

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

767 Eustis St.
St. Paul, MN 55114

March 1, 2019

Narrative Formation Across the Curriculum: Using Narrative to Cultivate and Assess
Spiritual, Vocational, and Identity Formation

United Theological Seminary received funding to pilot an innovative, potentially replicable, education model within our M.Div. to cultivate and assess spiritual, vocational, and identity formation by developing and interpreting life story narratives.

In this report, we describe the model we developed for cultivating and assessing spiritual, vocational, and identity formation through life story narratives. Our project tested the hypothesis that the link between narrating one’s stories in redemptive sequences and exhibiting personal generativity is causative, not only correlative. To our knowledge, United is the first seminary to test this hypothesis.

Table of Contents

1. PRIMARY GOALS OF YOUR INNOVATION GRANT PROJECT 2

2. HOW WELL DID THE PROJECT ATTAIN THOSE GOALS? 3

3. MOST CRUCIAL ISSUES AND QUESTIONS ENGAGED BY THE PROJECT 4

4. SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES/BENEFITS ENGAGED BY THE PROJECT? HOW DID YOU ENGAGE THEM?..... 5

5. SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES/OBSTACLES YOU CONFRONTED IN THE PROJECT? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?..... 7

6. WHAT DID YOU LEARN OF BENEFIT FOR YOUR SCHOOL? 8

7. WHAT DID YOU LEARN THAT MIGHT BE OF BENEFIT FOR OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE ASSOCIATION?..... 9

8. UNEXPECTED INSIGHTS, INNOVATIVE IDEAS, OR POSSIBILITIES THAT HAVE EMERGED THROUGH THE PROJECT?.....10

9. KEY RECOMMENDED PRACTICES THAT WE LEARNED IN PURSUING THIS PROJECT11

10. IMPLICATIONS FROM YOUR PROJECT FOR THE POSSIBLE PROCESS OF REDEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION?11

11. HOW MIGHT THE PROJECT OR ITS LEARNING BE SUSTAINED THROUGH A CULTURE OF INNOVATION IN YOUR SCHOOL?.....12

12. RESOURCES USED BEYOND OUR INSTITUTION?12

13. BRIEF FINANCIAL REPORTERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

APPENDIX A: AGGREGATE RESPONSES FROM CL455.ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE PROMPTS FOR FACULTY ...ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

APPENDIX C: EVALUATION FEEDBACK FROM FALL WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY.....ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

1. **Primary goals of your innovation grant project**

United's formation program will cultivate and assess students' intellectual, spiritual, vocational, and personal maturity as they acquire theological knowledge and develop ministry skills. In addition, it will pilot a project exploring possible causation between telling one's own stories in redemptive sequences and increasing personal generativity. This will be done in two parts:

Part I: Formation within context of cultural and theological diversity

Program Outcomes: *Students will:*

1. Demonstrate characteristics of spiritual and ethical maturity
2. Interpret and navigate theological and cultural difference competently
3. Articulate personal sense of vocation and theology in context
4. Increase generativity
5. Express faith in leadership and social contexts

Our program must meet the needs of students from various backgrounds, cultures, religions, and ethnicities. It will be effective for distance and on-campus students alike. And it will be attentive to unintentional privilege of western Christianity in culture and theology.

Activities

- **The Individualized Student Plan**, a central component of the program, is formulated by the student in light of denominational requirements and goals, and in conversation with denominational mentors and the DSVD. Plan is revisited every year.
- **Students write a spiritual or hermeneutical autobiography** upon matriculation, which serves as baseline for assessing theological, spiritual and vocational development.
- **Students also write a narrative at the end of each course**, integrating course material into personal and theological development. These will be read and responded to by trained course instructors.
- **Redemption Stories:** See Part II below.
- Spiritual Autobiography provides **baseline assessment** of the student's development upon matriculation. **Formal assessments of student growth are made** in specific required courses, and in students' summative papers. At the end of the program, summative assessments will be compared to the initial spiritual autobiography to ascertain spiritual and vocational growth.

Part II: Increasing generativity as part of formation process

Within the context of this formation plan, United will also pilot a project designed to increase generativity, the process of acting to benefit future generations or make the world a better place. This particular virtue is a key component of United's mission of "education for transformation" and our flagship programs in social justice and social transformation. Studies have shown that individuals who tell life stories in redemptive

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

sequences exhibit higher measures of generativity.¹ While these studies are clear that the relationship has only been shown to be correlative, not causative, United proposes to test the hypothesis that understanding and narrating one's life events in redemptive sequences can indeed cause an increase in generativity.

