TENDING TALENTS

THE SECOND IN A SERIES OF REPORTS FROM
A STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL FACULTY

BARBARA G. WHEELER AND MARK N. WILHELM / MARCH 1997

About this Issue

The last issue of *Auburn Studies* contained a profile of the current faculties of North American Christian theological schools, based on a data base of faculty characteristics compiled by the Auburn Center and a survey of faculty conducted in 1993. The next issue will provide a report on the faculty of the future, based on a survey of today's graduate students in theology and religion. This issue focuses on an intermediate topic: what theological schools can do to create effective and productive faculties—how, that is, institutions can "develop" their faculties in ways that will deepen, enrich, and extend educational mission.

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About the Authors

Barbara G. Wheeler is President of Auburn Theological Seminary and Director of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education.

Mark N. Wilhelm is Associate Director of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education.

TENDING TALENTS

THE CULTIVATION OF EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL FACULTIES

BY BARBARA G. WHEELER / MARCH 1997

*C*an theological schools do anything to make
their faculty substantially more effective and
productive? Our studies strongly suggest
that the cultivation of faculty is best achieved
through everyday practices and policies
that are deeply enmeshed in a school's culture.

Can faculty members be developed—
trained and treated in ways that will
better equip them to do their jobs?
A significant party of skeptics, many of
the presidents and deans of institutions
of higher learning, says no. The
incorrigibility of faculty is a favorite
topic of administrators talking among
themselves. As the administrators tell
it, most faculty arrive from graduate
school firmly imprinted with the habits
and values, good and bad, of their
doctoral mentors. After some minor
adjustments to the peculiarities of the
hiring institution, these habits and values
become fixed. Attempts by teaching
institutions to make major changes in

faculty attitudes or patterns of activity
are usually unsuccessful.

Some recent research supports this
common view. A report for The National
Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
of the U.S. Department of Education on
"the new academic generation" (higher
education faculty who have taught
for seven years or less) concludes that
although new entrants into teaching are
very different from their senior colleagues
in "background characteristics," their
attitudes and activities are remarkably
similar. The authors put it this way:

"The new entrants...were well socialized by their mentors into the 'old ways....' The two cohorts differ more in who they are than in what they do."[1] The power of socialization in graduate school to overcome other differences seems so strong that the authors wonder whether the demographic novelty of new faculty will make any difference in the character of American higher education.

Against this view stands the faculty development "movement," comprised of faculty development programs on many hundreds of campuses, resourced by a burgeoning literature on the subject, and spearheaded by a group of specialists who call themselves "faculty developers." Faculty can change their ways in positive directions, say the faculty developers, and training programs and centers can help them. By far the largest number of faculty development efforts focuses on teaching. Their goal is expanding the teacher's range of instructional techniques and capacity to choose the most appropriate techniques for various teaching purposes and types of students. Though the relationship between training in teaching and teaching effectiveness is difficult to measure, instructional development programs—especially if they are voluntary—do seem to make many who participate more confident and enthusiastic as teachers.[2] Experiments in encouraging scholarly productivity appear to have similar effects.[3]

As part of its study of theological faculty, the Auburn Center designed two qualitative research projects to address the question that the skeptics about and believers in faculty development regularly debate: *is there anything schools can do to make their faculty substantially more effective and productive?* One project was a three-year, interview-based study of junior faculty; the other entailed case studies of four theological institutions that had reputations as "good places to work." Below we report first on what we learned about faculty in their early years of teaching; in a companion report, we focus on the "development" of faculties as a whole. In both reports, however, we draw on information gathered in the course of both qualitative studies, and at points we also refer to the results of the Auburn Center's survey of theological faculty and its data base of faculty characteristics.

Where do we come out on the contested matter of faculty development with reference to our arena of concern—theological education? We agree and disagree to some extent with both sides in the general debate. Our studies strongly suggest that, as the believers

By 2006 more than fifty percent of faculty teaching in 1991 will have retired.

maintain, the capacities that theological faculty most need *can* be cultivated (a term we prefer, because faculty development is too often a technical undertaking), and further, that there is a substantial cost to educational quality and productivity associated with neglecting the cultivation of faculty. But the skeptics are right, too, that patterns established early are difficult to

change; and effective cultivation of good theological teachers and scholars is by no means as easy as some of the developers contend. In both reports, we expand on our view of these matters and especially our conviction that, valuable as special faculty development programs may be, the most effective forms of faculty cultivation are those that are deeply and permanently enmeshed in the policies and everyday practices of schools.

Junior Faculty: Cultivating New Talent

American higher education will soon be in the hands of a "new academic generation": already, according to the NCES report cited earlier, fully one-third of all college and university faculty are "new entrants"—those who have been teaching full-time less than eight years. Theological education is a little behind this curve: about one-quarter of the faculty of theological schools are "new entrants" by the NCES definition, but the Auburn Center's calculations show that the pace will pick up: by 2006 more than fifty percent of faculty teaching in 1991 will have retired. Within a decade, faculty who are now "junior" and even newer faculty yet to be hired will dominate North American theological schools.

Because of the importance of "junior faculty" for the future, the Auburn Center decided to study them in depth.[4] Three theological schools that had substantial cohorts of junior faculty were selected.[5] One was a non-denominational (chiefly Protestant) divinity school; one a Protestant denominational seminary; one a Roman Catholic seminary. Junior faculty in these institutions were

interviewed in three successive years. In total there were thirty-one full-time junior faculty, fifteen men and sixteen women, employed in the three schools during the period of the study (not all were present in all years for interview). To broaden the scope of the study and to protect the anonymity of the three institutions and their faculty, fourteen other junior faculty (seven men and seven women) in five other institutions were interviewed once, bringing the total of persons interviewed to forty-five. Six of the forty-five, or about thirteen percent, were African-American or Hispanic.[6] The average age of the faculty in the Protestant schools was forty-three, of those in the Roman Catholic institutions, forty-seven.[7]

In addition to these forty-five interviewed specifically for this study, we referred to interviews of junior faculty that we conducted for the related study of "good places to work," on which we

Junior Faculty Interviewees by Teaching Field

Field	Number
Bible	10
Canon Law	1
Education	2
Ethics	3
Field Education	2
History	4
Missiology	2
Practical Studies	11
Theology	10

report below (p.24), which added fifteen to the number of individual narratives we could use to test the generalizations we were tempted to make.

Here is our report of what we found. It is organized as follows: (1) We begin with a sketch of the backgrounds and experiences of those we interviewed up to the time they got their present jobs. (2) We then analyze their current work assignments and other activities, and we summarize their accounts of what helps and hinders their work. We report what has happened to them during the period of our study and speculate about what accounts for the success of some and the difficulties of others. (3) Last we make some recommendations about what schools can do to cultivate faculty.

Background: Family, Religion, Work Experience, Pre-Doctoral Education

The junior faculty we interviewed were born into medium-sized working- and middle-class families (interestingly, Catholics and Protestants had the same average number of siblings—3.5). Their parents were fairly well-educated,[8] but regardless of parents' educational level, most reported that education was highly valued in their families of origin, and going to college (though not necessarily graduate school) was a given. About ten percent were the children of teachers; another ten percent had parents or grandparents who were clergy. Almost all said that they grew up in "religious" households. More than a third of the Protestants have changed denomination during their lifetime, including one who was raised as a Roman Catholic;

one of the Catholics was a convert from Episcopalianism.

The educational backgrounds of faculty teaching in Catholic and Protestant institutions were strikingly different. Two-thirds of the faculty teaching in Catholic schools, but less than a quarter of the Protestants, attended church-related grade or high schools (most of the Protestants went to public school). Similarly, almost all the Catholics (eighty-six percent) attended Catholic colleges, universities, or seminaries with college programs; by contrast, nearly two-thirds of the Protestants attended non-denominational private colleges or public universities.

The pattern of college majors also differed by religious tradition: about half of each group majored in English or history, but substantial numbers of Protestants majored in philosophy or religion (about half report such majors alone or in combination with other majors), whereas none of the Catholic did; and a quarter of the Catholics majored in education or social science, whereas none of the faculty teaching in Protestant schools did.

Almost all the faculty we interviewed had had significant work experience before the present job. The Catholics were far more likely than Protestants to have interrupted their studies with periods of full-time employment. Those who did so were almost all members of religious orders and worked as assigned by their superiors. (The only Catholics

who did not interrupt their studies at some point to work full-time were two laypersons.) Half the Catholics and a quarter of the Protestants worked full-time between college and graduate school. For most this work was teaching, non-ordained ministry, or administration of a church agency. Two-thirds of the Catholics and one-third of the Protestants worked after finishing the first theological degree and before beginning doctoral studies. But Protestants were much more likely to work (part-time) during seminary or the master's program, almost always in church-related assignments.

About twice as many of our respondents held an M.Div. or other professional theological degree as held *only* a master's degree in theology, religion or religious education. About half the faculty of the divinity schools and Roman Catholic institutions in which we interviewed had professional theological degrees; almost all the Protestant denominational seminary faculty did. The patterns of seminary choice were different for Catholics and Protestants. Catholics considered attending only the institution they attended, reflecting the "assignment" of those who plan to be priests to particular seminaries by their bishops or superiors. Protestants shopped around, and more than two-thirds of them ended up *not* attending seminaries of their own denomination (a number went to non-denominational institutions), usually because they considered the alternative academically superior.

