



Making Theology MATTER

**Field Education as the Practical-Prophetic
Heart of Effective Ministry Preparation**

Cover photo: 2014 Black Lives Matter protest at Candler School of Theology, Atlanta.

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Auburn Studies No. 24 — Fall 2018


FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Executive Summary

“Mosaic came out of a realization of watching students going into pastorates armed with theological prowess, but getting steamrolled when they became pastors. They were in essence small business managers of small churches, making schedules, hiring and firing staff, understanding the economics of their organization, etc. It was an awakening—realizing how ill equipped many seminary students were.”

—Trey Wince, Mosaic Ministries



Trey Wince, Mosaic Ministries

If theology is to matter, it, like Jesus, must “become flesh and dwell among us” (John 1:14).

Those responsible for training and equipping the next generation of faith leaders want them to not only be smart, but also change the world. Why is it that theological field education (TFE), one of the most effective means to assure this outcome, has been consistently undervalued, treated as a “second-class citizen” in theological education? While David Kelsey’s 1992 book proposed practical reforms in theological education a generation ago, its title exemplified a preoccupation with theology over the practical: *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological about a Theological School?*¹ Yet, as field education supervisors like Trey Wince know all too well, the typical structural divide between theological and practical training has positioned many schools to produce graduates with “theological prowess” but without similarly robust practical wisdom with which to lead effectively in the real world. Instead, as Wince says, they get “steamrolled.”

If theology is to matter, it, like Jesus, must “become flesh and dwell among us” (John 1:14). Theological field education, this report will show, is a powerfully generative mode for theology to become flesh and dwell among us, thereby making theology matter—and matter to the same end to which the incarnation itself was directed: “the world” (John 3:16). To put a sharper point on it, as English priest and theologian Sarah Coakley puts it, without the crucial contribution of field education, theological learning in the hands of ministry leaders “can’t actually perform the prophetic function it needs to perform.”² At a time of great social and environmental peril—a time of brutal wars, crushing poverty, persistent racism, sexism, trans- and homophobia, along with long-term environmental damage—it is more imperative than ever to add fuel to the fire of change in theological education in order to prepare practical-prophetic leaders for effective ministry today.

Building on a national survey of theological schools, nearly a dozen case studies, interviews with TFE directors, and an extensive literature review, we report on some enduring challenges that TFE faces and a variety of experiments in

overcoming these challenges that, in distinctive ways, are letting TFE's full impact come to bear. The report is at the same time an argument, rooted in research, about the kind of impact TFE is designed to have and an explanation of how such learning is a primary way theology takes hold of one of its fundamental *raison d'être*.

Our five key findings include evidence of the persistent structural bias within theological education against robust practical-prophetic formation for ministry rooted in field education programs, even as students report both appreciation for what they do receive and a desire for more robust models and practices of TFE. There is also real evidence of the shifting and deepening of the models and practices of TFE. These are likely to continue to expand in variety, but for the sake of clarity we summarize them in three broad models, letting the variety of case studies later in the report indicate the range of diversity within each type.

- 1) In most schools, practical training for leadership (administration, budget, staffing, social change, use of conflict, organizing, and other such matters) is addressed in elective courses that are often taught by instructors, adjunct faculty, or field education supervisors.
- 2) Furthermore, most schools suffer from a curricular divide between traditional courses in the Bible, history, and theology and the experiential learning found in field education placements (in congregations, faith-based nonprofits, or chaplaincies).
- 3) Despite its structural marginalization in many schools, students value field education as among the most helpful, formative kinds of experience of their seminary education.
- 4) Although most school faculty are not at all, or only somewhat, involved in TFE, to the extent that students do experience classes that feature some integration of coursework and practical training for leadership, they value it highly and wish for more.

5) The three main models for TFE's place in effective ministry preparation all include more robust partnership with congregations, ministries, or other nonprofit organizations.

- 1) The *center of gravity is in the classroom*, but much attention is given to quality, in-depth field education experiences.
- 2) Work in *classroom and field education sites are deeply integrated*, so the best each has to offer informs the other, especially through well-designed contextual courses that focus on practical leadership and involve clergy and professors working together.
- 3) The *center of gravity is in the community context*, with supportive, specifically tailored, in-depth academic experiences that build on experiential learning delivered online or in classroom settings.

It is not the case that every school should endeavor to embody a "best" model. Yet our research offers clear indications about the kinds of changes theological schools can try—regardless of their model—as they work to more effectively prepare future ministry leaders for the challenges they and the organizations they lead face in the world today.

Ultimately, what is at stake is nothing less than the practical-prophetic power of faith—active in, and for the sake of, God's beloved world.



Students during Black Lives Matter protest at Candler School of Theology, Atlanta.

Contents

I. Introduction	6
II. Learning in Practice	8
A. Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it	8
B. The kind of knowing “learning-in-practice” entails	9
C. Why is the kind of knowing gained in practice so crucial today?	11
D. Learning-in-practice and practical-prophetic leadership in ministry	12
III. Field Educators’ Survey Findings	16
IV. Case Studies of Three Models for Theological Field Education	22
A. Model One: Center of Gravity in the Classroom	22
• Princeton Seminary	23
• General Theological Seminary	26
• The Saint Paul Seminary, University of St. Thomas	28
B. Model Two: Classroom Work and Field Education Sites are Deeply Integrated	31
• Fuller Theological Seminary	32
• Candler School of Theology, Emory University	34
C. Model Three: Center of Gravity in the Community Context	37
• Lexington Theological Seminary	38
• Meadville Lombard Theological School	41
• Vineyard Institute	43
V. Concluding Questions for Conversation	45
Appendix	46
About The Authors, Funding And Support	57
Endnotes	58

Photography by Carlton Mackey.
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(Cover page, page4, page22, page34)

I. Introduction



Fuller Seminary campus

To put it in admittedly dramatic terms, would Jesus have mattered if he had remained, as the famous opening of John’s Gospel puts it, “with God” (John 1:1), rather than “becoming flesh and dwelling among us” (John 1:14)?

