Addressing Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Through this initiative, Austin Seminary will become a place where students’ financial health is part of their preparation for ministry, and where institutional structures and practices support that goal. This grant enables the Seminary to:

1. Create ways to address the financial situation of students;
2. Explore models for delivering theological education that maintain the core value of residential education but reduce the overall cost of education; and
3. Educate leaders, in the church and beyond, about the value of educated clergy.

Addressing the financial situation of students

* Additional data gathering. We will create focus groups to learn more about students’ mindsets and collect consumer debt data.
* *Ministers Facing Money*. We will establish peer communities of accountability and practice, and offer retreats, programming (including Financial Peace University), and opportunities for public discussions about money in order to change the “culture of money” in these students’ lives. This program will be staffed by a ½ time new employee.
* Financial Plans. Students will create a financial plan at matriculation and will consult annually with a staff person to strengthen accountability.
* FinAids. We have purchased financial aid software to free up staff time for conducting research and coaching students on how apply for all available support.

Exploring Alternative Models

The Dean will lead this effort to investigate educational models in which:

* Students enroll in APTS with advanced standing, having completed a measure of master’s-level courses during their undergraduate studies.
* Congregations and institutions partner with APTS and students for cooperative learning and work.
* Students participate in the operation of the institution in budget-relieving functions.

Educating Leaders

The President will convene a colloquy of racially and denominationally diverse leaders from church bodies, business, healthcare, and other civic arenas to experience the value of theological education by engaging salient issues with Seminary faculty in a community of peer leaders.