



CONVERSATIONS

Divinity Schools Join the Seminar's Conversation

by Gretchen E. Ziegenhals

Over the past seven years, The Lexington Seminar: Theological Teaching for the Church's Ministries, has engaged 35 denominational seminaries in conversation about issues of teaching and learning in theological education. This year marks the first of a two-year shift in focus to university related divinity schools. Participants for this year include Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Harvard Divinity School, The Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, and Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

On March 4, 2006, four representatives from these divinity schools, Gail O'Day, Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs at Candler; Mark Edwards, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Harvard Divinity School; Matthew Zyniewicz, Assistant Chair in the Department of Theology at Notre Dame; and James Hudnut-Beumler, Dean of the Divinity School at Vanderbilt, gathered with Seminar consultants and the four members of the



From left, James Hudnut Beumler, Mark U. Edwards, Jr., Gail O'Day, and Matthew Zyniewicz represented the 2006 Summer Seminar Participants at the deans-meeting in Washington, D. C.

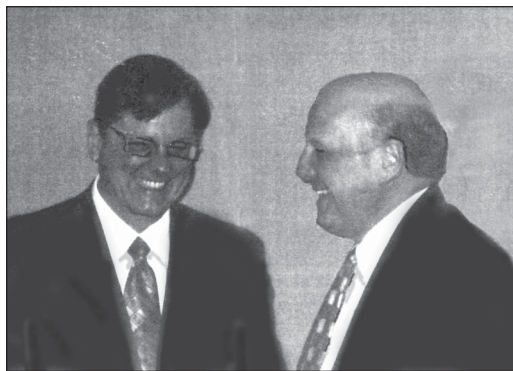
Seminar's Mentor Project on Academic Leadership in Washington D.C. The group spent the day discussing the narratives in teaching and learning that each school had prepared.

The questions emerging from the narratives and from our rich discussions reflected both the many issues that the schools hold in common, as well as issues unique to their specific

contexts. In particular, conversation focused on how a divinity school balances academic excellence and critical inquiry in the university setting with professional, ministerial and spiritual formation. In addition, participants discussed ways of rethinking and holding together the tensions surrounding identity and diversity, particularity and plurality.

Candler School of Theology

The School of Theology opened its doors at Wesley Memorial Church in Atlanta in September of 1914. In February 1915, it was named the Candler School of Theology, in honor of



Matthew Zyniewicz of the Department of Theology at Notre Dame and Garth Rosell of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary enjoy a break in discussions in the deans-meeting in Washington, D.C..

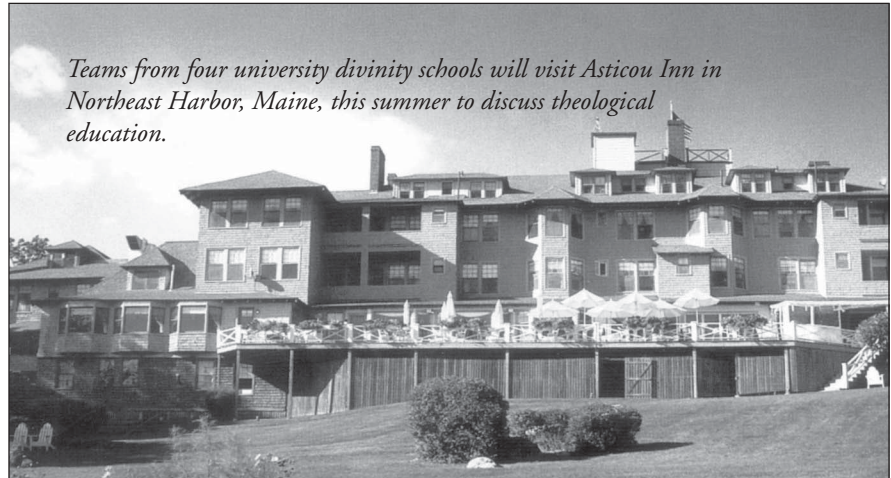
Academic Excellence (continued)

Bishop Warren Candler, the first chancellor of Emory University. Candler School of Theology, along with the law college, moved into the first two academic buildings completed on the Druid Hills campus. In 1957, having outgrown existing buildings, the school moved into Bishops Hall. Candler is now one of 13 United Methodist seminaries. It takes its dual identity as a school of the university and a seminary of the church seriously, as reflected in its six core values. Candler faculty teach in the religious studies program, as well as in the Divinity School.

Candler has a large and diverse student body. Of the 513 students enrolled in the school, 88 are part-time, 417 are MDiv. students, 55 are MTS, 15 ThM, and seven ThD candidates. The average age of the students is 34. Fifty-two percent are male; 67 percent are Caucasian; and 53 percent are United Methodist.

