bit like a child trying simultaneously to please two parents who are having an argument.) On one side it belongs to the academy, the community of those who have invested their lives in deep study of correspondingly narrow fields of expertise. There, attention is divided between extending the knowledge of one's discipline and handing that knowledge to the next generation of teachers and students. In this respect, the commitments of a theological school are to offer a rich understanding of the past and to foster innovative and rigorous research that can advance understanding of the present to serve the future. We are all here because of our stake in those endeavors.

But a theological school is also the product and the servant of communities of faith, bodies gathered through time and space to transmit not the knowledge and techniques of a discipline but the knowledge and love, indeed the service and the worship, of God. Their commitments are less to knowing the past than to continuing it, less to analyzing the history and structure of doctrinal commitments than to living as faithful embodiments of them. Theological schools are to prepare their students not merely to understand churches as a sociologist understands a tribe, but to lead them—and that from the inside. As we often put it, we are academies to and for the church.

But I want immediately to distance what I mean by that claim from some of the ways it has been interpreted. Schools of theology lose not only their academic credibility but also their best gifts to the church if they allow themselves to become merely trade schools—feeder institutions whose identities are exhausted by providing pastors to fill pulpits and schooled bureaucrats to staff denominational offices. To be genuinely an academy to and for the church is to sustain a complex relationship of support and critique, of standing within and at arm's length. It is to be deeply committed to the reasons people have had for building institutional churches, and to be sympathetic to their struggles; it is not necessarily to be wedded to the forms the church has found for pursuing its aims or for responding to those struggles. Often enough, theological schools must represent the loyal opposition. But we have credibility in that role exactly insofar as we do not merely critique but also serve, as we have hands-on experience and investment in the lives of congregations and their leaders; we are prepared to make our own candid confessional commitments, and we have a willingness to put our own skin in the game.

From within such lived-out loyalties we can make the critical insights of our research in history and hermeneutics, missiology, and ministerial practice accessible and useful to the churches we serve. Only from inside we can make a plausible case that sometimes loyalty takes the form of dissent. It is as men and women also of the church that we can show that a press for reform may also be an essential activity of conservation. As I have many occasions to remind students, God is divine but religion is human. Because religious institutions as human communities are subject to the same forces of decline and decay as all others, those that resolutely refuse to reform will either die or make us all wish they had. However, it

is the member, the servant, the lover who can call for reform: the cultured despiser (in Schleiermacher's memorable phrase) can only cast aspersions.

This is why the craft of being a writer within a theological school requires more than the knowledge and expertise of the scholar, and more even than the personal virtues that make good research and writing in any discipline possible. Because we never work only in and for the academy, our work requires a set of commitments made in the first person, and it makes claims on dimensions of the self that hardly any other kind of work in the modern academic world asks of its practitioners. In our work, it matters not only what you know but what you desire, what you hope for, what you fear—in short, who you are. Whatever our academic field or research topic, across all the diversity of our particular traditions and our personal understandings of faith, we are all working in support of communities that exist to know and to share the knowledge of ultimate things, and ultimate concerns must call forth our deepest commitments. They ask of us not only that we struggle to know and articulate the truth, but that we prize it above all of the other things—including publication and promotion, status and security, influence and validation—that we also seek through our writing.

Paul Achtemeier, whose recent death marked the passing of a vigorous and devoted intellect, once defined the seminary as “the place where the church loves God with all its mind.” That description has stayed with me because it marries so well notions that many are tempted to divide, or even to oppose. On one hand, it offers that study is a kind of love, a pursuit of heart and spirit that may fittingly be offered in service of God. On the other, it reminds us that the worship that befits a rational creature demands and includes thought as one of its dimensions. This is hardly a new idea, of course—Achtemeier was quoting Deuteronomy after all—but it is an idea that has lost currency in many places. It must not lose currency in the schools we inhabit or in the churches they serve. Most of all, it must not lose currency in us.

“To put it another way, writing is, for us, a kind of spiritual discipline.”

That idea brings me back to what kind of craft it is to write as a teaching theologian in a theological school. I submit that is a species of soulcraft, if you will pardon the expression, a work whose final product is not only

the manuscript that rolls out of your printer but also the person who gets up from behind your desk when it is all done. To put it another way, writing is, for us, a kind of spiritual discipline. In pursuing it, we commit ourselves to using the best gifts that are in us to learn and say as much as we can about the most important things there are: the meaning of the texts that nurture and sustain our communities, the rich and often painful history of human efforts to hear and follow God, the currents of thought and influence that shape or distort our understanding of the truth, and everything we can glean about the practices of guidance that can heal the people entrusted to the care of our churches. We engage the mysteries of suffering and the puzzles of how to remain faithful to our confessions while respectfully engaging with those of other faiths in the urgent work of making peace and caring for our planet.

