

**Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
Lexington Seminar**

Final Report
October 1, 2004

Issue and Context

At the outset, we would like to express our thanks for the opportunity for the faculty at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia to be given the time and space in lovely settings to work successfully on some challenging issues through the Lexington Seminar. The entire process was of great value to our faculty and to our institution as a whole as the following report will evidence. The benefit of wisdom from colleagues at several different institutions was of inestimable benefit.

Context

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia is a school of 425 students in an urban context. It offers the MAR, MDiv, STM, and DMin degrees, and will begin a ThD degree program in September 2005. In the MDiv degree program, there are four optional concentrations: African American, Latino, Multi-cultural, and Urban.

The faculty consists of 21 members, including currently two vacancies for which searches are already well under way. A new faculty position in African American studies will be added in 2005 (search also under way). Of the faculty members, one-third is white and male, one-third is female, and one-third consists of persons of color or language other than English. Recent faculty appointments have included a chair of Anglican Studies, a chair in mission and cultures, and a biblical position that is shared with another seminary in the Easter Cluster.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia is a school of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and a member of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries that includes The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. The cluster includes a common library located on three campuses accessible through a common data-base, one shared faculty member, transferable degree coursework at the first professional and STM levels, and shared programs of continuing education, diaconal ministry training, and distance learning.

The Lexington Seminar greeted us at a time when we had just finished our ATS/MSA accreditation review and felt good because we had been told that we had basically achieved the seminary's vision written in the 80's and revised in the 90's that in effect reinvented us as a confessional Lutheran/biblical yet interconfessional, ecumenical and multicultural seminary in a pluralistic northeastern urban setting. We found ourselves comfortable in our Lutheran identity as a seminary with about 50% of the student body being female and 40 percent being persons of color. Most of the latter were African

American students in our Urban Theological Institute program, now 25-years old, with evening and weekend offerings of MDiv/MAR courses. The average age of our students was coming down from its highs of the 80's because of denominational and LTSP strategies to attract younger students right out of college. We had avoided severe dislocations as a result of endowment losses in the recession because of a wise policy of steady tuition increases and a growing student enrollment (a doubling since the 80's, that is a head count of 425, up from 250). We have been growing in all programs, but especially in second professional programs. We have also benefited financially through economies of scale developed through collaboration with the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries facilitated by two major grants one from LUCE Foundation for our Libraries (One Library in three locations and one from the Teagle foundation for rather dramatic administrative and faculty collaboration among the three schools.)

We entered the Lexington Seminar at an exciting time in the life of our seminary, with plans for a new Learning Center and a renovated library. We ended the Lexington seminar with the new Learning Center already partially built (projected completion date is August 2005) and the plans for the renovated library well developed.

With all these positive trends in addition to the plans for completing a capital campaign and a building campaign, the Lexington Seminar helped us to take another honest look ourselves under three rubrics: (1) our diversity, (2) our teaching and learning, and (3) our need for a new curriculum with a theme, which was to be Public Theology and Witness.

Issue

Our plan was to work on curriculum revision, and was very much influenced by the experiences and insights of the two Lexington Seminar events in North-East Harbor, Maine.

We had not revised our curriculum since 1994, so it was time to revise. Since 1994, there had been many changes in technologically enhanced teaching, distance learning, growing classes, and increased diversity in the student body. The faculty found all these converging. In addition we were planning a Th.D. program and were wrestling with what that would mean for a faculty that has prided itself on a first rate MDiv program. We also found that more than 50% of the current faculty had had little or no role in devising the 1994 curriculum; many of those who planned the previous curriculum had retired or become deans or presidents at other schools. We further discovered that half the faculty perhaps had a different understanding about the school's expectations of the faculty and what would that mean for teaching, research, and writing.

We were at the very beginning of the revision process as we joined the first Lexington Seminar meeting in Maine. And all of the above issues were impinging on our thinking. By the end of that first Lexington Seminar event, we had articulated six points that we needed to take into account in curriculum revision:

1. The revision would build on current strengths affirmed in recent outcomes assessment. So the revision would be an evolution rather than a revolution. But, we wanted to add and make changes to better fulfill our mission. Strengths we had that we could build on were our theological tradition and our close ties to the church, especially in preparing students for ordination.
2. This seminar helped us see the need for intentionality in shaping pedagogies towards the students we actually have today in all their diversity. We wanted a curriculum that would work with students at the stages they are at on entry, and that would enable them to move as they are able (some probably much faster than others). We wanted to integrate our several emphases—Urban Theological Institute, traditional day program, Latino emphasis, and coming Multicultural emphasis--without losing the integrity of each. We believed that there were resources in each of these programs that could help in dealing with the diversity we recognized. Through the Lexington Seminar we also gained heightened awareness that the curriculum needed to take account of part-time and full-time students and that we would need to wrestle with the issue of pros and cons of the sequentiality that had been part of our course structure to that point. Also, we would need to devise ways to listen to our students in terms of what they need and intend to take back to the situation in which they are working.
3. We wanted coherence in the new curriculum, and believed that would be helped by a common theme of theology for public mission/theology in the public arena. This theme could then run through the day, UTI, Latino, Multicultural, and urban emphases, as well as through the advanced level degree programs. It would give commonality in the midst of diversity. The new ThD program would be focused around the same theme, and also focused on teaching and learning, not just research for the sake of research.
4. We learned from our discussions in the first meeting of the Lexington Seminar that the issue of formation was going to be an important one in the curriculum. We had, at that point, one system of formation through small groups and synod candidacy processes for Lutherans, and a much less structured system for students in 34 other denominations who attend LTSP. In the revised curriculum we wanted to strengthen the formation process for all students, and to include aspects of moral integrity and basic values.
5. The issue of mission/globalization/ecumenical, interfaith aspects of the curriculum would need an overhaul. The Lexington Seminar first meeting discussion helped us to see some of the pros and cons of immersion experiences and to rethink the preparation and follow-up. It also helped us to see the value of working with these issues from early in the junior year right through the senior year. We planned to explore a variety of ways to deal with this aspect of the curriculum.

6. We wanted to deal with faculty workload as part of curriculum development so that faculty members do not neglect self-care and time for research and writing.

Project Design

We decided that we need four retreat/reflection days for faculty, with consultants, to work on these six issues and any others that would arise.

To fulfill the plan, we had a consultant from the Andover Newton theological faculty meet with the LTSP faculty for four events. All events were held off-campus, to avoid distractions. The topic overall was pedagogy related to curricular revision and evaluation of present practices of teaching and learning.

The first event was the September 2002 faculty retreat, held at a Roman Catholic monastery/retreat center. The topic was “Trends in Theological Education with Implications for Teaching and Learning”. We examined the teacher-learner interaction and how to mentor others. A number of resources and bibliographical resources were shared by the facilitator. In small groups, faculty members were enthusiastic in discussing their teaching methods and practices. We dealt with ways to evaluate teaching and our distinct contributions in the area of public theology.

We also discussed our context, our current curriculum and changes needed, and the impending ThD program. Pedagogically, we are very serious about integration. Our previous curriculum attempted integration through special courses in the middler and senior years. Now we decided that the new MAR/MDiv curriculum would be much more intentional about integration, and an opening two-week prologue would set the tone for integration throughout the seminary experience that would build up to the senior public theology seminars. In addition, the desire for integration would be mirrored in our new ThD program with its four concentrations of historical theology, scriptural theology, contemporary theology, and theology for ministry/mission. Students would choose a major and a minor from these four, and would do comprehensive exams in those two areas as well as in their dissertation area. But, also all students would do a comprehensive exam in public theology, which would be the integrating theme of all of our curricula for both first professional and advanced level degrees. We wanted our doctoral teaching assistants to be experiencing integration in their own program as well as appreciating it in the MDiv courses in which they would assist.

The following three one-day events were held at the Sugarloaf conference center of Temple University throughout the 2002-3 year.

The second event focused on aspects of classroom teaching, class assessment techniques, and the role of teaching and scholarship with diverse student populations and implications for instructional design. Prior to the event, each faculty member completed a teaching goals inventory related to one of his/her course syllabi; the results were

discussed in small groups. Faculty members held different views on the value of outcomes assessment in relation to their teaching.

In February, the focus of the third event was teaching in the light of our multicultural context, diversity of students, and part-time students. We discussed diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, and class, and the school's most recent diversity audit. Diversity was examined not only in the classroom but also in extracurricular efforts designed to foster community within a wide variety of constituencies in our seminary relationships

On the issue of diversity and multicultural issues on the campus we had done a multicultural audit which pressed us on a number of issues. We actually had some painful faculty discussion focused on diversity as we discovered that not everyone on the faculty experienced our celebrated diversity in same way. Faculty members held different views on diversity: some thought that we could focus on multicultural issues in pedagogy as a particular issue. Others held that we could not discuss multicultural issues without at the same time discussing gender issues, otherwise gender issues would get short shrift. This led to debate on whether pedagogically it is ever appropriate to deal with particular issues of diversity or whether all issues (race, age, gender, culture, ethnicity, etc) must be dealt with simultaneously. Some thought that to deal with too many issues at once becomes unwieldy and fails really to deal with any. Others thought that to choose any one issue to start with, meant favoring that one over the others and so on down the list.