At the time of our interviews, eleven of the fourteen Catholic faculty were priests or religious; most belonged to religious orders; about two-thirds of the Protestant faculty were ordained clergy. For Catholics especially, the sense of religious vocation came early: half of them (and a quarter of the Protestants) felt "called" from childhood; half the Catholics entered their orders or began study for the priesthood before the end of college. Catholic priests and Protestant ministers expressed different views of the relationship between their teaching and their call to ordained service. For the Catholic priests (and, for that matter, most of the non-ordained religious), religious "profession" was a way of life, chosen quite independently of the decision to teach. For many of ordained Protestants, both ministry and teaching were "professions" in the sense of occupations to which one is deeply committed. For them, decisions about ordination and teaching were related, though not all saw the relationship the same way. Some chose teaching in preference to ordained ministry, convinced that one cannot do both well; others chose to be ordained specifically because they thought it would fit or qualify them better for seminary teaching.

Background: Doctoral Study

All but four of the forty-five persons we interviewed held or had nearly completed a doctoral degree in a field related to theology. Although a great variety of circumstances led people to doctoral study, a few general patterns were found. Again, one pattern held for those who belong to Roman Catholic religious orders and another for all others. The Roman Catholic religious usually decided to pursue the doctorate after a period

of teaching, with either further teaching or some other assignment for which the doctorate is preparation as their goal. Protestants and lay Catholics tended to make earlier decisions and were more likely to be motivated by intellectual interests alone. This was especially true for Protestants, a majority of whom said that they decided to get a doctorate either because they had always been interested in their subject matter or had "fallen in love with it" when they first studied it. In about half of all cases, one or more college or seminary professors had some influence in the decision to get a doctorate, and a handful of Catholic religious were asked by their orders to get a doctorate. In general, other persons—teachers, family, friends, and fellow religious or clergy—were not as important a factor in the decision as internal motives.

What was doctoral study like? In lapsed time, it took those we interviewed from three to twelve years to finish their work.[9] Almost half completed the degree on a full-time basis, with no interruptions. The rest either worked part-time on the latter part of the degree, usually while teaching, or interrupted their work entirely for some period, or both. A large majority of Protestants (eighty percent) and almost two-thirds of Catholics gained some teaching experience, whether in a job or an assistantship, during doctoral study. Most remember doctoral study as a period of intense intellectual excitement— an opportunity to immerse themselves in questions and materials in which

they had long been interested—but a surprisingly high number also associate it with personal unhappiness and difficulty. The reasons are various: minority status as a woman, African-American, Hispanic, foreign national, or older student; health problems; family difficulties; or specific features of the doctoral programs, such as teaching style or lack of a "personal faith" component. Help with these problems, and support in general during doctoral study, almost always came from fellow students.

Current Position: Getting a Job and Starting Work

Connections count. A third of the Protestants found out about the job they eventually got through published announcements. Almost all the rest— virtually all the Catholics and two-thirds of the Protestants—say that either they were contacted and asked to apply for the position or that they were "in the right place at the right time," meaning that they were hired by the institution in which they were studying or one in which they were teaching on an occasional basis. Further, once they were candidates for the job, most attribute their hiring to being known in some way: they had friends on the faculty, were linked to the school by denomination or religious community, or had attended it or taught there previously.

Almost all the faculty teaching in Catholic institutions said that they were intent on teaching in a graduate ministry program. By contrast, most of the Protestants would have been open to teaching in other kinds of institutions. Not many in either group, however, applied for other positions (thirty-seven

percent of Protestants, twenty-one percent of Catholics). Two-thirds of those who did were offered at least one other position besides the one they took. An assortment of reasons was given for why the present job was attractive: the type of institution or program was mentioned most often, especially, as noted, by Catholics; geography was important for one small group; the reputation of the school for collegiality for another. Other factors, such as spouse's employment and library, were noted by only a few.

Personal factors, though remembered by those we interviewed as unimportant in the decision to take a job, became much more prominent during the initial period of work. More than two-thirds of the Protestants found adjustment difficult for personal reasons: spouse's employment, arrangements for children, family finances, concerns about "quality of life" in the area around the school and about fitting into the local culture. The faculty in Catholic schools, most of

Connections count. Most faculty in our study attributed their hiring to being known in some way.

them unmarried, did not have to deal with the strains of a family adjusting to a new site, though some did report that adjustments to new living situations were not easy.

Provisions for orientation of new faculty varied greatly from school to school. One of the institutions in which we interviewed assigns senior faculty members the responsibility to act as "mentor" to a junior colleague, though junior faculty in that institution mentioned that many faculty colleagues—not just the assigned one—were as helpful in the initial period. Another has a half-day orientation session for new faculty with the dean. In the other institutions, there is "zero" formal assistance, leaving some first-year faculty mystified about even such basic matters as registration procedures. The help with procedures that new faculty seem to need and not get in these institutions in their first weeks of work (what one called "orientation to the nitty gritty") is the sort that faculty secretaries often provided in the past. In a day of personal computers, there seem to be fewer faculty secretaries, but it would not be too difficult to provide information about the mechanics of the faculty assignment from some other source.

More subtle but just as important is what one respondent called "a generally welcoming attitude." Some institutions display this and others do not. A faculty member who had worked in two institutions that were similar in size and structural type compared them: "[The first institution] makes [junior faculty] feel like a part of the faculty. [At the second], there's no sense that the whole faculty is really glad you're on board."

Several of those we interviewed noted that there is probably no avoiding some of the pressures and discomforts of the first months as a faculty member. There is an "isolation," we were told, built into the process of preparing a full load of courses for the first time. Some new faculty are simultaneously setting up their first permanent household and

settling a family into new surroundings. Even the most attentive institutions cannot make this period easy or unremittingly pleasant, though by providing timely information and a general welcome they can make it less difficult.

Current Position: Teaching

The most distinctive feature of the junior theological faculty we interviewed was their competence in and comfort with their assignments as teachers. The literature on new faculty reports a typical crisis for new college and university teachers: supposing that the key to effective teaching is impeccably-prepared lectures, they pour all their time and energies into course preparation. Often their overly complete lectures fail to "connect" with students; in response, they spend even more time and attention on writing lectures.[10] We found very little evidence that this syndrome operates among new theological faculty.[11] Most seem to know from prior experience that teaching is not a matter of announcing all one knows about a topic; they seem also to have gained from that experience—usually extensive teaching for the Catholics and a combination of teaching and ministry for the Protestants—considerable confidence that they will be able to teach well. One remembered the first year of teaching:

My reviews were good. I was always confident as a teacher. I never felt uncomfortable. Nor did I feel like a novice. I must admit that there's a certain grandness for me in public spaces, so I love lecturing [though] I'm probably a better teacher in a seminar.

The basic confidence common to most of those we interviewed did not make the initial months of teaching painless.

Many described the period as the hardest work they ever did: "Utterly exhausting and all-consuming," said one. "Teaching was not new to me," said another, "but it took me a while to find my stride….The first semester was difficult because I didn't have anything prepared that I could pull on….I really scrambled." Another reported that preparing the initial battery of lectures left little time for research and "barely time to eat and sleep." The difference between these new faculty and those whose experiences are reported in other studies was that the results of first-year efforts were generally positive, leading most to spend less time in subsequent years on preparation. Robert Boice, who conducted the major study of new college faculty, found a small group who

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figured out early that less teaching preparation is often more effective than extensive preparation. He called this group "quick starters."[12] Virtually all the faculty we interviewed were quick starters.

They also reported that their teaching improved over time. Usually this improvement took the form of mastery of whatever type of teaching they had been less comfortable with initially:

I used to think that I preferred small seminar settings; that was more my style. But now I've begun to like the lecture format....I have something to say and I can say it in an amusing way—an engaging way.

For many, growth as a teacher meant finding ways to deal with the increasingly great variety of backgrounds and abilities of theological students. All reported having some highly-gifted students, but almost all also noted that the range of ages, cultural and educational backgrounds, life experiences, theological and political views, and sometimes first languages presented a formidable challenge for teaching— one that some feel that they have not adequately met, even though in general this group reports that student evaluations of their work are very positive. Especially difficult problems, we heard, were the widespread lack of writing skills, even among otherwise good students, and the resistance of some students to learning anything for which they could not see an immediate application in the job they were preparing to do.

In the schools in this study we observed several different systems for determining what courses faculty members will teach. Several institutions give their faculty wide latitude in choosing "what they're going to teach, how they want to teach it, when they want to teach it." At the other end of the spectrum are schools with fixed curricula that assign faculty to particular courses, sometimes in teams. In the middle is a structure with some regularly required courses and openness to negotiation about who will teach them, when, and how.

The more extreme systems—the free one where "curricular decisions [are made] through making personnel decisions," and the heavily prescribed curriculum in which junior faculty are often assigned to co-teach with a senior colleague—created quite a lot of pressure for new faculty. The "free" system does not, in fact, work as well for them as for their senior counterparts. Even in such *laissez-faire* curricula, some subjects must be covered. These usually fall to junior faculty after senior faculty have made their free choices. The requirement

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of team-teaching generated a great deal of anxiety. The junior faculty member of the pair usually felt exposed to the students as the weaker partner and was nervous about having to perform in front of a senior colleague who would eventually make judgments about promotion and tenure. The intermediate system seemed to work best: a general structure into which the junior faculty member's courses have to fit, with some room for negotiation.

Despite the range of difficulties and unmet challenges reported here, however, the picture of the teaching of these junior theological faculty is a bright one. They relish teaching and approach it for the most part with both relaxed confidence and conscientious attention to the dimensions they have not mastered.

