COLLOQUY

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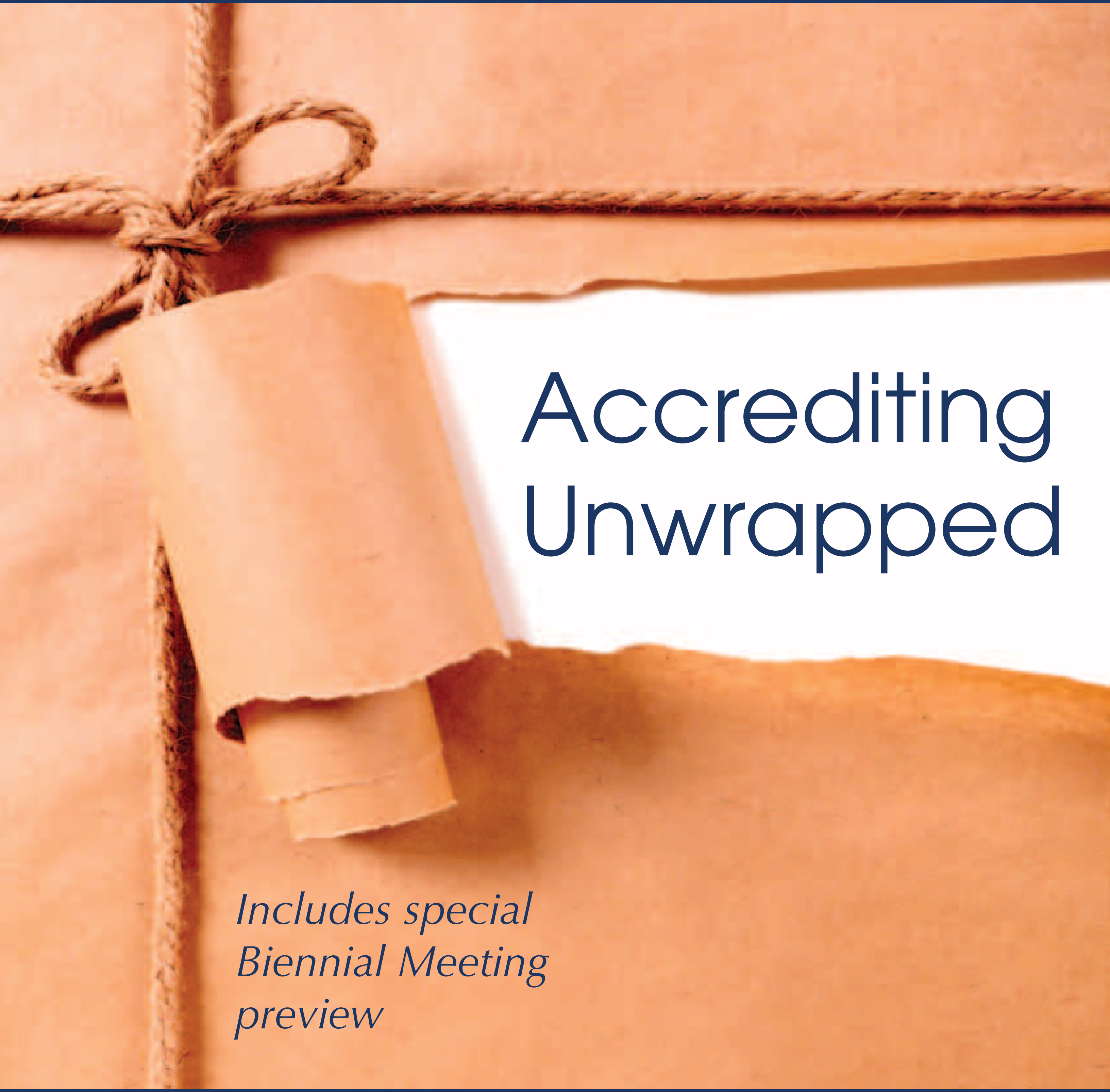


Accrediting Unwrapped

Includes special Biennial Meeting preview

The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

The schools of the Commission on Accrediting—comprising all of the fully accredited and candidate for accredited members of The Association of Theological Schools—are completing a four-year process to review and revise accrediting standards and procedures.

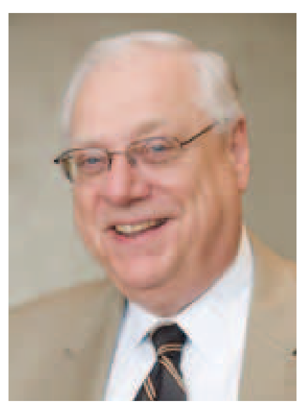
The Commission's current review and revision process is being undertaken at a time when higher education accreditation is being questioned in fundamental ways. Accreditation is being questioned because higher education itself is being questioned in unprecedented ways. Is it too costly? Is it too ineffective? Is it meeting broader social purposes or serving itself? What is the future relationship between higher education attainment and jobs for graduates? Can higher education be more effective and less expensive? There are, of course, the theological education versions of these questions. Are communities of faith better off because of advances in theological education? Do recent seminary graduates know how to lead congregations to be more effective and faithful? Is theological education preparing graduates for the church that *was* rather than for the church that *will be*? Can leading congregations educate students for ministry more effectively than theological schools? These questions are not going away any time soon, and both higher education institutions in general and theological schools in particular need meaningful and convincing answers. In the context of these questions, any system like accreditation that says the schools are, in effect, "good and worthwhile" will be questioned.

Accreditation is also under question for many other reasons, but one critical issue is the lack of agreement about what accreditation means. The Commission's *Handbook of Accreditation* identifies two purposes for the accreditation of theological schools: "The first is to ensure that institutions of higher education function according to *standards of institutional and educational quality.* Whatever the definition of quality contained in accrediting standards, the processes of accreditation have sought to ensure that, at the very least, some acceptable level of these standards of quality is present in an accredited institution. . . . The second purpose of accreditation is the *improvement* of institutions and their educational programs."

If accreditation functions only in the first way, it tends toward a compliance assessment about the current status of the school and functions as an audit-like and regulatory activity. If it functions only in the second way, it tends to cast an aspirational and developmental view toward the school's future but does not say much about its current quality or capacity. When accreditation is guided by both of these purposes, it takes on a function quite different from either of these two functions alone. It evaluates current realities in the context of developmental trajectories and those trajectories in the context of current realities. This results in a way of looking at institutions over time, in changing contexts, with assessment of peers about the present and with the counsel of peers about future development. It is an accreditation process that is more narrative and more qualitative, and it is one that ATS accreditation has sought to embody—in different ways at different times—for more than seventy-five years. The bylaws of the ATS Commission on Accrediting clearly affirm this dual approach by the identification of the purpose of accreditation as to "contribute to the enhancement and improvement of theological education."

The current review and revision of the standards has not addressed this fundamental definitional question. It has sought to revise the standards with an eye toward the definition that has served in the past and holds promise to contribute to the work of schools through the very rapid transitions in theological education that are occurring and will continue to occur during the next decades. Unless member schools decide otherwise, the ATS Commission on Accrediting will seek to define accreditation in ways that hold these two purposes together. It is not clear where the current questions about theological education, and the ATS schools who provide much of it, will lead. My hunch is there will be change but not revolution and that, in the end, schools will have the right answers for questions about their value and worth, and accreditation of theological education will effectively perform the function that it was invented to do.

Daniel O. Aleshire
ATS Executive Director



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Colloquy

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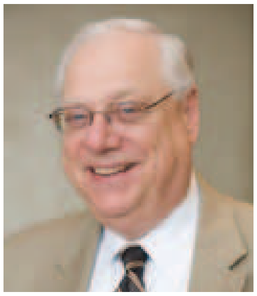

Daniel Aleshire

A glimpse into the work of the accrediting staff

An interview with Daniel Aleshire, Tisa Lewis, Bill Miller, and Lester Ruiz

Tisa Lewis

Bill Miller

Lester Ruiz

During the 2011–2012 academic year, the ATS accrediting staff will complete more than thirty comprehensive evaluation visits and at least fifteen focused evaluation visits. With more than one hundred days logged on the road and thousands of hours spent poring over self-study and other reports and conferring with evaluation committees over the phone, the accrediting group (AG) has been doing yeoman's duty to ensure that the information provided to the Board of Commissioners for its deliberations is complete and accurate. In the midst of their frenetic schedules, the AG staff paused long enough to answer a few questions about the day-to-day workings of accreditation from a staff perspective.

Is there a system that dictates why particular schools are assigned to particular accrediting staff members?

AG: A number of factors are at work here. While we don't have a system per se, we are concerned about ensuring that both the schools and the staff honor the "diversity grid" of ATS. So, we try to distribute the schools according to region, ecclesial family, nationality, and so forth. In addition, we try to balance the assignments so that each AG staff member has the opportunity to work with various types of schools, ecclesial families, and accrediting issues. Possible conflicts of interest also factor in, as we cannot assign a staff person to a school at which he or she has been an employee or student or had other significant engagement. Finally, looking at the aggregate of schools and the timing of their accreditation cycles, we try to even out the portfolio so that the annual work load is fairly evenly distributed among the four accrediting staff members.

How do you ensure that an accreditation evaluation committee is balanced in terms of skills and perspectives and is well suited to the particular school being visited?

AG: We agonize over committee selection perhaps more than any other aspect of the job. Like a game of Sudoku, it requires extreme care to ensure no conflicts of interest and the proper balance of expertise that will cover every issue appropriate for the particular site evaluation being planned. We look at the school's accrediting history to determine any particular needs. As we search for qualified individuals, we use the ATS database to identify the areas of expertise of individuals from member schools—whether they are administrators, faculty, or librarians; their ecclesial memberships; their success in solving a particular problem; and so forth. We consult with one another about personal experience with prospective evaluation committee members, looking for complementary personalities and styles. And of course availability is always a factor. As part of the process, schools are given the opportunity to object to the committee roster if it presents any potential conflicts of interest.

The US Department of Education now requires that, in addition to the requisite administrator and faculty member, all committees include a practitioner as well as an expert in distance education if the school has a comprehensive distance education program. Depending upon the school, adding a chief financial officer to the team might be advisable as well. As a result, schools can expect larger teams than in

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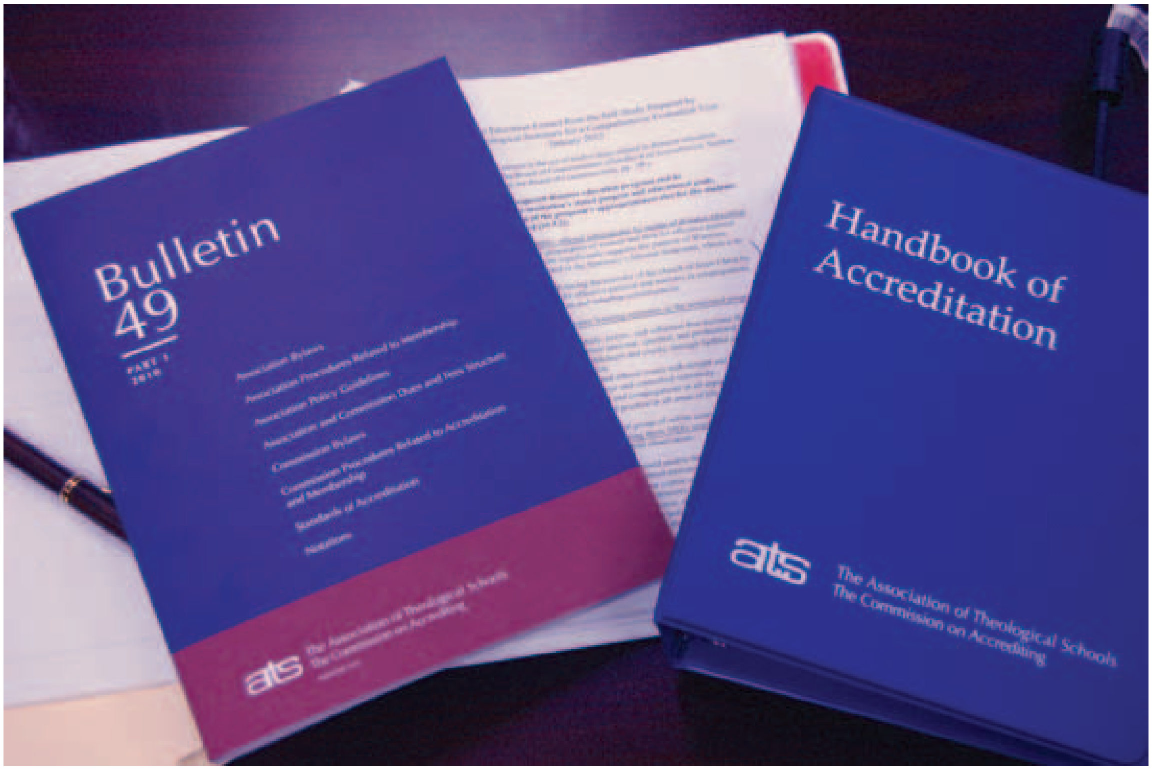

New evaluation committee members participate in training workshops—live or via webinars—and study the Handbook of Accreditation*; as of this spring, evaluation committee member training is* required*. A committee chair will typically spend a bit of extra time working with new members as well.*

the past, perhaps averaging four or more people in size.

How does the staff work with evaluation committees to *prepare* for a site visit?

AG: New evaluation committee members participate in training workshops—live or via webinars—and study the *Handbook of Accreditation*; as of this spring, evaluation committee member training is *required*. A committee chair will typically spend a bit of extra time working with new members as well. Then, during a previsit conference call, the chair will assign each committee member particular standards to study vis-à-vis the school's self-study. Committee members can request additional information or further training in order to prepare for the site visit.

How does the staff understand its role *during* a site visit?

AG: Each of us has our own particular style. But we agree that ours is a coaching role, a facilitator's role. During a site visit, accrediting staff serve as a resource to lend support to the evaluation committee members and to the school that will allow them to work well together and make for a productive site visit. As the site visit unfolds, we check in with the CEO and CAO to see how the process is progressing and to identify any issues or concerns that might not be expressed in the self-study to which the evaluation committee should be alerted. Our goal is to prevent surprises for either the committee or the school.

What is the staff's role *after* the site visit, both with the school and with the board? How influential is the AG staff in the board's deliberations?

AG: Our role is one of follow-up, of making sure the report is completed, that errors and omissions are addressed, and that communications receive prompt response. We also troubleshoot to ensure that all the standards are addressed. But this is truly a peer review process. The report is generated by the evaluation committee and sent back to the school for corrections of errors of fact. To supplement those materials, we prepare summaries of the reports that the Board of Commissioners reads alongside the materials sent in by the evaluation committee and the school, and we ensure that the proper material is included in the board agenda books and on a board Wiki to answer any questions the Commissioners might have about the conduct of the

Most Frequently Cited Accrediting Issues

Issue	Notations Imposed	Reports Due	Focused Evaluations Authorized
Assessment	5	92	8
Finance	5	60	9
Distance education	0	18	1
Strategic planning	4	16	9
Governance	3	13	5

evaluations. During the board meetings, we are available as resource persons. But our influence extends only insofar as we are able to provide accurate information to the board—when asked.

Given your schedule, it would seem that in any given week you might be following up on one site visit, conducting another, and preparing for a third. How do you juggle to ensure that each school is given its due?

AG: Certainly the job entails long hours in order to give proper attention to each school and ensure equity among them. In fact, evaluation visits alone require four streams of work at any given time—follow up from the last evaluation, conducting the current one, consulting with the committee for the next one, and helping to assemble committees for those scheduled well into the future.

The most common issues have to do with assessment, finance, and distance education. In this respect, accrediting can be seen as the "grand diagnostic" that identifies areas of needed growth. This, in turn, informs much of what ATS does on the Association side, in terms of leadership education, publications, and other programming designed to help schools improve.

As schools become more complex and add more extension sites, the work load grows commensurately. The evaluation committee for any given school is required to visit at least a sample of those locations where more than 50 percent of a degree can be earned. This means that a comprehensive evaluation visit might take as long as eleven months to complete. And that work load is only expected to increase.

Add to all that the work required to achieve Department of Education recognition and compliance, revision of the Standards of Accreditation, committee member training, and consultation to schools on special issues, and the accrediting staff is operating at full capacity.

Yet each school is unique—with its own setting, cast of characters, and story line—which distinguishes each one in our minds, even when our work with multiple schools may overlap in any given week. We also rely heavily on administrative staff back in the office—Sue Beckerdite and Lea Ann Fairall—to coordinate schedules and process reports so that each school is given proper attention by the staff, the evaluation committee, and the Board of Commissioners.