Today it is as difficult as it has ever been to prepare people for effective leadership in ministry. Dramatic challenges are roiling the social seas of the United States, changes that are truly global in scale. We are confronted by mass migration due to war and climate change; sharp wealth inequality; tense, sometimes violent, struggles over gender, sexuality, and racial equity and justice. Anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments from the highest levels of power foment hate and drive deep wedges in an increasingly polarized society. Alongside those challenges, the ways that individuals and communities practice spirituality or religious life are also undergoing massive changes. Patterns of preparation for ministry developed even a generation ago are simply inadequate to the changing realities we will face over the next decades. As institutions pivot to address these situations, some more and some less successfully, a key feature in their experiments lies at the intersection of the classroom and contexts for leadership practice—that is, experiential learning, where, in the tussle of responding to practical challenges, the formation of leadership occurs. In most theological schools, this work takes the form of theological field education (TFE), sometimes called contextual education, along with similar forms of experiential learning.

While a report like this might be expected to have as its main audience those currently leading TFE in seminary contexts, that is not the case. Most of what is contained in this report will help, but not surprise, those working in TFE. While they have been willing participants and conversation partners in the course of this research and are eager to see the findings, our conviction is that long-overdue change is needed in theological education more broadly. Some change is already underway that effectively flips classroom and community context, placing “learning-in-practice” closer to the center of programs and curricula that form leaders for ministry and dramatically changing the structure, or even the need for, TFE as such. As readers will see, in some of the case study institutions, TFE does not exist anymore.

To accelerate these changes, we seek two kinds of audiences for this report, putting forward two interconnected cases for the change our findings lead us to recommend.

First, on the basis of our research, we make a pragmatic case – TFE works. In study after study, including ours, research shows that learning-in-practice is central to effective practical leadership formation. The classic “act-reflect-act” cycle of learning-in-practice leads to better outcomes than more standard forms of classroom teaching oriented around content transfer and appropriation of knowledge through exams and essays. Better outcomes here mean especially the

formation of more agile and competent ministry leaders for a time such as this. Of course, all the particulars of how, what, who, and where influence the outcomes for better or for worse, as our many case studies suggest. Yet that variation in outcomes ought not mask the basic truth that learning-in-practice has a powerful potential to equip leaders to effectively engage whatever ministry roles they take up as they finish seminary.³ The audience for this case is largely trustees, presidents and deans, and their schools' wider networks of stakeholders—those who shape the vision and are responsible for overall decision-making at institutions engaged in theological education.



General Seminary chapel service

But second, prompted by our findings and a review of 100 years of literature about what has variously been called “field work,” “field education,” and “contextual education,” we make a philosophical, theological, and pedagogical case that centering ministry formation in learning-in-practice entails some of the most sophisticated and compelling knowledge that students of ministry leadership are expected to acquire. In addition, the potential for the integration of learning in relationship to pressing social challenges entails developing a capacity for practical-prophetic work at the heart of effective ministry today. While this is an argument theological field educators have been clearly articulating for years, it has, unfortunately, largely fallen on deaf ears in the wider theological academy.

There are a number of reasons why the significance of TFE does not get a hearing, including important structural ones. For example, as we will see from survey results, most schools classify directors of TFE as staff, not faculty, and when they are faculty they are not commonly tenure-track faculty. Behind this is a long history of TFE being dismissed as having no academic substance and directors merely requiring the gifts of administration, namely recruitment and facilitation of students' placements in ministry contexts. Yet these very staff make possible the central claim of our study, put in succinct form in the title of the report—that TFE is a pathway for “making theology matter.” In moving learning-in-practice to the heart of the theological education enterprise, schools show how theology matters, because it becomes incarnate in works of mercy, love, and justice among faithful people and their leaders. To put it in admittedly dramatic terms, would Jesus have mattered if he had remained, as the famous opening of John's Gospel puts it, “with God” (John 1:1), rather than “becoming flesh and dwelling among us” (John 1:14)?

Interweaving aspects of the history of TFE that shaped the current moment in theological education, we describe the kind of knowing learning-in-practice entails, why that sort of knowing is so crucial now, and the distinct potential of such knowledge as a source for practical-prophetic leadership in ministry. Then we share an abbreviated version of the TFE directors' survey findings, along with more than eight case studies grouped under three models of experimentation with TFE. A series of concluding questions and an appendix with a more expansive presentation of the survey data fill out the report.

II. Learning in Practice

Seminary graduates report that field education is one of the most significant aspects of their formation for ministry.



