

Gettysburg Seminary Self-Study Executive Summary

DRAFT 6/2/2010

In the past decade, Gettysburg Seminary has developed a culture of assessment. The school has long had a culture of planning, but the accelerating rate of change in seminary education and the myriad ways seminaries must offer their educational opportunities have necessitated greater focus of time and resources in planning and assessment. Today, LTSG consciously lives in a culture of continuous strategizing and evaluation. This seminary continues to foster such a culture, realizing that only by maintaining and refining it will LTSG be appropriate to its mission.

Our seminary is physically located at a key intersection of national and international life. Gettysburg is a small town on the edge of megalopolis. Baltimore, MD and Washington D.C. are our closest major metropolitan areas, but every major city from New York City to Richmond, VA is within a four hour commute. Smaller cities such as Harrisburg, York, Lancaster, PA and Frederick, MD are even closer. From our southwest to our northwest we are located on the edge of Appalachia, a context in stark contrast from megalopolis. LTSG graduates serve across the country, but especially in these two arenas (megalopolis and Appalachia). Moreover, Gettysburg Seminary is not in just any small town, but in the town of the key and bloodiest battle in our nation's history. Over 3 million people from all over the world visit Gettysburg every year. When someone in India helps a professor solve a computer problem online, this computer expert, on learning the professor lives in Gettysburg, often says that he/she knows the Gettysburg Address, given famously by Abraham Lincoln in November 1863. We have discovered Japanese business people, with very little English, who can recite the Gettysburg Address word for word. Gettysburg may be one of the most international small towns in the world.

Gettysburg Seminary, founded in 1826, is the oldest graduate and professional school of the 4.9 million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with seven sister institutions across the United States. Our seminary's 13-member full time tenured/tenure track faculty, excluding our seminary president and our librarian who also have faculty status and teach, consists of 6 women and 7 men. All are outstanding scholars and mentors of the Godly life in classroom, church and community.

On its 52 acre campus on Seminary Ridge (i.e. a significant location during the battle of Gettysburg), the seminary has developed and maintains a state of the art learning facility, with excellent physical resources and plenty of land for possible future expansion. The seminary leases a portion of its land to the local YWCA which in turn allows faculty, staff, and student membership at a nominal cost. The YWCA runs a day-care next to our dorm complexes, which our faculty, staff, and students use.

The seminary has continued to strengthen its capabilities throughout its 40 year membership in the Washington Theological Consortium, Washington, D.C. and its partnerships through the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

AREAS OF DISTINCTION AT GETTYSBURG SEMINARY

Over a series of meetings beginning with a faculty retreat in the fall 2009, the faculty developed the following areas of distinction which carry forward LTSG's historical commitment to the world. These areas of distinction will be further described in ATS Standard 3.

Focus on Holistic Student Formation

Through the coordination of Enrollment Services, Gettysburg Seminary offers integrated student services from admission to graduation. Each student is also assigned a faculty advisor willing to meet and dialogue with the student at the student's request. Teachers make themselves available to meet with students in formal and informal ways. Field Education personnel not only meet with students to arrange placements, but also spend much time in individual appointments to make sure the students' needs (not always their wants) are met. Worship centers our collective lives together, and the worship opportunities are rich and varied. Still primarily a residential campus, spiritual formation occurs centered in worship life and the classroom. Spiritual Directors are available for all students who wish. The excellent musical program with myriad opportunities for vocalists and instrumentalists is another feature of our campus life.

In the classroom, diversity exists with different denominations, persons of color, international students, students of all ages, students already in called ministry positions, etc. Teaching occurs in smart classrooms, with the use of technology built into the educational process. The faculty pays attention to contexts. Students take courses in the Washington (DC) Theological Consortium as well as in Gettysburg. The 4-1-4 calendar allows January to be a time for international or domestic trips, multi-cultural immersion, and for one intensive course. Three integrative seminars accompany the three components of field education. Students may enroll in one of three concentrations within our curriculum.

Commitment to Integrative, Contextual and Responsive Learning Programs

At LTSG, the educational and formational process is integrative from beginning to end. The school's primary purpose is integrative: to prepare women and men to serve the life and ministry of the church in the congregational context and the broader church, which requires both integrated academic learning and formation into faithful leadership qualities. Therefore, the faculty pays attention to contexts: that out of which the student comes; the field education experiences which are integrated into classroom work; and ministry contexts referenced in every course in the curriculum itself. As advisors and teachers, professors are highly accessible to students. Responsive students evaluate every course taught in the curriculum. Students have voice and vote on all standing faculty committees, except the Faculty Executive Committee.