Current Position: Research and writing

In their responses to our questions about research, writing, and publication, our respondents sorted themselves into two distinct groups (a contrast to the uniformity of responses to the questions about teaching): those who teach in university-related institutions and those based in free-standing denominational seminaries.

Some themes were common to the two groups. Virtually all our respondents, for instance, reported that they do most of their research and writing during the periods between the terms in which they teach: winter and summer breaks and sabbatical leaves. (In this one respect, they vary from Boice's profile of the "self-starter" new faculty members, who, Boice found, do research and writing regularly, including during term time. Some theological faculty said that they read, did research, or wrote reviews and shorter pieces while also teaching but conducted "serious" research and writing during blocks of time when they were not teaching.) One institution in which we interviewed had raised funds to pay their junior faculty "stipends" to do research during the summer rather than accept special teaching assignments; another lightened the load of committee assignments for new faculty members. Not surprisingly, these arrangements were deeply appreciated. At the other end of the spectrum, one institution ran a summer school in which it expected junior faculty to teach on a rotating basis. Though grateful for the additional pay, some resented what

they felt was subtle pressure to participate (for the sake of constituency relations) rather than do research.

Almost all of those we interviewed view themselves as writing at least some of the time for a broader audience than other academics, most often the church, though the amount of focus on the larger audience varies a great deal. And uniformly they report that their scholarly writing gets fairly little attention from their fellow faculty members or the "guild" beyond their own institution (reviews are slow to appear, and early scholarly books do not often win awards or become famous), while their "popular" books and articles intended for a church audience get a warm and enthusiastic response.

These similarities aside, the two groups approach research and publication very differently. University-based junior faculty usually have a research plan that grows out of their own strong intellectual interests. Usually this plan is not dictated by "guild" concerns in their

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specialty area (only one person we interviewed believed that guild priorities marked the route to tenure), though most seemed aware of where their interests fit in their field and two were fairly sure that their interests were so odd in their field that they would not be considered for tenure. Most of these

plans were medium in range, plotting out more than the next book or article but not extending far into the future. Routinely university-based faculty published the dissertation quite quickly and started work on a second book while they continued to produce scholarly articles. Many were writing for church and other audiences as well, but all had some scholarly project (in a couple of cases this was an unfinished dissertation).

The denominational seminary junior faculty displayed different habits and emphases. Some published their dissertations, but a number did not. Some were writing scholarly books, but a somewhat larger number were working on articles or books for a general audience. The proportion of general to scholarly projects was, as might be expected, much higher for this group than the university-based junior faculty. A few of the denominational seminary faculty (most but not all of these teaching in "practical" fields) had not done any scholarly publishing, did not intend to, and were not required to by their schools. The most significant difference between the two groups, though, was the way they developed their agenda for research and writing. The university faculty, as noted, were internally driven: the intellectual interests (these often included theological interests) they had developed over time guided them from project to project. The denominational seminary faculty were much more likely to do research and write in response to requests. Many of those we interviewed

were working at that time on a project that a publisher or journal editor had suggested to them.

It seems to us that the different approaches to research and writing of these two groups are happily complementary: one is impelled by developments in the intellectual world and shaped by secondary attention to the needs and interests of churches and other "public" groups; the other is impelled by the needs and interests of churches and shaped by a secondary conversation with intellectual and academic sources. The variety helps to insure that all the constituencies of theological education—church, academic world, and the wider public—will get some sympathetic attention and some constructive challenge from the published work of the new generation of theological faculty.

Current Position: Intellectual life

We asked all those we interviewed about their intellectual interests and how they had developed, and we asked those we followed for three years about how their interests had changed and why. As might be expected, the stories were very diverse, but certain patterns are evident, especially in the directions of change. Several said that, as they gained independence and confidence as scholars, they moved away from questions of method and especially from the exclusive use of historical/critical methods. Toward what did they move? Some spoke of a general "broadening" of their interests, an attraction to "the larger issues." Others said that they were increasingly attracted by questions

of theory. Still others characterized themselves as more "theological" and/or interested in lived religion; one said, "I'm more curious about what religious faith is and how it works in the world, because I know less [about that] than I thought I did when I came here." Several said that they were increasingly aware of and interested in the social purposes of their work, "obligations to the broader community...the human connections that one has as a university faculty member."

Many reported a reciprocal relationship between teaching and research: research provided new topics and ideas for teaching; teaching provided new questions for research. The alternation seemed to be an important source of the intellectual "broadening" that many described. So, for some (mostly university-based faculty) was the research itself: it impelled them to read in cognate fields. But reading was not a major source of ideas from outside the specialty field for most. Almost all reported reading journals in their field and some reading for recreation. The latter ranged from escapist fiction and popular news-magazines to poetry and classic novels read for pleasure. Most, however, regretted that they did not have time for reading in other fields that is "serious but not necessary."

Participation in the meetings of scholarly societies was almost universal among the faculty we interviewed— even those whose background was not academic found some guild group to attend. Typically, those we interviewed spoke of these involvements as facts of

life, expressing neither great enthusiasm about societies' activities nor any disapproval of them either. For some, the meetings were most welcome as convenient gathering points for friends from graduate school.

In a large number of cases, graduate school networks of former mentors and fellow students were the single significant intellectual community our respondents reported. Some also found intellectual stimulation and support for their vocation as a scholar in the school in which they were teaching. Almost none, however, had companions with whom they could regularly discuss the specific content of their scholarly work; this, combined with the limited response to written work received by most young scholars from any source, impressed us with how isolated most of the new theological faculty we met were as scholars.

Current Position: Other activities

The junior faculty in this study spend most of their first years on the job focusing on teaching; for a substantial sub-set (though not a majority), research consumes almost as much time and attention. Two other kinds of activity absorb substantial portions of time: church commitments and institutional service.

Protestant and Catholic patterns of church-related activity are very different. The focus of involvement for Protestants is the local congregation. All participate in congregational life, and at least one or two junior faculty in each institution (including the university-related ones) serve a congregation part-time. Many are asked to teach and speak at

congregations other than their own in the region of their school. A few have been tapped for national or international assignments for a denominational or ecumenical body. The Catholics, on the other hand, are regularly invited to make presentations at national and international events for clergy and laity. For those faculty who belong to one, the religious congregation may be the point of entry into what seems to be an international network of Catholic speakers and teachers, but the invitations extend well beyond the person's religious order, and lay faculty are popular presenters too. In this respect the Catholic church lives up to its name: even neophyte faculty members become widely known, literally around the world. With a few exceptions (mostly traceable to family ties or previous work as a church official), most new Protestant theological faculty are unknown in the church outside their immediate region.

The amount of institutional service— advising of students unconnected with course-work, committee work, and special administrative assignments— varied by institution, as did attitudes toward it. One institution did not invite much junior faculty participation in the governance of the school, on the theory that until the faculty member and school have made a long-term commitment to each other, such involvement is not appropriate. Others involved new faculty immediately in decision-making at all levels. Most common is the pattern of some involvement in making

some decisions and exclusion from others—such as tenure decisions— that are reserved for senior faculty.

Faculty attitudes toward their roles in institutional governance were positive when the amount of involvement expected and the rewards for such

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involvement were roughly equal. In the institution where junior faculty involvement in governance was not the norm, there was little resentment: most were grateful to be able to spend their time in the "rewarded" activities of teaching and research. When, however, faculty were expected to spend time in governance and committee work that they felt did not "count" at the point of promotion or review, there was considerable resentment and talk of "exploitation." Repeatedly such faculty pointed out the new faculty members cannot really say no to institutional assignments, no matter how burdensome, and thus are likely to end up with unreasonable amounts of the institutional and administrative work their senior colleagues do not want to do. By contrast, others were happy to take on even time-consuming institutional service if they felt that responsible service would eventually be rewarded. The rewards did not have always to be tangible ones: if junior faculty were convinced that institutional service

was a route to genuine collegiality with senior faculty, they were glad to do it.[13]

The faculty we interviewed managed to fit in other activities: most advised some students either as part of the school's formal advisement system or because students approached them. No one complained about the time that this took, and many said that they were "happy to do it," though women faculty noted that the small number of them and large number of women students sometimes meant that they had to place some limits on the amount of time spent in conversations with students. Almost all faculty also reported that they do their own clerical work, including typing.

What did these new faculty *not* have time for? Most had no involvements in community, cultural, or political organizations and activities. (There were exceptions—literacy tutoring, political organizing, parent-teacher activities in children's schools—but they were few.) Reports of leisure activities were sparse: some recreational reading, as we noted above, and some exercise and socializing, but few made regular provision for time off or having fun. A few described their "disciplines" for insuring that partners and children received regular attention, but others reported pressures and strains on family life.

Most of those we interviewed worked harder during the first years of faculty service than they ever had before in their lives. The stresses were extreme, and the toll on family relationships and personal equilibrium was sometimes high. As we noted earlier, the outcome of the intense initial period for most of the theological faculty we interviewed was more positive than has been reported for faculty in other kinds of institutions. Generally the challenges were met: to prepare a battery of courses and teach them successfully; to conceive an agenda of research, get to work on it, and publish the results; to find a place in the collegial culture of the school; and to keep all these activities in some sort of balance. These positive outcomes did not, however, obliterate the often searing memories of how difficult the first years were. Said one who negotiated the shoals of the first years with considerable success:

I found it very hard to keep up with everything, to be able to prepare new classes that I hadn't taught before, meet with students, advise students, write a little bit, contributing to committees, outside commitments, all the kind of little extras, the social expectations, fundraising dinners—there are a lot of other outside things too. There's a lot, and I found it very hard to keep up with everything and to figure out how to keep it all in balance and to have any kind of a life outside of here.

