

Announcing first annual conference on competency-based theological education



International Conference
CBTE 2018
Competency-Based Theological Education

An international conference on competency-based theological education—CBTE 2018—will be hosted by Northwest Baptist Seminary on November 5–6, 2018, in Vancouver, Canada. Northwest, with the support of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) through an innovation grant from the Educational Models and Practices initiative, is organizing this conference for the purpose of discussing, articulating, and promoting best practices in the development and implementation of CBTE programs. Northwest will also be exploring formation of an institute in competency-based theological education that will provide leadership and guidance in CBTE, and assume ongoing management of future conferences.

CBTE has been an emerging topic within the ATS community since its approval as an experimental model in 2014. When ATS launched its Educational Models and Practices project in 2015, it contained a major focus on CBTE. Competency-based M Div programs are currently offered by three ATS-accredited schools—Northwest Baptist Seminary’s Immerse program, Sioux Falls Seminary’s Kairos program, and Grace College and Seminary’s Deploy program—with CBTE program exploration and development underway at several more institutions.

What is CBTE?

Competency-based theological education represents a paradigm shift in theological education. It offers an innovative way for seminaries and learning networks to raise a new generation of proven leaders, trained in context, in the knowledge, in the skills, and in the character traits they need to prosper in their callings.

Competency-based education is not a new idea. In some industries, mentored training based on a specific set of competencies has been the de facto training model for decades. Even in theological education, the ministry practicum has been central to programs for years.

What is new, however, is the movement to develop robust, fully-accredited theological education programs that award credit based on demonstrated competency, not completed courses. These programs are fully delivered within the ministry context and strategically develop future ministry leaders in a holistic way.

“Competency-based theological education prepares students for the environment in which they will actually minister,” writes Charla Long, president of Go Long Consulting and executive director of the Competency-Based Education Network, “because it recognizes and requires mastery of a full range of competencies that are intentionally incorporated throughout the curriculum.”

This singular focus on the development of competencies helps seminaries achieve something else that can be difficult. “The strength of CBTE,” says Northwest Baptist Seminary President Kent Anderson, “is how it redirects seminaries to service the mission of their constituents. As we focus more intently on the mission of our churches and ministry networks, we become more missional ourselves.”

Anderson speaks from experience. The launch of Northwest's Immerse program marked a rebirth in the seminary's relationship with its supporting churches. By partnering together to build a program based on the competencies churches need to see in leaders, the mission of both school and constituency became aligned and focused.

This focus on demonstrated mastery of competencies makes the CBTE model an excellent host for implementing other innovations being explored by ATS institutions such as assessment of prior learning (APL), context or ministry-based learning, and just-in-time learning. All of these topics and more will be discussed at the CBTE 2018 conference.

What is the focus of the conference?

CBTE 2018 will follow a common conference format, including general assembly and breakout sessions. The general assembly sessions will explore such topics as CBTE within the larger competency-based education movement; pros and cons of CBTE vs. traditional educational models; CBTE methodologies and operational requirements; and student, network, and church perspectives on the CBTE experience.

The breakout sessions will follow three tracks:

Track 1—Discover

For those considering development or adoption of a CBTE program in their schools or ministry settings

- CBTE Program Design
- Strategic Partnerships—Why They're So Important
- Faculty Roles in CBTE
- Mentor Roles in CBTE

Track 2—Develop

For those ready to start planning implementation of a CBTE program

- Plan your CBTE Program Implementation
- CBTE Technology—What You Need and Why, Current and Future Options
- ATS Accreditation Standards for CBTE Programs
- Characteristics of Successful Strategic Partnerships

Track 3—Enhance

For those already running CBTE programs who want to share learnings and challenges and to collaborate with others on continuous improvement

- CBTE Quality Standards
- Badging and Micro-Credentials for Mentors
- Connecting CBTE Students to a Credit-Hour World
- Visioning the Future of CBTE

Featured speakers and presenters include:

- Charla Long, Executive Director, Competency-Based Education Network (CBEN)
- Stephen R. Graham, Senior Director of Programs and Services, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS)
- Greg Henson, President, Sioux Falls Seminary
- Amy Kardash, President, In Trust Center for Theological Schools
- Kent Anderson, President, Northwest Baptist Seminary
- John Lillis, Provost, Grace College & Seminary

Conference registration opens February 1. For more information regarding competency-based theological education or CBTE 2018, please visit the conference [website](#) or email cbte@nbseminary.ca.