Activities:

- Three narrative workshops for students (Fall 2017);
- Development and delivery of a new course offering: EL455 How Stories Shape Leadership (Spring 2018);
- Originally, we had also planned to assign incoming students to three groups in the Fall of 2017, and then assess their progress over their three years of study:
 - **Group One** (Control group): base formation program, below, "All Professional Students."
 - **Group Two** (Formation Across Curriculum, commences spring 2018): Base Formation Program, plus write narratives at the end of each course describing how course impacted growth and vocational identity; read and responded to by trained course instructor.
 - **Group Three** (Generativity Pilot, commences spring 2018): Base Formation Program and Formation Across Curriculum, and also coached by selected trained faculty to understand and write life stories in terms of redemptive sequences; read and responded to by those faculty.

2. How well did the project attain those goals?

In Part I:

- We have implemented the *Individualized Student Plan* with the students from this fall (2017) and spring (2018). We are currently reviewing their progress.
- The initial *Spiritual Autobiography* upon matriculation has been applied unevenly because of the timing of the grant with the beginning of the Fall semester, the author of this grant going on sabbatical in January, and the departure of the former Director of Formation in December. We are reviewing students' progress and will be working with those who have not yet submitted this document. We will also be working with our admissions department to ensure that the next student admissions in Fall 2018 follow through on this submission.
- As of Spring 2018, students have been asked to reflect and write a response to a *narrative prompt* at the completion of each of their courses this semester. These course specific prompts challenge students to integrate their narrative identity with academic material. Their responses will be reviewed by faculty trained through the ATS faculty development grant.
- We are currently collecting each of the above stated artifacts in order to assess spiritual and vocational growth. A subcommittee of faculty will then work together to design a process for assessing these artifacts.

¹ Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*. New York: University Press, 2006.

[[[
]]]]

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

In Part II:

- Three students attended fall workshops on the narrative formation processes. These workshops generated student interest in narrative formation, and two of the three students elected to enroll in the spring semester course. (See Appendix C attesting to their impact.)
- Eight students signed up for the redemptive story course **CL455: How Our Stories Shape Our Leadership**. This class was focused on students responding to prompts that invite them to delve into personal historic events and to do so within a small group (See Appendix B for examples of the reflective prompts used in class). Interviews with the students as to the impact of this class and process are reported below in Appendix A. The responses have been dramatic for most of these students as to the generativity characteristic as well as their personal formation. While we initially planned to use Dan McAdam's generativity scale as a pre and post measure, we found this instrument to be limited in its measurement effect. Not surprisingly, most seminary students already report a high rate of generativity. Moreover, the instrument is not designed to measure the *types* of generativity or the *impact* that these redemption stories have had related to our students' personal, spiritual, and vocational formation.
- The narrative prompts are being implemented across the curriculum in a majority of the classes this spring semester. We plan to review these responses over the summer. NB: Courses taught by adjuncts have not implemented these narrative prompts as these instructors have not yet been trained as a part of this project.
- We have not formally separated the students into three groups (Control, Formation Across Curriculum, Generativity) and we no longer plan to do so. We believe it's important that all incoming students be given the opportunity to participate in this new approach to formation. Toward that end, all students are now required to complete the initial formation course offered by the seminary.

3. Most crucial issues and questions engaged by the project

In what ways does narrative formation enhance or impact theological education?

We have drawn upon Paul Ricœur and Dan McAdams' concepts of narrative identity formation. More than story, narrative refers to the way that humans experience time, in terms of the way we understand our future potentialities, as well as the way we mentally organize our sense of the past. For McAdams, individuals form an identity by integrating their life experiences into an internalized, evolving story of the self that provides the individual with a sense of unity and purpose in life.² Generativity is an adult's concern for and commitment to promoting the well-being of youth and future generations through involvement in parenting, teaching, mentoring, and other creative contributions that aim to leave a positive legacy of the self for the future.³ High generativity in adults is correlated with telling stories that feature more redemptive than contaminative sequences, e.g., a difficult life event is followed by a positive outcome thus redeeming the difficult

² Dan P. McAdams, *The Art and Science of Personality Development*. New York: Guilford Press, 2015. [L]
[SEP]

³ <https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/research/generativity/>

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

circumstances preceding it. The project tested the hypothesis that the link between narrating one's stories in redemptive sequences and exhibiting personal generativity is causative, not only correlative.