LTSG has both a Lutheran confessional identity and a strong commitment to hospitality with ecumenical partners. Being in the ELCA, the faculty is highly involved in the students' assessment for ministry. The field education/contextual education program is highly integrated into the curriculum, and over half the faculty are directly connected with various contextual education components. Field education partners (supervisors for teaching parish, supervised clinical ministry, and internship) are valued as adjunct faculty, and internship supervisors annually offer feedback about the preparation of the students. Finally, the seminary has an

excellent life-long learning program both for rostered people and laity, through both degree and non-degree seeking.

Preparation for Public (Ministry) Leadership in a/the Global Context

The faculty is committed to teaching in the global context. Faculty members lead international study trips and immersion experiences every year. Faculty publications show an international reach. Some faculty members host a web site with an international readership. Professors belong to and network with national and international societies. Within the faculty is the editor of a prominent theological periodical, a member of the Board of Commissioners and a site visitor for ATS, a researcher with strong ties to scientists at Johns Hopkins University, etc. The LTSG Board of Directors makes globalization funds available to faculty every year. Our graduates can be found serving all over the world!

Commitment to Academic Excellence

The faculty understands itself both as a theological resource for preparing students for the Church and as a graduate school with rigorous academic standards. While students are always treated with great care, some students do fail courses and field education components, and a few are dismissed for academic failure.

Almost all LTSG's faculty have PhDs or ThDs from the US and Europe. The list of our publications of books, chapters in books, articles in refereed journals, and newspaper articles is extensive (see Standard 3). LTSG has developed and continually refines its curriculum with great integrity. The seminary has the largest endowment for PhD and ThD scholarships of any ELCA seminary, and each year some of our graduates begin PhD and ThD studies.

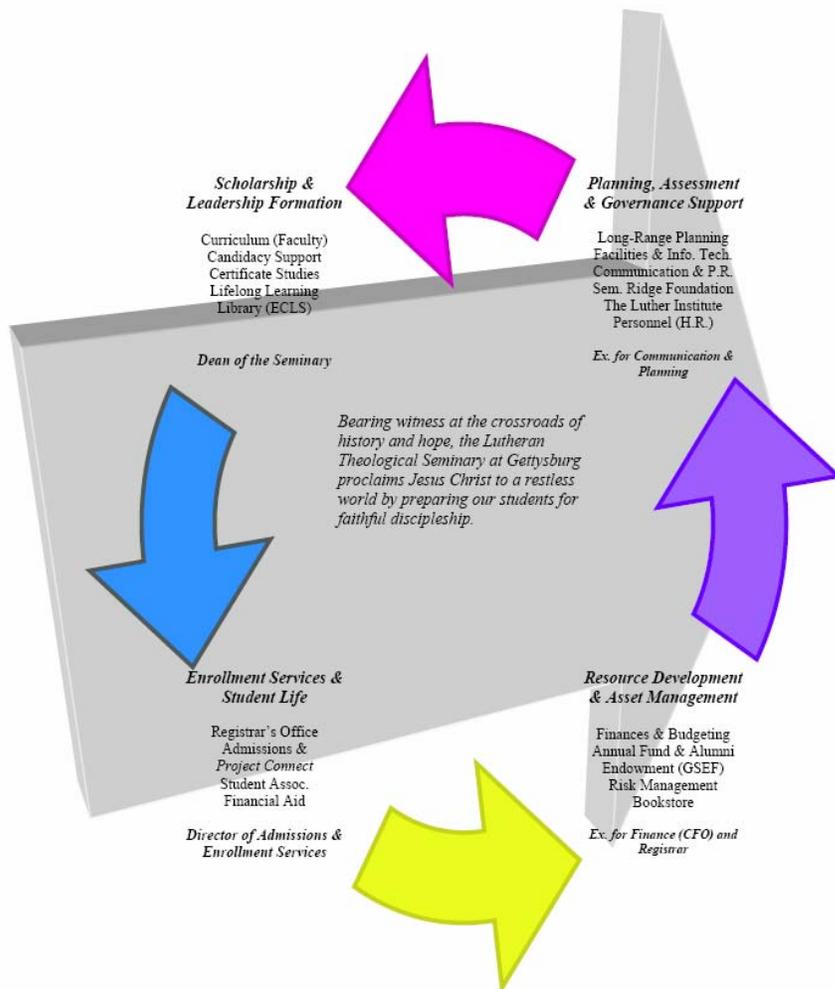
Shared Governance

Internal self-assessment, corroborated by external consultants, including the Director for Theological Education of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, who regularly attends LTSG board meetings, point to a high level of effectiveness in shared governance. With ultimate authority for institutional governance clearly residing in the Board of Directors, multiple other key constituent groups and individuals play critical roles in stewarding the Seminary and ensuring fulfillment of our mission. Under provision of the bylaws, the faculty has the duty and responsibility to establish academic aims and policies, determine the basic curriculum, academic standards, admit or dismiss students and make appropriate recommendations regarding their completion of degree requirements and readiness for ministry. The presidential office is vested with appropriate executive and oversight authority, which includes serving as chair of the faculty and chief executive officer. Other offices, including Dean of the Seminary, bear appropriate responsibilities and are granted authority to fulfill roles specified in governing documents. The LTSG Student Association (SA) fosters and oversees a lively array of campus activities and special events, and SA and class officers are advisory members present at each meeting of the Board of Directors.

