

Report of Colleges and Seminaries

**Report of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries
To the Synods of Regions 7, 8 and 9
Spring, 2015**

Since its founding in 1995, the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries (ECLS) has fostered strong collaboration between the three eastern schools and other partners, enhancing our common task of theological education for a broad spectrum of students and lifelong learners. In these challenging times when all seminaries seek new approaches to forming leaders for the Church, we are also engaged with the other ELCA seminaries, our regional synods and additional partners in the search for financial sustainability and programmatic flexibility.

A separately incorporated entity, the Cluster is governed by a Board of Directors made up of board chairs and other officers from each of the three schools. One of the three seminary presidents serves in rotation as Cluster executive director. With the retirement of Philadelphia's president Phil Krey, the Cluster is pleased to welcome David Lose as the new leader of LTSP. We continue on with only modest core funding from the seminaries. One of the key partnerships that has made the work of the Cluster flourish has been the reception of over \$6 million in grants from foundations to support common projects and subsidize seminary budgets.

Current Collaborative Programs

- The Cluster's *One Library Under Three Roofs* links the collections at Gettysburg, Philadelphia and Columbia, providing students, faculty and other borrowers with access to a vast array of books, periodicals and e-resources.
- Through the Cluster-sponsored *Project Connect*, hundreds of young persons have been invited to "consider their callings" over the past half-dozen years. With project funding from Lilly Endowment now completed, each school's Admissions Office continues working closely with many partners in encouraging persons to consider public ministry. The Cluster is working with a grant researcher who will help to identify potential partners for future work.
- The *Abundant Life Grant* was received this past year from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Totalling \$750,000, this grant enables each school to engage in research on the subject of seminarian indebtedness and explore means by which to reduce graduate debt.
- Given the geographical proximity of the two Pennsylvania seminaries, Gettysburg and Philadelphia have joined forces in exploring new ways to work together, including faculty sharing.
- **Future Cluster Directions:** Following the merger of LTSS with Lenoir Rhyne University, the Cluster is exploring new directions and new strategic partnerships for the coming years.

With Appreciation: The Cluster is grateful for support to theological education and our seminaries from our partner synods and churchwide organization. Special appreciation is expressed to Phil Krey for his many years of faithful service to the Cluster and the church.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Trexler, Cluster Board Chair
The Rev. Dr. Clay Schmit, Cluster Executive Director

2015 REPORT OF THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PHILADELPHIA

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I write with a heart filled with gratitude for the ministry we share to educate leaders for Christ's Church. This is a mission that The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia has pursued with passion and fidelity for 150 years and will continue to pursue well into the future. But let me be clear: we could not fulfill this mission without your prayers, financial gifts, and partnership in identifying and forming capable congregational leaders, and so we are most grateful for your support. As we all know, the landscape in which our congregations and church-related agencies do ministry has changed dramatically over the last twenty-five years and will continue to change. For this reason, our challenges and opportunities are often bound closely to one another. In this report, I will outline several of those.

Financial Sustainability

The major challenge facing all seminaries today is financial sustainability. LTSP is addressing these concerns by re-organizing its administrative structures in order to function more effectively and efficiently. The cost savings of these adjustments are absolutely critical to moving to a healthier future. LTSP is also actively seeking a) to make better use of its campus to further the mission of the school and generate additional revenue, b) expand opportunities for life-long learning in response to the requests of congregational leaders throughout our territory, c) more effectively market its specific programs and urban location to prospective students, and d) rebuild and redirect our mission advancement team in order to increase annual unrestricted giving.

Partnerships

If we are to have a future as a seminary, it will only be as a deeply invested and trusted partner with many other parts of the church. For this reason, we are actively cultivating partnerships with congregations and synods, social ministry agencies, church camps, and other seminaries. In this last category, our work with The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg to share faculty and explore means by which to align our administrative structures has been most exciting. Closer to home, we are currently in conversation with Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University about the possibility of Palmer relocating to our Mt. Airy campus in order to share facilities and to explore other possibilities of collegial collaboration in forming leaders for faith communities.

New Programs

After an extensive period of conversation with representatives of our supporting synods and other constituent groups, it has become clear that there are needs in our church that LTSP is well positioned to meet. Chief among these is creating robust Life-long Learning opportunities that draw congregational leaders into rich learning, conversation, and collaboration about how best to minister in a changed and changing world. Focusing our D.Min. degree offerings toward particular ministry-oriented tracks (biblical preaching, for example) and offering a Distributed Learning program for M.Div. student are two more strategies we are currently pursuing. This past year, we have experimented with a "Co-operative" model of education whereby students can

earn an M.Div. while working in a congregation across three years, a model that will continue to be valuable in our immediate region and will pair well with a DL M.Div. program.