Lexington Seminary student

Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it

In our research for this report and in many prior surveys, including The Association for Theological Schools (ATS) annual Graduating Student Questionnaire, seminary graduates report that field education is one of the most significant aspects of their formation for ministry. Likewise, our research, and multiple surveys over prior decades, shows that those who lead theological field education programs wish to deepen this impact by expanding field education opportunities and more deeply integrating them with the rest of the curriculum. In the first page of his introduction to a volume on TFE, Theodore Brelsford uses the term “integrate” no fewer than five times, suggesting that TFE is essential “if we intend seminary education to matter and make a difference in society, church, and the world.”⁴ Yet, despite some remarkable and well-known exceptions, leaders in TFE have too often continued, in the words of historian Conrad Cherry, “to feel like second-class citizens,” and their work continues to be structurally marginalized as a “subsidiary aim” of theological education as a whole.⁵

The very need to develop TFE was precipitated by the move of ministerial formation in the early 19th century from apprenticeships in congregations, responsive to ministry needs and practice, to graduate academic institutions responsive to their cognate scholarly disciplines. The Methodist and Baptist movements, whose fast growth in earlier periods was paired with disinterest or even disdain for a “learned clergy,” gave way in the twentieth century to the impulse towards seminaries and university-related divinity schools. The very fact of the adoption of the Enlightenment-inspired German university as a model for the development of theological education included a privileging of a certain kind of knowing—abstract, theoretical, and de-contextual—that aimed at developing specialized knowledge tied to academic disciplines.⁶

Early shapers of theological schools, like The University of Chicago’s William Rainey Harper, wanted to uphold the practical skills that pertain to a modern professional—a lawyer, doctor, or clergyperson. Yet his insistence on a school of theology in the university meant, as Conrad Cherry puts it, “the acquisition of specialized academic knowledge.”⁷ Harper clearly saw the interest of the university focused on what he called “scientific Divinity,” while still holding out the importance of “the practical side of this same work.” Yet, as if portending the next century of struggle holding these divergent aims together in theological education, he wondered aloud in his 1903 Presidential Report “whether both of these things could be accomplished in the same school.”⁸

The kind of knowing “learning-in-practice” entails

In the introduction to Charles Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy*, philosopher and educator William Sullivan picks up on Harper’s insight about professional education. It is indeed a hybrid endeavor, combining the cognitive knowledge prized in the academy, the craft know-how characteristic of excellent practitioners, and the normative knowledge shaping the social roles and identities of professionals. Yet the move to locate professional education—of clergy as well as nurses, doctors, engineers, and others—in an academic setting “clearly tilts the balance toward the cognitive.”⁹ While cognitive knowledge is foundational to good practice, for it to have an impact in practice—or, in the words of our title, for it to matter—students, Sullivan writes,

“must also be able to integrate, or reintegrate, this kind of knowledge with practice, with everyday life. But students learn the skills of integration and reintegration mostly by living transmission—through a pedagogy of modeling and coaching. For seminaries, as for all professional schools, it is this reintegration of the separated parts that provides the greatest challenge.”¹⁰

Sullivan develops this further by specifying more clearly what is learned in practice, and it is most decidedly not merely “skills” but a particular kind of “cognitive and theoretical content.”¹¹

In his book *Return to Reason*, which sums up a lifetime of making just this argument, philosopher Stephen Toulmin calls for a rebalancing of what he names “reason” and “reasonableness.” He laments how, in the “modern West,” hundreds of years of dominance by a mode of reason based upon theory and the drive to the universal have had the effect of marginalizing reasonableness, what he calls “a system of humane judgments based on personal experience and practice.”¹²

By engaging an integrative, contextual site of practice, Sullivan argues, students can learn “to find the religiously significant features in the lives of congregants and their problems, or the ability to render an insight derived from religious tradition or theological argument as a practical, usable counsel.” Like Toulmin’s effort at balancing reason and reasonableness, Sullivan argues, this twofold effort is “the essential completion and complement of the cognitive capacities” developed in the classroom



Fuller President Mark Labberton preaching in an outdoor worship service

context.¹³ While ministry requires “a vital cognitive aspect,” a merely theoretical knowledge of religious texts and tradition is not enough for the actual hurly-burly work of ministry leadership. That, it turns out, requires what he calls “practical reasoning” that goes beyond “transferring facts or even cognitive tools. Learning in the formative sense is a process by which the student becomes a certain kind of thinking, feeling, and acting being.”¹⁴

In the chapter on field education, Foster et al. spell out the character of practical reasoning, the kind of knowing gained through learning-in-practice. Such practical reasoning, they argue, “emphasizes

judgment in professional practice, as in the adoption of knowledge and skills while engaging or addressing a given problem or situation.”¹⁵ Drawing on the Greek term used by Aristotle, *phronesis*, they argue that field education is more than a space for learning skills; rather, it is perhaps the most significant place for the “cultivation of professional identity, judgment, and a sense of authority” required for bringing professional knowledge and skill to bear on specific ministerial situations.¹⁶

In this section, they argue that this kind of knowledge is the *sine qua non* of effective ministerial leadership and lament that no seminary they visited had taken on a major reframing of its curriculum around these insights. Yet they oddly reinscribe the marginalization of this kind of knowing by limiting its discussion to their chapter on field education rather than, as Sullivan’s introduction might suggest, developing a thoroughgoing argument for its role and significance in effective ministerial formation. Had they done so, it might have lent itself more directly to such curricular innovations, some of which we report on in our case studies below.