Pursuits like these take us into deep waters, and just as they make demands on who we are, they will also continue to shape who we become. For in them we will face unwelcome truths about our communities, past and present, and find our own sins and failures reflected. As we strive to hear and bring forth a new word from an old story, we will find that the challenges it offers fall on us as well as others and prompt in us some of the same resistance we may find in them. The problems we analyze in our work are not those of some other people living some other life on which we can comment with wise detachment—they are our own struggles as well. We who strive to write theology are always being stretched by it, always being invited to become what we profess, and we cannot continue the work and hope for its fruitfulness unless we are prepared for some kind of transformation.

If writing is a spiritual discipline, then what are the signs of its progress, other than the production of long manuscripts crowded with plenty of erudite footnotes? St. Paul tells us that the marks of a spirit-guided life are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-discipline. What, are we to suppose, are the outward signs of a spirit-infused practice of academic writing? At the risk of bluntness, the essential mark of the kind of writing we are all called to do is that it must be good. Here, I don't mean smart (you are all very smart or you would never have gotten this far) nor do I mean "cutting edge," in the usual sense of dealing in whatever topic and idiom is fashionable in the theological academy in a given season. I don't even mean that it must be groundbreaking and altogether original, or generate rave reviews and garner much attention in the

fan magazines of one's academic guild. I mean just that it must be good writing—clear and forceful, well-structured and vigorous, having a point and getting it across with as much precision, energy, and grace as possible. Thomas Merton wrote once that, unlike the country music song, he didn't wonder why the devil had all the good music—he wondered why he had all the good writers.

In arguing that theological writing must be good as writing, I do not mean to substitute aesthetic for moral and theological judgment. The gifts of a writer, like any other form of human power, can be put to uses good or ill. (Nietzsche could write like an angel, and look what malign purposes his writing served.) But I do mean that we disserve our schools, our churches, and our students when we act as if substance and style can be altogether separated in theological writing; I would argue that it cannot. This is because the nature of our subjects in all of our disciplines—the being and self-revelation of God, the ways in which ancient texts can be read as a living Word to God's people, even a vivid and accurate representation of human religious experience or the deep work of caring for souls—exceeds the power of words exhaustively to denote and eludes the capacity of language fully to capture and convey. Aquinas, whose writings fill shelves in any theological library, once said that everything we can say about God is a way of saying what is not true. This did not keep him from producing thousands of pages, one notes, and no more should it silence us. But because as theological writers our reach permanently exceeds our grasp, we must never fail to reach as far as we can—must not leave any muddiness that more care or delicacy of expression could remove, must not abide any obscurity that a more transparent structure or a less esoteric word choice might illuminate. We need resolutely to resist the academic arrogance that uses technical language as a kind of poll tax, a means of keeping the wrong kind of people out of our conversations. We have to reject the intellectual laziness that mistakes impenetrability for profundity. It does not reflect well on the state of our craft that students in advanced theological study often write so poorly; they do not always have good examples to follow.

And since the heights and depths for which we reach cannot entirely be spoken, we must often resort to words that point beyond themselves, that gesture toward and evoke what cannot be parsed in any grammar. As Walter Brueggeman said of biblical interpretation, in the end we must aspire to poetry. Beyond clarity and precision, past vigor and conciseness,

we are left with the power of language to conjure—its potency to awaken imagination and passion, conviction and indignation, longing and love. And for that we need every power at our disposal, every gift we possess and can cultivate (not to mention a cheerful readiness to borrow—with attribution, of course—from the real poets.) It is not only competence we have to aim for; it is eloquence. If I am not quite prepared to say with Keats that “truth is beauty, and beauty truth,” still I suspect that some truths—like the vital union of mercy and justice in God—require a degree of beauty in expression to be expressed at all.

Whether you find these claims about the moral, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions of our intellectual work plausible will depend on your being willing to swallow an idea about crafts and craftsmanship, which is that they involve a sort of reciprocal creativity. Their practitioners both shape and are shaped by the work in which they are engaged, for it is a doing and making of things not only in the world, but also in and of oneself. In that respect, all crafts proceed out of conviction and embody a kind of commitment—a commitment about what is needed, what is worth doing, what is worth making, and in the end, what is worth becoming in the world.