What are the most frequently cited issues that require response (e.g., report-backs) by schools?

AG: As of June 2011, the most common issues have to do with assessment, finance, and distance education. In this respect, accrediting can be seen as the "grand diagnostic" that identifies areas of needed growth. This, in turn, informs much of what ATS does on the Association side, in terms of leadership education, publications, and other programming designed to help schools improve. (See table above.)

Conversely, what are the most widespread strengths that should be sustained?

AG: Across the board, the most widespread strength among ATS schools is their adherence to mission. In some cases, schools are revisiting their missions in response to changing church membership, decreasing denominational support, flat enrollment, or the economic climate. But every one we visit remains committed to the mission that ultimately inspires and sustains it: providing a quality educational program to serve the church. We are also pleasantly surprised at how frequently there is a vibrant sense of community at ATS schools, both within residential programs and with distance learning programs.

During a site visit, accrediting staff serve as a resource to lend support to the evaluation committee members and to the school that will allow them to work well together and make for a productive site visit.

What is the most rewarding part of your work?

AG: Despite that every one of us has been tagged as an introvert by the Meyers Briggs classification system, we all agree that the campus site visits—interacting directly with administrators, board members, faculty members, and students—and the committee work are the best parts of our jobs. In particular, it is gratifying to work with schools who really understand that accreditation is for quality assurance and quality improvement, where the school and the evaluation committee really seem to understand one another. At that point the AG staff members assume the role of consultants, solving problems during the self-study process, incident to a comprehensive evaluation visit, or as part of the report-back process. Such issues might include any number of issues such as governance, or faculty resistance to outcomes assessment requirements, or institutional mergers or splits. Occasionally, a school will request a consultation from the AG staff independent of the accrediting cycle. The value that ATS staff brings to the consulting process lies in the accrued knowledge and experience gleaned from years in the accrediting arena.

What is the most challenging aspect of your work?

AG: Quite simply, time management. Yet there are intellectual challenges as well. For a number of years, there was a widely shared view of what good theological education looked like. We have now moved into an era of multiple models, with fluidity among them, and questions of the wisdom of taking certain actions are not so obvious. Consequently, schools are looking for advice, but the same answers don't work for all.

An additional challenge lies in the perpetual tension in the environment of higher education between two models, one of quality improvement and one of quality assurance. Through the development of the accrediting standards and its work in applying them, the Commission finds itself in the complex position of balancing these dual responsibilities.◆

Countdown to the 2012 Biennial Meeting

Wednesday, June 20–Friday, June 22, 2012
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The ATS membership includes the broadest spectrum of North American Christianity of any organization. With 261 member schools from the mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Catholic traditions, ATS is the only body to bring together the three ecclesial communities engaged in the common work of training religious leaders and scholars for the ultimate benefit of the church. That work is further enriched by the presence of organizations with affiliate status representing traditions outside Christianity.

The 2012 Biennial Meeting in Minneapolis will celebrate this rich and diverse religious community and the benefits that members enjoy from their shared common space. Participants will have the opportunity to develop greater appreciation for the unique blend of ecclesial families within ATS and to heighten their self-understanding in that context. As a community working together to improve and enhance theological schools, the membership will also consider at this meeting proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation.

Meeting Highlights

Plenaries
The 2012 Biennial Meeting will include two plenary sessions with programmatic content. The first—the executive director's report—will reflect on the religious and educational diversity of the organization, the strengths that diversity brings, and the organizational discipline it requires. The second will convene a panel to examine the three largest ecclesial communities in ATS—evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic—and to identify the major issues they currently face and their implications for theological education.

Revised Standards of Accreditation
After months of work by the Task Force on the Revision of the Standards and Procedures and several rounds of input by member schools, the proposed new Degree Program Standards will be considered and acted upon by the membership.

New member and affiliate status applications
A number of applicants for associate membership and affiliate status will be presented for membership vote.

Elections
The membership will elect officers, directors, and committee members for the Association as well as Board of Commissioners and committee members for the Commission on Accrediting.

The Distinguished Service Award
The twelfth recipient of the ATS Distinguished Service Award will be honored at a banquet on Wednesday evening.

Workshops
Twelve workshops will cover a range of topics in the areas of management and governance, educational issues, and accrediting.

Management and Governance
- Charting a Path and Staying on Course: Creating and Following the Strategic Plan
- Joining Forces: Three Models of Institutional Collaboration
- Finance 101: How Are We Really Doing?
- Finance 201: A View from Above
- Understanding Students and Faculty: What the Numbers Tell Us
- Exploring the Governance Process

Educational Issues
- Anticipating 2040: Education for Ministry in a Multiracial Society
- Reaching Beyond Ourselves: Education for Ministry in a Multifaith World
- Distance Learning: Assets and Liabilities
- Reconsidering Old Patterns: Big Questions in Academic Practice

Accrediting
- Accrediting 101: Philosophy, Structure, and Process
- Taking Stock: Institutional Assessment and Student Learning Outcomes

Accreditors as consultants: Reflections by two CFOs on the upside of the process

An interview with chief financial officers Michelle Holmes and Laura Snow

The comprehensive evaluation visit can have the CFO quaking in anticipation of four days under the microscopic gaze of the evaluation team. But viewing the self-study and the visit from the right perspective—as a consultant engagement rather than a police investigation—maximizes the benefit the school can derive from the accrediting process. *Colloquy* recently interviewed two CFOs to learn how to make the most of the process.

What should a CFO do to prepare for a comprehensive evaluation visit?

Be realistic and candid in your self-study report.

By approaching the self-study as a reflective self-evaluation rather than a public relations tool, the CFO can help the school identify areas for improvement that can then be addressed in consultation with the evaluation committee. The self-study effectively becomes the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis for ongoing strategic planning.

Know your reports.

From the self-study itself, to the reports that back it up—the audits, management letters, budget projections, statements of financial position, investment reports, and so forth—the CFO should be conversant in their contents and the implications they hold for the operation.

Ensure that the president and key trustees know the reports as well.

Don't assume that people understand all the financials. Make sure that your president and key trustees are familiar with the reports and what they say about the school's operations. During audit and board meetings, encourage trustees to ask questions, and listen to those questions. Observe their reactions to your answers. Note how quickly the budget gets approved. If no one is asking questions, it suggests that some of those present might not fully understand the reports.

Open conversations with other departments.

Consider how the resources referenced in General Institutional Standard 9 are relevant in other areas of the self-study. As the financial side of the operation becomes ever more critical, think interdepartmentally about issues such as new faculty compensation, office space, deferred maintenance, and technology. Present the financial implications of new initiatives under consideration.

The standards offer a good guide for strategic planning and best business practices. They outline what we should be doing, whether or not we're being accredited.

~Laura Snow

Have documents ready and accessible.

A full list of the required documents is available in Section 3 of the *Handbook of Accreditation*. It includes such items as faculty and trustee meeting minutes, audits and management letters, Annual Report Forms, institutional planning documents, course syllabi, faculty CVs, and student work samples. Some schools estab-

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lish a "document room" for this purpose near the room set aside for committee work. Be sure to include all policies currently in place, particularly those pertaining to human resources.

Make sure the business office team understands its role and limits.

The CFO's office has a wealth of information for review by the evaluation committee. It also holds a wealth of working documents that are not yet ready for scrutiny. Work with any staff in the office to be sure that draft documents are approved by the appropriate authorities before presenting them for review.

Think like an evaluation committee member.

Step back and look at the self-study and the evaluation visit as a detached observer. Try to think objectively about how others—both CFOs and others on the committee—might interpret and react to the documents you present and the conversations that occur during the comprehensive evaluation visit. What issues are likely to raise questions . . . and possibly concerns?

Clear your calendar.

No matter how well prepared you might be for the visit, assume that it will consume all your time for the four days the committee is on site. In the days that follow, allow additional time for followup.

Did your self-study and accrediting visit offer any opportunities to improve your

work that you would not otherwise have had? What will you do differently in your work as a result of the accreditation evaluation visit?

MH: In many ways, members of the accreditation evaluation committee became consultants in our strategic planning process. They helped us to expand our thinking and rethink some of the assumptions we were working under. In truth, we did not get the number of years we wanted before the next evaluation visit. They did, however, affirm what we were doing and encouraged us not to slow down but rather to keep moving forward, using the "tough love" approach of a short time frame. They understood our need to be pushed and reflected this in their recommendations.

LS: The standards offer a good framework for strategic and business planning. The self-study prompted us to do an environmental scan that tested our best thinking and promoted a broader, institutional perspective.

MH: All new CFOs should attend the ATS conference for CFOs and specifically the workshop on accreditation, which reviews Standard 9 as well as other standards in which institutional resources are mentioned. Do not wait until it is time to write the self-study report. The workshop not only helps new CFOs to understand the scope and responsibilities of their particular position but it also helps them to understand the bigger picture of their schools and how resources support the mission. So often the CFO is left out of the vision and mission formation. While this effort is typically led by the president, dean, and faculty, the CFO can help guide the process by keeping it grounded in the reality of resources. A truly collaborative self-study process also helps give credible voice to the CFO and can lift the position from silo to team status.

Significant resources are put into preparing the self-study report, receiving accreditation evaluation committees, and responding to the results of the visit. In what ways can all of this work be used as part of the ongoing institutional planning and assessment process of the school?

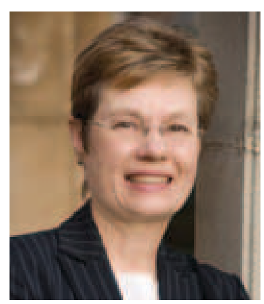
MH: During the comprehensive evaluation, thoughts were already turning to the future and ultimately to the next evaluation. Instead of defending the past, we found ourselves looking toward the future, viewing this evaluation and its subsequent report as a point of departure for the administration to build upon.

The accrediting experience for us was a beginning point, not an ending point. It gave us a jump start as we move into SWOT analysis and strategic planning.

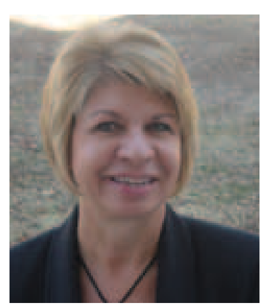
~Michelle "Micky" Holmes

LS: Report backs provide a good way to maintain momentum in the ongoing process of planning and assessment. Rather than capturing a moment in time, the accreditation process at its best supports continual assessment, accountability, validation, and enforcement. Having sat on the other side of the desk, I view the self-study and evaluation process as analogous to an audit with its accompanying management letter.

MH: Integral to the success of this effort is an understanding of shared governance. How does the CFO fit into the institutional governance structure? Rather than getting mired in politics, the successful CFO will know the lines of authority and the voices present in the institution, add his or her voice to the conversation, and "speak truth to power."◆



Michelle M. Holmes is an ordained pastor who has served at American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, California, for twenty-one years, including fifteen years in development and six years as vice president/CFO. She helped to prepare the school's self-study report and staff the comprehensive evaluation visit in March 2011.



Laura Snow is a seasoned CPA who joined Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, about a year ago as vice president for finance and administration/CFO. She arrived after the self-study was completed but was closely involved with the evaluation visit in September 2011.

Confessions of a comprehensive evaluation survivor: Lessons learned and advice for colleagues

By Ronald C. Walborn

When I became dean at Alliance Theological Seminary, the seminary was at the very beginning of a two-year process leading to an ATS Commission on Accrediting comprehensive evaluation. To be frank, the self-study process was not the first thing on my mind during my early months of leadership. I was focused first on listening, on building a sense of team, and on learning the ropes of a new institution. Had I known then what I know now about the self-study process, I might have heeded the jovial statements from Alliance faculty a little more intensely. I heard things like "very brave of you to become dean in a self-study year" over and over. It wasn't until sometime in the final months or weeks before our report to the Association was due that I truly understood the sentiment behind those statements.

A healthy respect for the self-study process is a great starting place for successfully leading your institution through one. After all, truly engaging the process of studying your institution is incredibly exhaustive and has the potential to uncover any number of problems. On the other hand, you may be amazed by strengths previously unnoticed. Your institutional self-study will be an incredible challenge if you engage it appropriately, but it will also be an incredible asset to your institution.

Use the study to look carefully for what God is already doing that we are missing. These hidden strengths represent areas of grace from God that we should value and seek to preserve.

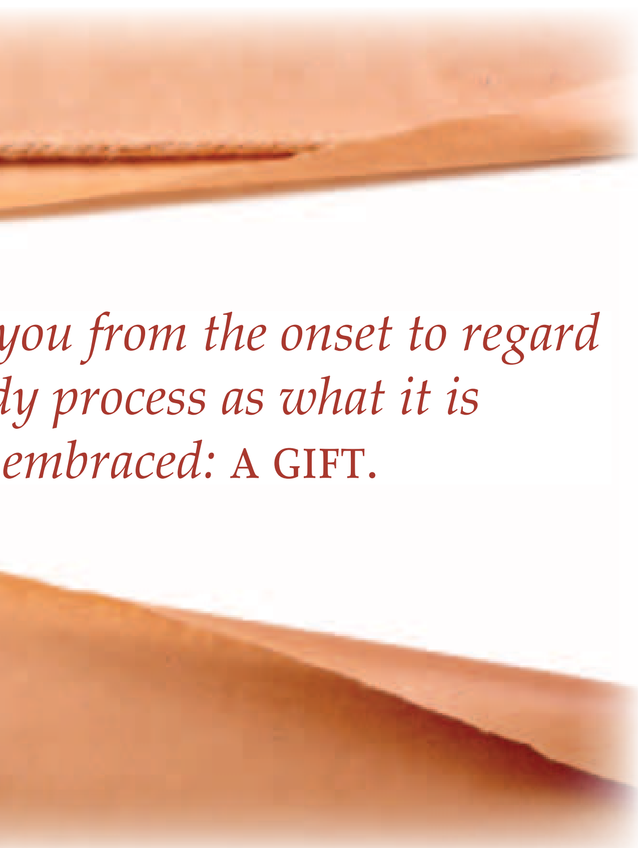
1. Regard the self-study as an asset.

When I first started handing out assignments, I heard numerous groans from seasoned faculty. There will be moments during the process when you would much prefer to be sitting in institutional committee meetings or completing administrative paperwork—anything but working on a self-study! But I challenge you from the onset to regard the self-study process as what it is if it

is fully embraced: *a gift*. The self-study process offers a chance for your institution to examine itself afresh. It requires you to look at things that might be regularly overlooked. It offers you space to peruse midcourse corrections, to tighten up processes, to refine direction. Self-studies are not simply about producing a report; they are about studying and knowing your institution better than ever before.

During Alliance's self-study, I had the benefit of having a former dean on the faculty. His best piece of advice to our faculty was to use the study to look carefully for what God is already doing that we are missing. These hidden strengths represent areas of grace from God that we should value and seek to preserve. That piece of advice—look for the hidden treasure—prepared us to enter into the self-study process with a positive outlook. We periodically rehearsed this question while reviewing materials from various subcommittees: "What is God doing at Alliance?" And indeed, we found strengths at Alliance that we had previously undervalued.

The self-study process, however, does not begin and end with an institution's preparing and submitting a self-study report. If it does,



then, in a sense, the self-study process has failed for you. Self-studies should teach you how to engage assessment and make it an ongoing part of your institutional life. It should raise issues that lead to dialog that lasts far beyond the few years of focused investment in writing a report. At Alliance, some of the big-picture questions that

Instead of asking each team to complete the same set of tasks (related to different standards) we broke tasks down according to strengths. . . . Recognize when someone is better at generating ideas or dialog than at leading meetings or writing reports, and utilize your team members accordingly. It will be more fulfilling for them and more productive for you.

arose in faculty meetings during our self-study process are still being discussed and are guiding our dialog. Through our self-study, we renewed our commitment to ask what we are supposed to be about and how well we are doing it.

2. Know your team.

I assumed all of our graduate faculty would be equally competent at leading subcommittees and overseeing the drafting of materials for our self-study. We set very reasonable deadlines nearly two years out, sent follow-up emails, provided examples, gathered and distributed data, set aside time for working groups in faculty meetings, and asked for interim reports. Some committees did better with their research and writing assignments than others. Instead of asking each team to complete the same set of tasks (related to different standards), we broke tasks down according to strengths. We found a few faculty members who love student interaction and ask good questions—they ran our focus groups. We looked to the program director with the strongest record of gathering and utilizing assessment data as the lead reviewer of our degree program chapters. We found the one person whose eyes lit up when things like Likert scales were mentioned and asked her to serve as the lead on interpreting and reporting important assessment data to others who were less statistically inclined. And we pulled in key staff whose writing, editing, publishing, project management, and organizational skills helped the entire faculty team function. Recognize when someone is better at generating ideas or dialog than at leading meetings or writing reports, and utilize your team members accordingly. It will be more fulfilling for them and more productive for you.