A decade after *Educating Clergy* another group of scholars, led by Dorothy Bass, took on this practical way of knowing directly in their book *Christian Practical Wisdom*. The first sentence of the book could be said about the circumstances of TFE:

”Why is the very kind of knowledge that people need to live well - what we call practical wisdom - the least understood, the hardest to learn, and often the most devalued kind of knowledge?”¹⁷

That volume takes on the challenge of articulating practical wisdom as it is enacted in various spheres of Christian life, as well as seeking deeper clarity regarding its eclipse in the modern West, and the dynamics of its more recent rehabilitation in what some call late- or post-modernity.¹⁸ However, Kathleen Calahan, one of its authors, in an outstanding subsequent volume she edited, *Integrating Work in Theological Education*, digs into a central aspect of the challenge, namely: “Why is practical wisdom the hardest kind of knowledge to learn?” Her response, in brief, echoes exactly what Sullivan, Foster, and others have argued: “Practical wisdom is integrative knowledge that encompasses the full dimensions of human being, knowing, and acting.”¹⁹

In *Educating Clergy*, Foster et al. offer a very clear articulation of how the integrative learning-in-practice that leads to practical wisdom actually happens pedagogically. Explaining it in this way highlights some of the dynamics of why it is both so hard and so important. It begins, of course, in practice. The situation or question arising from the situation becomes “a catalyst for formal reflection on that incident, moment, or experience, drawing on prior experience, resources from other classes in the seminary curriculum and other educational experiences, and the wisdom of supervisors and faculty members from their own reflections on practice.”²⁰

In fact, then, this circle of practice, reflection, and return to practice, done many times over the course of professional training and in many distinct areas of the work, provides the pathway from hesitant beginnings in ministry to a more mature, intuitive, and confident place as a ministry leader. Spelling this out shows both how field education—or experiential learning contexts generally—provides a fundamental place for developing such practical wisdom, and why the work done in such a place makes theology matter.

Yet the driving forces of integration central to such pedagogical processes ought to raise a warning flag

regarding how theological education most often regards TFE. How could seminaries expect field education to be effective in teaching practical wisdom when it is positioned as a sideline activity for theological education, rather than a dynamically integrated component of the basic programmatic and curricular work? It makes sense, given this, that the most powerful way of developing this kind of practical wisdom for leadership means that the reflective learning-in-practice loop should be placed at the center of preparation for ministry leadership—either through deep curricular integration between classroom and context or by putting the center of formation in context, effectively making practice primary and TFE as a distinct enterprise unnecessary. We offer case studies of schools representing both types below.

Why is the kind of knowing gained in practice so crucial today?

One obvious reason why effective preparation of ministry leaders is so crucial today has to do with the diversity and complexity of rapid cultural change in our society. Already in many major metropolitan areas and in more than half a dozen states, the historical white majority population has become a minority, with people of color, representing many racial/ethnic and national backgrounds and, increasingly, multiracial/ethnic backgrounds, predominating.²¹ More than ever, people live and work in proximity to diverse others. A just and generous future requires learning how to bridge multiple divides. Not doing so means to leave in place the seeds and, in some cases, the fully grown expressions of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and white supremacy that are synonymous with hate and violence.

Furthermore, other dynamics of change—social and especially technological—are so rapid it begs the question of whether leaders can ever be prepared, and if so, how. It is interesting to hear the perspective of engineer and inventor Dean Kamen, who is globally respected as a tireless advocate for STEM education. Speaking at the kickoff of the 2016 season of First Robotics, a high school robotics program he cofounded 25 years ago, he argues:

“This is the first generation that will see their own technology and way of life, their way of doing a profession, become obsolete. That’s why it is critical for students not to just develop some skill set...but to learn how to learn, learn how to keep learning, and learn how to be open to change.”

More than ever, people live and work in proximity to diverse others. A just and generous future requires learning how to bridge multiple divides.



Fuller students and staff march in an immigration reform march in Pasadena

Tongue in cheek, he suggests students go look at a *LIFE* magazine from the 1950s, look at the advertising, and see how silly the products look from our vantage point now. The same could be said for church periodicals—the depiction of religious life in the United States and Canada has in many places changed so dramatically in the past 60 years that they look equally silly. Yet, Kamen says, in school you have to learn enduring fundamentals. Newton’s Law, he laughingly says, “is not just a good idea, it’s a law!” But beyond a common set of fundamentals, the practice of integrating them with today’s technologies and the skills needed to do this will likely shift within five years.²²

A similar reality struck Scott Cormode, then dean at Fuller Seminary, as he listened to feedback from alumni. The basic message was that they loved their time at Fuller, yet its curriculum did not prepare them for the fast-changing contexts in which they are called to lead. So as part of a major curriculum revision, Fuller altered core programs so that they centered on adaptive leadership formation rather than mastery of academic, discipline-based teaching. That shift, and the curricula the Seminary developed to support it, had in clear view the goal of forming agile leaders—learning learners—for a changing church and world. In the background of their work, of course, is the well-known framing of leadership amidst complex social and cultural change taught by Harvard’s Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky.²³ They vividly describe two basic modes of leadership: First, a kind of no-nonsense, pragmatic leadership is required when there is a known technical solution relevant to simple or complicated problems. However, when solutions for complex problems are not known, they call for adaptive leadership willing to experiment and learn. The dynamics of learning-in-practice indigenous to TFE are geared perfectly to forming adaptive learners and helping them develop the skills needed for leadership amidst very challenging times.

Learning-in-practice and practical-prophetic leadership in ministry

One obvious reason why effective preparation of ministry leaders is so crucial today follows directly from the sorts of complex, adaptive challenges that Heifetz and Linsky name. The Reverend Raphael Warnock, senior pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, inspired by the work of Michelle Alexander in her book *The New Jim Crow* and his own long experience pastoring in inner city churches, is taking on criminal justice reform. To Warnock, our national system of mass incarceration, especially as it impacts the African American population, represents a system that “is more criminal than it is justice.”