The craft of theological writing is a distinctive form of this broader kind of human endeavor, like all of them both traditioned and creative, deeply rooted in a community and its purposes, and calling forth what is most personal and particular in each of us. Its distinctiveness lies in that it serves a unique and surpassing human good, the knowledge of what is of ultimate importance in human existence. Thus, its practitioners occupy a place of trust they must strive to deserve and protect. We are in such endeavors always students as well as teachers, always subjects as well as authorities, pushed to our own furthest limits in service of what reaches beyond us. For the final fruit of the craft of theological writing as it is pursued in schools of theology is not the books we produce, but the students we nurture and the churches we serve and guide; it is the lives we live, and the people we become.

Sondra Ely Wheeler is Ashby Carr Professor of Christian Ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.

Open Forum

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the role of the researcher in this process. The second part of the paper presents the methodology used in the study, including the data collection methods and the analysis techniques. The third part of the paper discusses the results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The final part of the paper provides a summary of the key points and offers suggestions for future research.

The research was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of scientific inquiry. The data was collected from a large sample of participants, and the results were analyzed using advanced statistical techniques. The findings of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, allowing for a thorough understanding of the subject matter. The conclusions drawn from the findings are based on a careful analysis of the data and are supported by the results of the study.

The study has several strengths, including a large sample size and the use of advanced statistical techniques. However, there are also some limitations to the study, such as the potential for bias in the data collection process. Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable contribution to the field and offers insights into the subject matter.

In conclusion, the study has shown that the research is an important and complex task that requires a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the use of advanced statistical techniques. The findings of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, allowing for a thorough understanding of the subject matter. The conclusions drawn from the findings are based on a careful analysis of the data and are supported by the results of the study.

Shaped Digitally: Supervised Ministry in Online Environments

Axel Schoeber

formerly of Carey Theological College

ABSTRACT: Some theological educators are wary of online courses and limit their potential on the theoretical basis of a face-to-face educational paradigm. Yet theological education is happening online, and it needs to be accepted as a viable contribution to, and sharpened as a partner in, our common enterprise. The educational model of a Community of Inquiry illuminates how digital learning can be transformative. Then, one associate professor of supervised ministry outlines how he engages students in this very personal course via online delivery in a way both formative and community building.

As an associate professor of supervised ministry, I am committed to shaping students into more effective practitioners of Christian ministry in their attitudes, character, and praxis. It is a role, with its opportunities and challenges, that I relish. I have from time to time encountered fellow theological educators who hesitate to affirm what I do. It is not me they are wary of. They struggle to imagine how one can effectively shape students in deeply personal ways without meeting with them face-to-face. For them, the fact that my supervised ministry class is delivered entirely online is unsettling.

Faculty members who express such hesitation are not alone. While there seems to be a widespread acceptance that online learning is here to stay, the uncertainties about its effectiveness linger. *Inside Higher Education* produced a survey in 2015 showing that in higher education generally many faculty members had doubts along this line. They found that many more faculty members disagree (53 percent) than agree (17 percent) that online courses can achieve student learning outcomes at least equivalent to those of in-person courses.¹ Specifically, a majority of faculty believed online courses are inferior to in-person courses in several areas: interaction

1 <https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/media/Faculty%20Attitudes%20on%20Technology%202015.pdf>, 6.

with students both during class and outside of class, the ability to reach both exceptional and at-risk students, and the ability to answer student questions. The survey, however, provides a clue that some of these doubts may arise from unfamiliarity or, at least, lesser familiarity. In surveying technology administrators at the same time, *Inside Higher Education* found more positive attitudes and concluded, "Technology administrators . . . could see possibilities in online instruction that are not yet apparent to faculty members."² In this paper, I wish to address the wariness by calling on my experience teaching supervised ministry online for more than seven years and describing outcomes that have been achieved in the digital medium.

Some students can only learn in face-to-face settings; others prefer these settings. Some want to set aside distractions and focus on theological studies for three years. Conversely, the residential model is expensive—prohibitively so for many—and it is highly dislocating for most. Many would prefer not to uproot their families and leave their present communities and ministry settings. Stress on spouse or children is often a disincentive. A theology of place or presence can also yield resistance to a move. Then, everyone has to uproot again three years later.

Many theological educators have a strong preference for mutual embodied presence, with face-to-face interaction as the medium for delivering divinity programs. Some will ask probing questions about online education that are important to wrestle with. *Theological Education* devoted an entire issue to this discussion in 2007, and it raised some cautions. "Theological institutions must be careful to remember that technology is a tool and not a goal."³ Klimoski, Viktora, and Rafferty remind us that "technology will not fix education."⁴ They add, "What we do when we receive new technologies is to add on dimensions to our preexisting way

2 <https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/media/Faculty%20Attitudes%20on%20Technology%202015.pdf>, 15.