Candler's mission statement reads, "Candler School of Theology is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concern. Its mission is to educate — through scholarship, teaching, and service — faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world."

Candler is interested in exploring the ways in which they can hold together two cultures — a doctoral culture and a seminary culture. As they immerse themselves in curriculum revision, they also are asking, How do we promote a culture of change? Is our curriculum a collection of classes, or a cohesive whole with a narrative?



Teams from four university divinity schools will visit Asticou Inn in Northeast Harbor, Maine, this summer to discuss theological education.

Harvard Divinity School

Harvard College was established in 1636 by a vote of the Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony. It was named for its first benefactor, John Harvard of Charlestown, a young minister who upon his death in 1638, left his library and half his estate to the new school. Because of its roots, theology remained vital to the school as it developed. Harvard Divinity School was established in 1816 and was the first non-sectarian theological school in the country.

Harvard Divinity School currently enrolls approximately 500 students: 150 M.Div., 220 MTS, and 120 doctoral. The MDiv. students represent over 30 Christian denominations, including a large group of Unitarian Universalists, and small but growing numbers of Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. Of the 42 faculty, five are new this year.

The Divinity School educates its students "for service as leaders in religious life and thought — as ministers and teachers, and in other professions enriched by theological study." The academic setting is characterized by a "commitment to serious and impartial investigation of truth." The School recently launched a major curriculum revision of the M.Div. and MTS programs, a revision that had not been done in 25 years. One goal of the

curriculum revision is to move ministry studies more into the center of the intellectual life of the school. In addition, the curriculum is designed to "address the challenges that confront religious communities when commitment is considered in a global context." The Divinity School hopes to educate ministers who know how to learn in diverse contexts, who see intellectual work as spiritually formative, and who will speak in a public voice.

These commitments have raised the following questions: What does it mean to keep ministry studies at the heart of the intellectual community? How do we make an invitation to colleagues not experienced in ministry? How do we give students enough freedom? How do we do theological education with a sense of integrity and cohesion, given a context of diversity?

The Department of Theology, University of Notre Dame

The University of Notre Dame was founded in late November 1842 by Rev. Edward Sorin, a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Its establishing coincided with the great opening of the Midwest by railroads and canals, and with the great antebellum immigration of Catholics from Europe. In addition, Father Sorin had a

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Academic Excellence (continued)

vision of a great American Catholic university in the tradition of the great Medieval universities. Despite a major fire in 1879, which destroyed the Main Building, the university rebuilt and continued its growth.

The Department of Theology is located within the College of Arts and Letters, the largest and oldest college at the University. It is one among 20 other departments within the College of Arts and Letters. The Department attracts more than 200 undergraduate majors each year, and houses five graduate degree programs. It offers the only two professional, graduate-degree programs in the College. The students in all four masters' programs — MTS, MA, MDiv., and MSM — take many of the same courses. The Department of Theology is larger than other departments with 58 full-time faculty, but no full-time administrators. The Department educates approximately 250 undergraduate theology majors each year, and 45 MDiv., 45 MTS, 75 MA, and PhD. students.

The Department sees itself as providing an intellectual setting for faith, and as maintaining a balance between identity, excellence, and diversity. As such, it is dedicated to "critical reflection on the historic faith of Catholic Christianity in service to its students, the Church, the academic world, and the general public." It also invites its students to "examine the richness of the Catholic tradition as a whole and experience how its diverse voices still yield a continuum of thought."

The Department is interested in exploring the questions: How do we help students develop a faith stance, while maintaining academic rigor? What role does the Department of

Theology play in helping to promote a Catholic identity? How do we create a distinctive academic culture that arises out of a faith commitment?

Vanderbilt Divinity School

The Divinity School at Vanderbilt was established in 1875, following the 1873 founding of the University. It was begun as the Biblical Department, one of the original four departments of the University. From its opening until May 1914, it was under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. From that time forward, it has remained an ecumenical theological school, under the direction of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. In 1915, the Biblical Department became the Divinity School, retaining a separate dean and faculty. In 1966, the Graduate School of Theology at Oberlin College moved to Vanderbilt, enriching the school's



Plenary sessions during the Summer Seminar provide opportunities for conversation.

resources, faculty, and opportunities for service.

Now celebrating its 130th year, the faculty and student body represent more than 35 religious traditions, including Judaism and Catholicism, among many others. Twenty percent of the student body is African-American. Each year approximately 210 students study in either the M.Div. or the MTS programs. Approximately 120 students are pursuing a PhD. in the Graduate Department of Religion. Vanderbilt is

marked by its critical academic inquiry, its respect for religious traditions, its commitments to ecumenicity, and the pursuit of justice for all people and for the created order. Diversity is also interwoven into the public "Commitments" of the school. Vanderbilt's key statement of purpose reads, "The Divinity School is committed to the faith that brought the church into being, and it believes that one comes more authentically to grasp that faith by a critical and open examinations of the Hebraic and Christian traditions." The school commits its common life to overcoming racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism, and environmental degradation.