As was the case for the first months of work, the difficulty of the first years could not be eliminated. Some institutions did more than others, however, to help make this a productive period. We will describe those measures later in this report.

Current Position: Promotion, Tenure, and Continued Employment

The first years in any profession are often the hardest. Faculty in higher education, however, work under an extra set of pressures that most other professionals do not: they must, within a specified interval (usually seven to ten years)

either be promoted to permanent status or move on to another institution or line of work. Because many institutions limit the number of tenured or permanent faculty, some junior faculty will very likely have to leave.[14] In addition to learning the ropes and demonstrating competence—requirements for all new professionals—new faculty have to make it through a triage system that virtually requires that some of them not continue in their present positions.

We mentioned earlier (note 5) that not all the institutions in which we interviewed have formal systems of tenure; some schools that do offer tenure to senior faculty do not have "tenure track" positions for junior faculty. Almost all those we interviewed, however, were either on track to be considered for some kind of permanent status or, if not on track, had been told at the time of hiring that, depending on their performance and on institutional circumstances, they might be considered for tenure. Only a handful had been hired for positions that were initially identified "non-continuing," and some of those persons had in fact later been offered continuing or tenure-track positions.

For most, then, earning tenure or its equivalent was an issue. Of the thirty-one faculty in the three institutions which we studied over a three-year period, about half "definitely" wanted to stay and another third had more reasons to stay than leave. Only a small number counted on leaving, either because they wanted to do something else or because they knew their position would not continue. Most felt that they fit comfortably into the institution and could support its purposes with some

enthusiasm.[15] Some felt a reciprocal loyalty on the part of the institution to them. Interestingly, this sense was not always correlated with chances for tenure or continuing status. For reasons we

Two key factors seem to determine who receives tenure: the value placed on the position occupied by the new faculty member, and the care exercised in the initial choice of the new faculty member.

explore in the next section, some of those who knew they would not get tenure did not feel undervalued by the school, and some who did or would very likely get tenure nevertheless felt ill-used.

Formal standards for tenure were similar in all the schools where we interviewed: all said that they required good teaching, some publication, and a record of other kinds of faculty service to the institution and in the church and academic worlds beyond the school. But, in fact, the standards that actually operated in each school were quite different. As might be expected, the amount and quality of publications carried extra and often decisive weight in university-related institutions. Denominational seminaries were more likely to place about equal weight on the three elements of the common description—research and publication, teaching, and service, especially to the institution and the church—and usually a fourth, not always written down: collegial "fit" with other faculty. In some of these schools getting tenure was a challenge; in others, it was

assumed that anyone hired on tenure track would get tenure unless some glaring deficiency or problem emerged.

Of the thirty-one faculty whose progress we followed, eight had left by the end of our study, and at least six more seemed likely to leave before tenure. We now estimate that, because of financial exigencies in one institution, about two-thirds of those we interviewed in the three schools will not be tenured. We cannot say whether these levels of attrition before tenure—one-half to two-thirds of new faculty failing to earn senior status in the school that first hired them—are typical. We did, however, identify what seemed to be two key factors in the determination of who went and who stayed:

1. how much the faculty valued the *position* that the new faculty member occupied; and
2. how much care was exercised in the initial choice of the *person*.

"Valued" positions, as we came to use the term in analyzing our findings, were those whose subject matter was viewed by the faculty as both intellectually respectable and essential for the integrity of educational programs of the school. Many slots in both "academic" and "practical" areas fell into this category, but some did not. For instance, positions created solely in response to political pressures or primarily to please or mollify the school's wider constituency were usually not valued. Neither were those that were rigged to include administrative responsibilities that other

administrators did not have the time or expertise to carry out.

Most often, the institutions we observed seemed to have exercised great care in finding people to occupy their "valued" positions. We labeled persons so selected "sponsored." Once they had been carefully screened against the profile of characteristics that long-time faculty members really held in high esteem, investment in their success was very high. We recorded instances when circumstances required that a valued position be filled quickly or temporarily with a non-sponsored person, for instance, when the incumbent in the valued position had taken another job on short notice. More rarely, a person who was an excellent fit for the institution had been found, usually serendipitously, for a position that no one cared much about. It was, in fact, one such person who provided one of the most succinct accounts of what "sponsorship" entails:

There were a number of individuals who preceded me in this position. My impression is that, as junior faculty, they were unprotected. I suspect this was a contributing factor in their decision to leave the institution. Admittedly, I have done good work, but those who preceded me also did good work. As I reflect upon my successful incorporation into the faculty, I believe I was protected somehow by a few significant members of the senior faculty. Protection may be too strong a word, but there was some higher power working within the institution that did not leave me vulnerable to many of the experiences that negatively affected other junior faculty.

This kind of protection, as we observed it, was partly political: "sponsored" persons were likely to have advocates when decisions were made about their future. Much of the benefit, however, derived from direct assistance. Persons

carefully chosen usually received a lot of help along the way: they were given introductions and access to the inner faculty circle and taught the cultural norms and taboos of the school. "So from the very beginning," one sponsored faculty member told us, "I felt that people made an effort to include me and to invite me into...collaborative effort." Sponsorship was such a powerful force that it sometimes, as in the case of the faculty member quoted, overcame the disadvantages of a non-valued position. In this case, the speaker seemed likely to remain in a quasi-administrative position that previously had many occupants.

Usually, however, "sponsored" persons occupied "valued" positions, and vice versa: almost all the valued positions were held by sponsored persons. The conjunction was critical. Being the sponsored occupant of a valued position, more than any other factors except availability of funds, determined the new faculty member's future relationship to the school. The statistics for the thirty-one new faculty we studied closely show a definite pattern: of the fifteen we identified as sponsored persons in valued positions, three-quarters had already been or seem likely to be offered the chance to continue in their present institutions. Of those who did not have both features—a valued position and sponsorship—only about a third will probably be able to stay. If it were not for the special financial circumstances in one of the three schools, the correlations would have been even stronger. In short: *decisions made before new faculty members arrived about the position and the person to fill it were the most important determinants of "success" as a junior faculty member.*

Important as they were, such decisions did not seal the fate of every single person we interviewed. In a small number of cases, valued positions were created after hiring: in the case we illustrated above, the faculty member for whom this was done was sponsored from the beginning. In at least two others, sponsorship was "earned" during the first year by the new faculty members' determined effort to forge relationships with senior colleagues and to demonstrate a tight fit between the neophytes' competence and interests, on the one hand, and the educational mission of the school on the other. In one or two other cases, new faculty who occupied valued positions and were sponsored lost their sponsorship (and we think are unlikely to be offered permanent posts) through their own actions. For a variety of reasons (disorganization and personal problems), they simply did not perform well.

Recommendations: The Cultivation of Junior Faculty

Though the best predictor of junior faculty *longevity* in the institution was the care with which decisions are made before and in the course of hiring, there are, we found, steps a school can take after hiring to increase the *productivity* of new faculty.

We have already referred to one of these measures: *the school should provide explicit information about academic procedures.* A few institutions in which

we interviewed did provide some kind of formal orientation, but most tended to assume that new faculty, having spent the previous decade or longer in institutions of higher education, were likely to know or be able easily to figure out what is expected of faculty members. Usually they did not: even if they had attended the institution in which they ended up teaching, they knew little or nothing about the faculty assignment. They wasted time and emotional energy discovering details of the school's operation that someone could have told them, such as how to set teaching schedules, how to obtain supplies, and whether they should attend extra curricular activities. It does not take a great deal of effort on the school's side to "help you understand the intricacies," as one new faculty member put it. This kind of information can be conveyed in writing or in orientation sessions. The best system would probably be a combination of both, with the orientation sessions spread across the new faculty member's first semester so that questions not anticipated in the written material or initial presentations can be answered. Some of the stressfulness of the first year of teaching is, as we have said, probably inevitable, but a small investment of time and attention by the school in a program of faculty orientation can eliminate quite a lot of unnecessary confusion and anxiety.

A second set of measures for helping new faculty to be productive covers a broader territory of institutional practices. These measures can be grouped under the rubric of *fairness*. Some of the schools in which we interviewed already incorporated some or most of them. Others would have to make substantial changes in patterns of institutional life to put them in place.

The most important element of fairness is a close match between the list of tasks that junior faculty are asked to perform and the list of activities for which they are rewarded. Some junior faculty in our study did complain of overload in general, but much more common was the complaint reported earlier: that they were asked to do things for which they would not get credit when decisions were made about their future. Often these were tasks such as administration, committee service, and publicly representing the school that took substantial time away from research—the activity they thought most likely to be rewarded with promotion and tenure. Institutions, said one junior faculty member, have "a sort of irresistible urge to exploit new talent." Junior faculty did not, as we reported earlier, object to any particular activity in their assignment in itself. But if the activity earned no credit, and especially if they were asked to do the tedious work of administration and then were ignored when important policy decisions were made, many were deeply resentful. Even more serious, many felt less well prepared for continued faculty service than they might have been because their time had been demanded for so many relatively minor tasks. As we noted before, junior faculty excluded from institutional decision-making rarely objected to this if they could use their time not needed for teaching for research and other activities that they

thought would prepare and qualify them for their future work.