As I said at the outset, we couldn't do any of this without your help, and so I would encourage every congregation to place in its budget a commitment to support LTSP in training our future leaders and to hold all the seminaries of the ELCA in prayer. We will live into God's preferred future together or not at all. As we move forward, know of our gratitude for your fidelity and partnership.

David J. Lose
President, LTSP

Muhlenberg College 2014-15 Highlights

At Muhlenberg College, admissions, development, academic quality and the student experience continued to be robust during the past year. The College opened the year with a record 15% students of color in the freshman class. The first year class also included 19 international students, including students from Jordan, Afghanistan, Rwanda and nine students from China. This past November, the College also approved its Diversity Strategic Plan.

Religious Life continues to thrive at Muhlenberg. Drawing on our relationship with the ELCA, the College welcomes students from all faith traditions. We have a thriving Interfaith Leadership Council, in addition to offering worship services for our Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish students. This year we hosted Eboo Patel from the Interfaith Youth Core and sent ten students to three different national interfaith leadership training events.

Mallory Bernstein '14 earned a Fulbright Grant and biology professor Bruce Wightman was awarded a prestigious NIH grant. The College received a three year grant from the Mellon Foundation. The grant will help the College implement its new general education curriculum, especially in areas of global engagement and digital pedagogy, and provides bridge funding for a faculty position in Religion Studies. In addition, the College is part of the newly formed Pennsylvania Liberal Arts Consortium, also initially funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, which will provide cost-efficient opportunities for faculty and staff development, shared programming, and other benefits. The College also earned "Community Engagement Classification" by Carnegie Foundation.

The faculty added public health as a major. This is an exciting new development and will complement Muhlenberg's science and health care professionals program, which have been the flagship programs at the College for many years.

Muhlenberg's nationally ranked theatre and dance program produced several outstanding productions, including the summer music theatre productions of "Spamalot" and "A Chorus Line." Creative children's programming included this year's production of "Gruff." The mainstage production was Steven Sondheim's rarely produced early musical "Anyone Can Whistle." The Master Choreographers dance concert and "New Visions" were also well received. The Muhlenberg College choir, under the direction of music professor Michael Schnack, performed at the New York Workshop production of "The Events."

Four creative and successful alumni events generated both alumni pride and support. Mulementum, a 24-hour “Day of Giving,” inspired more than 1600 donors, smashing last year's inaugural day of giving by more than 200 and producing many first time donors. In January, the College hosted the second annual THAW events – Toast Heard Around the World – in more than 30 different locations. People toasted the College from Tel Aviv to Florida to Los Angeles to Hilton Head to New York City. Mule Madness, in its fourth year, produced dozens of new donors and increased participation rates as former athletes rose to the competitive challenge. The Muhlenberg Golf Classic raised significant dollars for the athletic programs. In sports, the Mules won the Centennial Conference soccer championship and advanced to the NCAA playoffs. The football team also earned an NCAA tournament bid. The wrestling team competed in the "Grapple at the Garden" event in Madison Square Garden.

The Center for Ethics brought several nationally recognized speakers to campus, including performance artist and poet Ursula Rucker. This year's theme was "Civility and Disobedience." Other campus programming included "Black Lives Matter: A Luta Continua (The Struggle Continues)", a week of interactive, interdisciplinary programming that celebrated the life of Martin Luther King Jr. Artist and curator Vicki Meek delivered the Black History Month keynote address.

Student engagement in service continues to be a hallmark of the Muhlenberg. Students volunteer for scores of service projects and organizations in the community and the College has a presence in schools, churches and non-profit agencies throughout Allentown and the Lehigh Valley. This past year, Air Products and Chemicals Inc., partnered with the College to set up a paid internship program at five non-profit organizations. The College has also partnered with the Civic Theatre and the West End Alliance to strengthen the surrounding neighborhood.

President Randy Helm, who retires June 30, 2015, had a farewell tour that included 13 stops including Los Angeles, San Francisco, several stops in Florida, plus Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. After leading the College for 12 years, Helm turns the reigns over to John I. Williams, Jr., an entrepreneur and innovator who has been involved as a trustee or life trustee at Amherst College for more than 30 years.