In the midst of this diversity, the Divinity School is searching for ways to encourage spiritual formation among its students. Whose work is it to lead ministry students in examining their spiritual lives? What kinds of constraints can we put on students in a place dedicated to academic excellence and religious diversity? What do we owe our students in terms of spiritual formation? What is our school, uniquely positioned, to do in terms of this issue?

These conversations in Washington D.C. will form the basis of the Summer Seminar sessions in Northeast Harbor, Maine, June 15-20. During the Summer Seminar, six-member teams from each of the schools will spend a week in conversation about teaching and learning and the theological context of divinity schools. The week is a time for theological educators to engage in conversation with colleagues from diverse divinity school settings, to discuss insights with colleagues from their own institutions in a setting away from the pressures of institutional life, and to rest and be restored in the rhythms of Acadia National Park.

Seminary Newsbriefs:

2005 Participants

Bethany Theological Seminary

Academic Dean and Professor of Old Testament Steven Breck Reid writes, "The Bethany teaching faculty met at Maria Stein Catholic retreat center in February. The main task was to dream together about the future of the Institute for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults. Russell Haitch led the faculty through these discussions. The faculty also did some scenario planning. The title was 'Bethany Theological Seminary in 2015.' This is a lead-up to the questions the faculty will wrestle with in the 'Heritage and Vision' seminar this May in Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, partially sponsored by the Lexington Seminar."



Eastern Mennonite Seminary

Academic Dean Ervin Stutzman writes, "The Seminary is exploring various dimensions of relating to 'the other' as an issue in teaching and learning. The faculty took the first step in implementing this project at a faculty retreat on January 3-4, 2006. Each member of the faculty was given 30 minutes to tell stories of 'the other' that shaped his or her approach to teaching and learning. We learned that faculty members had diverse experiences of the other, ranging from fear, to curiosity and eagerness to explore relationships. These experiences profoundly shape faculty members' orientation to the teaching task, particularly to diversity in the classroom."



Faculty members are now identifying individual or collaborative projects that will bring them into significant contact and conversation with a group of people who seem 'other' to them. These experiences will provide the background for another faculty retreat to explore the implications of our findings for teaching and learning."

Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest

Associate Dean and Professor of Church History Alan Gregory writes, "Back in December, ETSS began its faculty development project with a splendid visit from Vic Klimoski, during which he helped us give shape to the piles of unaddressed issues pushed under our collective carpet. We also began, at this point, to discuss a faculty 'rule of life' as one goal of the project, a set of practices and commitments that would represent and sustain the collegiality that is our overarching theme. Since January, we have settled on the pattern of meetings for our next stage and secured the services of two facilitators to keep us on track, rap knuckles, and dry tears when necessary. As our first run at searching for a Dean has failed - in point of fact, the failure was itself something of a success - we now have longer to shape our lives into a goodly order."



2006 Summer Seminar Participants

Candler School of Theology at Emory University

Theodore Brelsford, Jr.
Michael Joseph Brown
Theresa Fry Brown
Thomas E. Frank
Gail R. O'Day
Alton B. Pollard, III

University of Notre Dame - Department of Theology

John Cavadini
Michael E. Connors, C.S.C.
Virgilio Elizondo
Janice Poorman
Randall Zachman
Matthew C. Zyniewicz

Harvard Divinity School

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.
Mark U. Edwards, Jr.
David C. Lamberth
Anne E. Monius
Stephanie A. Paulsell
Donald K. Swearer

Vanderbilt University Divinity School

James Hudnut-Beumler
Alice W. Hunt
Herbert Marbury
Vicki B. Matson
Irma "Trudy" Stringer

Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Associate Dean Diane Hymans writes, "The attention of our faculty is focused on matters of calendar and curriculum. In January, we made the



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decision to move from our current calendar, based on quarters, to a semester calendar with a January interim term. This new system will begin with the 2007-2008 school year. Since January, we have been working on what the curriculum will look like in this new format, which raises all kinds of complicated questions regarding content and sequencing. Revising the curriculum is a challenge for a faculty whose Lexington Seminar project is intended to help us slow down our pace. Our hope is that the new calendar may help with that process. We continue to celebrate three new faculty members who came to us in the fall, and who bring new curriculum emphases in the areas of theology, worship and Christian spirituality, and leadership for ministry.”