Our director of assessment recently met a number of nonfaculty assessment leaders whose roles within institutions were solely linked to the successful writing of self-study reports. One such individual had just changed institutions.

The self-study process, however, does not begin and end with an institution's preparing and submitting a self-study report. If it does, then, in a sense, the self-study process has failed for you. Self-studies should teach you how to engage assessment and make it an ongoing part of your institutional life.

Once the site visit was over at her previous employer, her role was done, and she had moved on to do the hard work of producing another self-study with another institution with which she had no existing relationship and no ongoing investment. While there were moments during our self-study process when I would have gladly hired an outside administrator to take the reins and alleviate the pressure, I look back with the benefit of knowing what our self-study offered to us. That is not to say outside administrative personnel should not be used. Rather, I would advocate getting as much administrative assistance as your institution can provide while simultaneously realizing that to be effective, to be productive, your entire institution needs to engage the process. We found student workers who were highly capable at a range of support-related tasks. A part-time student worker, who also happens to be a lawyer, used her eye for detail to attend to numerous formatting and indexing needs. A different student worker served tirelessly on a subcommittee and gladly worked with our focus groups. You might find that some staff are more gifted at organizing materials and writing cohesive narrative than faculty. We invited alumni to participate on subcommittees and brought the board of trustees into the process through regular conference calls. At the end of our self-study process, Alliance had a much deeper sense of team, and our various constituents had a much deeper sense of ownership. Our vision and purpose became more united as we labored side by side.

3. Communicate well.

Keeping people informed goes a long way toward creating a sense of mutual goodwill. At Alliance, we chose a multipronged approach to communication that extended beyond meeting times, writing deadlines, and questions needing faculty response. This meant that we spent time talking with other departments and schools of our institution. We kept others informed of our progress and the outstanding needs. Not only did this help keep us in good institutional graces, but we often found help in unexpected places as staff and administration from other areas of the school joined our team to help us complete our task.

Since Alliance has two extension sites (one of equal size to the primary campus), we found our need for careful and ongoing communication to be even more important. In fact, the need to get diverse faculty and staff from these sites (suburban New York, urban Manhattan, and Puerto Rico) onto the same page helped lay important groundwork for tightening our own internal processes. We realized where communication gaps had previously existed and became intentional about getting face to face more often. And again, a sense of *team* was built, so that our intercampus relationships are stronger now than at any time in our past.

We also talked with our student body about the self-study process, choosing to communicate as thoroughly about what we were learning as about the process itself. It made things like additional surveys and requests to serve on committees less burdensome. Students and alumni saw participation as a privilege and were able to see how their involvement was making a difference to the larger seminary community. In a sense, they saw their own importance to Alliance and became excited with us about what we discovered along the way.

During our site visit, we heard of an ATS member school that had its celebratory cake and ice cream waiting in the next room while the evaluation committee was giving its final report to the seminary leadership. While this seems a bit premature, the desire to celebrate the huge accomplishment of a successful self-study and reaccreditation evaluation visit is understandable. After all, the self-study task is huge! So much so that we chose not only to celebrate once the visit was successfully completed, but we also celebrated along the way. We celebrated among faculty every time a deadline was reached. We celebrated the Herculean efforts of some of our student workers and staff. We gave tangible expressions of appreciation. And we especially celebrated all of the areas of strength that we found during the process. Again, this communication reached beyond faculty to all of Alliance's constituencies: "We're doing a great job in this area! Join us in rejoicing!" This celebrating helped add to our sense of shared community and goals.

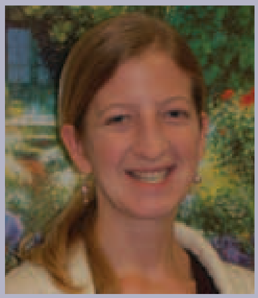
Once your site visit is over, you will want to utter a collective sigh of relief. The months and months of focused attention, of extra hours, and of extra responsibilities will be over. You will probably want some time off. And, you might be tempted to start working through that pile of mail you neglected for six months. But whatever you do, do not stop communicating. Take what has come out of your self-study process—the increased sense of self-awareness, the increased sense of team, the clear questions that still need to be answered—and make them a part of your ongoing dialog. Use your discoveries to build momentum. Let your self-study inform your recruitment processes. Make it a part of your institutional identity—it will help you build a culture of assessment. And it will put you ahead of the curve the next time you need to survive a self-study.◆

Once your site visit is over, you will want to utter a collective sigh of relief. . . . But whatever you do, do not stop communicating. Take what has come out of your self-study process—the increased sense of self-awareness, the increased sense of team, the clear questions that still need to be answered—and make them a part of your ongoing dialog.

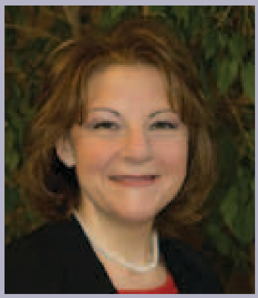
***Ronald C. Walborn** is dean of Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, New York.*

THE ASSOCIATION

ATS says goodbye to one staff member, welcomes another



Caitlin Rohrer will be leaving ATS in March to become director of the prerelease HOPE program at Allegheny County Jail, where, among other tasks, she will be managing instructors and curricula for classes, running orientations and graduations, and serving as chaplain to inmates participating in the program. We wish her well.



Please join us in welcoming **Lea Ann Fairall**, who joined the ATS staff in February as an administrative assistant for accrediting, supporting the directors of accreditation and institutional evaluation. Other responsibilities include providing administrative support for the accreditation visit cycle, educational programming, Commission-related events, and other accrediting-related activities.

Earning an MEd degree at Western Illinois University, Fairall brings nearly twenty years of experience in the field of education, including teaching at the high school and undergraduate levels, managing a regional night school program for at-risk youth, and coordinating cooperative work study programs. Her undergraduate education includes a BS in business/vocational education from Illinois State University and a BS in marketing from Bradley University.

Surfing the sea change: Academic leaders pool their knowledge on building assessment programs

By Sarah B. Drummond

Over the course of less than a generation, the focus of educational evaluation in higher education has shifted from teachers and institutions to learners and their impact on their fields. As logical and positive as this shift may be, for theological schools it represents nothing short of a sea change.[1]

Most theological schools are still at the front end of the transition into this new way of assessing educational quality. Many theological schools' educational infrastructures are not built to withstand the sea change and must be rebuilt far beyond the invention of an outcomes assessment program. New leaders are emerging, however, who understand the challenge of this new form of educational evaluation, see its promise for reforming institutions, and wish to work together to help theological schools face this new reality.

When peer evaluators view schools from afar and through brief immersions, they can see quite easily what is not happening. They expect integrated assessment plans, where every link in the chain—from courses, to degree programs, to the mission of the institution—hangs together.

An assessment summit?

Cynthia[2] is a member of the faculty and associate dean at a divinity school in the northeast. More than a year ago, she agreed to serve as the self-study chair for her school's upcoming comprehensive evaluation, held jointly with The Association of Theological Schools and the regional accrediting body. Having worked in theological education for many years, Cynthia did not underestimate the complexity of the task. She mapped out a careful approach to outcomes assessment and for securing the necessary administrative support and faculty buy-in. As she implemented the plan, however, she encountered setbacks that left her puzzled and occasionally frustrated.

During a lull in the academic year, she visited a friend on the campus of another divinity school. While meandering the halls, she stumbled upon an office nameplate that stopped her in her tracks. "Dean of Assessment" was the title underneath Bob's name. Cynthia had neither met nor heard of Bob, and she had certainly never heard of a role like dean of assessment. She rapped on the door with both curiosity and hope. Cynthia and Bob began a conversation that day that left both feeling that institutional leaders responsible for assessment at theological schools need opportunities to talk with one another about the distinctive challenges they face.

Within just a few days of that conversation, Bob and Cynthia extended an invitation to assessment-oriented leaders in theological schools in their region to gather for discussion, something like an assessment summit. Even though the gathering they proposed would take place on relatively short notice and at a particularly busy time of year, the response was overwhelming: leaders wanted to talk to one another. With Bob serving as host, and Cynthia and Bob facilitating discussion, eleven leaders gathered, representing eight institutions: Five were academic deans, three were faculty members with responsibility related to upcoming or recent accrediting evaluations, one was a dean of assessment, one was a chief financial officer, and one was a trustee with a high level of responsibility for a self-study underway.

The agenda for the day reflected the knowledge Cynthia and Bob brought to the conversation related to assessment leadership:

- Developing goals that can be articulated as outcomes, rather than simply focusing on educational processes
- Identifying and collecting data that relates to the assessment of goals and determining who will review the data
- Program-level assessment: how to close the loop, engage faculty, and invite reflection

Participants shared in advance one-page summaries on the current state of affairs in assessment in their respective institutions. They then engaged in discussion, sharing points of tension and—in some cases—aggravation. They helped one another with problem solving while affirming one another's struggles and offering encouragement and understanding.

Perhaps one of the most telling attributes of the discussion Cynthia and Bob led was that facilitators began by carefully delineating confidentiality expectations. One cannot talk about designing and implementing a plan for assessment without airing dirty laundry—that is, sharing with one another the places where the institution is not functioning well. Considering that the institutions represented in the gathering could easily be described as competitors, a high level of trust was necessary for this discussion to take place at all.

The tug of war

The leaders who gathered for this discussion are different from one another in many ways. They hold different positions in their institutions with varied levels of administrative and academic authority. Their institutions differ as well, with some from university-rooted divinity schools and others from smaller, independent institutions. One characteristic all shared, however, was an understanding of what it is like to be wedged between stakeholders who often do not understand one another and outcomes assessment.

On one side of the tug of war, they have accrediting bodies. Peer reviewers representing accrediting bodies tend to be knowledgeable about assessment and the way in which educational evaluation has shifted its emphasis onto outcomes. When peer evaluators view schools from afar and through brief immersions, they can see quite easily what is *not* happening. They expect integrated assessment plans, where every link in the chain—from courses, to degree programs, to the mission of the institution—hangs together. When they do not see that integration, they make a note of it. In fact, one of the schools represented at the assessment summit had received a notation in a recent peer review for a lack of cohesion in its assessment program.

Many faculty members see assessment as something imposed upon the institution from outside—from accreditation bodies in particular—and academic leaders must work hard to demonstrate to faculties the value of outcomes assessment as a means of improving the education offered by theological schools.

On the other side of the tug of war, they have the faculty. Faculty members tend to resist institution-wide outcomes assessment, and how to bring them aboard was a theme in the assessment summit. Why are faculty members resistant? Perhaps they wish to work independently, perhaps they fear what it would mean if their students were not learning as much as they should, or perhaps they worry about the now-and-future theological school and how much they will have to change as institutions change. Many faculty members see assessment as something imposed upon the institution from outside—from accreditation bodies in particular—and academic leaders must work hard to demonstrate to faculties the value of outcomes assessment as a means of improving the education offered by theological schools.

Building a program

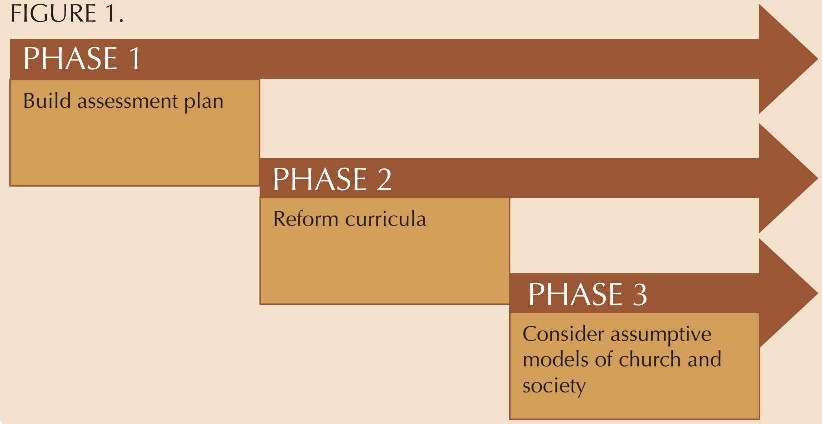
Participants in the assessment summit represented institutions at varied points in building an assessment plan. Each described a building process that included numerous phases, and leaders described moments of feeling utterly stumped. An example of a dilemma participants shared related to setting outcome goals. The following are some questions stemming from this dilemma:

- Where should the goals for a curriculum originate?
  - If they come from the administration, how can administrators foster faculty ownership?
  - If they emerge at a grass-roots level, how can they be incorporated into the institution's infrastructure?
- No matter where goals originate, how can processes weather delays and roadblocks inherent to communal discernment?
- To what extent does it matter that stakeholders understand the difference between a goal, an outcome, and an artifact?

Different schools patterned their program-building efforts in ways that made sense in light of limited resources, institutional cultures, and overstretched schedules. Similarities among processes easily outstripped differences, however.

A key question that emerged from the assessment summit related to the sequence of discussions in the assessment program-building process. Most schools that took building an as-

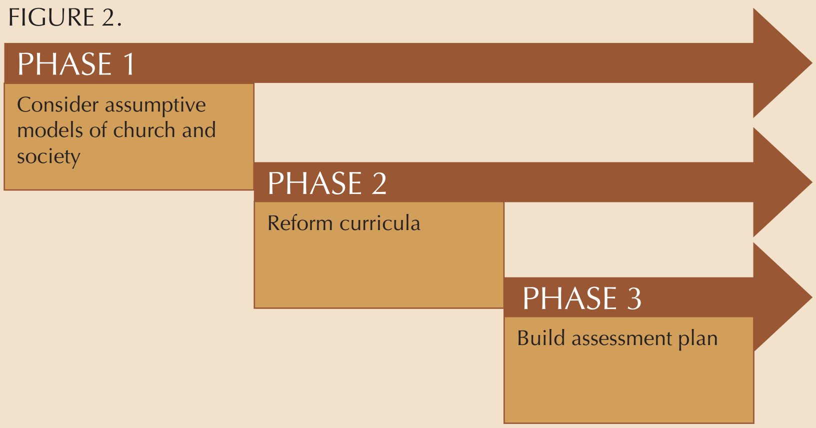
FIGURE 1.



sessment plan seriously linked that process with curriculum reform. They started with assessment program creation, then moved to curriculum reform, but then began to question the assumptions they were making about the state of the church and requirements of ministry. (See Figure 1.)

Although the above sequence was the *de facto* course of action for most schools, participants in the assessment summit would agree that, in an ideal world, the order should be reversed. (See Figure 2.)

FIGURE 2.



Several participants described a disconnect in their institutions where superimposing an assessment plan on an existing curriculum had backfired. The hope might have been to integrate assessment across the institution, linking courses with degree programs with mission, but ultimately the integration was ineffective, in part, because it was forced. One school in which the academic dean described the faculty as "obsessive" about the meaning and impact of its work found itself unable to translate its reflective practices into the language of assessment: "[O]ur assessment failed to mention those very things that are our waking passions." Participants agreed that compelling faculty members to append learning goals to syllabi, and other practices meant to foster integration, tend to give assessment a bad rap and raise defensiveness.

Hope for the future

Some participants in the assessment summit whose institutions have engaged in formal outcomes assessment for more than three years described signs of hope. First, some named turnover in the faculty as a hopeful prospect. New faculty members who arrive on campus when an assessment plan is in place do not have to unlearn old, and thus relearn new, perspectives on evaluation. Second, faculty members do get used to new ways of thinking about evaluation over time. As they understand the perspectival shift better, those who resisted at first can come to embrace outcomes assessment. Third, as feedback loops develop over time, institutions can improve based on the learning generated by student learning assessment, and those results provide encouragement to stay the course in assessment program building.

Institutional leaders charged with student learning assessment have much to gain from connecting with one another. Those who participated in the assessment summit found joy in *not* having to explain to each other some of the challenges of the role, the peccadilloes of faculties, the occasionally unrealistic expectations of peer reviewers, and the strains on theological education as a whole. To come out of the weeds of outcomes assessment planning, programming, and monitoring helped participants to take stock of their own work and receive the encouragement of colleagues.◆

***Sarah B. Drummond** is dean of the faculty and vice president for academic affairs at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts.*

ENDNOTES

1 See Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 49.

2 The names of consultation participants and their institutions have been changed or concealed.

The Ministry of PRESENCE

An interview with chaplains from the US Air Force and US Coast Guard

Responsible for nearly half of the military personnel's spiritual needs, these military chaplains face huge challenges and thrilling responsibilities.