Some of our programs operated in parallel universes (for example, we were always aware that the relative autonomy of the Urban Theological Institute was both a bane and a blessing) and some of the ecumenical members of the faculty felt disempowered and not heard and thus addressed issues of hierarchy. We learned much about ourselves in these conversations and probably identified work for a decade.

Another issue in diversity that we wrestled with in relation to pedagogy is our commitment to the Lutheran tradition, yet our desire to serve an ecumenical student body—two-thirds of our student body and 60% of our faculty are Lutheran, and Lutheranism is an important part of our heritage. Yet, one-third of our student body represents over 30 other denominations, and we wanted to be open to and respectful of other ecumenical traditions. This ecumenical outlook is in fact part of our Lutheran heritage too. So we wrestled with: How do we teach confessional theology in an ecumenical student body? How do we encourage each student's own traditions, yet remain clear about the tradition that founded and supports the seminary and is vitally connected to it as a churchly body? How do we choose textbooks that reflect this diversity, yet are representative of the tradition. Perhaps we are fortunate in that many major Lutheran theologians are often claimed by other denominations as "theirs" too—such as Bonhoeffer, Tillich, Bultmann, and Pannenberg.

An additional pedagogical component in the diversity pool was the way in which we referred to students. We had been referring for some years to our "day and UTI" programs. But, this wasn't accurate, because it was one program from the beginning, although originally with different sets of students; mainly Lutherans attended in the

daytime Monday through Friday, and mainly African American non-Lutherans attended in the evenings and on Saturdays. Then gradually, as more students, Lutheran and non-Lutheran, became part-time and began to take day and evening classes wherever they fitted into their schedule, we had to look for different nomenclature. We had tried “part-time and full-time”, but that was unsatisfactory because some part-time students would take a year off to complete studies full-time, or vary between full-time one semester and part-time the next. Then we had tried “traditional” versus “non-traditional”—until we heard that students were questioning whether “non-traditional” meant second class.

Finally, the fourth event in May 2003 explored the dimensions of vocation as theological educators, and the public face of theological education. We dealt with the issues of public witness for a theological seminary in the light of the Iraq war and other public events. Then we moved into discussion of the new curriculum, which included proposed expansion of global, ecumenical, and interfaith components, public theology offerings, and an August prologue to theology, ministry, and contexts.

As a result of our days together, the faculty curriculum committee then took on the task of incorporating the new insights into fashioning a new curriculum, which the faculty subsequently approved, and which began in September 2004. The curriculum reflects the commitments in global, ecumenical, and interfaith components, public theology offerings, and the August prologue to theology, ministry, and contexts. It also brings into one program the various diverse constituencies of the seminary population, and gathers all the programs under one theme of public theology. (See below, Project Results.)

Resources Used in Developing and Implementing the Project

Publications

Anderson, James A. and Maurianne Adams. “Acknowledging the Learning Styles of Diverse Student Populations: Implications for Instructional Design”, *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, No.49, Spring 1997.

Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl. “Beyond Diversity: Cultural Competence. White Racism Awareness, and European-American Theology Students”, *Teaching Theology and Religion*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 141-148.

Pazmino. Robert W. “Theological Education with Hispanic Persons: Teaching Distinctives” (pre-publication copy).

Rice, R. Eugene. “ReThinking What it Means to be a Scholar”, *Teaching Excellence*, Winter-Spring 1990.

(Publications contd.)

Teaching Goals Inventory Online, University of Iowa Education Department.

Warren, Lee. "Class in the Classroom", *Essays on Teaching Excellence*, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University, 1992.

Resources Experts

A faculty member in educational theory from Andover Newton Theological School met with the entire faculty for four retreats, as above.

Facilitators

The drafts of the curriculum were drawn up by the curriculum committee consisting of Dr. Paul Rajashekar (Dean), Dr. John Hoffmeyer (chair), Dr. Katie Day, Dr. Margaret Krych, the Business Manager, the Registrar, a UTI administrator, and three students. The faculty, first in Areas, and then as an entire faculty, reviewed, discussed, recommended changes, and finally approved the curriculum plan.