Taking on such complex challenges requires not only having the moral courage to jump in and say “maybe we can make a difference,” but also having the skills and capacity to engage the work on analysis and strategic action.²⁴

TFE has historically engaged practical-prophetic training, as Graham Taylor did in drawing on applied sociology in partnership with Jane Addams in turn-of-the-century Chicago and George Webber did in his innovative work with the East Harlem Protestant Parish in post-World War II New York City, among others.²⁵

A model of such moral courage, Leah Gunning Francis took to the streets to understand the movement for Black Lives that took over the streets of Ferguson, MO after the police shooting of Michael Brown by Officer Darren Walker. While now Gunning Francis is Vice President



Dr. Leah Gunning Francis,
Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Dean of the Faculty, and
Associate Professor of Christian
Education and Practical Theology
at Christian Theological Seminary

for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, and Associate Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology at Christian Theological Seminary, she was then Associate Dean of Contextual Education at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis and lived only a few miles from Canfield Green Apartments where Michael Brown, an unarmed teen, was killed and left laying in the street for hours. As she saw the unfolding protest building, she decided to seek to understand the faith leaders—both clergy and the young adults who were leading the protests in the streets.²⁶

As she learned, these “leaders emerged organically from the ground up, not from the top down. They were not appointed, nor did they fit any stereotypical model of what a ‘leader’ looks like or how a leader talks. They were women and men; black, brown, beige and white; gay and straight; able-bodied and differently abled; well-heeled and bare-heeled; young and not-so-young. These people found themselves responding to a call that came from around them and within them, and they refused to remain on the sidelines at such a time as this.”²⁷ In her depiction of the stakes, she turns the tables on traditional theological education which tends to highlight the role of faculty and clergy, and instead acknowledges the role of young leaders within the movement. “Indeed,” she writes, “the argument could be made that young people ignited leadership among clergy; they created the space and the impetus for the clergy to live into their roles as leaders.”²⁸

It is clear, however, that for the full promise of such practical-prophetic capacity to be realized in forming future faith leaders, important structural, theological, and pedagogical issues must be confronted. Sarah Coakley raises exactly these structural, theological, and pedagogical issues, which, if addressed, would unleash the prophetic potential of faith leaders in relationship to the significant social challenges they face today.²⁹ Her reflections use the umbrella term “pastoral theology,” and it is clear that she includes within this the ministry leadership area of the curriculum, including the work of TFE. She pointedly says that even using the terms “systematic” and “pastoral” theology is to state the problem. The structural divide between theological disciplines and departments has its roots in the nineteenth-century European Enlightenment, especially the model developed at the University of Berlin by Friedrich Schleiermacher. While seeking to save a place in the university for theology, his decision to move theology to the professional schools, such as medicine and law, institutionalized a divide between “rational” areas of inquiry, systematic and historical theology, biblical studies, ethics, and the professional areas that

are viewed as “not really intellectual in the same way... more connected by affectivity, pastoral response, love, rather than thought.”³⁰

Coakley provocatively describes the divide between so-called “rational” areas and “affective” areas as a wound, and says “we need to, as it were, re-mend this wound.” To her, the hard work of healing this divide is imperative because, in a sense, in allowing the divide to remain, theology doesn’t matter in the way it should. Theological education in the modern West has de-intellectualized pastoral theology, the effect of which is to actually “defang it for critical theological thinking out in the field.” Drawing on her pastoral experience in prisons, Coakley laments how chaplains are let in the prison “under this guise of non-demanding intellectual pastoral input, which is absolutely unchallenging to the prison system.” Of course, she says, “The prison system doesn’t mind a few chaplains as long as what they’re there to do is mop up distress without in any way questioning the system as it stands.” Insofar as that is the case, she says, theology doesn’t matter; it isn’t able to perform the prophetic function it needs to perform.



Professor Sarah Coakley,
Norris Hulse Professor of
Divinity, Cambridge

Thinking out loud with her interviewer, Coakley suggests that the required institutional reform for theological education could reasonably end the practice of having a department of pastoral theology or ministry (and one could add TFE) separate from the central pillars of the curriculum. She argues that learning skills shouldn’t be dislocated from the “hard, intellectual, interdisciplinary efforts to understand, say, jails, and look at how they were themselves founded on theological principles in the early modern period but have lost their moorings and become secularized—yet theological questions are still implicit in what they do.” Echoing what William Sullivan and others say above, Coakley argues that such ministry training is “actually more demanding” because you need all the critical intellectual pieces and other interdisciplinary connections, as well as situational skills and wisdom, for prophetic voice and action.³¹

Helpfully, she gets specific about how such integrative work could form leaders for the kind of practical-prophetic voice she calls for in our culture in places like prisons. In her own teaching, she does this by way of presenting actual case studies arising from practice, not merely telling stories about particular situations but subjecting them to critical social and theological analysis, something many TFE leaders already do to some extent.³² However, Coakley wants something not just pedagogical here but structural and institutional. She argues that it is not enough that theological reflection happens in TFE with the staff or site supervisors or with peers, as important as that is. She is seeking a kind of deep “integration of the highest intellectual endeavors with truly transformative implications of this kind of work for all other parts of the self.”

Such structural integration, then, helps heal the wound both ways. It gives teeth back to those working in what she calls the “pastoral theology” areas, including TFE, allowing practical-prophetic voice and action. And it helps systematic and historical and biblical theology to

matter, in that students have “to also learn how not to drop [their] theological insights in a crisis,” something they too often do because the structure of education has not helped them learn the disciplined practice of bringing those critical intellectual tools to bear in pastoral situations.

Coakley suggests that it is “a fundamental mistake” for theological schools to let students off without practicing how those subjects “inform the decisions that you’re making” as you engage not only in the minister’s own congregational or other organizational leadership, but in relation to challenges in the culture—in relation to prisons, hospitals, city governments, corporations, or social issues like race, environment, immigration, and many others.