Fairness in faculty assignments can be conveyed in positive arrangements as well as in the absence of unfair demands. In the section on research above we listed the special provisions some institutions made to support research, the segment of the faculty assignment that new faculty had the most difficulty making progress on and the one that caused the most anxiety in the face of promotion and tenure decisions. Such measures were appreciated as fair as much as unrewarded overload was resented as "exploitation." But just as important as special arrangements for many faculty members was

A common story of unfair treatment was of being misinformed, usually about prospects of future employment...Unfair treatment takes an enormous toll on faculty morale and productivity.

what one termed the institution's "generic" support of research in the structuring of faculty assignments, and the general interest of colleagues, "if not material interest in this particular subject, at least a general interest in people being engaged [in] publishing." Because young scholars are quite isolated in their work (a big change from their situation as graduate students in which their work was carefully scrutinized), an atmosphere of general support for

research in the home institution was a critical motivator.

A second important element of fairness was the treatment of new faculty as persons. Two kinds of stories of harsh or unfair treatment were told repeatedly. A number of our respondents reported that their processes of contract review had been extremely difficult: "disabling," said one; "I was devastated," said another; "it was faculty devourment, not development," said a third. In all these cases the final decision had been positive: the result was promotion or extension of contract. In the course of the review, however, colleagues, sometimes other junior faculty but more often senior professors, had taken the opportunity to make criticisms of the faculty member under consideration. The unfair feature of these criticisms, in the view of the criticized and others, was their personal nature. "Anything can happen," said one junior faculty member reporting on the review of another, "according to people's whims or grudges or insecurities....Even though we now have very exacting criteria about publication and effective teaching, some of that other culture is still there: 'Do we really like this person enough?' And that is not a professional review in my opinion." Personally damaging reviews occurred only in institutions that placed a high value on collegial relationships among faculty; the reviews in schools where faculty functioned as isolated teachers were usually reported to be coolly professional. This apparently ironic effect is explainable: schools that foster faculty "closeness" also provide opportunities for animosities to develop; and schools that value closeness may go to extremes to be sure that those invited

to continue "fit" into the faculty community. But the faculty members we interviewed who had undergone or observed bruising reviews protested them vehemently: "We just cannot keep terrorizing people....I'm not afraid of....constructive feedback, but people should not be destroyed or diminished."

The other common story of unfair treatment was of being misinformed, usually about prospects of future employment. The majority of those hired in temporary or non-tenure track positions were assured by someone at the time of their hiring that something could probably be worked out to enable them to continue beyond the stated term. In most of these cases, no continuing position was found. Usually the promisor was not deliberately misleading the junior faculty member: the assurance at the time of hiring was a sign of the promisor's determination to champion the junior faculty member's cause. Less laudable, though, was the tendency of sponsors, as prospects dimmed for the junior colleague continuing, to withdraw political and often personal support, leaving the junior faculty member feeling profoundly deceived and betrayed.

Unfair treatment takes an enormous toll on faculty morale and productivity. Usually the first years of teaching are a period of rapid and formative professional growth. After experiences of harsh reviews or "desertion" by senior faculty members who had promised support, however, many junior faculty lost confidence and their sense of direction. Research projects slowed or stopped. Sometimes teaching performance suffered as well. Often it took a year or

much longer for those who had had these grueling experiences to recover their equilibrium. Many doubted that they would ever regain their previous level of trust in faculty colleagues and processes.

Harsh and unfair treatment of new faculty is an unnecessary waste of a valuable resource. What can schools do to guard against it? The worst offenses of inflated and unkept promises and stinging personal criticism are committed by individuals acting on their own. Institutional policies can act as a brake, however. Schools can, for instance, disclose to new faculty the school's past employment patterns: percentages of junior faculty granted tenure and

The most significant barrier to learning the culture in several institutions was a deep division between senior and junior faculty.

renewed in non-tenured positions. That will not prevent senior faculty from assuring their juniors that exceptions to the pattern will be made in their case, but it may alert junior faculty to the possibility that some promises made to them are unrealistic. Institutions can also insist that review and evaluation processes focus only on professional performance. This will not prevent interpersonal tensions from affecting promotion decisions, but it will discourage damaging personal attacks in public settings.

The most important steps that a school can take to cultivate its new

faculty are those that promote their integration into the institution's culture. Valuable information about the school's norms and practices was conveyed, as we noted before, by those senior faculty who "sponsored" particular junior faculty; but even more important for most new faculty, sponsored or not, was a "generally welcoming attitude" on the part of most or all faculty and a willingness on the part of long-time faculty to initiate them into the ways of the institution. Where there was "generosity and a collaborative spirit" on the part of senior faculty and administrative colleagues, junior faculty members were highly satisfied with their jobs (sometimes even with temporary jobs) and reported that they were productive despite the many strains and stresses of their new roles. Where these conditions were absent, junior faculty often longed for them:

I'd like to talk to a dean about how one breaks into publishing or about how one balances all this stuff, and that doesn't happen. Or, interest in actually what I'm working on. I don't live for that approval or that interest, but it would be a way for the institution to make good on some of its expectations and a way of offering some sort of support.

The most significant barrier to learning the culture in several institutions was a deep division between senior and junior faculty. Junior faculty did not object to limitations on their participation in the formal governance structures of the school (provided these were offset by extra time for research), but when the division conveyed a lack of respect for their work and their opinions on intellectual and academic matters ("nobody cares what you think," as one put it), they found the situation difficult to live

with. "I've never been anywhere where the gulf between junior and senior faculty was as wide [as here], and as perceived," said one junior faculty member who had had experience teaching elsewhere. "Some of my younger colleagues were driven to near distraction by this." The few faculty we talked to who were very unhappy in their current positions gave as their reasons distant or tense senior/junior relationships or other factors that kept them from becoming part of the faculty community, such as a hostile and secretive administration or brutal procedures for evaluating junior faculty, rather than issues of salary, balance of research and teaching, or institutional reputation.

Do programs of faculty development help to integrate new faculty into a school's culture and to create other conditions that enhance their contributions to the educational life of the school? Two of the institutions in which we interviewed had highly organized programs. One matched junior faculty to senior mentors. The other had an elaborate program that included discussions on topics like teaching as well as opportunities for junior faculty to discuss their research. Both programs were popular with the participants and were given credit for making the challenging first years of faculty service easier and more pleasant. The chance to present and discuss research, a rare break in the research isolation of the early years of faculty service, was especially welcome.

From these and other examples we observed in our case studies for a related

project, however, it became clear that *programs by themselves cannot "develop" new faculty into confident, contributing members of an educational community.* Programs that were an outgrowth of that "generally welcoming attitude" that junior faculty said was for them the most important element of their work situation enhanced the positive effects of being in such an environment. By contrast, in difficult situations, where

In difficult situations, where junior faculty are not otherwise taken seriously or treated well, faculty development programs are palliatives at best.

junior faculty are not otherwise taken seriously or treated well, faculty development programs are palliatives at best.

How then should theological schools cultivate the valuable resource they have in junior faculty? As we have argued throughout this report, the provisions that best enable beginning faculty to "develop" as contributors to the school, the church, and the academic profession are not special programs, though such programs can help, but regular policies and practices woven into the culture of the institution. New faculty, including those needed for positions that may not continue, should be chosen with the greatest of care for their fit with the purpose and mission of the school. In the terms of this report, there should be no "non-sponsored" faculty, and those who occupy "non-valued" positions that may not have a future should be given special opportunities to prepare them-

selves for work elsewhere. Once hired, junior faculty should be provided with the basic information they need to start work, given assignments that are fairly matched to the criteria on which their performance will be evaluated, shielded as much as possible from irresponsible actions by senior faculty (both inflated promises and personal attacks), and "generally welcomed," in both explicit and subtle ways, into the full life of the faculty community.

The implementation of measures that promote the cultivation of new faculty will not always be easy. An orientation program for new faculty is not hard to organize. The self-awareness and self-discipline required to correct the overuse of and abuse of junior faculty is more difficult. Those uncollegial institutions in which *all* faculty are isolated from each other face a formidable challenge if they want to cultivate their junior faculty members: a long, slow process of change in the school's basic culture. One cannot weave new faculty into a web of collegial relations and mutual respect if it does not exist.

No matter how taxing, however, the cultivation of new faculty deserves a school's focused attention. In less than a decade after they are hired, new scholar-teachers will be playing decisive roles, as senior faculty and administrative leaders, in the shaping of theological education for the future. It is good stewardship and wise institutional policy to tend their talents carefully.

Notes

1. Martin J. Finkelstein, Robert K. Seal, and Jack H. Schuster, "The American Faculty in Transition: A First Look at the New Academic Generation," A Preliminary Report Prepared for The National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (December 1995): 22.

2. Jerold W. Apps, *Higher Education in a Learning Society: Meeting New Demands for Education and Training* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988), 194-200.

3. Robert Boice, *The New Faculty Member: Supporting and Fostering Professional Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 160-183.

4. Cameron Murchison, at the time of the study, pastor of Blacksburg (VA) Presbyterian Church and currently Professor of Ministry at Columbia Theological Seminary; Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., Chair for the Social Scientific Study of Religion, University of St. Thomas; and Barbara G. Wheeler, Director of the Auburn Center, were the principal investigators for this study. They were assisted by Mark Wilhelm, who administered the project, and Johanna Baboukis and Darla Fjeld, who transcribed and coded the interviews.