How did you first become interested in military chaplaincy?

Gen. Richardson: I joined the Air Force during Vietnam and got a degree in Russian to become an intercept operator. Later I worked in Washington, DC, as an interpreter for an intelligence department. While there I went to a church just to meet girls. I had no previous church background and didn't know what to expect. But the preacher's words pierced my heart. He gave an altar call, and I was saved.

Shortly thereafter I was deployed to Turkey, where I met an enlisted man who was also a lay preacher in an African-American congregation. He discipled me and gave me my first opportunity to preach.

I served my term and then pursued a degree in biblical studies. I was ordained and then went to seminary. I became a pastor, but then the call came to go back to where I had first met Christ and grown in my faith. I have now served as a military chaplain for thirty-four years.

Capt. Weeden: I enlisted in the Coast Guard as a very young Christian, and I really grew as I lived with the other men in the close quarters of a ship. Later I went to Bible college and started serving as a youth pastor in a local church. At that time, in the early '80s, there was a growing Christian subculture with music and politics. It was becoming very easy to live within the Christian enclave.

Increasingly I felt isolated from those I felt God was calling me to reach. In the church, we were developing programs and opening our doors expecting people to walk in. Sometimes they did, but often they did not. I decided I wanted to get out to where the people were.

What attracted me to the chaplaincy was how it allowed me to live out my faith openly while still being among people where they worked. I could carry my faith into very unique contexts—a ship, a battlefield, an overseas base. That was more attractive to me than being at a church where everything revolved around Sunday. I'm not opposed to the local church, but I didn't want to sit behind a desk. I love being out with people.

The military includes chaplains from many different faiths. How has that diversity impacted your ministry?

Capt. Weeden: Working with my colleagues across the spectrum of faith has been one of the most rewarding things for me. My very first station assignment included a team of about eighteen chaplains including a rabbi, several Catholic priests, and Protestants from multiple denominations. We had a meeting about ministry objectives, and we quickly developed five or six areas of agreement. I remember thinking, "Wow! I wasn't able to get that kind of consensus in a local church among like-minded people."

We know what our differences are, but sharing duties with these people and breaking bread with them has been a blessing.

After decades of serving in the military, have you seen attitudes toward chaplains change?

Gen. Richardson: I've never seen America love its military more, and I've never seen the military love its chaplains more. That's true of every rank, even the commanders. I've had a number of commanders say to me, "It wasn't until we went overseas into a war environment that I recognized how much my chaplain means to me. What a difference the chaplain's presence makes to the unit."

With the chaplain, people have a place to turn, a place to vent, a place to ask for help and share burdens. With the chaplain, they have totally privileged and confidential communication. And many commanders see the chaplain as a close advisor.

Capt. Weeden: I have found a greater spiritual awareness and receptivity than when I first started in the '80s. That doesn't always translate into more commitment and spiritual growth, but there is much more openness.

A lot of that is because of the wars. Being in harm's way, being in very difficult environments, will cause people to ask profound questions about life and eternity in a way that life at home in the States may not.

How is military chaplaincy different from other pastoral ministries?

Capt. Weeden: As a Navy chaplain we have four responsibilities. First, we *provide*. We provide religious services and guidance based on our own faith.

Second, we *facilitate*. As an evangelical I cannot provide a Jewish service or conduct a Catholic mass. But where we cannot provide we facilitate. We make sure that the religious needs of everyone are being met.

Third, we *advise*. Leadership looks to chaplains to advise on many levels, from morale and ethics to religious engagement with communities overseas. Some chaplains are working very strategically with clerics in the Middle East to help the military in those communities.

Fourth, we *care*. No matter who walks through our door, we are here to care for everyone. No one else in the military can provide full confidentiality. We are a safe place.

Gen. Richardson: Military chaplaincy is not like serving in a local church. You are going to be called into some very challenging environments. I have served in more than 100 countries and in every state. I have been in the presence of carnage. I've walked on battlefields and through bombed out buildings. I've carried human remains in my hat, and I've held the hands of great Americans who have gone to be with God.

I've sat by many hospital beds, and far too many times I've stood in Arlington Cemetery to say goodbye to a friend. Still, I couldn't imagine anything more wonderful than being called to be a chaplain.

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~Captain Gary P. Weeden

What challenges do you see on the horizon for Christian chaplains in the armed forces?

Gen. Richardson: Some organizations under the guise of religious freedom have attacked military chaplains as unconstitutional. They believe religion has no place in the military. Thankfully our constitution says otherwise. We have a right to the free exercise of religion. But the lawsuits have a demoralizing effect on some chaplains, and they cause some commanders to pause, and it makes others hesitate before expressing their faith.

Capt. Weeden: The bigger challenge will depend upon what happens in our world next. We don't know where the next battle or conflict will be. Things can change quickly, as the events in Libya have shown. But those things put extra demands on the military, and chaplains need to be ready to minister in any context.◆

The full-length article, written by Skye Jethani, senior editor of Leadership Journal, *first appeared in the fall 2011 issue of* Trinity Magazine *of Trinity International University. Excerpts of it appear here.*

As chief of chaplains of the US Air Force, ***Major General Cecil R. Richardson*** *(MDiv, TEDS) is the senior pastor for more than 800,000 active-duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian forces serving in the United States and overseas. He leads an Air Force chaplain corps of approximately 2,200 chaplains and chaplain assistants from the active and Air Reserve components.*

Chaplain of the Coast Guard ***Captain Gary P. Weeden*** *(ThM, TEDS) began his Coast Guard service following high school. As a student at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, he served in the US Naval Reserve as a theological student programs officer. Since then, Weeden has served in a number of roles, including as deputy chaplain for US Central Command and Area Chaplain for US Coast Guard Atlantic Area.*

Cooperation without compromise: Teaching clergy to work in a multifaith environment

By Chaplain (Colonel) Kenneth W. Bush

The United States is an ethnically and religiously diverse nation. In the past, much of this diversity was concentrated in urban areas, but a recent study by Brookings[1] reveals that in the last decade immigrants are spreading out into smaller metro areas and moving to suburbs more than cities. This means that even clergy who expect to serve in rural or suburban areas need to be prepared to work in the context of greater religious diversity. In order to help member institutions deal with this increasingly pluralistic landscape, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) initiated the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices (CHAPP) project, funded by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation Inc. The CHAPP project established working committees representing the three broad ecclesial families in ATS membership and held a series of consultations meant to examine the multifaith environment from these three perspectives. During one of these consultations, ATS invited institutional chaplains to share their unique insights into the challenges and opportunities of working in pluralistic environments. This article summarizes some of the material presented on the military chaplaincy at the Pittsburgh consultation held in September 2010.

As religious practitioners, chaplains may be asked to provide information on local religious thought, customs, and traditions or to serve in a liaison role during dialogues with local religious leaders. This requires a unique facility for working in a pluralistic context.

A unique ministry environment

The Army and the military services in general are ethnically and religiously diverse subcultures that reflect the general demographics of American society. What makes this setting relevant for the study of pastoral practice in a multifaith environment is that, within this population, clergy from equally diverse traditions are required by law and calling not only to minister to soldiers and families from their own faith traditions but also to support the free exercise of religion of everyone in the communities they serve. Guided by the principle of "cooperation without compromise," chaplains credentialed by more than 150 different endorsing agencies perform religious worship, education, rites, and pastoral care according to their denominational standards or provide for the services they cannot perform for those of other faith traditions. In addition, while performing or providing ministry, chaplains supervise and are supervised by men and women from other faith traditions and must work within this leadership structure without bias or prejudice in regard to those traditions.

In this context, chaplains must understand both the internal religious environment of the military organizations they serve and the external religious environment of the areas in which they operate. While their primary mission is to perform or provide religious support to the military community, chaplains must also be conversant with the impact of religion on military operations in order to provide advice to military commanders when required. As religious practitioners, chaplains may be asked to provide information on local religious thought, customs, and traditions or to serve in a liaison role during dialogues with local religious leaders. This requires a unique facility for working in a pluralistic context.

A unique educational approach

At the United States Army Chaplain Center and School, the staff and faculty are charged to teach fully qualified clergy, who are endorsed by their respective credentialing bodies, how to serve in the military context just described. In addition to meeting denominational requirements, these men and women must meet the educational, physical, and work experience qualifications established by the Department of Defense. One of the challenges of educating clergy to minister in such a highly pluralistic environment is that many have not been broadly exposed during their education to other religions or the practice of pluralism in the American context, nor do they have much experience in dealing with people from other faith traditions.

The Army Chaplain School meets this challenge by providing both formal instructional content and a structured environment for experiential engagement. A critical starting point in the discussion of religious pluralism is defining the term. There is a distinct difference between pluralism as fact and pluralism as value. The former is simply the objective recognition of the existence of ethnic and religious diversity in American society, a reality that few would have an issue acknowledging. Pluralism as value has at least two main definitions. One is the view of diversity as a source of social and cultural strength. Again, this is a view that many clergy accept at face value. The second definition is more controversial. It is the idea that all religious beliefs are essentially the same and that, as clergy, we should accept all truth claims as equally valid. While some theological traditions might affirm this value, a number of others would find this viewpoint theologically untenable. To bridge this tension, the Chaplain School basically teaches the parameters of religious freedom as understood under the American Constitutional system. This is essentially a form of *principled pluralism*.[2] Working in a religiously pluralistic environment, chaplains are not required to believe that all competing truth claims are equally valid, but they must respect the right of others to hold and practice their point of view even if diametrically opposed to their own. Chaplains must respect men and women from radically different faith traditions and recognize that, under our form of government, every person has a right to exercise his or her faith according to his or her denomination's tenets and the dictates of conscience. As military officers, they are bound by oath to support and defend the Constitution, including the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

Another critical educational element is establishing the value of working in a pluralistic environment. Chaplains are reminded that their own religious freedom is dependent on a civil public square in which they honor the rights of others to hold differing points of view and can engage in respectful dialogue. These are incredibly complex and nuanced issues that require a great deal of dialogue and personal reflection. The staff and faculty help chaplains individually set the parameters under which they can support the religious freedom of others without compromising their own theological belief systems.

Working in a religiously pluralistic environment, chaplains are not required to believe that all competing truth claims are equally valid, but they must respect the right of others to hold and practice their point of view even if diametrically opposed to their own. Chaplains must respect men and women from radically different faith traditions and recognize that, under our form of government, every person has a right to exercise his or her faith according to his or her denomination's tenets and the dictates of conscience.

A third critical element is enabling chaplains to deal with a wide range of belief systems. Given the potential diversity, it would be impossible to expose them to even the key elements of every possible theological system. To deal with this challenge, the Chaplain School focuses on teaching basic cultural awareness skills and knowing what questions to ask in order to gain an understanding of the essential elements of another person's worldview. Students are encouraged to transfer skills such as active listening and conflict resolution, learned in areas such

as counseling, to open fruitful dialogue with people from unfamiliar cultural and religious backgrounds.

In addition to formal instruction, the environment itself reinforces working in a pluralistic environment. Students are assigned to platoons that are, by their nature, religiously diverse, and they are required to work with others ethnically and theologically very different from themselves. Instructors take every opportunity to reinforce sensitivity and respect for other traditions while not requiring chaplains to compromise their own beliefs. Extracurricular events such as jointly planned and executed military ceremonies require chaplains to work through problems with clergy from other traditions in order to accomplish the mission. The institution also conducts numerous cultural heritage events that celebrate diversity and the contributions of other ethnic groups to American society.

Although institutions cannot teach students everything they need to know about every belief system they might encounter, they can prepare students to ask key questions to understand the basic worldviews of those they encounter and the impact of those worldviews on issues surrounding key life events such as birth, religious initiation, marriage, and death—points when clergy are most frequently asked to provide pastoral care.

Some modest recommendations

What can our theological institutions do to prepare future clergy for ministry in a multicultural and religiously pluralistic environment? Inserting new courses into already full programs of instruction may be a bridge too far. A more reasonable approach would be to integrate critical perspectives and content into already existing courses.

Civilian pastors should be aware of the religious context of the outside community and taught how to navigate within its religious diversity. Although institutions cannot teach students everything they need to know about every belief system they might encounter, they can prepare students to ask key questions to understand the basic worldviews of those they encounter and the impact of those worldviews on issues surrounding key life events such as birth, religious initiation, marriage, and death—points when clergy are most frequently asked to provide pastoral care.

In addition to exposure to other traditions in the classroom, institutions should look for ways to increase cultural awareness by experientially exposing students to other cultures and their associated religious traditions through extra-curricular events. Most communities in which our educational institutions are located have a number of cultural events. Students could be required to attend a certain number of them during their training. Institutions could host smaller events of this nature on their own campuses in order to foster dialogue in a more controlled or targeted venue. Staff and faculty should be encouraged to lead by example, demonstrating cultural awareness and sensitivity to diversity. When possible, institutions should include staff and faculty who come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Americans are ethnically and religiously diverse, and the effects of globalization and the demographic realities will only increase that diversity. Institutions that want to prepare their students to meet both the challenges and the opportunities of this reality must find creative ways of integrating into their programs an understanding of culture and approaches to ministering effectively in a religiously pluralistic environment.◆

Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the US Army, or the US Army Chaplain Corps.

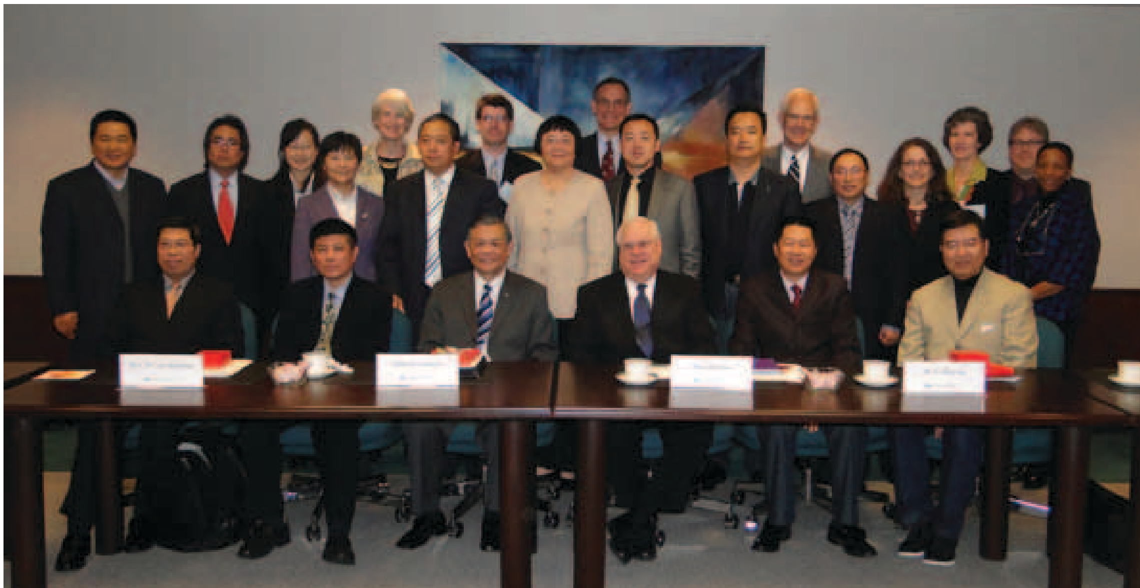
Chaplain (Colonel) Kenneth W. Bush *is the senior chaplain at Fort Eustis, Virginia, and was the former director of training and leader development at the US Army Chaplain Center and School.*

ENDNOTES

1. Jill H. Wilson and Audrey Singer, "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change" (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2011). Accessible at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/papers/2011/1013_immigration_wilson_singer.pdf.

2. For a good explanation of principled pluralism, see The Williamsburg Charter, which is accessible at http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/findingcommonground/C02.WilliamsburgCharter.pdf.

Chinese delegation visits ATS



On October 3, 2011, ATS welcomed a delegation that included Elder Fu Xianwei, chairperson of the National Committee of Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, and Rev. Lu Dezhi, vice president of the China Christian Council, as well as educators, seminary presidents, and leaders of the State Administration of Religious Affairs of PRC. Prompted by an invitation from the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia, the visit allowed ATS staff to present the delegates with an overview of accredited graduate theological education in North America.