At the heart of this study, we were exploring ways in which students integrated new perspectives introduced from the theological content of their courses (narrative prompt within the classes) and feedback from their peers (CL455) to author and reauthor their narrative identity. Our hypothesis was that when a student can use the lens of their academic subject matter along with contemplative questions from peers to reflect on and re-examine the trajectory of their own life and important events, a deeper coherence and resonance takes place. The capacity to *thicken* one's narrative and tell one's own story in more life-giving ways affects their own recall and proficiency in utilizing this wisdom in later situations and ministry. This type of integration increases generativity that then affects how one interprets their present moment and grasps more creative and effective possibilities of response.

A secondary issue that appeared was the overall importance of spiritual and personal formation of the students in correspondence to their seminary career. We are receiving more students who have either not grown up in a church, are coming from a different religious background, or from multiple backgrounds. In traditional Christian seminaries, the church has played a vital role in spiritual formation and affirming vocational call as a community surrounding an individual growing up within it. The participation in liturgical, ecclesiastical, and fellowship aspects of the church help form the narrative identity of an individual as well as continually impact their interpretive viewpoint from a theological lens. This narrative identity is then naturally drawn upon and integrated further when studying theological endeavors in seminary. This process aids in re-interpretation of these past events and the depth therein but also builds generativity and confidence for further ministry contexts. But for many of our new students, this communal experience of spiritual and personal formation has not happened in a church context. Drawing out and connecting these past events with a theological lens is not impossible but nuances must be taken into account. The seminary is not a church, but there are formation considerations similar to a church that seemingly must be addressed in some appreciable manner in order for our student to achieve their vocational goals successfully.

4. Significant **opportunities/benefits** engaged by the project? How did you engage them?

This project, in correspondence with the Faculty Development grant, has helped to begin to embed the narrative aspect of formation across the curriculum. The training of the faculty in this process gave them firsthand experience of combining personal narrative with theological reflection. We have seen that narrative identity woven with theological education deepens one's engagement, hermeneutic, and utilization of the material as resonant themes emerge between both sources.

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

The **Individualized Student Plan** has been implemented. We are aggregating results as students are meeting with the Director of Spiritual and Vocational Development annually to compile this. We will review the impact of these narrative activities on this plan.

The **spiritual autobiographies** upon matriculation are being implemented unevenly with some participants creating them within the first months and others who have not yet turned them in. We are assessing the best ways to track students' progress with these initial artifacts.

Students who enrolled in CL455 How Our Stories Shape Our Leadership were also required to write a spiritual autobiography. We will be examining the differences between their initial and second autobiographies to better understand the ways in which their narratives “thickened”—i.e., became more nuanced.

The faculty practiced creating **narrative prompts** in separate workshops. They also practiced the narrative small group storytelling process used in CL455 with each other in these sessions. We noticed an unintended consequence of deepening engagement and relationship with other faculty participants in doing so. The qualitative aspect of faculty candor and comfort between each other was appreciably evident leading to more open and trusting interactions. This process has offered potential opportunities in the future for community building among the faculty.

The narrative prompts students are being asked to complete at the end of each of their courses are designed to help them connect the relevancy of what they are learning with the impact of this on their own identity both during seminary and in their subsequent ministries.⁴ We are currently collecting their responses to these prompts.

This innovation project has also enhanced and expanded our current formation offerings. Our formation program has only been in formal existence for two years. It begins with an emphasis on reflection on one's identity and the formation of a self as an initial course offering (EL250: Spiritual and Personal Formation) that all M.A. & M.Div. students must take. The narrative process from this grant has corresponded with EL250 by its basis in relating one's narrative identity (i.e., one's story) with their peers and then reflecting upon and responding to the contemplative, open-ended questions they offer. This process is captured in the CL455 course as natural sequence after EL250.