Social ethicist Elizabeth Bounds, a professor at Candler School of Theology, represents one example of the kind of structural shifts called for by Coakley. In an essay describing her experiences working at the intersection of student engagement in community ministry placements and the classroom, she tries to make sense of what theological reflection is and how it can be more effective. Candler’s robust and integrative program includes varied community placements over two years, faculty-facilitated reflection seminars (what Bounds focuses on here), and courses intentionally paired with contextual experiences. Frustrated by the difficulty students have in connecting their texts (assigned in classes) with their contexts and the situations they face, she sought deeper clarity about what would facilitate this kind of equipping. She wanted to know “how to help students begin to practice, or practice more richly, the dialogue between theology and context that is at the heart of theological reflection.”³³ Her simple definition of theological reflection is intentional engagement with three dimensions: the *self* engaged in a *situation* bringing to bear *critical theological frameworks*.

Like Coakley, Bounds stresses how important it is to overcome the structural and pedagogical divide holding these dimensions apart. Students need various tools from classes for thinking critically about themselves, doing social analysis of the context, and doing theological analysis of the particular situation at issue, likely one calling for the student to consider what kind of leadership response is called for. Because of the difficulty in achieving this kind of integration, Bounds highlights the importance of 1) offering basic, focused, and repeated assignments so students can practice the integration of the sorts of analyses that facilitate risking action and learning from actions taken through further reflection, and 2) the importance of close collaboration between teaching faculty and site supervisors as two facets of the support students need to grow in their practice.

Bounds moves away from theological reflection to say what TFE has historically called “theological reflection” should, rather, be thought of as “knowing-in-action,” forming in students a necessary capacity for practical wisdom, or phronesis.³⁴

Review of a wide range of literature, including some of the best writing on TFE, convinces us that the formation of effective leaders for ministry matters deeply and is the very hardest work. From the perspective of theological education, then, a close look at where things stand regarding this crucial area of formation for ministry leaders can help readers interpret their own institutions’ current circumstances and develop proposals for new experiments.

III. Field Educators' Survey Findings

“I don’t think seminary contextual education is designed to prepare a student, but rather to equip a student to be able to improvise, to give them solid basics in identity and spiritual formation, and relational skills to build a community.”

To find out how field education is structured in different schools, what the usual requirements are and, more broadly, what the view is “on the ground” of how things are going, in 2016 we surveyed field education directors. We asked a wide range of questions about their practices, policies, and staffing and the experience of their students. Some of those findings are highlighted here; the remaining data are given in the Appendix, along with information on how the survey was administered. Given our 25 percent return rate, we cannot assume that our findings are representative of the diversity of theological schools in the ATS, yet these findings echo other existing data, offering an insightful glimpse at this crucial and changing aspect of theological education.

As mentioned earlier in this report, TFE is frequently underappreciated, and its directors are often under-resourced and undervalued and typically serve without faculty status. Although 63 percent of the directors hold a sort of faculty status, more than half of them (53 percent) are considered administrative faculty, not teaching faculty, and 55 percent neither have tenure nor are on a tenure track (although these institutions offer faculty tenure). They do have a wealth of experience as practitioners: nine out of ten (92 percent) have held a leadership position in a congregation. Eighty-five percent hold the M.Div. degree and almost half (48 percent) hold a Ph.D., Th.D., or Ed.D., a remarkable fact given the structural marginalization of their roles in many schools.

Field education or experiential education is required to meet The Association for Theological Schools accreditation standards for the M.Div. (and frequently for other ministerial master of arts programs as well):

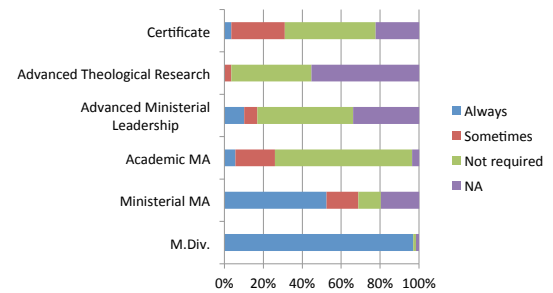
The program shall provide opportunities for education through supervised experiences in ministry. These experiences should be of sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership within both the congregation and the broader public context and to reflect on interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential learning. (A.2.5.3)

Terms such as “sufficient duration” and “intensity” are left up to the school to determine and define. Not surprisingly, TFE directors themselves are sanguine about how likely it is that students will “gain expertise” in such a short period of time. One put it this way: “I don’t think seminary contextual education is designed to prepare a student, but rather to equip a student to be able to improvise,” to give them “solid basics in identity and spiritual formation, and relational skills to build community.” Then, students would have “the potential to faithfully practice ministry with the hope of becoming competent, proficient and maybe becoming expert.”³⁵

Over one-third of schools surveyed (35 percent) require the equivalent of two semesters of field education for the M.Div. degree, while another 16 percent require three semesters and 29 percent require four semesters. Only a few schools require that students be engaged in some form of field or contextual education in every semester in which they are enrolled. The “intensity” of these programs varies widely as well—some schools require a minimum of 10 hours a week in a parish or ministry site and others require a full-time internship year. It’s difficult or impossible to say, then, what a “typical” field education experience looks like, with requirements varying from 250 total site hours to over 1,400 site hours required for the M.Div.

Some would say that field and contextual education programs and directors are given an impossible task and mission: to take students who are sometimes heady with knowledge and prepare them for the nitty-gritty of congregational life or the realities of leadership in a nonprofit.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DEGREES REQUIRE AT LEAST ONE UNIT OF FIELD EDUCATION?