Strengthening Bible institutes and church leadership: A partnership to develop a viable certification process

By Fernando A. Cascante

The unprecedented growth of both the Hispanic population and racial/ethnic churches around the country points to the urgent need to make sound theological education available to their pastors and leaders.

Yet Hispanics often do not have access to the baccalaureate education typically required for admission to an ATS member school. In those cases, the only option they have for ministerial formation—Bible institutes—often lack appropriate financial resources and quality theological and biblical content. At the same time, traditional seminary education is experiencing unprecedented change and the need to rethink its mission and purpose. From these two realities it is easy to see that the survival and the mission of theological institutions in the twenty-first century depend greatly on their willingness and capacity to open and adapt their educational programs to the realities and needs of present and future church leaders of those Hispanic and Latino/a congregations. But until now, the only available and rarely used option for them has been a "back door" option—namely, the 10-percent rule (percentage of students with no baccalaureate degree that may be admitted for theological studies at a seminary at any given time).

Aware of these realities, Stan Perea, executive director of the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH), and Daniel Aleshire, executive director of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) held conversations in 2010 about the future of theological education for Hispanic church leaders and how it is related to the future of theological schools in the United States. As a result of those conversations, AETH developed a project for the creation of certification standards that, on the one hand, will contribute to improving the quality of theological education of interested Bible institutes and, on the other hand, will comply with the general denominational standards for ordaining lay leaders into pastoral ministry. Such certification standards will open a "front door" to graduates of eligible Bible institutes who want to pursue further theological studies in ATS member schools.

Thanks to funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, a commission formed in the spring of 2011 including persons knowledgeable about Hispanic theological education and standards and procedures of accreditation. The main outcomes of its first meeting were the redefining of the overall purpose and goals of the Commission's work and the forming of subcommittees to undertake it. The Commission's overall purpose is *to develop standards, curriculum recommendations, and processes for interested and eligible Hispanic/Latino/Latina Bible institutes to be certified by AETH in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada.* The Commission's overall goals are *to create and formalize a process of certification that will (a) promote and improve the theological education of eligible Bible institutes so that their graduates function at a baccalaureate level and are equipped to become leaders for the radical transformation of church and society, and (b) provide accessible pathways to enrollment in ATS-accredited graduate theological schools for graduates of AETH-certified Bible institutes.*

The Commission formed three subcommittees to plan and implement its work:

1. Certification standards and process of certification (Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Edward Wheeler, Edward Delgado, Efraín Velázquez)
2. Curriculum design (Maritza Rosas, Felix Muñiz, Teófilo Aguillón, Sherwood Lingerfelter)
3. Capacity building of Bible institutes (Alvin Padilla, Leland Eliason, Luis Rivera, Zaida Maldonado-Perez)

Sitting: Rev. Teófilo Aguillón, Dr. Zaida Maldonado-Pérez, Dr. Fernando A. Cascante, Rev. Maritza Rosas, Dr. Alvin Padilla, Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier. **Standing**: Dr. Daniel Aleshire, Rev. Dr. Ed Delgado, Dr. Leland Eliason, Dr. Sherwood Lingerfelter, Dr. Ed Wheeler, Dr. Luis Rivera, Rev. Dr. Feliz Muñiz, Rev. Stan Perea. **Not shown**: Dr. Efraín Velázquez.

During its second meeting in October, the Commission reaffirmed the purpose and goals of its work, and the subcommittees reported on the work completed and the work planned for the following months. This work involves site visits of model Bible institutes as well as conversations with seminary leaders interested in and willing to partner with them.

The Commission met a third time in March 2012 to review results of a survey sent to more than 250 Bible institutes from around the country (more than fifty-eight responded). Using these findings, the Commission produced the first draft of the standards and the curriculum to be proposed for the certification of interested and eligible Bible institutes. It hopes that a final version can be approved by the appropriate committees of AETH by the end of 2012 and considered by the ATS Board of Commissioners in early 2013. The goal is for initial implementation to begin in 2013.

Through this project AETH will provide Bible institutes a great opportunity to promote and improve the ministerial formation they offer to Hispanic church leaders, and ATS will provide its member schools with a greater opportunity to serve the rapidly growing Hispanic population more effectively. More importantly, this project will challenge Bible institutes and seminaries alike to carry out the mission for which they ultimately exist: to prepare leaders, women and men, for the service of the church at large and for the sake of God's reign in the world.◆

Fernando A. Cascante *is coordinator of the joint commission and director of pastoral formation and leadership development for AETH.*

Questions and comments may be directed to Daniel Aleshire at ATS.

Six faculty members named as 2012–13 Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology

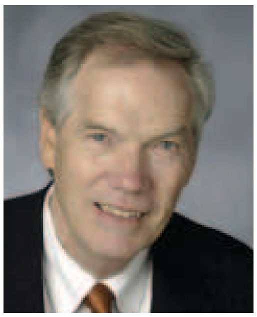
Selected on the basis of the strength of their proposals to conduct creative and innovative theological research, the Fellows will engage in year-long research in various areas of theological inquiry. At the conclusion of their research year, the Fellows will gather at the annual Luce Fellows Conference to present and critique their work and to discuss with both current and past Luce Fellows how their work may impact the life of the church and the broader society. They will also present their findings for publication in popular religious journals.

Curtis Junius Evans
University of Chicago Divinity School
The Federal Council of Churches and Race Relations: An American Experiment
Evans's project will explore the significance of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) Race Relations Department as an American experiment in fostering racial harmony. Although he will examine the FCC's race relations work in the context of broader interracial movements of the time, his study also gives attention to the internal dynamics of the FCC, including an analysis of its annual Race Relations Sunday, which was a central tool of the FCC to facilitate racial reconciliation within churches. Evans argues that no study of the FCC's racial work would be complete without a thorough examination of the life and work of George Edmund Haynes, the executive director of the FCC Department of Race Relations and the first African American to occupy such a high position in the organization. Haynes's emphasis on a theology of inclusivity and Christian brotherhood was a crucial component of the FCC's early race work until his tenure ended in the 1940s. Evans will also explore some of the tensions created by the FCC's Department of Race Relations as it addressed the social and structural oppression of blacks in America, especially as the organization tried to balance this larger work with its more focused efforts related to the internal racial dynamics of churches.

Paul J. Griffiths
Duke University Divinity School
The End: An Eschatological Assay
Which things come to an end? What are the possible ends of things? Griffiths notes that those are the central questions of eschatology, the theological discipline that asks and tries to answer questions about ends. They are also the questions addressed by this project. As Griffiths explains it, an end is a state or condition beyond which there is no novel future; were there to be such a future, an end would not have been reached, but only some condition prior to or preparatory for an end. Something that comes to an end, therefore, has no novel future: it is either annihilated, which is to say that it comes to nothing; or it enters one or another kind of stasis, a condition in which there is no further change. His project will ask of humans, angels, other animate creatures, and inanimate creatures, whether they have ends in this precise sense, and if so, what those ends are, or may be. This study, therefore, will involve taking speculative positions on questions such as whether nonhuman animals come to nothing when they die; whether inanimate objects have an end other than annihilation; and whether humans have ends at all. According to Griffiths, there are few more important questions to ask: fuller understanding of what we are requires attention to what we shall (or may) finally become.

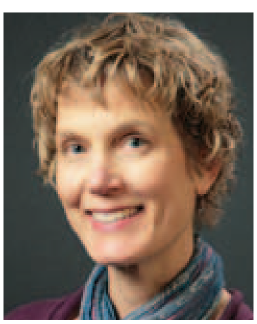
Karen L. King
Harvard University Divinity School
Martyrdom and its Discontents: A Historical Essay on Rethinking Religion and Violence in the Formation of Christianity
According to King, historians have traditionally characterized the first three centuries of Christianity as the age of persecution, a time when Christians were overwhelmingly united in the belief that they were fighting a war against Satan in which willing martyrs would gain eternal life. Recent discoveries from Egypt, however, provide evidence that paints a more complex and realistic picture, she argues. King maintains that Christians were far from unified in their struggle, at

times disagreeing passionately about how to understand and respond to the torture and execution of fellow believers. At stake were fundamental issues about authority, power, and justice; about the nature of God and what it means to be fully human; about the value of sex, suffering, and wealth; and about what truth torture and violence tells. Her goal is to set out a more accurate account of this crucially formative period of Christianity that will allow the discussions of religion and violence in our own complex age to engage this history critically and constructively.



Richard Lischer
Duke University Divinity School
Telling Lives: Christian Autobiography and Memoir

Lischer will explore the theological genius of Christian autobiography and memoir and demonstrate the relevance of the genre for the life and mission of the church. He plans to give a comprehensive theological account of the Christian practice of literary autobiography and memoir. The study will show how reflection on memoir enriches the field of practical theology. He notes that "Canon," "rule," and "dogma" all imply precise and authoritative *regulae* by which to measure the practice of faith. In contrast, memoir is not a rule but a fleshly instance of the rule. It does not involve a definition of grace to be memorized but the experience of grace as perceived by means of the dramatic indeterminacy of a depicted life, replete with plot, setting, character, and motivation. While some understandings of autobiography emphasize the genre's focus on the individual, Lischer argues that the Christian writer is conditioned by another understanding of the *ego,* one that finds its fullest expression in union with Christ and the community. Through the project, literary and theological analysis will converge in the naming of plots, for example "Lost and Found," "Journey," "Conflict," "the Stripping of the Altar," and several others.



Amy Plantinga Pauw
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Wisdom Ecclesiology

According to Pauw, the doctrine of creation has done remarkably little work in modern systematic theology, and nowhere is this truer than in ecclesiology. Normally, she says, the emphasis in ecclesiology has been on doctrines of reconciliation and eschatological consummation. Unfortunately, the primordial and ongoing graciousness of God's creative relations to humanity, seen most clearly in the canonical wisdom books, is virtually ignored in theological reflection on the church. Pauw argues that wisdom ecclesiology is a needed complement to existing ecclesiological approaches. It makes possible a richer theological account of central dimensions of ecclesial life, such as the church's enormous educational and relief mission enterprises. She concludes that a wisdom ecclesiology intersects with a variety of more recent cultural realities and pressures, including ecological concerns, interfaith cooperation, and the recognition of the importance of embodiment in communal life, and that it also helps close the gaps between the church's life and its theological self-understanding by providing an account of the church's God-given vocation to creaturely wisdom.

Amos Yong
Regent University School of Divinity
The Renewal of Christian Theology: Systematic and Dogmatic Reconsiderations for a Global Christianity

According to Yong, renewal movements—including pentecostal, charismatic, and related forms and expressions of the church now numbering more than 650 million Christians, by some counts—are at the vanguard of the expansion of world Christianity, especially across the Global South, and are gaining increasing momentum going into the middle of the twenty-first century. This study will produce the first introductory systematic theology text written from such a global renewal perspective. While it is anchored confessionally with the World Assemblies of God Fellowship's "Statement of Faith," Yong says, it will also attend to the perspectives of other renewalists, especially in terms of the diversity of the global movement's pneumatic spirituality, eschatological orientation, and missional and evangelistic commitments. Simultaneously, he maintains, the theological vision to be articulated will remain embedded in the historical traditions of the church, will be attentive to the ecumenical concerns of the church catholic, and will engage contemporary issues such as developments in the sciences, globalization dynamics, and intercultural and interreligious realities. Yong proposes an alternative model for Christian systematic theology that will invite students and educated persons to consider the riches of the Christian faith in ways that are relevant to the demands of the late modern global context.◆

The Association thanks the Henry Luce Foundation for its ongoing support of theological research. The 2012–13 Fellows constitute the nineteenth class of scholars to be appointed since the inception of the program in 1993, bringing the total number of Luce Fellows to 130.

Twenty research projects receive Lilly Theological Research Grants

2012–13 Lilly Faculty Fellows

Frances S. Adeney, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Women Doing Mission Theology

Eric D. Barreto, Luther Seminary
"A People for God's Name" (Acts 15:14): Theology and Ethnicity in the Acts of the Apostles

Edward B. Foley, Catholic Theological Union
Reenvisioning Ministerial Methods for the 21st Century

Nyasha Junior, Howard University School of Divinity
Womanist Biblical Interpretation: An Introduction

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Fuller Theological Seminary
Creation and Humanity: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World in Dialogue with Intercultural, Interreligious, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Rachel S. Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary
Dangerous Religious Ideas

Kirk Wegter-McNelly, Boston University School of Theology
The Theology and Science of Economics

2012–13 Lilly Theological Scholars Grant Recipients

Gill Kathleen Goulding, Regis College
Jesuit and Ignatian, Congruent or Confrontational: An exploration of Ignatian Influence on Jesuit Theologians

Jonathan H. Kim, Talbot School of Theology of Biola University
Faith Development in Third Culture: Exploring the Interrelationship of Thema and Faith

Andrew M. Mbuvi, Shaw University Divinity School
Commentary on 2 Peter and Jude in the New Covenant Commentary Series

Roger Sangburm Nam, George Fox Evangelical Seminary
"Our Fields and Vineyards Belong to Others!" Economic Redistribution in Nehemiah in Light of Recent Epigraphic and Numismatic Finds

Tracy J. Trothen, Queen's School of Religion
Sport, Techno-science, and Religion: The Enhancement Debate Reconsidered

Randi Jones Walker, Pacific School of Religion
History of Christianity in the Pacific Region

2012–13 Lilly Research Expense Grant Recipients

Amanda W. Benckhuysen, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
The Legacy of Eve: A History of Women's Interpretations of Genesis 1–3

Kate Bowler, Duke University Divinity School
Uplifted: Christian Immigration and the American Prosperity Gospel

John Daniel Dadosky, Regis College
Image to Insight: The Iconography and Sacred Images of William Hart McNichols

Boyung Lee, Pacific School of Religion
They Cried Out to God: Korean Tongsunggido as a Communal Spiritual Practice Model for North Americans

Edward N. Peters, Sacred Heart Major Seminary
The Synod of Bishops and the New Evangelization

2012–13 Lilly Collaborative Research Grant Recipients

Daniel L. Brunner, George Fox Evangelical Seminary
Aaron J. Swoboda, George Fox Evangelical Seminary
Jennifer L. Butler, George Fox Evangelical Seminary
"On Earth as in Heaven": Researching and Writing an Evangelical Ecotheology Textbook

Lois M. Farag, Luther Seminary
John Paul Abdelsayed, University of Notre Dame
Febe Armanios, Middlebury College
Mariam Ayad, University of Memphis
Ramez Boutros, University of Toronto
Gawdat Gabra, Claremont Graduate University School of Religion
Maged Hana, Coptic Cultural Center, Cairo
Maged Mikhail, California State University, Fullerton
Samuel Moawad, Universität Münster
Carolyn Ramzy, University of Toronto
Saad Michael Saad, Watani International Newspaper
Hany Takla, University of California, Los Angeles
The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith, and Culture

Leonard M. Hummel, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
Steven W. James, Gettysburg College
Chance, Necessity, Love: An Evolutionary Theology of Cancer

The Association thanks Lilly Endowment Inc. for its sixteen years of support of the Lilly Theological Research Grants program.

Inaugurated in 1996, the program is designed to enhance the skill and capacity of faculty in ATS schools as theological researchers and scholars. It supports the research efforts of faculty, particularly at junior and nontenured levels, in order to nurture the development of their scholarship; seeks to enlarge the pool of faculty actively engaged as theological researchers; works to increase knowledge about grant seeking and the craft of theological research; and nurtures the habit of research as an ongoing aspect of scholarly life.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Educational programs for faculty in ATS member schools have three primary goals:

- to identify and explore issues related to their vocation as theological educators,
- to assess and rethink faculty roles in governance, curriculum, and service programs, and
- to develop increased capacity to exercise leadership as faculty.

A Roundtable Seminar for Newly Appointed Faculty
October 19–21, 2012 • Chicago, IL
By nomination of academic dean. Designed for faculty who have completed their first or second year in an ATS member school, this event will address the unique vocation—both individual and corporate—of theological educators.

ATS Faculty Presentation and Reception at the AAR/SBL Meeting
November 2012 • Chicago, IL
Faculty from ATS member schools are invited to a reception following a presentation by a senior faculty member about living into the vocation of a theological educator.

Faculty Focused Consultation
March 15–17, 2013 • Pittsburgh, PA
By nomination of academic dean. Faculty will gather to discuss significant issues that face them as theological educators and to develop strategies to address the changes taking place in theological education.