The newly designed course (CL455) practiced the narrative circle process weekly. This process consisted of a narrator first offering their descriptive response to a prompt in a small group of 3-4 peers. Each peer then offered a contemplative, open-ended question for the narrator in order to deepen the narrator's reflection on his or her story. From this, the original narrator responded to their own narrative in light of these offerings. There were eight students in this initial class. Both the course evaluations and interviews with students enrolled in CL 455 attest that they now have a greater awareness of their story and an increased sense of generativity. See Appendix A: Aggregate Responses from

⁴ Please refer to Appendix B: Narrative Prompts for Faculty 2018

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

CL455. We also noticed that there has been a significant transformative event with the majority of the students that took EL250 before CL455. These respondents have felt they experienced an integrative pathway for their seminary career, they now have tools and a process that they will use in future vocational contexts, and they have developed an intimacy with their classmates that is invaluable for communal belonging and identity. This parallels findings from the faculty participants as well. The majority of students in CL455 express hope that this process would be what all United students experience in the future. Many students from the course plan to continue to meet with one another in narrative circles after the class is over.

5. Significant challenges/obstacles you confronted in the project? How did you overcome them?

As mentioned earlier, the idea of splitting the students into three groups did not happen as detailed in the initial grant application. Instead, it was our assessment that as many students would benefit from this narrative approach so we implemented this narrative approach across all groups.

The coordination of the administration aspect of these artifacts (1st spiritual autobiography, Individualized Student plan, narrative prompts from other faculty in their courses, 2nd spiritual autobiography, and the narrative process engagement with redemption stories) is large and will only become more difficult as our student population is predicted to increase. This process has also been hampered by the Dean (the originator of the grant) going on sabbatical during Spring 2018, the resignation of the Director of Formation in December 2017, and the appointment of a new Director of Formation in March 2018.

The due date for our Spring semester course syllabi are requested four months before the teaching of the courses (October 1). As a result, most faculty were unable to include the narrative features in their spring courses.

A number of senior of faculty were also on sabbatical during this implementation which reduced the number of participating faculty. Those who did incorporate this into their courses expressed satisfaction in the preparation of the narrative process and coaching in incorporating this into their semester plans.

Adjunct faculty weren't included in this initial plan and training. The core faculty participated which made the number smaller but still very effective. We hope to broach the subject of including adjunct faculty into this which may positively affect faculty culture and community.

As a new course offering, it was decided that CL455 not involve prerequisites. Based upon what we have learned, we now believe it's best that students have completed or be co-enrolled in EL250 (Personal and Spiritual Formation). Responses in Appendix A describe the complementary benefits of the narrative formation course following personal

and spiritual formation, e.g., the second course provides an opportunity for further personal integration and deepening relationships with one's peers.

6. What did you learn of **benefit for your school?**

The major finding from seven of the eight student participants in the CL455 class are summarized from interviews with them and recorded in Appendix A: Aggregate Responses from CL455. A majority of them described their experience in this course as "life changing." This has been attributed to their weekly participation in narrative reflection processes in class, how it has impacted their view of their own identity through engagement with their narratives, the power to re-author their narratives in response to the contemplative questions offered by trusted peers, and how doing this impacts their leadership and deepens their compassion for themselves and others. Almost all of them have asked that this narrative process continue in some way shape and form, either informally in the community or formally as a course offering.

Generativity has clearly been amplified with a majority of the participants in relation to our hypothesis, but the depth and impact was not anticipated. They have reported a deeper sense of trust in being vulnerable with their own difficult narratives and in sharing this with others in discovering meaning within a communal relationship. The consequence of this learning carries over into other vocational contexts and the integrative outcome of academic material becoming another perspective that changes one's interpretation of self and world. Three of the seven participants from CL455 come from non-traditional religious backgrounds or have reported intentional disassociation from an institutional religion. Conversely, almost all of them have now reported experiencing a greater confidence with their future vocational paths in conjunction with what spirituality is, how they have access to their narratives, and how they can facilitate spaces for others to experience this deepening as well.

Students have also reported a growth in the trust and intimacy between each other from this course as well. The secondary effect from this has been community-building between participants that has left them wanting to continue to deepen this experience and hone it with this cohort and with others. This process takes time, much like any qualitative relationship. The course allowed for a delineation of time to explore this. To do this as a community would also take time and commitment.

Students have reported that this has also been a skills-building class. Each has reported the relevant application of this process in future vocational settings for small group facilitation and creating opportunities for shared leadership within these groups. They have reported feeling empowered from this process in learning from and teaching others by this narrative process. We are working on ways to philosophically incorporate this into our formation program trajectory between the different stages of their academic career. The initial assessment is that EL250 would be a beginning course that would be a pre-requisite for and built further upon within CL455. The one person who did not have EL250 has a different, qualitative response than the others surveyed. This may come from a variety of factors. The one person taking both classes simultaneously has

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

expressed a blending of the two that might blur some of the benefits of having them distinct but concurrent in their offering. More research and exploration need to occur.