Project Results

We planned to build on current strengths. Our re-accreditation report, self-study, and outcomes assessment all indicated that we already had a strong and largely successful program at all levels. Much of the new first-professional curriculum is thus little changed from the prior "traditional" curriculum, recognizing that, for the most part, our base curriculum was turning out well-prepared pastors and lay leaders.

1. Our first goal was to take the old curriculum and shape it into a more integrated experience for students. This integration will occur in the new curriculum
 - through the common theme of public theology that provides coherence to the curriculum, including both first professional and advanced degree programs (see below #4)
 - in our pedagogy, which provides more opportunities for students to reflect on the way in which their theological studies form a cohesive whole and how these studies impact their lives and ministries
 - through increased opportunity for interaction among our diverse student populations.

2. Our second goal was to integrate the diverse student body into one community. We did this in the following ways:
 - The new first-professional curriculum has been unified for all students. Previously, there had previously been an entirely separate set of requirements for

- nontraditional “Urban Theological Institute” predominantly African-American students. A unified curriculum formalizes our recognition that nontraditional students come from all denominations and ethnic groups and that we cannot neatly categorize as “different” the students in our evening/weekend program. The new curriculum also recognizes that a wider array of courses needs to be made available to students who are only able to take courses on weekends and in evenings.
- By offering some required courses only in the evening in a given year, we hope to foster greater intermingling of our weekday and evening/weekend students.
 - By appointing a director of student services specifically for evening/weekend students and by appointing regular faculty advisors to all such students, we hope to help nontraditional students feel more a part of the entire seminary community.
 - Sequentiality has not been eliminated in the new MDiv/MAR curricula; it may even be stricter than previously, especially for nontraditional students. However, fewer degree requirements will be met by specific courses and more by a variety of courses. Therefore, students will mingle more with others from different backgrounds.
3. The third goal was to be intentional in shaping pedagogies towards students in all their diversity. It was clear that some of the discussions on diversity probably will continue for a long time, but was good to have them surfaced (above, Project Design). We dealt with diversity in the following ways in the new curriculum:
- We will continue to offer concentrations for students focusing on ministry in urban, Latino/a, and African-American contexts, and we are adding a concentration in multicultural ministry.
 - We will seek instructors for denominational history and polity courses that honor those traditions.
 - Students will have a core curriculum that recognizes the commonality of ministry issues across cultural, geographic, and denominational lines, but they will also have opportunities to focus on ministry contexts that are important to them. By bringing those interests to bear on the public theology seminars they take as seniors, they will heighten consciousness for their student colleagues and teachers as well.
4. The fourth goal was to instill a common theme through our curriculum. We chose the theme of public theology define public theology, which we define as theology for public witness or theological discourse in the public arena. This is theology that is done in and reflects on the context of ministry. We will prepare students for the church that exists today and not for a church that no longer exists.

The unified first-professional curriculum will help to ensure that all our MDiv/MAR students will take the same courses and encounter the same themes. The public theology theme will be introduced during a new first course for students, the Prolog, and final-year students will again focus on the theme in one of several seminars on public theology to be offered each year.

- The Prolog, offered in an August pre-session, seeks to provide an integrative introduction to theological study, integrating the various disciplines of study, integrating classroom study with congregational ministry, and integrating seminary study with socio-cultural contexts. We have built in procedures so that the Prolog will enable us to get to know our students and also obtain an early indicator of each student's level of preparedness for seminary. Further, we have built in writing requirements that will help us detect those students whose language skills may require remedial attention, so that such students may be given better chances to succeed in their degree programs.
 - Senior Seminars in Public Theology will provide students nearing graduation with a chance to integrate various dimensions of their seminary education. Limited to no more than 12 students, the seminars will be structured around participants' sharing, discussing, and learning from each other's work on particular themes developed by the instructor(s) under the broad rubric of public theology. At least one seminar each year will be "quodlibetal," with students' questions determining the themes of the course.
5. Our fifth goal was to strengthen the formation process for all students. The method in the previous curriculum had tied formation groups to field education and thus made such groups available only to traditional MDiv students. We abandoned that approach. In the new curriculum, all second-year (or equivalent) students, both MDiv and MAR, will be required to engage in formation groups that will be available both on weekdays and in the evening. More emphasis will be placed on vocational discernment and the development of spiritual/devotional resources, as well as moral integrity and basic values.
6. Conversations within the Lexington Seminar led to our sixth goal to rethink our approaches to global/ecumenical/interfaith issues. Formerly, only our traditional MDiv students were required to complete a single requirement in one of these three areas; and evening/weekend students were exempted altogether by their separate curriculum. In the new curriculum, all MDiv students will complete requirements in all three areas, typically one each year (or equivalent) of their program. For the first time, MAR students will also be required to complete a requirement in at least one of these areas.
- With the establishment of a professorship in mission and cultures, more courses dealing with global/missional issues will be made available, decreasing the need to provide actual immersion experiences, the manner of offering of which will be reviewed.

