

Sioux Falls Seminary

2013 Lilly Endowment Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministries

Project Name: The Stewardship Project: Developing New Paradigms for Theological Education

Project Objectives

Sioux Falls Seminary intends to help current and future seminary students restrain their borrowing – thereby lessening the burden of student debt on future ministry leaders. Our efforts will be focused on four areas.

Research: We intend to explore as much internal and external data as we can to meet the needs of our students. The data we collect will shape much of the three remaining areas. We have committed to partner with Northern Seminary in this effort.

Education: We will provide current and prospective students with realistic information about the true cost of educational debt. This will be done through both formal and informal conversations and through designated learning experiences.

Partnership Plan: We will create a program that encourages and empowers students to gather a community of people to support them prayerfully and financially.

Educational Model: This is a new addition to our project. Three months into this effort it has become clear that a combination of partnerships and new models of education are needed.

Significant Activities to Date

Research Partnership: We have committed to become a research partner with Northern Seminary. We believe we can do more together. Combining our research will better inform our educational model.

Strategic Conversations: Recently, we have been in conversation with Gordon-Conwell, Asbury, and Indiana Wesleyan about student debt, financial models, and student scholarships based on partnerships.

The Spirituality of Fundraising: A one week course titled “The Spirituality of Fundraising” was offered March 10-13. Ten students and two professors discussed fundraising and stewardship practices through a theological lens and how it impacts the lives of those we serve.

Faith and Culture: “Faith and Culture” is a formative orientation course that all Sioux Falls Seminary students take early in their programs. We have added a one-hour component on navigating the financial realities of seminary.

Research: We are in the early stages of compiling internal data in the following areas: net tuition for each program, discount rates, program audits, and graduate debt. Externally, we have participated in a peer study with other ATS schools, researched educational models outside of theological education, studied undergraduate student debt, and explored stewardship teaching in the local church.

Most Important Resources Discovered or Produced

Our most important discovery is the clear need for a new paradigm for theological education. Adding projects to a failed model will not achieve our objective. This is evidenced by our initial research into educational models, the relation between undergraduate and graduate student debt, and current organizational systems across seminaries in ATS.

Contact Information:

Nate Helling | VP of Enrollment and Development | 605.336.6588 | nhelling@sfseminary.edu

Greg Henson | President | 605.336.6588 | ghenson@sfseminary.edu