In order to enhance governance by inviting persons with expertise and required capacities in vital areas, the board has established related subsidiary entities, each of which has a board of trustees or advisors. Endowment investment and the development and implementation of growth strategies are vested in the Gettysburg Seminary Endowment Foundation (GSEF). The

rehabilitation and stewarding of the historic Civil War edifices owned by the Seminary is entrusted to a non-religious corporate entity, the Seminary Ridge Historic Preservation Foundation (SFHPF). Special programs and emphases fielded in the nation’s capital, Washington D.C., function under the umbrella of The Luther Institute. Among the members on the board of each of these Seminary subsidiaries are several members of the Board of Directors, thus ensuring a ready flow of information and communication among the several partners with responsibilities designated by the board.

Following a two-year experimental period of employing a new administrative team approach, the Board of Directors determined to reorganize its committee structure and functioning, paring down from 9 to 4 standing committees, which parallel the fourfold administrative staff team structure. While still early in its implementation at the time of this writing, the new structure appears to be meeting the objectives of further enhancing shared governance and giving opportunity for broad-based input into decision-making by multiple stakeholders.



GROWING EDGES

The administration and the faculty are unanimous in recognizing two areas for growth at our seminary: 1) future economic stability; and 2) racial diversity of tenured/tenure track faculty. In the last decade, LTSG has been a model among the ELCA in preparing and living within a balanced budget. As a result of this care, Gettysburg Seminary comes to 2010 with a decade of balanced budgets. By many measures, Gettysburg is first or second among ELCA seminaries in terms of its financial strength. However, it is the case today that almost every denominational seminary without a significant endowment must cut programs, staff, and faculty to keep the seminary financially and educationally feasible. Gettysburg Seminary has made these necessary cutbacks in a way to increase efficiency, maintain the excellent educational standards, and with a minimum of staff firings. Among the causes of financial difficulties are regular decreases in money from the ELCA national body and its synodical expressions, and the downturn in the nation's and world's economy resulting in a decrease in the amount of the endowment at LTSG. While this school fared much better than most of our sister seminaries, it still experienced more than a 25% decrease in endowment over the past few years. Today, the higher cost of delivering quality degree programs with fewer residential students necessitating more individualized courses of study, and the fact that this school can no longer increase tuition, room and board at the level of the past decade is bothersome. As ATS and MSCHE are well aware, there is a severe crisis in seminary education in this country and Canada, and even a crisis with the M.Div. degree itself, which remains by far the degree most often sought at our school.

LTSG has made great strides in the diversity of its faculty, staff and student body in the last decade. For example, a decade ago (1999-2000), this school had eighteen tenure-track faculty members: 6 women and 12 men; in 2009-2010, LTSG has six tenured/tenure track women faculty (not the same six as a decade ago) and seven men. In addition, the President and the Librarian have faculty status. In 1999-2000, this seminary had thirty-six Teaching Parish supervisors: thirty-one men and five women; in 2009-2010, Gettysburg has 32 supervisors: twenty-one men and eleven women. In 1999-2000 and again in 2009-2010 there was one African American supervisor (different people). In 1999-2000, LTSG had thirty-seven internship supervisors: thirty-five men and two women; in 2009-2010, this school has forty internship supervisors: thirty-one men and nine women. In 1999-2000, there were no interns or supervisors of color. In 2009-2010, there were six interns of color (three Africans preparing to be ELCA pastors in the United States; and three African American students already serving in the AME denomination), and three African American supervisors of the AME students). LTSG's student body has grown from two percent persons of color to nine percent today. The exception to this progress is in the very important category of persons of color among our tenured/tenure track faculty. We made increasing faculty persons of color a priority ten years ago, but have not accomplished it. Right now, we are handicapped by financial restraints so that new searches, which had been planned and even begun, have been stopped until the financial picture improves. Specifically, the faculty began a search for a Professor of Field Education based on the imminent retirement of the professor in that position, but that search was put on hold for at least two and a half years for financial reasons. This position might have been a prime one in which to call a person of color to a tenure track position.