- Students can satisfy the ecumenical requirement by taking a course in the polity and doctrine of another denomination or by doing an internship at a congregation of another denomination, as well as by taking courses in ecumenism.
 - Our “Church History III” option, formerly met only by courses in American religious history, now will include global Christianity courses that recognize the world beyond US borders.
 - By reserving our January Terms for G/E/I courses and electives, we hope to make these courses and experiences more accessible to all our students.
7. We also addressed issues of faculty workload through the appointment of a committee to bring specific proposals to the faculty and Board to ensure that our faculty members have time for self care, as well as research and writing. Healthy conversations have taken place around this topic, and faculty members have responded positively to the initiative. We also took the time to write a new policy on expectations of the faculty for promotion that was approved by the Board in spring 2004.

How the Project Sharpened Concerns Around the Processes of Teaching and Learning at LTSP

Faculty

In the Lexington Seminar setting, the LTSP faculty members present were able to share with faculty members from other schools, and learned that other schools also shared the issues that seemed so important to LTSP. Moreover, some of those schools had already tried ways to deal with these issues, and whether their experiences were positive or negative, served to prevent us “reinventing the wheel” when we turned to our own LTSP curriculum planning. Particularly helpful were collegial insights from the Lexington Seminar discussions that focussed on student diversity, formation, and globalization/ecumenical experiences (see above pages 3 and 9).

The entire LTSP faculty benefited greatly from the four retreat events held throughout the academic year that focussed on teaching and learning. Not only were we able to wrestle with issues that were foundational to the curriculum that we would teach, but we were also able to look closely at our own teaching methods and styles, our syllabi, and our teaching concerns, in the context of collegial small-group sharing and critique. The faculty was able to articulate the pride we have and value we see in the teaching that we do. We were also able to hear suggestions of colleagues that would lead to improvement in our teaching. And we were able to consider ways to balance research and professional development alongside the teaching task.

The faculty was able to explore teaching implications as we seriously assessed the diversity of the student body, the planning for a unified curriculum around a common theme of public theology, and the importance of formation and

global/ecumenical/interfaith issues. Faculty members were challenged to rethink their course objectives and teaching methodologies in the light of the commitments expressed in the new curriculum.

School as a whole

The New Curriculum will serve the school for conceivably the next decade. With the common theme of public theology running through all of the five degree programs, for the first time in its history LTSP will have a common factor that will bring into conversation students from first professional and advanced level degrees.

Students will be able to see the common theme through their courses and understand how the teaching in one course relates to that in the others.

Traditional and non-traditional students will mingle in their classes and learn from each other as they deal with issues of diversity, formation, globalization, ecumenical, and interfaith issues.

Students will spend much more time integrating their theoretical studies with ministry and ministerial contexts.

What We Would Do Differently

We believe that overall we have had an excellent experience and have arrived at a fine curriculum. However, if there had been more time we would have wrestled even more with the diversity issues that still remain (above, page 5). We are planning to continue these conversations in the coming months and years, beyond the official end of the Lexington Seminar project.

What issues continue to challenge

Further diversity issues continue to challenge as described above, page 5.

Sharing the Wisdom

The Lexington Seminar experience taught us a great deal about Theological Education beyond our own institution.

Perhaps the most startling point was to find that other schools, which on the face of it seemed quite different from our own, had experienced many of the same issues and challenges that we had. Often the parallels were almost uncanny. In addition, those schools were able to share their solutions or attempts at solutions to the problems we were dealing with. Not only the formal Lexington Seminar sessions but also the informal conversation around meals and on trips provided a wealth of shared wisdom and insights.

Our members took notes at odd moments as well as in official sessions and pooled our wisdom in institutional discussion sessions and on our return to our own campus.

In turn, by attending to the issues that were the focal point of the projects of other schools, we learned about many issues that were also pertinent to our campus—some of which we had faced before and so could share our experience and insights; some of which we probably will face in the future and now have some tools to deal with.

We hope that our own insights that were shared in discussion sessions may have benefited the other schools present also.

Copies of materials that helped including research tools
Appended.