Wartburg Theological Seminary

Associate Professor of Church History Elizabeth Leeper writes, “Wartburg Theological Seminary completed its Lexington Seminar Grant Proposal in December 2005. Our proposal, in brief, is 1) to revise our ‘Twelve Pastoral Practices,’ a list of skills and attitudes we would like to instill in our students as part of their pastoral formation; 2) to incorporate the Practices more fully into our curriculum, syllabi, admissions processes and mission support; 3) to revise our Faculty Handbook; and 4) to use both the revised Practices and Faculty Handbook in our upcoming re-accreditation. We will get underway in this process during our faculty retreat in May, 2006.”

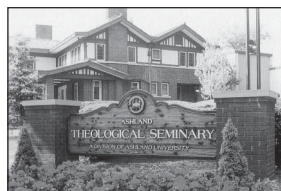


2004 Participants

Ashland Theological Seminary

Academic Dean Dale R. Stoffer writes, “The phase of our Lexington

Seminar project that we are currently involved in is the assessment of students’ critical thinking skills. Prior to our winter quarter, 106 first-year students took a critical thinking on-line assessment developed by Insight Assessment. Ashland’s faculty have also been asked to take the assessment, both to develop a norm for critical thinking in a theological setting, and to give us some feedback on whether this is a test we should continue to use. Our Lexington Seminar team will be meeting in March in order to evaluate the two instruments that we used in assessing students’ writing skills and their critical thinking skills. We will also be discussing how to assess these skills in the future, and laying plans for implementing an expanded assessment process during the 2006-07 academic year. We will be compiling all of this information for the Final Project Consultation.”



Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond

Associate Dean for Continuing Education Jim Peak writes, “At the BTSR faculty retreat in the fall of 2005, Vic Klimoski facilitated a dialogue that enabled the BTSR faculty to consider issues that impact teaching and learning, and life as a faculty member at the seminary. Klimoski explored numerous themes that enabled the faculty to think about the seminary’s culture and about ways to enhance the faculty’s involvement in the community. Out of this dialogue, the faculty determined that it is committed to creating a culture of trust, to becoming better informed about the seminary as a system, to cultivating regular

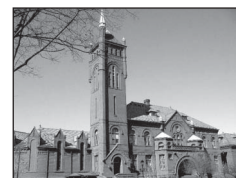


conversations with the president, and to developing a greater understanding of its role in the life of the seminary.

This past fall, the BTSR Board of Trustees initiated a strategic planning process. This strategic planning initiative has provided the faculty with an opportunity to have a voice in exploring the seminary’s identity in terms of its values and mission, to participate in decision-making, and to identify consistent and appropriate ways to become involved in determining the seminary’s future.”

Lancaster Theological Seminary

Associate Professor of New Testament Greg Carey writes, “Our Lexington Seminar work has led to strategic discussions among the faculty and with trustees. Last fall our faculty and trustees joined for a two-day retreat to discuss both the nature of our constituencies and the focus of our potential non-degree programs. The faculty expressed its enthusiasm for lay education both within and beyond our degree programs, including a Certificate of Lay Leadership program requiring one year of residential study and our ongoing Summer Lay Academy. Our constituencies are clamoring for help with training ministers toward alternative (i.e. non-M.Div.) ordination tracks. The faculty does not wish the Seminary to participate in administering such programs, but it will continue to participate in them individually.”



Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

Academic Dean Michael Root writes, “Southern’s Lexington Seminar project continues to make progress. Our

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Newsbriefs (continued)

concern focused on our commitment to full-time, residential study for ministry and our need to reach out more effectively to part-time students.



Last fall, our Board adopted a plan developed by the faculty for a part-time program that will seek to extend some of the virtues of full-time study to part-time students. A coherent sequence of courses will be offered, so that a part-time student can complete the core, three-year academic aspect of the MDiv. in six years. (Information about the program is available at http://www.ltss.edupartime_mddiv.html.) The program will center on a new cohort each fall. The schedule integrates these students into the total student body and will provide opportunities for fellowship and worship. We are now publicizing the program in our constituencies within a

100-mile radius. A faculty retreat is planned for late August as we begin the new program.”

Wesley Theological Seminary

Dean Bruce Birch writes, “After a successful fall faculty retreat with Charles Foster as the facilitator, the faculty has set itself the task of looking at both pedagogy

and course structure to see how we are measuring up in our intent to use our community diversity as a



resource, rather than simply regarding it as a challenge. The Lexington team will meet soon to formulate some questions and guidelines for the faculty, for self-assessment and restructuring of teaching practices. We will then have results brought back to a final faculty retreat in the process, to be held in August 2006.”



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Newsletter of The Lexington Seminar

Spring 2006

Vol. 8, No. 1

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Published by “The Lexington Seminar: Theological Teaching for the Church’s Ministries.” A Project Supported by Lilly Endowment Inc. and Sponsored by Lexington Theological Seminary.

631 South Limestone Street
Lexington, KY 40508
www.lexingtonseminar.org

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