3 Jeff Groeling and Lester Ruth, "The Times They Are A-Changin': How a Training Seminar for Online Education Changed a Seminary One Faculty Member at a Time," *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): 57.

4 Victor Klimoski, Jan Viktora, and James Rafferty, "Issue Editors' Introduction: Technology Will Not Fix Teaching," *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): iii–v.

of living: the foundations remain, albeit adapted.”⁵ Put another way, “digital technology in North American theological education is not changing the fundamental realities of our culture and the way we live.”⁶ These cautions remind us not to inflate claims for or expectations of online education. Technology has not “changed everything,” despite the claims of advertisers.

Still, we should ask: Can the digital world deliver an effective education? If so, how? Clearly, “technologies must serve, not drive learning goals and processes.”⁷ Echoing Koontz, increasingly theological educators understand “teaching and learning as an interactive process.”⁸ “Because interaction is central to the learning process both face-to-face and online, the[re is] increased focus on discussion and interaction within today’s classroom.”⁹ This emphasis on interaction has prepared the way for the recent articulation of a pedagogy of engagement.

A pedagogy of engagement creates a communal learning experience where information, knowledge gathering and objective facts, though valued, are means to a greater and deeper learning where both teacher and student are changed. . . . 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. . . . [C]onsider 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.¹⁰

This pedagogy intersects well with a learning theory called Community of Inquiry. Developed to formulate an understanding of what effective online education might look like, Randy Garrison, Terry Anderson, and

5 Arun W. Jones, “Thoughts from a Cross-Cultural Perspective on Technology in American Culture: A Prelude to Thinking about Technology in North American Theological Education,” *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): vii.

6 *Ibid.*, viii.

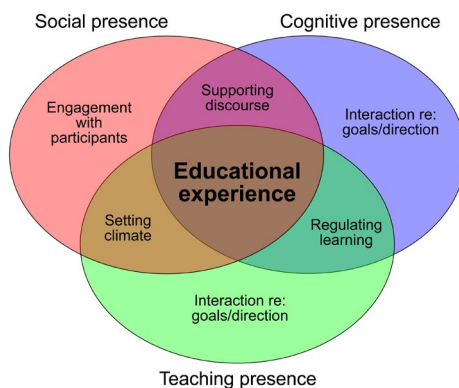
7 Gayle Gerber Koontz, “Cross-Cultural Learning as a Paradigm for Encountering Educational Technology,” *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): 1.

8 *Ibid.*, 4.

9 Groeling and Ruth, “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” 65.

10 Roy E. Barsness, Richard D. Kim, “A Pedagogy of Engagement for the Changing Character of the 21st Century Classroom,” *Theological Education* 49, no. 2 (2015): 94.

Walter Archer worked on a project at the University of Alberta to create the following model, starting in 1996:



Community of Inquiry Model

Positing three types of presence to support effective learning—cognitive, teaching, and social—initial assessments have been positive.¹¹ Cleveland-Innes stresses that “in order for a community to emerge, there has to be some kind of relationship between the learners to link them.”¹² This model allows us to probe both online and face-to-face delivery. For example, does being in the same room automatically mean instructors achieve the teaching and social presences that form the student for effective ministry? We probably all have experienced classes where one or both were absent. The Community of Inquiry model indicates that relationship is crucial in any mode of delivery, and what we need to gauge is the effectiveness of relationships in forming students for a life of skilled ministry.

11 L. H. Ling, “Community of Inquiry in an Online Undergraduate Information Technology Course,” *Journal of Information Technology Education* 6 (2007); Joan Kang Shin and Beverly Bickel, “Distributing Teaching Presence: Engaging Teachers of English to Young Learners in an International Virtual Community of Inquiry,” Chris Kimble and Paul Hildreth, *Communities of Practice: Creating Learning Environments for Educators*, v. 2 (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008). See the original project studies in D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson and W. Archer, “Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education,” *The Internet and Higher Education* 2, nos. 2–3 (Spring 1999): 87–105; D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson, *E-Learning in the 21st Century: A Framework for Research and Practice* (London: Routledge/Falmer, 2003). See also the website: <http://coi.athabascau.ca/>.

12 Martha Cleveland-Innes in “Learning to Learn Online: A MOOC with a Difference for Novice Online Learners,” a webinar sponsored by the Canadian Initiative for Distance Education Research at Athabasca University, October 7, 2015. See also <http://www.ltlo.ca/>.

