



Board Notes

October, 2017

Board Notes is a form of communication designed to keep the trustees informed about and engaged in current seminary events, decisions and actions that affect the work of the Board. It is prepared by President Blair and Board Chair Parmely. We welcome your feedback as we work to increase the flow of important information during periods between board meetings that may not be captured by other forms of communication.

October Work of the Board

On October 9-10, the Board gathered for its regularly scheduled Fall meeting, which focused on development of a new financial model for the seminary. The board adopted a final version of the operating budget for fiscal year 2017-18 and a forward-looking financial framework developed by the administration for fiscal years ending 2019 through 2021. The projected budget guidelines hold annual draws on endowment investments to no more than 4.0%. The Board requested that the administration submit by January 2, 2018 implementation plans for accommodating any out-sourcing of operations, adjustments in personnel and any extraordinary expenses related to personnel adjustments, which were otherwise not present in the framework projections.

At the request of the administration, the Board also provided guidance through a series of proposed processes for making adjustments in the number of personnel employed by the seminary. These included a request that President Blair develop a formal voluntary reduction process for faculty similar to that used in 2013-14 and an involuntary process for staff. Both would reflect an assessment of the needs of the seminary for pursuing its core mission.

In the event that financial targets are not met by a voluntary reduction in faculty, the Board recommended that President Blair explore other means, including a declaration of financial exigency to proceed with involuntary reductions in tenured faculty numbers. The Faculty Handbook follows the guidelines prescribed by the

American Association of University Professors related to financial exigency and the matter of faculty tenure. A copy of the Handbook is available for trustees in the October meeting folder on Moodle.

President Blair will be reporting to the Board by January 2, 2018 the status of implementing each of these recommendations and any additional board action that may be required.

These recommendations of the Board are only guidelines and do not preclude the administration developing alternative voluntary staff termination options for achieving financial targets, including job-sharing, out-sourcing, resignations and retirements.

Departure of Chief Financial Officer Barney Barry

We hear with regret, but also with good wishes, the news that Barney Barry will be leaving Saint Paul on November 3. Barney has accepted a position with The Local Investment Commission (Kclinc.org). We thank you, Barney, for your tireless efforts on behalf of the school and know you will bless your new employer and the community in your new position.

Distance Education

We hope periodically to bring to the readers of *Board Notes* articles of an educational or operational nature related to issues facing the Board. This month's contribution is from Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean Jeanne Hoeft and deals with online learning at Saint Paul.

Even though enrollment in theological education has declined steadily for a number of years, the trend appears to have leveled off the last few years and many schools have reported recent growth. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) reports that almost half of the schools with at least 20 online students showed enrollment growth in the 2015/16 academic year, while only about a third of schools without online students grew during that period. Most of the increase in the number of schools expanding their online offerings has happened in the last 5 years, and those schools have usually been freestanding and evangelical. (ATS breaks their ecclesial families into three categories - Mainline, Evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic/Orthodox).

Saint Paul was a pioneer in distance education when we opened our Oklahoma campus and began teaching with video conferencing in almost all classes. ATS considers video conferencing one form of distance education. Currently we offer about ten courses in an asynchronous online format and many courses in hybrid online format. As we continue to expand online and hybrid offerings, we are required to meet the standards of our regulatory bodies, including the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), ATS, the Department of Education (DOE) and the United Methodist Senate (UMS).

Accreditor and Regulatory Restrictions

ATS - At least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the MDIV must be residential. A hybrid course whose content is majority face-to-face counts as residential

HLC/DOE - Coursework must include 30 weeks of instruction across two terms.

UMS - At least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the MDIV must be residential.

Current ATS standards allow for only one degree to be offered completely online, the academic MA, Saint Paul's MATS. Other degrees, such as the MDIV and MACM, are approved for up to two-thirds to be offered online, unless the school petitions for an exception or experimental status. Only one UM seminary, United Theological Seminary, is approved by ATS to offer an online MDIV. This MDIV does not meet the standards for ordination in the United Methodist Church.

Distance Learning Terminology

Distance Education- any instruction in which the instructor and student are not at the same location

Residential - when instructor and student are on a full-site campus at the same time for more than 50% of the time

Synchronous online - students and instructor are online at the same time through video conferencing

Asynchronous online - students and instructor are not online at the same time

Hybrid - courses or programs that blend online and residential instruction

Initial comparisons of online vs. on-campus student learning at ATS schools, and verified by our own study at Saint Paul, report little difference in the effectiveness of student learning between online and face-to-face learning. However, in many ways distance learning may be too new in theological education to

draw reliable conclusions. The biggest benefits of online education are the scheduling and residential flexibility, access and lower cost it offers students. There are challenges for schools wanting to expand into online education, including the cost of hardware, software, technology support, faculty training and developing good instructional design. Theological schools continue to explore ways to support vocational and spiritual formation through these new delivery modalities. Saint Paul is committed to a theological education that is more than acquisition of knowledge competencies, which requires that we continue to challenge our assumptions about how formation for ministry occurs.

Saint Paul faculty and staff are preparing a new hybrid MDIV program that offers online and residential hybrid courses in a way that maximizes flexibility and accessibility for students while maintaining accreditation and quality education. One model under consideration requires students to be on campus for as few as 4 weeks out of the year and would offer both synchronous and asynchronous classes.

Developing new models of education such as these requires commitment and change across the institution. The Board of Trustees will need to invest the resources required for the seminary to stay up-to-date with technology, facilities, staffing and instructional design if Saint Paul is to move into the future on this particular path.

Resources and Readings

United Methodist Senate Standards

<https://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/education/univsenateorgpol.pdf>

ATS Standards

<https://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/standards-of-accreditation-161130.pdf#pagemode=bookmarks>

ATS Articles

<https://www.ats.edu/uploads/...online/online-learning-part-1.pdf>

<https://www.ats.edu/uploads/...online/online-learning-part-2.pdf>

<https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/...online/formation-online.pdf>

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