MINING THE MOTHER LODE

How to position student information as a key assessment tool

Currently, 105 of the Commission's 241 fully accredited schools have pending actions regarding assessment. Yet schools are sitting on a mother lode of data that could be mined to provide specific and defensible measures of how well they are doing in educating and serving their students. Student information professionals have the opportunity to share those data to enhance not only the self-study process but also ongoing institutional planning.

A robust assessment plan requires the use of both direct and indirect data. The Entering Student, Graduating Student, and Alumni/ae Questionnaires (ESQ, GSQ, and AQ) are one valuable source of indirect data that should be included in the plan. Roughly 65 percent of ATS member schools are using the questionnaires, and at least a quarter of those schools have sent representatives to the Association's ESQ/GSQ/AQ workshops over the past three years, with many more joining through webinars. But while many report in their self-studies that they are using these tools, few actually report out the gathered data points. A decade ago, it was very rare for assessment to be cited for follow-up action. Today, 105 of the Commission's 241 fully accredited schools have pending actions regarding assessment, including five imposed notations, nine show causes, eighty-three reports due, and eight authorized focused visits. It would seem that schools have adopted the language of assessment but not a culture of assessment. Yet assessment is a living practice that should be an integral part of the institutional culture.

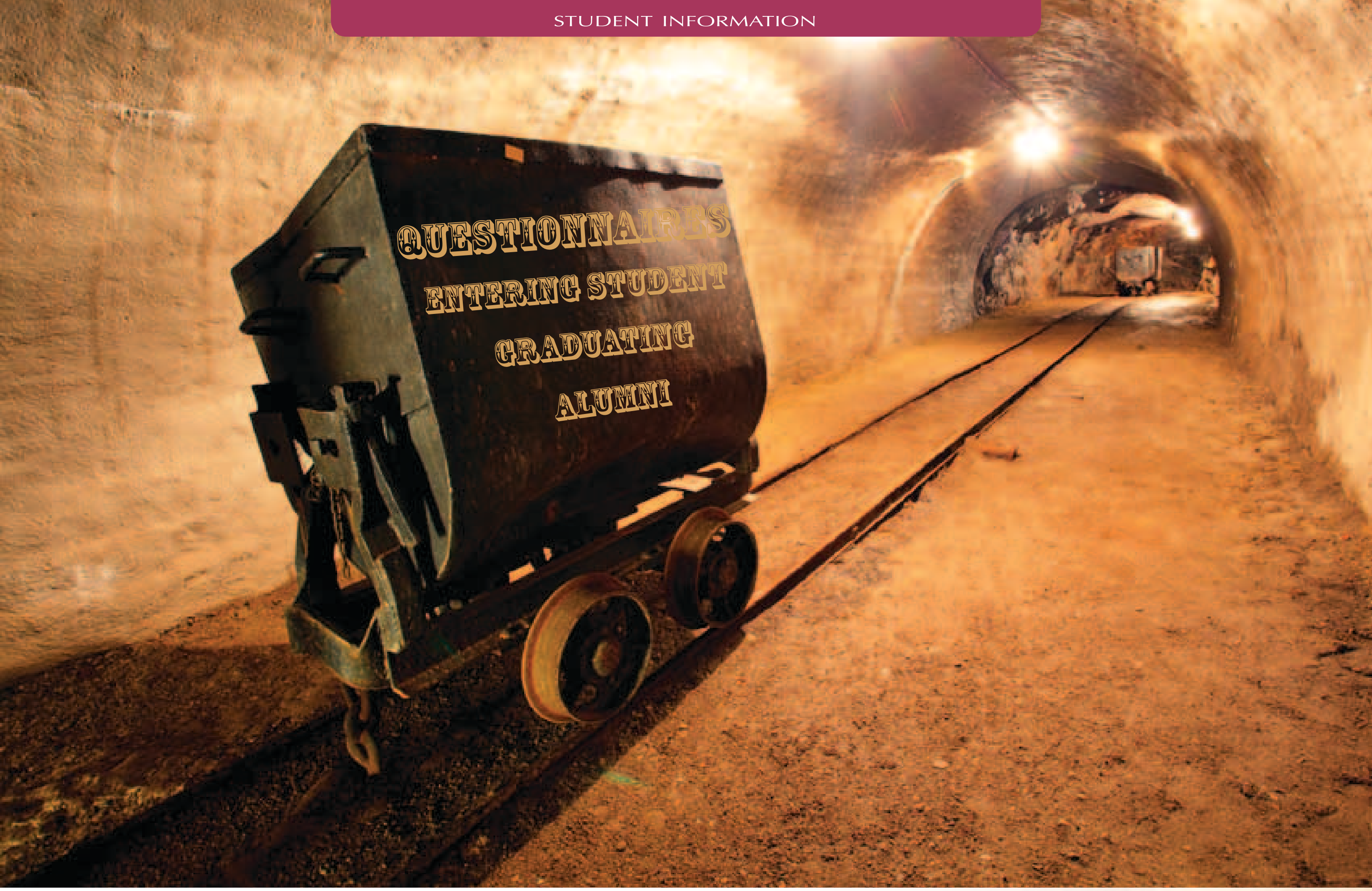
Creating a culture of assessment requires a commitment to (1) data-driven decision making and (2) capacity building among all stakeholders to understand the data and what they are telling us. With increased flexibility reflected in pending changes to Standard 10—pertaining to multiple locations and distance education—and the Degree Program Standards, schools are likely to explore more entrepreneurial options for delivering theological education. And the proposed revisions mandate assessment as a condition for experimentation. As schools venture into new educational territory, it will be even more critical to be on top of the available data to assess educational outcomes, formation, and professional development.

It would seem that schools have adopted the language of assessment but not a culture of assessment. Yet assessment is a living practice that should be an integral part of the institutional culture.

Claiming a voice at the table

So how do those charged with gathering and interpreting student information ensure that this valuable information makes its way into both the self-study and ongoing institutional planning? Access to the process is key, of course, but student information professionals can increase institutional receptivity through three tactics:

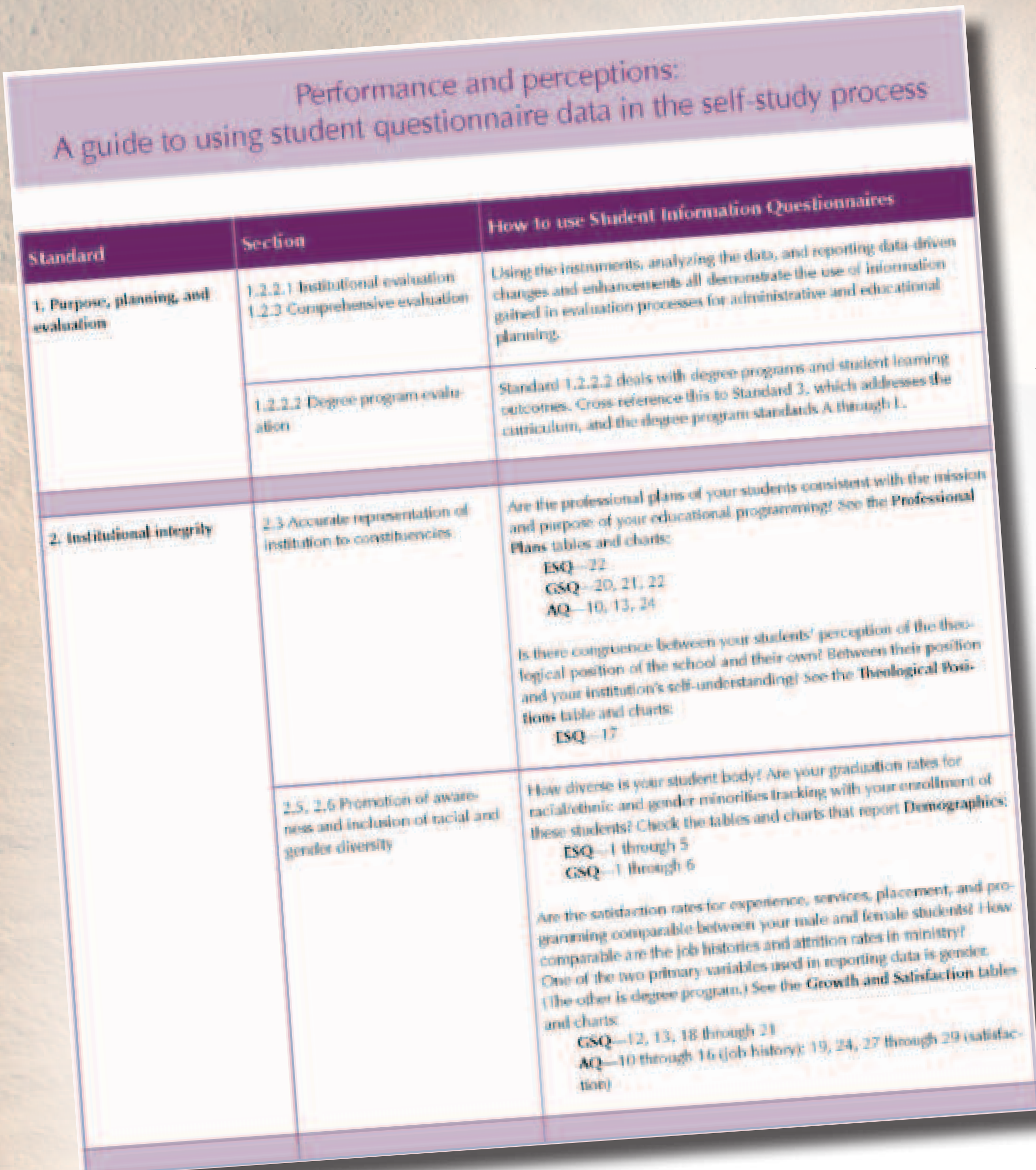
1. **At every gathering of administrators and/or faculty, present a few well-curated tables or charts in an accessible and compelling format.** Recognizing the value of data in informing our work, the ATS staff, at every



general staff meeting, concludes with a "Bits and Bytes" presentation that showcases one particular data set and prompts discussion about the implications of that data for the full array of member schools and for our work as a staff. Similar conversations at member schools can be fueled by the wealth of student information data available through the ESQ, GSQ, and AQ. Use the data, interpreted in context, to construct a narrative about your school and its place in the larger world of theological education and the church. Specialized reports—grouping schools by denominational family, for example—allow for benchmarking so schools can assess their performance against a peer group of institutions. On a larger scale, the Total School Profile aggregates the data of all ATS schools and programs, archived and available on the ATS website as far back as 2000–2001.

The ATS staff, at every general staff meeting, concludes with a "Bits and Bytes" presentation that showcases one particular data set and prompts discussion about the implications of that data for the full array of member schools and for our work as a staff. Similar conversations at member schools can be fueled by the wealth of student information data available through the ESQ, GSQ, and AQ.

2. **When suggestions are made for broad courses of action, wonder aloud if the available student data support the validity of the decision.** Listen to the voices of your students as they speak through the data and think strategically about what they are telling you.
   - If the registrar proposes changing the course schedule, consider the population reflected in the student information data: Are they commuters, full- or part-time students, raising families, working while attending school? How would the particular mix at your school best be served?
   - If the curriculum planning committee proposes a change in the MDiv cur-



Performance and perceptions: A guide to using student questionnaire data in the self-study process

Standard	Section	How to use Student Information Questionnaires
1. Purpose, planning, and evaluation	1.2.2.1 Institutional evaluation 1.2.3 Comprehensive evaluation	Using the instruments, analyzing the data, and reporting data-driven changes and enhancements all demonstrate the use of information gained in evaluation processes for administrative and educational planning.
	1.2.2.2 Degree program evaluation	Standard 1.2.2.2 deals with degree programs and student learning outcomes. Cross reference this to Standard 3, which addresses the curriculum, and the degree program standards A through L.
2. Institutional integrity	2.3 Accurate representation of institution to constituencies	Are the professional plans of your students consistent with the mission and purpose of your educational programming? See the **Professional Plans** tables and charts: **ESQ**—22 **GSQ**—20, 21, 22 **AQ**—10, 13, 24 Is there congruence between your students' perception of the theological position of the school and their own? Between their position and your institution's self-understanding? See the **Theological Positions** table and charts: **ESQ**—17
	2.5, 2.6 Promotion of awareness and inclusion of racial and gender diversity	How diverse is your student body? Are your graduation rates for racial/ethnic and gender minorities tracking with your enrollment of these students? Check the tables and charts that report **Demographics**: **ESQ**—1 through 5 **GSQ**—1 through 6 Are the satisfaction rates for experience, services, placement, and programming comparable between your male and female students? How comparable are the job histories and attrition rates in ministry? One of the two primary variables used in reporting data is gender. (The other is degree program.) See the **Growth and Satisfaction** tables and charts: **GSQ**—12, 13, 18 through 21 **AQ**—10 through 16 (job history); 19, 24, 27 through 29 (satisfaction)

riculum, consider the professional plans of current students: Do they anticipate careers in parish ministry, mission work, hospital or military chaplaincy, teaching, social work? Do your curricular goals fit their collective aspirations?

» As decisions are made about recruitment, consider the data on how students identify and choose schools: Do they respond to printed materials received in the mail, search the web, or talk to their pastors and friends? Does your current resource allocation in recruitment respond to that reality?

» When strategizing about financial aid and related issues, consider the levels of debt that students collectively bring with them and the relative importance of available financial aid in their choice of schools. How much debt do they bring with them? How much do they have when they graduate? How will that affect their need to find supplemental income while in school or bivocational employment upon graduation?

» Do you know who your students are in terms of age and marital and family status? Are your student services programs matched to their presenting needs?

3. Using the Performance and Perceptions guide to organize data, feed relevant student information to those compiling the self-study. This reference tool (available in the fall 2010 *Colloquy* and on the ATS website) aligns data from the ESQ, GSQ, and AQ with specific sections of the 2010 General Institutional Standards. By sorting the data according to the standards to which they apply, you can provide easy "plug-ins" that self-study authors can simply slip into their reports.

Accrediting actions related to assessment fall predominantly in the areas of degree program evaluation and student learning. As the membership lives into the proposed revisions to the Degree Program Standards, consider the data available through the GSQ and AQ on how students reflect upon their satisfaction with the educational experience and the relevance of their earned degrees. While the data collected from these surveys are indirect, they can help provide a useful diagnostic window into the effectiveness of your degree program.

With this mother lode of good information, coupled with the coaching and support available through ATS workshops and online resources, schools would benefit from breaking out of the routine mode, reflecting critically about student information data, and translating those reflections into good practice.◆

Considering human and spiritual formation in distance learning: A question of relationality

By Paule Barbeau and Sebastian Mahfood

Every teaching and learning environment is necessarily a formative setting, and the participants within it have to recognize it as such. To develop a formative process, both the teacher and the student must recognize that a relationship between them exists. If this recognition does not occur, then nothing formative is intentionally happening, and neither the appellation of *teacher* nor that of *student* can be appropriately applied within the so-called teaching and learning environment. While online and face-to-face teaching and learning environments employ different modes of delivery, both can be understood as formative settings.

Human formation in online theology courses

The emphasis that Catholic seminaries have traditionally placed on human formation has helped to define and shape the way it is approached across the entire spectrum of theological education. According to the *Program for Priestly Formation*, human formation endeavors to ensure that "the human personality of the [minister] . . . be a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the human race."[1] The program specifically describes the outcomes for which Catholic seminaries are looking when they intentionally set out to foster the growth of a seminarian. A seminarian who has been properly formed is

- a free person;
- a person of solid moral character with a finely developed moral conscience, a [person] open to and capable of conversion;
- a prudent and discerning [person];
- a [person] of communion;
- a good communicator;
- a person of affective maturity;
- a [person] who respects, cares for, and has vigilance over [one's] body;
- a [person] who relates well with others, free of overt prejudice and willing to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds;
- a good steward of material possessions; and
- an [individual] who can take on the role of a public person.[2]

This understanding might meaningfully be broadened to all students in theological formation.

Some would argue that people who engage others solely through online learning communities have fewer opportunities to express empathy. Paul House, professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, has argued that online education "depersonalizes mentor-student relationships, de-emphasizes collegial student life, marginalizes community worship, isolates faculty, and undercuts collegiality between institutions."[3] In establishing these points, House has in mind a particular kind of distance learning program—what he calls the prevalent kind—which does have these negative impacts.

Spiritual formation, just like human formation, has to be targeted intentionally by faculty and seminarians alike. The initiative should come from faculty who encourage seminarians to engage with the course materials in a prayerful rather than a purely intellectual manner. Seminarians should be encouraged to meditate on the material and to incorporate it into their prayer lives.