Some theological educators are more comfortable delivering “content-driven” courses online, in contrast to the applied or formative courses. We can explain digitally the priority of the Gospel of Mark or the highlights and “lowlights” of the Reformation era or lay out the biblical evidence contradicting the notion of the impassibility of God. However, the possibility that we can establish relationships that form the spirit, character, and praxis of our students seems counterintuitive. Personally, I would not teach bible, theology, or history in this “factual” way in any setting. Such instruction transmutes the dynamic realities the content attempts to describe into mere concepts. These disciplines need to “live” through active interpretation and application. The real question is whether physical classrooms are better at creating interaction that shapes mind and spirit, character and practice. Or, can online education also achieve these outcomes? Perhaps we ought to rephrase even this question, however. What if online education requires a different skill set for professor-student interaction but actually leverages the optimum face-to-face setting in which a student can learn about practising ministry? “Seminaries and divinity schools value students actually doing ministry so that they can integrate ministry theory and practice.”¹³ “The good news to which the church is called as witness is fundamentally a way of life. It must be ‘acted out’; it must be practiced.”¹⁴ In many cases, the ministry involvements and opportunities students currently have and the relationships they are currently embedded in are excellent contexts in which to do this growing. Could making them uproot to go to school actually lessen the effectiveness of ministry preparation?

As we will see, virtual classrooms can accomplish these goals. Perhaps we can liken this outcome to a blind person whose sense of hearing becomes more acute than that of most sighted folk; we use what is available and find we can still do the work very well. I stand amazed we can now perform surgeries over the Internet, with the supervising surgeon a great distance from both the patient and the doctor performing the incisions. However, if I am not careful, this amazement can lead me to overlook the potential benefit of such surgery. It becomes something outside my

13 Matthew Floding, ed., *Welcome to Theological Field Education* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2011), 1.

14 Jonathan R. Wilson, *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 11.

normal categories for engaging life. Similarly, so we do not miss the positive outcomes of online theological education, let me describe how I have taught supervised ministry online for seven years.¹⁵ I hope it will advance our understanding of both digital and face-to-face education in this time of great change.

First, some definitions. *Personal* is an adjective indicating that we take someone seriously and as worthy of respect. We treat another as made in the image of God. *Community* refers to people who find significance, depth, meaning, and belonging in their interactions. *Virtual reality* can be variously defined, according to our mood or paradigm. Neutrally, it is a digitized way for people to interact. Negatively, it points to the Internet as an inadequate substitute for real interaction. Yet, it can be construed positively as a medium through which personal, community-building work can occur. I do not wish to replace face-to-face interactions with virtual reality, but I have experienced these healthy results through online delivery of supervised ministry. When the Internet is skilfully employed, students gain greater facility in their face-to-face work of ministry.

I am associate professor of supervised ministry at Carey Theological College in Vancouver, Canada.¹⁶ Carey offers a Master of Divinity degree that delivers two-thirds of the courses fully online and one-third in a hybrid (partly online) format that focuses on a three-day onsite intensive. I have been on full-time faculty for more than seven years. Previously, I had taught many courses for the college in face-to-face settings as an adjunct professor. All my instruction has occurred online since joining the faculty. Besides supervised ministry, other courses I have taught from my computer are Baptist identity, global Christian history, and reimagining the educational mission of the church. I also pastored four churches for 27 years in the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada—Carey's sponsoring denomination—and my undergraduate degree was in education.

So what assignments do I set for students in supervised ministry? Many are commonly used at onsite schools. We begin with a ministry agreement form signed by the student, the local mentor, and the professor.

15 The following is a significant reworking of a seminar I led at the biennial gathering of the Association of Theological Field Educators in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on January 23, 2015. It was titled "Digital Connection: Personalizing and Building Community in Online Supervised Ministry."

16 <http://www.carey-edu.ca/>

The formulation of this agreement takes about two weeks and begins with an online discussion in which students introduce themselves to one another, including identifying the goals they have for their ministry practicum. These goals usually include development of some ministry skill(s), some aspect of managing a ministry life more successfully, and some aspect of personal growth, such as handling criticism better. Some students articulate vague aspirations that mean little, such as “I want to become a more effective pastor.” I push the students to be more specific (though not necessarily measurable): “What would greater effectiveness look like for you?” I also allow refinement of goals during the course, even deleting some and adding others, to encourage a discipline of life-long personal evaluation. Often students draw me into conversation about their goals, exemplifying involvement of others in this strengthening process. This task initiates both the community-building, as students interact with one another’s goals, and the personal, as I insist that each sharpen an understanding of what they need out of the course. For example, if a student aspires to be a solo pastor, the ministry plan needs to include aspects of pastoral care, preaching, worship leading, and involvement in church decision making. Goals and supervised activities need to align.