5. Not all the institutions in which we interviewed had formal tenure systems, though all had some kind of continuing senior status that functions like tenure without the same guarantee of permanence. We defined "junior" faculty as non-tenured full-time faculty, whether on tenure-track or not, who either have not yet reached the point of decision about tenure or senior status or who, if they will not be considered for senior appointment, are in their first seven years of teaching. A few of the faculty we interviewed in the first year received tenure during the period of the study. We continued to interview them. Others left for other jobs; when possible, we tried to conduct a final interview with these persons after departure.

6. Because our study was qualitative in method and our goal was to follow groups of junior faculty over time and to observe them in relation to their institutional contexts, we did not try to construct a demographically representative sample. As best we can estimate, women are substantially overrepresented in the group of forty-five interviewed for this study (among the youngest quarter of faculty in comparable theological schools, they are about one quarter of the total; in our group they make up half), but the representation of racial and ethnic minorities is about the same as is found in the youngest quarter of faculty in all comparable schools. The seven institutions in which we conducted interviews for this study did not include an evangelical Protestant school (though the "good places to work" study did); though there are self-identified evangelicals among the forty-five persons we interviewed for the junior faculty study, their numbers are small, and the study is not "representative" of the full range of Protestant institutions.

7. Many of the Catholics we interviewed were members of religious orders, which often require several years of "formation" and/or work before doctoral study. The average age for Protestants is the same as the mean for "new entrants" in the NCES study.

8. The NCES study found that "new entrants' fathers" were significantly better educated than the fathers of more senior faculty. This was also true for the theological faculty the Auburn Center survey in 1993: only 15% of the fathers of the youngest quarter of faculty had not completed high school, compared with 34% of the fathers of more senior faculty.

9. The Auburn Survey of Theological Faculty (1993) found that the average time to complete the doctorate, not counting interruptions of study, was 3.5 years of full-time study plus 4.2 years of part-time study.

10. Boice, *The New Faculty Member*, 55-56, 62-63.

11. Boice (59-73) found that the new faculty in his study generally gave positive self-reports on their teaching. His observation and those of others contradicted these reports. We observed the teaching of junior faculty in the schools where we conducted three years of interviews, and we asked the deans of those institutions to assess the quality of teaching as well. From these observations and reports we conclude that the positive self-reports of junior theological faculty are accurate.

12. Boice, 75-76.

13. Our findings suggest that this may be a point on which it is easy for institutions to fool themselves. We studied two schools that were proud of the collegiality between their junior and senior faculty. In one, the junior faculty were convinced that the collegiality was genuine; in the other, most believed that it was a cover for overuse of junior faculty on committees and in administrative roles, with the most important decisions still made by senior faculty and administrators outside the formal structures.

14. One other group of new professionals who face similar pressures is associates in traditional law firms, who compete for a limited number of partnership slots and must leave the firm if they do not "make" partner.

15. All the Catholics felt this way. Remember that Catholics are much more likely to have decided what kind of institution they wanted to teach in before taking their jobs; Protestants were less picky to start with and a little less satisfied with their choices later.

GOOD PLACES TO WORK

A STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

WITH COLLEGIAL AND PRODUCTIVE FACULTIES

BY MARK N. WILHELM / MARCH 1997

A persistent effort to create and sustain a commonly held educational culture is central to the cultivation of a good faculty. Openness to a diversity of ideas and traditions seems to be an especially important feature of an educational culture that enables faculty to do their job well.

During the past four years, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education has studied theological faculty from a variety of perspectives. We have analyzed the demographics of the faculty population, surveyed samples of current faculty and faculty-to-be (doctoral candidates in theology and religion), interviewed junior faculty in a variety of institutions, collected information on faculty compensation, and explored the history of the faculty role. By means of these and other studies, we have learned a great deal about faculty members' backgrounds, careers, attitudes, and aspirations.

In this report, we turn to the topic of "the faculty" as a body and the question of what institutional conditions at a school contribute to faculty productivity as individuals and as a group working together. To find out about the collegial aspects of faculty life, we conducted additional research. Four schools were selected as case studies in consultation with individuals familiar with theological schools in North America. The schools chosen included a denominational school with a university affiliation and three free-standing schools representing

Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical Protestant traditions. Regional diversity, although not specifically sought, was also achieved.

The schools we selected have reputations for having created collegial and productive faculties. No preconceived definition of productivity, such as number of books published, controlled or narrowed the selection process. We sought to identify schools with faculty that were "productive" as defined by local conditions. We asked the consultants who helped us to choose our four sites to consider a range of factors that different schools emphasize when they assess their "productivity": faculty publications, service of faculty to the religious and scholarly communities, and creativity and quality of educational programs. We sought institutions that have also gained reputations as "good places to work"—schools that have succeeded in recruiting and retaining the faculty they want and whose faculty reported in our surveys that they are content with institutional conditions.[1]

The first four institutions we selected all agreed to participate in the project. Two researchers visited each school for a three-day site visit, attempting to understand what made the school a good place to work and inquiring whether faculty at the school considered it a good place to work, that is, a collegial, productive place. A protocol for the site visits required:

■ interviewing as many faculty as possible for one hour each, with special concern to include both senior and junior faculty, women and ethnic/racial faculty, and insiders and outsiders;
■ interviewing the chief executive officer and the chief academic officer;
■ attending a faculty meeting;
■ attending chapel and, if possible, other community events.

Researchers asked faculty and senior administrators to discuss: school culture; school mission and purpose; school practices and programs designed to make a good working environment; faculty relationships with students, administrators, and other faculty; faculty work and productivity; faculty role in institutional decision-making; and general perceptions of the school as a good place to work. Researchers also reviewed personal backgrounds and specific faculty

Researchers interviewed 65 of 132 faculty at four schools, including chief executive officers and academic deans, all of whom held faculty appointments.

assignments with each faculty member they interviewed.

Researchers interviewed 65 of the 132 faculty at the four schools (a majority of faculty at all sites except one large school), including chief executive officers and academic deans, all of whom held faculty appointments. Information gathered from the site visits was augmented by reviewing faculty handbooks, school catalogues, and other descriptive literature such as historical

sketches and pamphlets about particular school programs.

The study's concept and method were modeled after a study of faculty morale and the quality of the academic workplace in liberal arts colleges conducted in the 1980s by Ann E. Astin under the auspices of the Council of Independent Colleges.[2] In seeking insight into the future of the liberal arts college as an academic workplace, the Astin study found a higher level of faculty morale than expected. The researchers attributed high faculty morale to four organizational factors common to liberal arts colleges. Liberal arts colleges tend to:

■ Develop a distinctive organizational culture that is nurtured and built upon. Liberal arts colleges typically capture and institutionalize a particular culture, rooted in a given history. The culture is perpetuated through shared stories; symbols, ceremonies, and architecture; relationship with a larger community; and the intimacy of small size. This culture creates a sense of shared mission and community that yields a clarity of vocation among faculty. A crucial part of these cultures is a commitment to openness and respect for difference in the context of a devotion to a particular mission and community.

■ Establish participatory leadership that is strong and purposeful but also conveys to the faculty a sense that the college is theirs. Faculty at liberal arts colleges appreciate forceful administrative leadership, but faculty also value their own leadership roles. Authority and information about decision-making is shared with the faculty by administrators and trustees.

■ Maintain a firm sense of organizational momentum. Although liberal arts colleges embody and perpetuate certain cultures, they also remain innovative, maintaining a sense of "being on the move." They can adapt their practices to new conditions, enabling the school to survive difficult periods. Organizational momentum and the sense of renewal it brings are important for sustaining the morale of faculty who might otherwise fall into an unsatisfying and unproductive rut while they teach for nearly their entire careers at the same school. Organizational renewal and individual renewal are interrelated.

■ Have faculty with a compelling identification with the institution. A college tends to recruit carefully faculty who share the values of the school. Faculty often, in fact, are hired who have a pre-existing relationship with the college. The reward system builds the faculty's identification with the school and its mission.

Findings: What Makes a Theological School a Good Place to Work

All the schools we visited exhibited the organizational traits that the Astin study suggested make for a good place to work in the liberal arts college sector of higher education. Although the Auburn study was not undertaken with the goal of validating the Astin study, the results of the theological school site visits confirm Astin's findings. The four organizational traits described above are

key to understanding how theological schools can be good places to work, conducive to the cultivation of faculty who enjoy their work and do it well.

Theological schools are, for the most part, mission-driven institutions, and the interviewees in this study easily described their work in the context of their school's larger mission when invited to do so. Faculty at the schools visited used common stories and language to describe the mission of their schools and how the community of the school accomplishes the mission. Newcomers (both junior faculty and senior faculty hired late in their careers) could describe the ethos of their school from the point of view of the outsider in process of being integrated into a new culture. Rooted in specific histories, the schools we visited have identifiable mission-driven cultures.

Although each of the schools has a distinctive mission-driven culture, faculty at all four schools indicated that a commitment to the needs of both church and academy was a central aspect of their school's mission. Faculty repeatedly used phrases such as "concern for the life of the church and competence in one's area of scholarship" or "combining the best of scholarship with the development of Christian vocation" to define a sense of mission among faculty members at their schools.