Further, since faculty assist seminarians in cultivating these gifts in all kinds of tacit ways, some might find it difficult to envision how online formation might be assessed. When we are able to be present to others *only* through online communications, we have to be more creative in how we measure the quality of relationships

Online discussion forums are a perfect opportunity for seminarians to realize that the knowledge they are acquiring is meant to be shared, and the forums themselves provide them with the venue in which to practice skills of communication related to the evangelization of others. These skills, along with the human formation skills also acquired online, will be invaluable to seminarians who will use them when reaching out to their parishioners in face-to-face encounters and through various communicative media.

that form and the human development of each of the individuals who form them.

The solution to the problems that House enumerates can be effectively addressed, however, in an online program that authentically pursues the human formation outcomes called for in the *Program for Priestly Formation* and measures the degree to which each is achieved. Starting with the most prevalent way in which communities of learners interact with one another (i.e., via asynchronous discussion boards), we might posit for our seminarians that

- posting on discussion boards may foster the human qualities of truthfulness, respect for others, justice, integrity, affability, generosity, kindness, courtesy, and prudence, as well as the capacity to relate to others in a positive manner and the ability to get along with others and work with them in the community;
- responding to other students' posts may foster good self-knowledge, self-discipline, and self-mastery, including emotional self-control, making good judgments, and affective maturity; and
- entering into continuing dialogue in the postings may additionally foster the capacity to receive and integrate constructive criticism.

We "formators" have to be intentional about the type of interaction we need to pursue with our seminarians in order to create the kind of online teaching and learning environment that enables us to adequately measure their growth.

Spiritual formation in online theology courses

The *Program for Priestly Formation* points out that a bridge exists between human and spiritual formation as the two are linked "by the Incarnate Word and by the fact that grace builds on nature and perfects nature"[4] and "human formation leads to and finds its completion in spiritual formation."[5] It is pastoral charity that animates the spiritual life of the priest, and pastoral charity "finds its full expression and its supreme nourishment in the Eucharist . . . In virtue of this pastoral charity the essential and permanent demand for unity between the priest's interior life and all his external actions and the obligations of the ministry can be properly fulfilled."[6] There is thus a definite link between the priest's prayer life and his mission, which is nourished by the Eucharist. Priestly ministry is one of total self-giving, and consequently, spiritual formation must include a profound understanding of God's presence and love in our world, and the "link between everyday life and spirituality."[7]

Spiritual formation, just like human formation, has to be targeted intentionally by faculty and seminarians alike. The initiative should come from faculty who encourage seminarians to engage with the course materials in a prayerful rather than a purely intellectual manner. Seminarians should be encouraged to meditate on the material and to incorporate it into their prayer lives. Seminarians, for their part, should be seeking opportunities to strengthen their prayer lives. Through a greater devotion to the Eucharist and a more intentional melding of study and prayer life, the seminarians will be drawn into greater communion with Jesus Christ via their increased awareness and knowledge of God's mysteries.

One of the potential benefits of this is the discovery and development by the seminarians within themselves of God's own grace. "Failure to develop this skill of discernment within all seminarians is to send them out to the parish ill equipped to assist the laity in naming their experiences of grace and awakening their receptivity to being taken up in the Paschal Mystery—the birthplace, in faith, of all of life's meaning."[8]

Faculty can play an important role in helping seminarians in this process by highlighting important self-discoveries that they may touch upon in discussion board postings or other assignments, by posing questions that lead the seminarian to further questioning, and by encouraging the seminarian through congratulatory comments on progress in the self-diagnosis process. In this way, seminarians can be led to a "greater appreciation for [the] link between human growth and holiness of life . . . and to notice the movements of God in those moments."[9]

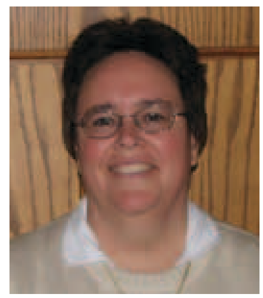
Online discussion forums are a perfect opportunity for seminarians to realize that the knowledge they are acquiring is meant to be shared, and the forums themselves provide them with the venue in which to practice skills of communication related to the evangelization of others. These skills, along with the human formation skills also acquired online, will be invaluable to seminarians who will use them when reaching out to their parishioners in face-to-face encounters and through various communicative media.

Whereas in a traditional setting, spiritual formation outcomes may be assessed subjectively in part by observing a seminarian's behavior and demeanor, assessment of outcomes in distance learning would likely be somewhat different. One would first evaluate the seminarians for changes in affect displayed in online posts and reflection papers, in the way they interact with classmates, and in the topics they bring up in classroom and peripheral discussion boards. While the content of prayer is difficult to evaluate in either situation, the fruits of prayer can be discerned through reflection papers, journaling, real-time text discussions with others, and face-to-face opportunities using technology such as Skype. The question of how to authentically assess an internal transformation is one that must be left up to each faith community.

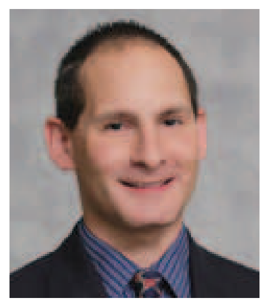
Conclusion

The presidents and rectors of the member schools of The Association of Theological Schools will gather in June 2012 to consider whether residency for many programs might be waived, provided the school can demonstrate that it is meeting its outcomes. This very issue of human and spiritual formation in online teaching and learning environments will be among the primary talking points, including methods by which to assess its quality. Faculty members can help provide their institutions with some basis for this conversation by identifying one or two goals each from human and spiritual formation and creating a rubric that makes sense to the particular course each is teaching based on the characteristics of someone who has met these goals. It will be the institutional conversation that comes from this that will provide the basis for assessing the demonstrable outcomes.

Paule Barbeau is a teaching assistant for online theology and Catholic Distance Learning Network certification courses.



Sebastian Mahfood is associate professor of intercultural studies at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and coordinates the Catholic Distance Learning Network of the National Catholic Educational Association's seminary department.



ENDNOTES

1. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation,* 5th ed., sec. 75 (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), 35; and *Pastores dabo vobis*, sec. 43.
2. *Program of Priestly Formation*, sec. 76.
3. Paul R. House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern: A Plea for Personal Theological Education," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 4.
4. *Program of Priestly Formation*, sec. 82.
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6. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), sec. 23. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html.
7. Very Reverend John Canary, "Spiritual Dimensions of Celibacy Formation," *Seminary Journal* 9, no. 2 (2003), 22.
8. Deacon James Keating, "Priestly Spirituality, Seminary Formation, and Lay Mission," *Seminary Journal* 13, no. 2 (2007), 79.
9. Canary, "Spiritual Dimensions," 23.

Major gift metrics that matter

By Thomas W. Grabau

While the metrics used to measure development performance vary widely, clearly stated goals are essential. And thoughtful analysis of the metrics—with the flexibility to alter the program in response—can yield substantially more dollars raised.

In recent years conversations among development professionals have moved beyond the "art and science" dichotomy. Experts now acknowledge that artful fundraising and intelligent management are both informed and enhanced by the strategic utilization of data that matters. Talented, creative managers and major gift officers must know how to employ performance metrics and organizational data effectively to realize more fully their institutions' philanthropic potential and aspirations.

Actual performance falls far short of the rules of thumb in many institutions.

What we've learned

Expectations vary widely and are more often applied as "guidelines" and "in spirit only" rather than "strictly" and "to the letter."

The use of performance metrics is increasing among major gift programs. Yet the longstanding "rules of thumb" for major gift officers are essentially points of departure rather than reflections of widespread and rigorous practice. In a significant number of programs, actual expectations vary depending on the major gift officer's level of experience, length of tenure with the institution, prospect portfolio, and assigned territory.

Expectations and practice also vary depending on the maturity of an institution's philanthropic culture, the sophistication and funding of its development operation, and the context of its current philanthropic priorities. For example, when ramping up for a campaign, an institution with a modest campaign history and a more limited knowledge of its top prospect pool may place a greater emphasis on metrics related to prospect discovery and qualification than on solicitations and dollars raised.

Finally, field research, including performance data gathered in multiple feasibility studies, suggests that actual performance falls far short of the rules of thumb in many institutions.

What this means to your program

Clearly, the metrics used to measure performance and the methods of performance management vary widely.

Nonetheless, nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that establishing the correct level of ambition through clearly stated performance expectations and standards was essential for stimulating performance and achieving fundraising success.

The key is to define a set of performance metrics that enables your institution to fulfill its charitable aspirations and that addresses the three essential components of any successful major gift program. (See "3 Essential Elements.")

Keep it simple. Research suggests that gift officers who were more focused on fewer metrics—whether prospecting activities, solicitations, or dollars raised—outperformed those professionals with equally weighted or mixed

Rethinking the old rules of thumb

Old Rule #1

Gift officers should conduct an average of between twelve and fifteen face-to-face visits per month.

The face-to-face visit is valued as the gold standard of prospect cultivation and engagement. Expectations and practice, however, vary substantially. Stated practices among survey respondents cluster around the following four expectations: 120, 150, 180, and 210 per year. Programs that track contacts usually want between 80 and 90 percent to be in the form of face-to-face visits.

Interestingly, actual performance across all types of institutions and organizations tends to fall well short of the "rule." One recent survey found that nearly 70 percent of gift officers completed ten visits or fewer each month. The overall average was slightly more than seven (7.3) visits per month. High performers conducted an average of slightly more than eight (8.3) visits monthly.

Old Rule #2

Gift officers should visit approximately 50 percent of their portfolio each year (e.g., a major gift officer would visit seventy-five individuals annually in a portfolio of 150 prospects).

Few survey respondents fulfill this expectation. The actual percentage of portfolios visited each year depends on the number of prospects being solicited. The greater the number of solicitations, the more limited a gift officer's reach and the fewer individual prospects visited. A few programs have established the expectation that every assigned prospect must be visited once every three years.

Old Rule #3

Approximately one-third of a gift officer's portfolio should be in the solicitation stage.

Few respondents track this metric. If one discounts outstanding or open solicitations, applying this rule of thumb could mean as many as fifty solicitations annually in a portfolio of 150 gift prospects, or between four and five major gift requests a month.

If, as approximately two-thirds of the respondents believe, three to four face-to-face visits a year represent the optimal number for prospects in active solicitation, fifty prospects in active solicitation would require between 150 and 200 visits. Given the required investment of time in cultivation, presolicitation, solicitation, negotiation, and closing, most respondents aim for between twenty-four and thirty solicitations annually, or between two and three monthly.

Old Rule #4

A full-time major gift officer should raise $1 million per year on average.

Only 25 percent of the survey respondents practiced a gift expectation of between $1 million and $1.5 million. Nearly 60 percent of the 2009 respondents indicated an expectation of between $0.5 million and $1 million. Another 25 percent of the 2005 respondents indicated their expectations for dollars raised was driven by the makeup of the major gift officer's portfolio.

Here, again, a substantial minority based annual performance expectations on the gift officer's level of experience, length of service with the institution, and portfolio potential.

3 Essential Elements

1. **Potential**: A clear understanding of the giving potential of your constituents and stakeholders.
2. **Strategies**: Plans supported by management practices that effectively drive results.
3. **Execution**: A bias toward competent, objective-driven, and timely action and activity.

measurement models. In short, focusing on fewer but essential metrics results in increased productivity across a wide range of activities.

Choosing metrics that matter

Potential: All managed or assigned prospects should have a philanthropic capacity and connectivity rating.

Thanks to wealth screening, the application of sophisticated data-mining and prospect-modeling methodologies, and proactive research, an institution should be able to rank order all of its constituents in one of these two ways:

- philanthropic capacity—both for lifetime giving to all charities and for lifetime giving to your institution by six-, seven-, and eight-figure gift ranges
- connectivity—reflecting the perceived degree of relationship with your institution, the campaign, and/or philanthropic priority as either *highly connected*, *connected*, *somewhat connected*, or *modestly connected*

Focusing on fewer but essential metrics results in increased productivity across a wide range of activities.

These improvements in the science of fundraising will enable institutions to populate a matrix that cross-references capacity and connectivity.

Fundraising potential will be optimized by focusing on highly connected, connected, and somewhat connected prospects with a mid- to high-level capacity rating. A consistent and focused review of prospects with significant potential that are unassigned as well as prospects of lower potential that are assigned will support active and flexible management of portfolios and ensure that gift professionals are spending their time on the best prospective donors.

Strategies: Performance planning and prospect management

The art and science of fundraising are unified through the process of performance planning and prospect management.

Performance plans. Every major gift officer should have a written performance plan that provides fiscal-year fundraising and engagement goals and that is endorsed by his or her supervisor. The plan should incorporate

- a projection of total dollars raised and face-to-face visits completed;
- a total of specific solicitations projected by quarter over a twenty-four-month period to demonstrate a viable pipeline of prospects;
- a list of specific cultivation and stewardship events and activities;
- an accounting of specific campus liaison responsibilities; and
- professional development goals and activities.

Written strategies for each gift officer's top twenty-five to fifty prospects—with specific initiatives, specific persons to be involved in each task, including internal partners and external volunteers, and specific target dates for each purposeful action—should be required and documented as such in the system.

Again, actual practice varies. Major gift officers might craft written strategies for their entire portfolio with more detailed strategies for their top fifty prospects. A principal gifts officer should provide detailed written strategies for each assigned prospect.

Written plans are effective management tools because they

- clarify and focus thinking;
- establish context and framework for action;
- become the basis for performance planning;
- provide content for ongoing dialogue;
- empower major gift officers;
- facilitate the manager's effectiveness; and
- evolve more readily into next year's plan or the multiyear plan for a campaign.

Prospect management. Active prospect management is critical to success because it maintains focus and enables timely adjustments in strategies in the dynamic context of major gift work.

Monthly prospect review sessions, supported and informed by consistent tracking reports reflecting performance metrics, are essential. These exchanges should be supplemented by weekly, informal conversations and by more formal quarterly assessments and adjustments between the supervisor and the major gift officer.

Additionally, annual reviews should specifically assess the previous year's projections and activities and serve as a foundation for next year's plan.

Execution

Visits, solicitations, ask amounts, dollars raised, prospects qualified, etc. Planning is a waste of time without purposeful execution. Fundraising is a business with a bias toward action and results supported by myriad data points and statistics.

The key is to choose and sustain performance metrics that best align with the current context of your institution's strategic directions, values, and desired outcomes.

In some highly complex institutional fundraising environments where wide variations exist in talent, experience, prospect pools, regional or unit assignments, and philanthropic culture, it is likely more effective to measure and manage individual gift officers using a customized set of metrics that track both inputs and outputs.

Inputs: Face-to-face visits, proposals made, time in cultivation, etc. Inputs are metrics that tell us how hard we are working and how focused we are. They are also useful for building confidence and/or reassuring our presidents, trustees, and institutional colleagues that we are performing at levels high enough to produce the desired results.

Those that matter most among potential inputs are face-to-face visits and the number of major gift proposals made. The number selected for each depends on your institutional context and, at times, required travel and constituent outreach budgets.

A consistent and focused review of prospects with significant potential that are unassigned as well as prospects of lower potential that are assigned will support active and flexible management of portfolios and ensure that gift professionals are spending their time on the best prospective donors.

Another way of setting the level of expectation related to inputs is to assume, after accounting for vacation time and administrative work time, that a full-time major gift officer has between sixteen and twenty weeks, or between eighty and one hundred days, a year to devote to prospect cultivation and engagement. How many of those days and weeks is the gift officer out of the office working directly and personally with prospects or facilitating such contacts by cultivation partners?

A little tracked metric worth elevating is the time a prospect spends in cultivation. Most programs have a gift officer who has a portfolio filled with prospects in a state of perpetual cultivation that never get solicited. In every campaign there is a group of prospects that annually appear on the campaign prospect list languishing in cultivation. The time in cultivation metric would serve as a red flag of inaction and a barometer of the efficiency with which prospects move from discovery through cultivation to the actual solicitation. Prospects who fail to be engaged to the point of solicitation should be evaluated and potentially reassigned.