Each year one student, at least, is preparing for non-congregational ministry. We make slight adjustments to assignments to accommodate their trajectories, and their perspectives help pastors-in-training to set congregational work into a wider context of ministry. Sometimes we have students who are based or preparing to work on another continent. They bring a global angle to our interactions that is salutary for pastors who will serve in increasingly multicultural contexts. A missionary, who is currently initiating a “business-as-mission” approach to cross-cultural work in Asia, recently told me, “This ministry was born in your class [when the student was based in Latin America] when you urged me to use my supervised ministry field hours to focus on a new project that I was intending to do anyway.” Starting with goals suited to this student, a few years later an international ministry is born that will impact thousands.

Another common assignment in supervised ministry is the ministry experience report that, on two occasions, asks students to reflect theologically on their ministry praxis. When the analysis of a ministry interaction is only relational or psychological, I return the assignment for reworking. It must be a theological reflection that roots the evaluation and projected improvement of praxis in the Gospel. The focus is on ministry engagement

involving the student directly (not something observed) which had a “less than desirable” quality about it. These assignments allow for much personal interaction with students as I provide feedback.

Later in the course, the student completes a three-page philosophy of ministry paper. It is short so it can be adapted for use with congregational search committees or before an ordination council. It allows the student to articulate the central theological concepts that provide motivation as they engage in ministry day by day. Most pastors have such core beliefs; it is helpful when they can articulate them to themselves and others.

There are also books to read. *Welcome to Theological Field Education* sets up viable expectations of the course for students.¹⁷ It includes sections for the interns to pass on to their mentors for dialogue. Kathleen Cahalan’s *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* outlines a Christocentric approach to various aspects of pastoral work that I highly commend.¹⁸ Glenn McDonald provides a vision of small-group life and people-focused (not program-based) ministry in *The Disciplemaking Church: From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*.¹⁹ It allows me to encourage students who face or will face discouraging dynamics in their churches to invest in a small group of individuals who wish to grow in faith and could influence other congregants with their enthusiasm. Each book is the focus for one online discussion period. In addition, each student writes one book review that they post for the class from a list of ministry-related works. In this manner, all encounter more reflections on the nature of ministry, such as *The Wounded Healer* by Henri Nouwen, *Working the Angles* by Eugene Peterson, *Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel* by John Forrester (an important topic with much Asian immigration to North America), *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* by Andy Crouch, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us about Surviving and*

17 Matthew Floding, ed., *Welcome to Theological Field Education* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2011).

18 Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

19 Glenn McDonald, *The Disciplemaking Church: From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*, rev. ed. (Grand Haven, MI: Faith Walk Publishing, 2007).

Thriving by Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, and *Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* by Gordon Smith.²⁰

Online discussions are crucial to the success of the online mode of delivery.²¹ Including interaction on their book reviews, it is here the students develop into a cohort as they accompany one another through the class. As they move from sharing their learning goals at the beginning through the final discussion on “How Have I Changed?” they engage topics that shape their pastoral imagination and create a significant vulnerability with one another about what they learn and how they expect to put it into practice. One student’s story emphasizes this point. As the course began, he was a youth pastor in a Baptist church thousands of kilometers from Vancouver. After a few weeks, he indicated through emails and phone calls that he suddenly expected to be released from his position, which did happen. He was allowed several months to wind down his ministry, which enabled him to complete a number of course assignments. (I rearranged time frames so those tasks that needed to be done in a ministry setting could happen early.) He and I decided early to share his process with classmates. They provided much support, but also had an immediate experience of the vagaries of pastoral life. He was without a church for a few months, but before the course was completed, he began to serve as senior pastor in another Baptist church. I offered him support and guidance through the call process and while getting established at the new church. Most of this input was shared with the rest of the class in set discussions or extra posts. The student declared that my faraway input was more beneficial than any other, including the local and face-to-face.

All online or over the phone, this interaction was both intensely personal and community building. Several other students reported similar responses to the course: “Axel built a very strong community of learners,

20 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979); Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); John A. Forrester, *Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel* (Toronto: Pastor’s Attic Press, 2010); Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013); Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us about Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013); Gordon Smith, *Called to be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

21 Kenneth D. Snyder, “Beyond Entertainment: A Rationale for the Pedagogy of Technology in the Classroom” in *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): 30–31, provides a helpful description of effective online discussion forums.

seekers, and discoverers which is difficult to accomplish in a remote setting." "The interactions between students was very precious and the supervision of the instructor was very important to our learning." "The instructor cheered me on, and this gave me the strength to go on."