As mentioned above in # 4, we also experienced the change in faculty engagement as a great unintended benefit from training for this process that mirrors the students' findings as well. The aspect of sharing our own narratives with each other through this training seems to have brought us closer together as we offered aspects of our identity to one another not normally shared in the context of seminary.

We hope to see the impact of this first-hand encounter in the types of narrative prompts and opportunities faculty create for their students. Ideally, the construction and implementation of the narrative questions in correspondence to the content matter of the class would be evocative; the faculty's inherent interest in discovering the depth of a student's engagement with the class material is now coupled with seeing another aspect of the student's identity and what is at stake or impactful for them.

We are gathering data as to how this will all impact the second **Spiritual Autobiography**, their **Individualized Learning Plan**, and the integrative **Narrative Prompts** from other courses. This might take a few years to plot out all we can glean from this project.

We are assessing whether this process (within the faculty, between students, and between faculty and students) could be part of our 'brand'—*the United way* of both engaging one another and the theological content of our academic offerings (as suggested by a student experiencing this in class). This might reinforce the emphasis we place on education for transformation of the whole person as well as complement some of our signature specializations in Social Transformation, Arts and Theology, and our new Formation element.

7. What did you learn that might be of **benefit for other schools** in the Association?

Given the great emphasis placed on peer groups for sustaining pastoral leaders, our narrative formation approach equips our students with a toolkit (drawn from narrative therapy and group spiritual direction) for cultivating inner exploration in the context of community and has the potential for creating enduring friendships among our students.

Moreover, our approach prepares leaders who can facilitate such groups in a wide array of settings. This tool as a process will be advantageous for them in their future vocational settings, such as Clinical Pastoral Education and small group discernment.

Having the faculty undergo this training has also deepened our relationships and is challenging us to forge more connections between our pedagogy and academic outcomes. It has fostered camaraderie and increased communal trust among us.

We are experiencing a new diversity of students who have not been raised in church for spiritual and personal formation or a presumed theological reflective practice of their

narrative identity within a religious tradition. The narrative process in CL455, paired with EL250, assists in the process of beginning a theological reflective practice, an intentionality of a communal spiritual and personal formation through trusting relationships, provides a process and tools for students to engage deeper conversations in their future leadership and vocational contexts, and assists in remediating the discrepancy between students who have not been nurtured in a religious tradition and community in their formation. We hope to explore whether the narrative prompts also assist in this integrative aspect also.

We anticipate that our student body will only become more diverse with our concentrations in Interreligious Chaplaincy, Social Transformation, and the Arts and Theology. This diversity will not be solely from non-churched students but also as those from different religious backgrounds. As a seminary which trains their seminary students for church ministry as well as service in non-congregational vocations and non-profits, the focus of our formation program in building personal and cultural competency seems particularly relevant to the narrative process of this project. How a community shapes one's identity while in seminary will become more important as this trend continues and expands.

8. Unexpected insights, innovative ideas, or possibilities that have emerged through the project?

Unexpected Insights:

Again, we were taken aback as to the overwhelming feedback to those taking CL455. We are trying to digest how this will impact our own seminary's focus on personal and spiritual formation, as well as community-building in relation to our mission and pedagogy. Students described the process in CL455 as relational formation and viewed it as an essential complement to their coursework in personal and spiritual formation (EL250) as mentioned above. This may also serve as a template for their formation process leading into a contextual education placement and reflection and then culminating in a senior capstone seminar where they will begin to discern the next phase of their vocational journey after graduation.

The potential impact on communal intimacy, identity, and inclusion could be profound as more and more of our students are commuters (and may have a diminished sense of community). The seminary is not a church. But our findings lead us to believe that we must address and solidify some functions of communal life and support.

We as faculty will have to expand our repertoire for engaging our students as whole persons, as we have experienced a greater engagement of ourselves as whole persons (see Appendix C Evaluation Feedback from Fall Workshops). Consequently, the faculty that have participated in the narrative prompts workshops have increased their understanding of how our students integrate their narrative identity with a particular subject matter. What may occur, as has happened in one course reported in our Faculty Development Grant, is that student engagement and responses to the narrative questions posed in class

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

may be very poignant. Pedagogically, this seems to be very impactful. But are we as educators adequately equipped for this?