	Last Five Years Individual Giving	Last Five Years Non Individual Giving	Total Last Five Years	Portfolio Capacity	Last Five Years Individual Yield
Manager 1	$1,863,527	$0	$1,863,527	$22,290,274	8.4%
Manager 2	$479,593	$0	$479,593	$25,229,202	1.9%
Manager 3	$6,815,207	$0	$6,815,207	$118,304,998	5.8%
Manager 4	$33,035	$0	$33,035	$10,201,650	0.3%
Manager 5	$766,616	$0	$766,616	$49,130,895	1.6%
				Team Average	4.4%

Currently Assigned Individual Portfolio Capacity	Yield	Assigned Individual Giving Next Five Years	All Other Giving Next Five Years	Estimated Total Giving Next Five Years
$8,082,689	5.8%	$468,796	$400,910	$869,706
$8,082,689	6.8%	$549,623	$400,910	$950,533
$8,082,689	7.8%	$630,450	$400,910	$1,031,360
$8,082,689	8.8%	$711,277	$400,910	$1,112,187
$8,082,689	11.0%	$889,096	$400,910	$1,290,006

This sample university yielded 5.8 percent on the portfolio capacity of the currently assigned individual prospects. Small increases in yield could result in raising $1.3 million over the next five years.

Outputs: Results and outcomes that drive success. Outputs measure effectiveness and the return on investment. Outputs most frequently tracked are total dollars raised, the number of gifts closed, and the number of new major prospects qualified.

Of course, the metric that matters most is total dollars raised. However, the target for a fiscal year should be determined by the gift officer's tenure in the position, length of service with the institution, major gift fundraising experience, and composition of his or her portfolio.

Gift officers new to the position and the institution should expect total dollars raised to increase substantially by their third year, even if they have inherited well-developed portfolios of cultivated prospects.

The yield rate is a metric that merits wider attention and application. It is essentially a fundamental measure of a gift officer's performance calculated against the potential in his or her portfolio. The rate is calculated by measuring the amount a gift officer raises over a multiyear period versus the capacity represented in his or her portfolio. Capacity is broadly defined as the amount a prospect can give over a five-year pledge.

A yield rate for an individual gift officer is valuable because it provides insight related to the gift officer's effectiveness at making and closing asks for significant gifts. As mentioned earlier, data collected from numerous institutions indicates that the yield rate improves significantly in a gift officer's third year in a given position, assuming purposeful and appropriately vigorous activity. Because the metric rates a gift officer's productivity against his or her own portfolio, it provides an apples-to-apples comparison that elevates high performers, identifies potentially strong performers, and exposes low performers.

A yield rate can also be calculated for an entire institution. For example, if all assigned individuals at a given institution were to give $100 million over a five-year period, and their total capacity were $2 billion, the yield would be 5 percent.

An institutional yield rate opens the door to strategy and portfolio adjustments designed to increase the total dollars raised. Moreover, it informs how large the suspect and prospect pools actually need to be to produce the desired results.

Conclusion

Current practice related to performance metrics and methods of performance management offers considerable latitude. The rules of thumb discussed here are merely points of practice and points of departure.

To an important degree, performance metrics are situational and should be determined by institutional context. Once determined, it is advised that metrics be sustained over the life of a campaign to focus expectations and to allow for contextual tracking, management, and communications on progress.

The management challenge is to define a highly focused set of clearly stated and consistently monitored performance metrics that focus, promote, and track activity and results meaningful to advancing your program's mission, strategic direction, and values. Setting the right expectations, based on your known philanthropic potential combined with sound strategies and purposeful implementation, will support both goals and projections.◆

Thomas W. Grabau is a consultant at Bentz Whaley Flessner (BWF) with more than thirty years of institutional advancement experience. This article was adapted from a 2010 article Grabau based on two nationwide surveys of major gifts officers conducted by BWF in 2005 and 2009.

Beyond mere competence: Reflections on student personnel administrators as educators

By William R. Myers

As a seasoned student personnel administrator, you might think you've heard it all:

- Ten students visit the president to report their concerns at the loss of the school's current food service provider; the president calls you.
- An international student has arrived and has no sheets to put on the bed and no money to purchase them; this student will call you.
- A couple knocks on your door; she has a mysterious lump on her breast; can you recommend a doctor?
- A faculty member stops you in the hall to complain about another faculty member's misuse of the chapel hour; can you fix it, please?
- An applicant with glowing recommendation letters in your file happens to come to mind when you see the author of one of those recommendation letters; you ask this person about the applicant and discover that the author has never met the applicant and has not written the letter of reference in your file presumably signed by him or her.
- Two students close the door and tell you that they are ready to institute sexual harassment charges against a field education placement mentor; what should they do?

This is not an unlikely litany of issues and concerns that you might face (either individually or as a team of colleagues) next week. This is the daily "stuff" of student personnel work in the messy, human, and increasingly complex communities of the institutions that compose the ATS membership. You have a job to do—you are a problem solver.

And you need to be competent at what it is you are called to do. You need to understand admissions software, debt loads, assessment procedures, nonacademic policies . . . and so much more. You need to know all the kinds of details that are becoming increasingly more complex with each day's passing . . . so much so that without competence, without adequate utilitarian knowledge of the highest order, the ship that is your school will develop holes below the water line and sink simply because of incompetence.

But it is wrong to assume that competence alone defines what makes someone good as an admissions director, a recruiter, a dean of students, or a financial aid officer. Some things lie beyond being merely competent in student personnel work. In a seminary, community educates. In fact, the seminary is centered by educational activity—that's what people pay for, and it is what they expect when they enter the place. They usually mean by this, however, that

How a financial officer, a registrar, or a dean of students deals with each student informs and educates and ministers to and with students in ways that demonstrate what really matters in a school. And those actions, those practices, tell us who we are as a seminary.

they expect the professor and the classroom to educate, and they believe that a seminary educates solely by providing a set of boxcar classes that, when strung together, make up a curriculum called MDiv or STM or DMin.

Education in a seminary, however, happens not only in a classroom but also throughout the practices that make up the school. The way that an international student with no sheets is dealt with educates that student and the rest of the school about hospitality and ministry. The way those students in your office suggesting sexual harassment are dealt with educates not only them but also the entire school about power differentials, appropriate boundaries, and the way ministry happens. The way you talk with the faculty member who complains about misuse of the chapel hour educates not just that individual but the entire community. And the way that the community eats together and prays together demonstrates the practices of the school that communicably educate everyone as to what counts in ministry. The community educates. And you are not merely technicians within the community. You are—by your gestures, your responses, your presence, your engagement—beyond being merely competent. You are educators.

You are the teaching glue that walks with the community on pilgrimage, walking them through thresholds, the processes, the rules, the expectations, the boundaries, the language, the taboos, the rituals, the truth-telling that make up this place called seminary. (In the process you educate/form/shape/challenge every member of the school's community). Education happens not only by a stated, formal curriculum but also by the ways a school structures itself, by the presence (or absence) of hospitality, by the language and the missional ethos that make up the educational bricks and mortar. Faculty offer a formal, stated curriculum. Field educators, parish placements, and other immersions into ministry carry the less formal, mentoring curriculum. But folks in student personnel administration put human faces on and give human gestures to the hidden, educative, structural curriculum of the institution. How a financial officer, a registrar, or a dean of students deals with each student informs and educates and ministers to and with students in ways that demonstrate what really matters in a school. And those actions, those practices, tell us who we are as a seminary.

The best of you work hard. You are better than merely competent. You are genuinely good at what you do. . . . But being competent, sensing a call, and engaging in ministry with passion can be seductive. It can lead to a belief that one can help everyone, can control the environment, can function as the master educator, can—or should—solve all problems like the Lone Ranger in disguise.

Ministry, calling, and passion

As a student I clearly remember the real smile, the caring, hospitable presence of the chief financial officer in the seminary I attended when my wife and I overspent our bank account and were reduced to tomato soup and canned food purchased at Sears with a credit card. That CFO could have dropped the hammer on us, but instead he stayed with us and helped us cope during a hard moment in our seminary career. He ministered to us. And we made it through those waters. You are administrators, and ministry forms the core of that term.

If you are fortunate, your work isn't just something that you do. It is your vocation, and you feel right in doing this work. You feel that you are called to do it, and you have a deep connection with God's claim on your life to engage in educative ministry. You have a passion for what your role entails and for what you and your work means to that particular community. That might not mean you always like what is going on there. Community is, after all, a messy, human business, and you might occasionally need to raise your voice—literally or figuratively. But you are moved beyond being "merely competent."

A warning . . . and a challenge

The best of you work hard. You are better than merely competent. You are genuinely good at what you do. You understand that systems educate, and you work hard to help the institutional community where you minister to understand itself as a formative, educative community. You are called to your work, and you minister together with colleagues in the calling.

But being competent, sensing a call, and engaging in ministry with passion can be seductive. It can lead to a belief that one can help everyone, can control the environment, can function as the master educator, can—or should—solve all problems like the Lone Ranger in disguise.

Heroic models are not good models. In the heroic model, students present needs, and you not only solve their issues but also invent new work for yourself to prevent that issue from ever rising again. The heroic model capitulates to a needs-based understanding of student personnel work and not only leads to individual burnout but also models a failed understanding of ministry in which the competent one ministers to the incompetent one. We have too many Lone Ranger understandings of student personnel work, too many folk who believe—in an individualistic, infantilized, consumer-culture way—that their role is to do ministry for the rest of the community.

We ought to model our work with students in increasingly collegial forms and formats. We ought to imagine and communally build structures that encourage the gifts present in the community to emerge. We ought to work to model life together as learning moments that are educative instead of problems to be solved. I therefore challenge you to

- recognize the seminary where you are employed as a unique community; a school, and not a church;
- seek competence and skill in your work;
- be open to the call beyond being merely competent; and
- step into the educative role uniquely played by those in student personnel work;
  - » so that the call is answered, at least for this occasion in your life, with passionate engagement
  - » and that the heroic model is slain, so that the "we" of community can be made evident.

Don't go it alone!

I close with a paraphrase of Exodus 18 and the exchange between Moses and Jethro, his father-in-law.

Every day Moses sat to hear the issues of his people. From early morning until late at night they paraded into his sight to seek advice and judgments on their needs. Jethro asked Moses: "Why are you doing all this for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" And Moses responded: "Because I am competent and have this office; this is my work. I decide what is right. I know and enforce all the rules. I tell them what God wants them to do."

We ought to model our work with students in increasingly collegial forms and formats. We ought to imagine and communally build structures that encourage the gifts present in the community to emerge. We ought to work to model life together as learning moments that are educative instead of problems to be solved.

Jethro said to Moses:

> Moses, Moses; what you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone. Get the community involved! Choose those who are trustworthy, and let the people be the people. If you do this [and by the way, I think God commands you to do this] then you, Moses, will be able to endure, and all these people also will go into their homes in peace.

And Moses gave heed to Jethro, and did all that he had said. And the people went to their homes in peace.◆

William R. Myers *served as dean of Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, and as director of leadership education and accreditation at The Association of Theological Schools, from which he retired in 2008.*

Board of Commissioners June meeting report

The ATS Board of Commissioners met at the ATS office June 6–7, 2011.

The board considered reports from evaluation committees for the following schools:

American Baptist Seminary of the West, Berkeley, CA
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO
Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA
Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, TX
Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, Hamilton, ON
Carolina Graduate School of Divinity, Greensboro, NC
Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, ON
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, Berkeley, CA
Drew University Theological School, Madison, NJ
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, CA
Heritage Theological Seminary, Cambridge, ON
Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary, Miami, FL
Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley, CA
Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Logos Evangelical Seminary, El Monte, CA
Logsdon Seminary of Logsdon School of Theology, Abilene, TX
Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, SK
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA
New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA
Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ
Queen's School of Religion, Kingston, ON
Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS
Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, NY
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX
St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, MD
Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC
World Mission University, Los Angeles, CA

The board considered petitions for new or revised degree programs, changes in degree programs or nomenclature, and other petitions regarding course-offering sites, distance and extension programs, and removal of notations from the following schools:

Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, NS
Ambrose Seminary of Ambrose University College, Calgary, AB
Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA
Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, OH
Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, PA
Briercrest College and Seminary, Caronport, SK
Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL
Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN
Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA
Columbia International University–Seminary & School of Missions, Columbia, SC
Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX
Denver Seminary, Littleton, CO
Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA
Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN
Harding University Graduate School of Religion, Memphis, TN
International Theological Seminary, El Monte, CA
Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Lincoln Christian University–The Seminary, Lincoln, IL
Logos Evangelical Seminary, El Monte, CA
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago, IL
Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL
Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA
North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL
Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester, NY
Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX
Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA
Providence Theological Seminary, Otterburne, MB
Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN
Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, TX
Shaw University Divinity School, Raleigh, NC
Sioux Falls Seminary, Sioux Falls, SD
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL
Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC
Wesley Biblical Seminary, Jackson, MS
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA

The board acted on reports received from the following member schools:

Anderson University School of Theology, Anderson, IN
Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY
Catholic University of America School of Theology and Religious Studies, Washington, DC
Cincinnati Bible Seminary, Cincinnati, OH
Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Erskine Theological Seminary, Due West, SC
Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL
General Theological Seminary, New York, NY
Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN
Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO
Loyola Marymount University Department of Theological Studies, Los Angeles, CA
Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, SK
Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis, TN
Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dyer, IN
Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Portland, OR
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lombard, IL
Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX
Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa, OK
Regent College, Vancouver, BC
Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, VA
Saint Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA
San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon, SK
St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, FL
Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY
United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH
University of the South School of Theology, Sewanee, TN◆

Remember that Degree Program Standards require that schools measure the percent of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

Petitions to the ATS Board of Commissioners must be received by April 1 for consideration in its spring meeting and by November 1 for consideration in its winter meeting.

The work of the Board of Commissioners: A task of Herculean proportions

Imagine . . . twice a year . . . a homework assignment of 3,000 pages of reading, all of which must be mastered in a month's time and then discussed in a protracted oral assessment . . . while you continue to hold down a full-time job . . . or two. Imagine as well that your performance on this assessment will impact the future of hundreds of institutions and tens of thousands of students. This is the magnitude of the work entrusted by the Commission on Accrediting membership to the Board of Commissioners.

Overseeing the work of the ATS staff devoted to accrediting, the Board of Commissioners is elected at each Biennial Meeting and represents a cross section of the membership. The board comprises between twelve and sixteen individuals, three to four of whom are public members, with the institutional commissioners serving nonrenewable six-year terms and the public members serving up to two consecutive two-year terms. The ultimate arbiters of all decisions related to the accredited status of member schools and the approval of the degrees those schools offer, the Commissioners also establish fees to be assessed in the conduct of accreditation activities, recommend changes to the dues structure, and oversee revisions to the Standards and Procedures prior to their consideration by the membership.

The decisions of the Board of Commissioners with respect to individual schools are rendered only after exhaustive reading and discussion at two primary meetings in February and June and three supplemental meetings scheduled throughout the year. In preparation for these meetings, Commissioners pore over volumes of reports, petitions, requests, and notifications of substantive changes—as many as 3,000 pages for each meeting. Once gathered, they work both collectively and in small groups to examine the particulars of each school under consideration for initial accreditation or reaccreditation, each report required between evaluation visits, and each extension site, distance education program, or degree under consideration for approval. Together, the commissioners might make more than a hundred decisions at a given meeting.

In addition, over the past two biennia, the Board of Commissioners has taken on the extra charge of overseeing the work of the Task Force on the Revision of the Standards and Procedures and responding to the latest requirements of the Department of Education.

The Commissioners bring to this work a vast knowledge of theological education, a keen appreciation for the challenges that schools face, and an ardent desire to encourage ongoing innovation and improvement in the programs those schools offer. The growing complexity of this work requires ever more diligence and creative thought on the part of the commissioners. According to David Esterline, chair of the Board of Commissioners, "The tension between assuring quality and providing space for innovation is at the center of our work and has been a driving concern in the revision of the standards over the past four years. As Commissioners, we find ourselves constantly in a position of encouraging aspirational goals for schools while adhering to a minimum set of standards, including those of the Department of Education, which can make us better schools. This tension is heightened by the diverse range of voices among the member schools. Fortunately, the diversity around the Board of Commissioners table—representing a range of faith traditions, institutional contexts, administrative positions, and viewpoints as well as racial and gender balance—enables us to respond effectively and maintain equilibrium between the demands of quality assurance and the desire for innovation."

"An even greater challenge," Esterline adds, "is ensuring consistency among the decisions we make. With respect to each school, we consider the integrity of four key areas—mission, resources, programs, and outcomes—and how they match up and support one another. Looking across the full agenda for one of our meetings, we look for consistency as well. On the final morning of each three-day meeting, the Board of Commissioners builds into its deliberations an opportunity to review the meeting's decisions for consistency. Only then do we consider our work to be done."

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June 20–22, 2012

Minneapolis Marriott City Center

Registration closes on May 18.

Celebrating Community