Although programs may vary widely in structure, all have a similar goal: to provide students with “real-life” experience in ministry, a focused learning-in-practice that draws on classroom learning yet generates a different kind of knowing more akin to practical wisdom. It is a profound challenge to provide students with quality, in-depth, hands-on experience guided by one or more mature, thoughtful, experienced supervisors. The significant coordination involved requires that TFE directors themselves have a kind of practical wisdom: sites must be located or approved, supervisors trained, expectations clearly laid out, students’ vocational goals aligned with assignments, reflection groups organized, mentors assigned or approved, students’ learning monitored, and field sites evaluated. In addition, the TFE directors develop and teach, or collaborate with others to teach, various seminars or workshops for students on practical aspects of ministry, such as stewardship, staff supervision, and conflict resolution. Most do all of this with few resources. Remarkably, six out of ten directors are the only full-time employees in their offices, and it is probably safe to say that all directors consider their offices understaffed.

TFE directors' diverse comments epitomize the challenges faced in their daily work:

- Many field education sites do not afford students ample opportunities to engage in substantial ministry leadership roles. There is only so much one can learn by observing and not doing. Other sites may be tempted to use the students as cheap office or clerical help.
- Some students allow very little room for their own transformation, and I have to carefully place them in a community willing to challenge them.
- We have an uptick in our Hispanic Studies program, and have to be creative in finding enough ministry sites for them.
- Diverse student interests need a wider range of contexts for ministry, which we struggle to provide.
- It is often difficult to provide structured opportunities for ministry reflection for commuter students.
- Formation and educating for pastoral imagination is difficult when the student body is very diverse. Even in selecting the books or articles to read, it's difficult to address the needs of all the students in the class.

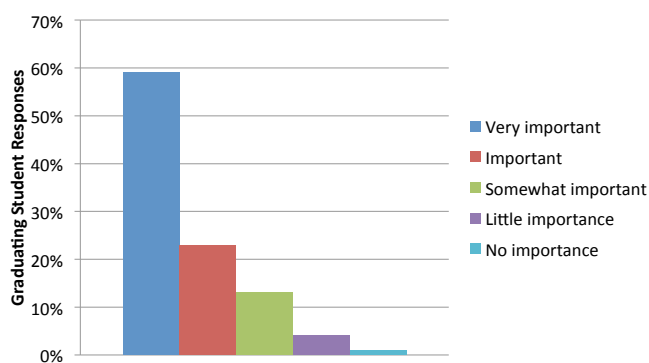
In the midst of these challenges, many directors struggle with the marginalization they feel within their institutions:

- The work of forming public leadership is heavy and needs more support within theological education. Most of our departments are under-resourced and underappreciated.
- It's hard for administration and faculty to fully appreciate the impact that field education has on students' learning, so we ask faculty to do some on-site visits and to teach some of the internship integration courses.
- We suffer from lack of administrative support for record keeping and communication.
- Some of our faculty don't believe that field education is important.
- There is a general lack of understanding of the field, including that it is (or should be) a rigorous academic and professional field.
- There are limited professional formation opportunities for contextual education professionals within theological education.
- Faculty must be constantly educated about field education. Most colleagues are unaware of what it takes to have a successful program, and what it means for the rest of the curriculum.

Directors don't, for a moment, doubt the critical importance of field education in preparing students for ministry. Asked where they would situate field education within the curriculum of their schools, 34 percent place it at the center, while 53 percent say it is important, but is not at the center. One in ten say it is on the periphery. It's not clear from this, however, whether they are indicating where they would place field education or merely noting where they perceive the faculty and administration would place it.

Recent graduates and alumni, though, leave no doubt as to where they would situate TFE. Graduating students have consistently reported in the Graduate Student Questionnaire (GSQ), a survey administered by the ATS to member schools, that field education was among the most important influences in their educational experience. Almost half (49 percent) said it was among their top three experiences in seminary. Over half (59 percent) of graduates from 2016–2017 said that field education or internship was very important, and another 23 percent said field education was important.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS FIELD EDUCATION/ INTERNSHIP TO YOUR SEMINARY EDUCATION?



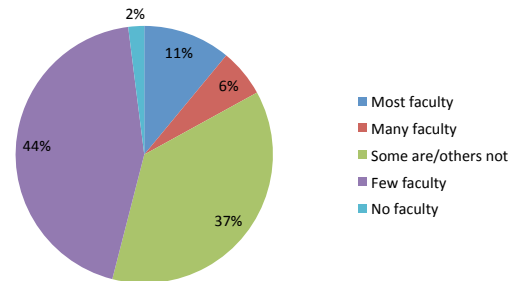
One of the areas in which recent graduates said their field education was particularly effective was in providing greater vocational clarity. A challenge field educators face is helping students, including some with little or no formal religious training, discover and develop their vocational calling. At the same time, students are attending seminaries and theological schools hoping to learn skills and develop talents that are applicable to a wide range of ministries, both in and out of the church. No longer can a seminary assume that all its M.Div. students are destined for congregational work or hoping for ordination upon graduation. Nearly three-quarters of the programs surveyed (74 percent) said that vocational discernment was an explicit part of the field education experience, while the remaining programs said it was an implicit part. We found ample evidence that TFE programs are gradually revising their structure to accommodate students' wider sense of vocation, even as many are still structured and designed to train clergy for congregations.

Changing demographics in and out of the church call for students to be adept at crossing racial, cultural, and class divides. Over one-third of schools (35 percent) require students to have a multicultural experience through either an internship or an immersion program, which may or may not be part of field education. Some of these sites are within the United States (Oglala Lakota Pine Ridge Reservation, along the U.S.-Mexican border, or in a congregation different from the identity and prior experience of the student), while others are courses or seminars that take students to other countries. Two-thirds of schools offer the possibility of students working in a multicultural church or ministry, but it's optional. Another 15 percent say they have limited opportunities for students to work in multicultural settings.