The impact of communal intimacy on core and adjunct faculty as an ecosystem has been reported in our Faculty Development grant report. Mainly, this narrative process could help address the isolation adjunct faculty may experience when they are considered ancillary members in an environment of institutional financial survival. This condition is exemplified in the presumption of scarcity of time or resources in building relationships between all faculty.

Innovative Ideas:

Inviting faculty to pose course specific narrative prompts to better understand course related outcomes. An example is provided below.⁵

Innovative Ideas & Possibilities: Ideas emerging from the Faculty Development portion have also been listed in that report. For the students, one possibility is further expanding on their own leadership in learning from and teaching each other. Each student could be invited to be a part of a narrative circle throughout their seminary career. We believe this will positively impact communal life and integration of learning as well as develop leadership capacities in our students as they take turns facilitating these groups.

9. Key recommended practices that we learned in pursuing this project
- a. Having a menu of narrative prompts that tap into different learning styles;
 - b. Developing more course specific narrative prompts;
 - c. Accessible practices for narrative group process - 4.4.4. (4 minutes of telling one's narrative in response to a prompt, 4 minutes of a contemplative questioning from each observer, 4 minutes of retelling/responding from original person. See Appendix B for examples.)
 - d. Developing skills in contemplative listening and asking contemplative questions (Please see appendix C "Evaluation Feedback from Fall Workshops" re: the impact these processes had on participants).
 - e. Instituting CL455 as a follow-up course to EL250. Working to join the objectives of these two courses so there is more intentional overlap and correspondence.
 - f. Identifying the next offerings after this course that links contextual education, leadership development, and their capstone senior year.

10. Implications from your project for the possible process of redevelopment of the Standards of Accreditation?

It seems that under Goals of Theological Curriculum (3.1.1) and Learning, Teaching and Research (3.2.1.3) our findings would seem pertinent. 3.1.1 states "In a theological

⁵ From "Leadership and Strategies for Social Change": We have considered a number of vantage points for leadership over the course of this semester. Which lens, or lenses of leadership, have helped you to understand more fully the context in which you serve (or a context in which you are involved in some way)? In up to two pages, tell us about a recent experience when you deliberately practiced viewing this context through a different lens or set of lenses.

ATS Innovation Grant Final Report
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

school, the overarching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to a responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this overarching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of a faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community.”

3.2.1.3 states “Learning should foster, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge, the capacity to understand and assess one’s tradition and identity and to integrate materials from various theological disciplines and modes of instructional engagement in ways that enhance ministry and cultivate emotional and spiritual maturity.”

This process is helping our students integrate the academic information into their life and subsequent application. Beyond what we learn through academic rigor, what seems at stake here is purpose, meaning, and the agency to live into ever-expanding possibility in whatever future setting we enter. What we learn and can recall (content-wise) seems inextricably and proportionally tied to how it intersects with who we are (or who we conceive who we are). Inversely, how this new content can help us view our identity can also help reframe that same identity so we see new and other facets of the same jewel. This can continue to expand our understanding of the answer to the question “Who am I?” which can also help us to be learning agile in an increasingly complex world.

11. How might the project or its learning be sustained through a culture of innovation in your school?

- a. Faculty retreats to continue to build our capacity to both assess spiritual and vocational formation and integrate these dimensions with our academic material.
- b. Forming a subcommittee of faculty interested in exploring this further.
- c. Determining which courses would be greatly enhanced with narrative prompts and assignments. Identifying more courses to incorporate a narrative assignment into as well.
- d. Include adjunct faculty in expanding this training with intentionality of building their inclusion into the overall community.
- e. Forming narrative circles led by students as described in #8.

12. Resources used beyond our institution?

Diane Millis (<http://www.dianemillis.com>) was our consultant and lead implementer of the programs from this grant. Along with our Dean at the time (Sharon Tan), they both constructed the framework and goals for this grant. Diane is extremely gifted in her field and exceeded our expectations. She is now an adjunct professor of our seminary. We are actively seeking other ways of integrating the findings of this grant and Diane’s experience and wisdom into our Formation program. I cannot speak highly enough of Diane’s capabilities on this grant and the impact she has made on the culture of our seminary.