Whatever its content, a common identity based upon a shared mission commitment is an important organiza-tional element in molding faculty as a body. We believe that more extensive visits at our case study schools would have revealed the rituals, symbols, and events that are central to creating and sustaining a corporate identity for a faculty. Even our brief visits suggested that worship in the school, for example, plays an important role. Very likely, the mechanisms for building and maintaining a school's culture will vary according

A shared acceptance of diverse ideas and traditions is the basis of collegiality at these schools, far more than a collegiality based on common projects or close personal friendships.

to local situations. But the shared sense of mission that they help to create and sustain is vital to the corporate cultivation of a faculty.

Another aspect of organizational culture is equally crucial for cultivating a theological faculty as a body: an openness, within the context of a shared mission, to a diversity of ideas and traditions. Interviewees reported that a range of ideas could be expressed and taught at their schools and that dissent was permitted. Faculty perceived their school to be different from others in their ecclesiastical tradition: less rigid, with more academic freedom and, as one interviewee noted, "a willingness to follow ideas."

These schools welcome a diversity of religious traditions among faculty members. Each school has faculty representing a range of the subgroups within the basic tradition the school, and each school has hired faculty who stand

outside the tradition that sponsors or dominates the school. The faculty from religious traditions outside the tradition of the school are accepted and not viewed as threats to its mission and ethos. To the contrary, these schools consider the "diverse" faculty members to be a plus.

Faculty felt free from doctrinaire academic and ecclesiastical orthodoxies that they believe often plague theological faculty elsewhere. In their view, questions of theology and practice could remain open at their schools in a manner that could not happen at schools in similar traditions. Faculty told us that their institutions' deep commitments to tradition and a common mission seem to enable the schools to view openness to diversity as enrichment instead of threat.

Faculty deeply appreciated administrators who defended their educational culture of openness before a school's constituency or ecclesiastical authorities. At two of the schools, faculty described this reality as a form of "protection" from overly-rigid church or theological standards and a "haven" from the politics of culture-wars style theological disputations.

A school that is open to a diversity of ideas and traditions—without denying its distinctive mission—seems to create among faculty members the feeling that they can exercise their academic competencies in service of the school's mission without fear of sanction from administrators or other faculty. Faculty feel that they have a valued, collegial role to play, even if they are among those outside the school's core tradition. As the self-identified outsider at one of

the schools put it, faculty at his school are willing to "give each other the benefit of the doubt."

A shared open acceptance of diverse ideas and traditions is, in fact, the basis of collegiality at these schools, far more than a collegiality based on common projects or close personal friendships. Although shared work, research, and friendship among faculty are honored, they are sporadic, and they are not

More of a puzzle is what *type* of executive leadership works best in making an institution a good place to work and building up a corporate sense of being faculty.

central to an organizational culture that creates and sustains a good workplace and a corporate sense of being a school's faculty. What is important is a mutual authorization, based on an openness to diversity, that faculty give each other as colleagues to engage their school's mission through their scholarship. Joint projects, friendships, discussion groups, hallway conversations about current research, and similar activities were often the mechanisms for fostering and conveying mutual authorization, but the specific mechanisms were, once again, not crucial. The mutual authorization to be faculty together was key, and it served as the collegial basis for a corporate sense of identity as a faculty, in service of a common educational mission.

2. PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

Faculty at the schools visited think that they have an appropriate voice in the governance of their schools and that administrative leadership is not authoritarian. Words such as "informed," "consulted," and "respected" were used regularly by interviewees to describe how their administrators treat them.

At the same time, these relationships are often "prickly at the edges," as one faculty member commented, as all four schools seek to work out the proper role of the faculty in institutional decision-making, given the more elaborate administrative structures common in higher education today. As one of the faculty handbooks notes, "The role of faculty in governance is complex and sometimes obscure." Nevertheless, faculty still perceive leadership as collaborative and participatory at these schools. They know that compared with other institutions their problems are not very great: "If you think communication among faculty and with administrators is difficult here, you should try it at a university."

Although a participatory leadership ethos is important, confidence in the competence of the chief executive officer is equally important. Shared, participatory decision-making does not contradict the need for competent, effective executive leadership. All four schools visited have respected chief executives who are considered supporters of their faculties, effective managers, and skillful public relations agents for their schools.

More of a puzzle is what type of executive leadership works best in making an institution a good place to work and building up a corporate sense of being

faculty. Two of the schools visited are currently led by strong, visionary leaders. Although their leadership styles are participatory, not autocratic, their work provides direction for much of what happens at their schools. In the terms used in this report, they have led their schools into a re-shaping of their received organizational culture.

The other two schools in the study have strong leaders who define their work as chief executive officers more narrowly and administratively. Instead of re-shaping the organizational culture of their schools through visionary leadership, they have worked effectively to strengthen and sustain the existing organizational culture. At key points in their histories, these schools had visionary, transforming leaders, and the work of those figures still defines the culture of those schools. And in an apparent recognition of the importance of on-going visionary leadership, the chief executives at these two schools have relied on and encouraged academic deans to supply this more charismatic, inspirational leadership.

Are the two schools currently led by strong, competent, but "non-visionary" chief executives living on borrowed leadership capital, or will the practice of participatory leadership be adequate to maintain these schools as good places to work with a faculty that retains a strong corporate identity? The answer is not clear. At these two schools, references to the visionary leaders from the past surface in the conversations of the

current faculty when the mission of the schools is discussed. Does this reality simply reflect the kind of story-telling that sustains an institutional culture? Or does it indicate an ever-present need for visionary leadership in the position of chief executive officer, leadership that is sought in past images, if necessary? The issue merits further research.[3]

3. ORGANIZATIONAL MOMENTUM

Each of the schools visited has demonstrated the ability to maintain organizational momentum. Each has adapted to new circumstances in recent years. One has had what the Astin study would label a "turn-around" experience. Following a period of serious institutional decline, the school and faculty re-grouped. In the process, interviewees reported, "faculty morale soared." That school is still at the task of consolidating its institutional recovery, but institutional momentum has already been restored. Two of the four schools have successfully re-defined their missions in light of changed ecclesiastical realities, focused around the need, in one case, to achieve financial stability and, in the other case, to stabilize enrollment. And the fourth school has managed a period of institutional growth that included a successful generational change in leadership.

The Astin study found that institutional momentum keeps faculty fresh and interested in their work over long careers at a single school. With few exceptions, our interviewees indicated that they want to remain in their appointments indefinitely, and many senior faculty reported offers to go elsewhere that they had declined. They want to be part of a school and a faculty

that is "making an impact," and the perception of institutional momentum is a key element in creating this sense.

It is in this connection that occasional joint projects, such as the publication of a journal or a book, show their role in the cultivation of faculty as a body. Their symbolic value for inspiring morale is great. They are signs of a school "on the move." The faculty that we interviewed certainly cared about the substance of joint activity and projects, but the fact of accomplishing the projects seemed to be of greater importance for creating a sense that they were part of a good faculty.

4. INSTITUTIONAL IDENTIFICATION

As with the liberal arts schools in the Astin study, each of the schools in this case study works hard to recruit and retain faculty members who identify with its culture.

This begins with hiring practices. One senior faculty member says that he begins his assessment of faculty candidates by asking himself, "Will this person be a pain at faculty meetings?" His concern is less personality quirks than compatibility with the school's mission and culture. Faculty and administrators work hard to locate new faculty who will "fit in," and they are wary of anyone who expresses anything less than a full commitment to their school. A prospective faculty member suspected of seeking an appointment "as a stepping stone," as one interviewee

put it, would not likely be hired at any of these schools.[4]

As was found in the Astin study, our four schools locate new faculty ready to identify with their institutions in part by hiring heavily among scholars from within their institutional culture, often their own graduates. Two of the four schools have faculties with large majorities of graduates. These schools also discipline their faculty to conform their teaching, research, and service to the mission of the school. Faculty are expected to work seriously at their

Faculty and administrators work hard to locate new faculty who will "fit in," and they are wary of anyone who expresses anything less than a full commitment to their school.

teaching. Respondents indicate that teaching poor enough to impede the school's mission would "bring attention to itself." Research and publication are honored, and faculty are required to demonstrate progress in these areas of their work. Faculty service to both the school and its community is expected. Faculty are encouraged to "become involved in service to religious groups and to engage in other forms of service within the community," as one dean said, as appropriate to and supportive of the school's mission. Two of the schools require a written annual report from each faculty member that summarizes research and service activity.

Each school has practices and structures to support faculty in their work, rewarding them for successfully working to advance the institution and their role in it. Those whose work, with the

approval of the school, exceeds normal expectations in teaching, research, or service are compensated by receiving reductions in load in another area. This informal system of compensation has been a source of jealousy for a minority of the faculty in one of our schools, but in general the system works effectively to build a sense of fairness and commitment to the institution's goals.

These institutions make other provisions for supporting faculty in their work. Sabbatical policies are liberal: one semester after three years, in three of the four cases at full pay and 80% at the other. (Junior faculty are especially encouraged to take the sabbatical at first opportunity; faculty in general at these schools are expected to develop sabbatical plans and take the time available to them.) Seminars and collegially-based training and discussion groups are available for improving teaching. Scholarship is defined broadly so as to support the faculty in any study and writing that is consistent with the school's mission. Faculty who consistently produce serious academic work are respected, but anyone identified solely as a "publishing faculty member" would not be welcome at these schools, which understand "scholarship" to include teaching and service.

The development of institutional identification among the faculty at these schools is exceedingly successful. Although we met a few unhappy faculty members at each institution, nearly everyone, as noted above, intends to remain indefinitely in their appointments

and is very contented with their working conditions. Even those who have had opportunities to leave insist that they are glad they stayed because their school is such a good place to work.