Online discussions last one week, occur monthly, and address important topics of ministry preparation. Two discussion periods focus on how to conduct, first, memorial services, and then the public celebrations at which pastors often officiate: weddings, baptisms (of believers), and the presentation of children. I prepared videos that demonstrate a good model of each—though I start the video on memorial services with seven minutes in which I assault the viewer with every bad practice I could think of. I then debrief with my own pastor and give an example of a good service. The students participate in or attend a service in the month previous to watch for what made for good or weak practice (even if they slipped unknown into a funeral home service). Consequently, they had current observations to interact with, and the discussion sharpened their awareness further. The sample wedding was "conducted" for a couple with no personal faith commitment. The baptismal videos demonstrated several ways to immerse a candidate and reminded students of the importance of details such as not allowing the microphone to fall into the water. Some pastors not in the course have been granted access to these videos because they need practical equipping for these milestone events.

Two other discussions shape pastoral practice. Building on an assignment to have multiple caring conversations on a Sunday morning, I urge the students to use short conversations intentionally to make pastoral connections that set a tone of caring throughout the congregation or ministry. Casual personalities find themselves pushed but usually concede the ongoing value of such intentional engagement. I also challenge authoritarian understandings of the pastor's position in exchanges about the need to lead as a servant, following Jesus' example and instruction.

The final topic is very practical too: ministry finances. Here is the discussion starter:

Finances, particularly nowadays, are a significant issue affecting the effectiveness, even viability, of many ministries and churches. Yet too often students for the ministry receive no training in how to approach this topic. So, let us give it a try. Please obtain the latest budget of your ministry. Condense it to a summary that is about ½ page long. (We

do not wish to have any sensitive information, so please “hide” it as you condense.) Post this version. Answer these questions: How is anticipated income determined? Is it realistic? (Please remember the commitment to confidentiality you all made at the beginning of the course.) How do spending projections get made? Is their realism evaluated each year? Are there spending categories that are politically untouchable? If so, does this reality cause financial strains? Does the pastor’s (or equivalent) salary get treated with fairness and dignity? What theological statements are made by these uses of money? Finally, what safeguards are in place to ensure the money gets handled with integrity?

This exposure to the financial approach of a number of ministries and the questions students ask each other sharpen their understanding of theology and practice considerably.

These discussions confirm a common claim about online learning.²² Since each student must contribute to every topic, and since students think through written posts with probably greater care than most verbal interactions in a face-to-face classroom, the quality of their interactions is generally deeper and therefore more formative of good pastoral attitudes and praxis. The discussions draw students into a learning community and, over time, become deeply personal. They facilitate the “dialogical space” that is an important component of the pedagogy of engagement.²³

Two further types of feedback complete the picture. First, there are two sets of reports completed midway and near the end: a self-study report, a mentor’s report, and a lay intern committee report. Such reports are common in supervised ministry courses, yet their importance for online delivery must be stressed. The forms for the first and second reporting periods are different, but they all allow for the student’s learning goals to be weighed. They also provide feedback from others on ministry skill and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses. Often the weaknesses identified midway are well addressed by the end. The Lay Intern Committee, rooted in a theology affirming that ministry—including pastoral leadership—belongs to the whole people of God, is structured to provide

22 For example: *Inside Higher Ed*, “Teaching with Technology” webinar, Feb. 17, 2015; Roger S. Nam, “Online Theological Education: Perspectives from First-Generation Asian American Students,” *Theological Education* 45, no. 1 (2009): 61.

23 Barsness, Kim, “Pedagogy of Engagement,” 105–106.

encouragement and timely awareness of growth points from the perspective of lay folk who receive the intern's ministry or work alongside. Some students feel trepidation regarding such a committee, which we address as we discuss *Welcome to Theological Field Education*. Each year, a significant number of students declare that they found the exercise so valuable that they will incorporate it into their ongoing ministry lives. Students who are prone to overwork or to put too much content into their sermons or who have interpersonal traits that undermine ministry effectiveness all benefit considerably from this judicious caring input. Pastors need, among other things, to grow by "soliciting feedback instead of praise" and by "developing as a leader in public ministry."²⁴ These reports help them do so.