All the rewards and routines of faculty life discussed above that function to develop institutional identification among faculty seem to relate more directly to motivating faculty members to be productive as individuals than as a group. Sabbatical policies, various reward mechanisms, requirements for community service, and other policies and programs affect the faculty member as an individual. But these things also seem to build group identity. As faculty loyalty to and identification with the institution increase, collegiality among faculty committed to common goals increases too. As already noted, the faculty of the institutions we studied are not especially chummy with each other or personally close. They do, however, respect and depend on their colleagues and view their own efforts as complementary to those of other faculty members. Individual and group morale and effectiveness, in other words, seem to be closely, even inseparably, related.

What have we learned from these case studies? To summarize:

1. THE ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS IDENTIFIED IN THIS STUDY ARE CRUCIAL FOR CREATING AND SUSTAINING PRODUCTIVE AND COLLEGIAL FACULTY.

Brief visits to four theological schools of varied types confirmed that the organizational factors found by the Astin study in good liberal arts colleges were also present in these theological schools:

the fostering of a mission-driven culture that is open to a diversity of ideas; the establishment of non-authoritarian, participatory but competent leadership; addressing changes in institutional realities so that momentum toward achieving a school's mission is maintained; creating strategies and mechanisms that enable faculty to identify with the school's mission and culture. These factors were arranged and worked out very differently in each of the four cases we studied, leading us to conclude that they are best viewed not as elements of a blueprint or strategy for making a good faculty but rather as features of an institutional culture that must be cultivated in order to achieve that goal.

2. THE CASES SUGGEST SEVERAL CONCERNS THAT MIGHT COMPROMISE EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN A GOOD FACULTY.

■ *Leadership.* This report raises the issue of visionary versus managerial executive leadership. Charismatic, visionary leaders bring obvious strengths to a school. Given the importance of this kind of leadership, either past or present, for the schools in our study, one could argue that visionary leadership is a necessary component in creating a good workplace. If so, the drawing-down of visionary leadership capital by those institutions without such a chief executive officer will threaten those schools' ability to become or remain good places to work. It is also possible, however, that more managerial leadership,

operating on a participatory model, can enable the establishment of a collective vision for a school and its faculty. Theological schools need to consider these issues in their nurturing, recruitment, and hiring of senior leadership.

■ *Sustaining Institutional Identification.* The schools in this study, along with many others, have many senior faculty nearing retirement. How will the upcoming generational change affect these schools as good places to work? Will schools be able to find faculty who will identify with the schools in a period of weakened identification with specific religious traditions? Schools that want to maintain a good faculty will need to find the balance between

Faculty at the case study schools work effectively because they feel committed to and fully part of an important educational culture that has a meaningful mission.

the goal of retaining faculty diversity, an important factor in sustaining an organizational culture of openness, and the goal of hiring faculty who "fit in" a school's culture.

■ *Sustaining Organizational Culture.* How will schools maintain the organizational cultures that are apparently necessary to sustaining good faculties, given the drive to operate in new organizational forms, such as distance learning and "virtual" classrooms? Two of the four schools in the case study are developing these new institutional forms. But all four schools are under financial and enrollment pressures, resulting from changes in the larger ecology of religious institutions and constituencies of the

schools. The need to realign institutionally in response to these pressures in contemporary theological education is a challenge to any school interested in creating or sustaining the organizational culture necessary for fostering a faculty as a body.

3. A VIBRANT, MEANINGFUL EDUCATIONAL CULTURE OR ETHOS IS THE KEY FACTOR IN MAKING A GOOD PLACE TO WORK AND THE CREATION OF A PRODUCTIVE, COLLEGIAL FACULTY.

Adequate compensation, sound faculty development programs, fair work load, generous sabbatical policy, and other "faculty handbook factors" are important at the four schools, but no single constellation of these factors caused the schools to develop a good faculty. As argued above, it is the creation of an educational culture that is crucial to cultivating faculty rather than any specific programmatic mechanisms to achieve that goal. Faculty at the case study schools work effectively because they feel committed to and fully part of an important educational culture that has a meaningful mission. Ethos, not details of faculty contract or programmatic issues such as curricular reform, is central to developing and sustaining a good faculty. The faculty at these schools cohered as a productive team owing to a common participation in a mission-driven educational culture. A shared sense of mission, expressed in different ways at each school, was found in each of the schools visited.

4. OPENNESS TO A DIVERSITY OF
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MISSION, IS THE CENTRAL ELEMENT IN
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A VIBRANT EDUCATIONAL CULTURE OR
ETHOS.

The schools visited exhibited this openness in various ways: the hiring of faculty who represent the range of perspectives within a school's tradition, the hiring of faculty from other traditions, administrative support for the free expression of ideas—even ideas that dissented from the core traditions of the school. The specific practices are less important, however, than the principle. A school that is open to a diversity of ideas and traditions, without denying its distinctive mission, creates among faculty members the sense that the school values their participation in the school's educational mission. Openness to a diversity of ideas and traditions is the means by which faculty are welcomed into and sustained by an educational culture.

This openness seems to be the most important factor in cultivating individual faculty members as confident, contributing members of a school. It also, almost paradoxically, seems to be a dominant theme in cultivating faculties that work well together. Faculty at the sites we visited were enthusiastic participants in the body of the faculty because it permitted distinctiveness and variation. Making a place for particular faculty members whose interests and gifts are somewhat different appears to

be the first step in establishing the faculty not only as productive individuals but as a team. A corporate sense of being a school's faculty seems to be built upon a shared acceptance that a diversity of gifts may be placed in service of a school's common mission.

Conclusion

We began this study with the goal of understanding better why some schools have faculty that function well as a body, not just as individuals, and the organizational factors discussed above identify some of what must be tended to if a faculty's collective sense of itself is to be created and sustained. These factors, however, also obviously relate to the development of faculty as individuals. Participatory, non-authoritarian, effective leadership, for example, is equally important for fostering the productivity of faculty as individuals and as a group.

Intangibles like "a shared purpose and vision" must be actualized through concrete practices...but schools with an organizational commitment to maintaining an educational culture will not understand these practices atomistically or programmatically.

Openness to diversity, a key element in cultivating faculty as a body, also allows faculty members to work productively as individuals. It is clear that the development of faculty as individuals and as a group cannot be separated as distinct functions.

Yet a productive faculty that functions well as a body is more than the sum of its individual members' productivity.

One could imagine a group of individual self-starters who worked productively but never developed a common identity or commitment. These case studies suggest that ethos or culture creates and sustains a faculty that works well together. A shared purpose and vision, expressed in a set of regular practices that makes up a culture, matters most for a making a school a good place to work with a good, productive faculty.

Intangibles like "a shared purpose and vision" must, as just noted, be actualized through concrete practices such as effective presidential leadership, viable reward mechanisms, and conventional faculty development activities. But schools with an organizational commitment to maintaining an educational culture will not understand these practices atomistically and programmatically. The cultivation of a faculty as a body depends upon a school undertaking these practices not as independent, functionalistic "one shot deals" but as part of a conscious, persistent, organizational effort to create and sustain a commonly held educational culture.

Notes

1. We found in our 1993 survey that faculty contentment and unhappiness are concentrated in particular schools. Though theological faculty in general are happier in their work than faculty members in other branches of higher education, such discontent as there is is concentrated in a few institutions. Some institutions scored markedly higher than the majority on the faculty contentment measures we devised. The schools we selected are not necessarily the "happiest" institutions, because some of those did not, in the view of our consultants, emerge as highly "productive" institutions, but all four of our sites scored in the upper quarter of theological schools on our contentment scales. See Barbara G. Wheeler, "True and False: The First in a Series of Reports from a Study of Theological Faculty," *Auburn Studies* (Bulletin No. 4, January 1996): 10-11.

2. Ann E. Astin and others, *A Good Place to Work: Sourcebook for the Academic Workplace* (Washington, D.C.: Council of Independent Colleges, 1991). ERIC No. ED338131. The project included case studies of ten schools.

3. Recent literature on the office and role of seminary presidents affirms that "vision" is an important component of presidential leadership. The literature does not specifically address, however, our questions: Must a president be a visionary, or may a president lead by working effectively within a "received vision" from a predecessor? Does a president who relies on "received vision" put a good institution with a productive, collegial faculty at risk? See Neely Dixon McCarter, *The President as Educator: A Study of the Seminary Presidency* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. 35, 141-2; and Malcolm L. Warford, "Work and Calling: An Interpretation of Presidents' Reflections on the Nature of Their Office," *Theological Education* Vol. 32, Supplement 3 (1996): 10-12.

4. The Auburn Center's study of junior faculty found that collegial "fit" was an important factor in achieving tenure or its equivalent. In fact, the study notes that junior faculty who received tenure were initially hired because they exhibited characteristics required of those who would fit in well with a school's faculty. In other words, decisions about faculty compatibility *made before persons were hired* were crucial to the tenure process. When carefully chosen junior faculty were appointed to positions "valued" by the faculty, they were in effect "sponsored" for tenure at the school. See the companion report in this issue of *Auburn Studies*, 15-17.

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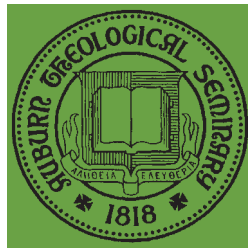
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