The second type of feedback comes through the Profiles of Ministry instrument available from The Association of Theological Schools. This tool, developed in the 1970s, needs some updated case studies. However, it is still valuable in providing insight in two major ways. First, it shows a student's leaning in ministry among one or more basic approaches: the ecclesial (which focuses on the public—basically "Sunday morning"—work), evangelistic, justice-seeking, and pastoral. It also looks at personal characteristics that impact effectiveness, including tendency to overcommit, people-pleasing, manipulation, allowing emotions to dominate decision making, and authoritarian tendencies. Students gain an increased awareness of how they impact several field observers by their ministry skills, their attitudes, and their personal faith. Some valuable discussions with students—in person (if they happen to come to campus) or over the phone or Skype—would not have occurred without this instrument to draw attention to the need; and it is helpful for me, in bringing up sensitive topics, to be able to say, "Normally, such a score would indicate such-and-such. It could lead to these kinds of problems. Might that be relevant to you?" It feels less like accusation and turns the student into a partner in improving long-term ministry effectiveness and resilience. One student, based in North Africa but Asian culturally, said of his wife who completed this exercise with her husband (since they are both students), "She learned a lot about herself from your explanation of her Profile of Ministry. We felt still connected to the community [of Carey] through our talk."²⁵

24 Barbara J. Blodgett, *Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be: Four Practices for Improving Ministry* (Herndon, Virginia: Alban, 2011), 9, 139.

25 At the time of publication, the Profiles of Ministry instrument is being phased out.

Conversations after the two sets of reports and regarding the Profiles of Ministry help students learn a lot about their ministries. “Your field education helps you find your voice as a minister.”²⁶ Several have discerned a calling into congregational leadership they were not expecting. They feel strongly supported and yet sharpened as well. The online medium is no hindrance. Articles on the course website—about various aspects of the Lay Intern Committee, about the value of discussions and how to participate in them technologically, about choosing ministry activities and a mentor, about meeting with a mentor, and about how to complete a ministry experience report—all assist the students in course and, ultimately, ministry success.

One weakness in my course is the training of mentors. Because students are spread out geographically, we cannot set up “teaching congregations” in the Vancouver area and send our students there. Where students are culturally or geographically isolated, there can be few potential mentors. Yet we have always found someone, and I have only been disappointed on two occasions. I send out a small manual to mentors and respond promptly to all inquiries. Still, I intend to create more comprehensive training—online, of course—that I anticipate most mentors will find beneficial.

According to my students, the course still achieves the outcome of shaping students for ministry life. At Carey we solicit—as many theological schools do—feedback from our graduating students through the Graduating Student Questionnaire, an instrument provided by The Association of Theological Schools. Question 21c. asks them to rate the effectiveness of their field education experiences in developing seven different capacities. The students are provided the following rubrics: 1 = Not at all effective / 2 = Not very effective / 3 = Somewhat effective / 4 = Effective / 5 = Very effective. Here are the average responses for two recent years:

26 William B. Kincaid, *Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012): xii.

	2014	2015
Greater vocational clarity	4.7	4.2
Improved pastoral skills	4.3	4.3
Greater interest in future ministry	4.3	4.3
More self-confidence	4.3	4.2
Greater sense of people's needs	4.8	4.2
Better idea of my strengths and weaknesses	4.8	4.7
Greater self-understanding	5.0	4.7

The 2014 class rated the course exceptionally favourably, but the 2015 class was also very positive about their time in the supervised ministry course. Because these capacities represent growth in very personal areas, one may conclude that this online course provided a deeply personal experience. Further student comments reinforce this impression: "This course offered a great opportunity for reflection, self-evaluation, and guided growth. I think this course has benefitted my ministry greatly." "Particularly effective: Both the mentorship aspect of the course and the overarching mentorship of the professor. I found that both were very supportive and caring." "I am sad that it has come to a close. I wish we could continue in some capacity."

So, online delivery can yield outcomes desired in theological education.²⁷ Ministry formation can be personalized over great distances, and online courses can build communities of learners.²⁸ The impact of the Internet on higher education seems irreversible; if so, theological educators do well to sharpen one another in what we do, whether face-to-face or online.

As this issue has moved toward publication, Axel Schoeber has been transitioning from his position as Associate Professor of Supervised Ministry at Carey Theological College in Vancouver, to work as an education consultant, including a focus on online course design.

27 I have only described learning activities from one course. Others, such as synchronous live classrooms or assignments in which students teach each other by video or Prezi, also contribute to these outcomes in my other online courses.

28 Intriguingly, initial findings—too preliminary to be conclusive—nonetheless suggest online education may have a little greater success in the formative aspects of theological education: The Association of Theological Schools, 2015 State of the Industry webinar, September 18, 2015. Accessible at <http://www.ats.edu/resources/publications-and-presentations/2015-state-of-the-industry-webinar>. See also Groeling, Ruth, "The Times They Are A-Changin'," 61, who suggest that online discussions move during a course from impersonal to more personal in contrast to the large lecture classes.

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