Another challenge some schools face is a growing population of non-native English-speaking students. The services available to them and their options for field education may be limited, but almost two-thirds of respondents (61 percent) say their schools have connections or contacts in these students' communities, and they usually find placements for them there. Over half the schools (53 percent) said they have English-speaking congregations and ministries that are glad to accept such students. Other services or assistance offered to non-native English-speaking students include language support to help students improve their English or accent reduction and designated mentors or staff specifically tasked with working with this population. "We are able to be responsive and flexible, depending on the formation needs of the student and his/her vocational direction," one person wrote. "If we do not have an immediate answer, we reach out to our community and denomination to troubleshoot the best solution and match."

Responsiveness to student diversity also includes offering appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities, such as hearing or visual impairments or mobility challenges. Field education personnel are, for the most part, confident they can help such students fulfill their field or contextual education requirements. Half the respondents (53 percent) said they have found placements for such students in the past, while 31 percent said they think they could find placements for such students. Another 16 percent said they either have never faced this need, or are doubtful they could help these students.

LEVEL OF FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN FIELD EDUCATION AT YOUR SCHOOL



Interviews with field education directors from a number of schools, and surveys and interviews with students and alumni who have had field or contextual education assignments, point to both the importance of good supervision and the challenge that schools face in recruiting, training, and overseeing good site supervisors.

Schools have similar requirements for site supervisors: Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) say they must have a certain number of years of experience in their ministry setting (three years seems to be the average), and 58 percent say they must have an advanced ministerial degree and must meet with, or be interviewed by, the field education director or staff. Some schools require that the individual be ordained, licensed, or credentialed in his/her denomination; others require that church judicatory approve of the site and site supervisor. Exceptions to these "rules" are often made for sites that are not congregations. For instance, if someone is working in a homeless shelter and outreach program, the professional experience of the director is important, but not ordination or a theology degree; in this case the student often is required to have a theological mentor in addition to the site supervisor.

The type of training a supervisor receives varies widely by school. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) are given a handbook laying out the schools' expectations, their responsibilities, and a student's role. Many schools (65 percent) require that the site supervisor attend one or more workshops or training sessions, and some, such as Boston University School of Theology, require a full course in the supervision of theology students. Schools are increasingly providing these training sessions online or via livestream to accommodate supervisors who live at a distance from campus (24 percent offer such options).

Schools have a variety of ways to entice busy clergy and other supervisors or make attendance at these seminars more attractive to them. They certainly don't do it for the money: eight out of ten schools do not pay their site supervisors, and others say it depends on the circumstances. One in ten do pay them, albeit a very modest amount, varying from a \$100 Amazon gift card to \$200–300 per semester or per year. If supervisors are also teaching in the classroom component of TFE, they are more likely to be paid as instructors. Some schools offer continuing education units to attendees, and others offer supervisors the opportunity to audit a course each semester. Nearly all offer lunch or dinner, and the opportunity to meet with fellow clergy and seminary faculty is a draw for many. Schools that do not make these sessions a requirement struggle with full participation, despite enticements.

Field/contextual education programs frequently struggle for faculty involvement, and directors often feel isolated from the real nexus of power and influence on campus, namely that of the academe. Required classes and field education can feel like parallel tracks in the curriculum, rather than an intertwining vine. Nearly half (46 percent) of directors say that few to no faculty are involved in their departments or programs, while only 17 percent say that many or most faculty are involved in contextual education. One field education director was even more direct, writing, "Some of our faculty don't believe that field education is important." The common practice on many campuses is to identify field or contextual education as the stepchild of theological education or to refer to the department as "second-class."

Field/contextual education programs frequently struggle for faculty involvement, and directors often feel isolated from the real nexus of power and influence on campus, namely that of the academe.

IV. Case Studies of Three Models for Theological Field Education

In the following section, we highlight three overarching models for structuring field education and provide a few illustrative case studies for each. These, and other schools like them, each have different levels of faculty engagement. In some schools where TFE is valued but not integrated, more faculty choose to connect in a variety of ways, but in cases where it is more deeply integrated, a more explicit and intentional mode of faculty engagement with contexts and vice versa takes precedence. But we found that where the curriculum shifts to make the context the primary site of learning, the role of the faculty shifts as well, more directly engaging the fruitful learning-in-practice at the heart of student experience. Such dynamic changes portend a growing intuitive or explicit desire to heal the “wound,” as Sarah Coakley calls it, wrought by dividing the “academic” and the “pastoral” in the preparation of ministry leaders. To the extent that this healing is successful, we argue, theology will matter, deeply informing the practical-prophetic engagement of ministry leaders in the midst of the greatest challenges facing the world today.

Model One: Center of Gravity in the Classroom

In the majority of schools, the traditional structure of TFE is in place. In these settings, the faculty and curricula of the degree programs are distinct, if not separate, from the staff of TFE and its co-curricular offerings. This is especially true in university-related divinity schools, because they tend to have the highest cultural commitment and structural alignment with the academic world, structured by its specialized disciplines, modes of rational inquiry, and practices of promotion based on research and writing. In the overall ecology of theological schools, some highly academic schools are indeed needed, and also are often the schools with well-regarded doctoral programs. Still, even with that, our argument about the kind of knowing learned in practice is salient, even for doctoral training—something a few programs, like Vanderbilt’s Program in Theology and Practice, have discovered. Similarly, in some schools with a more traditional structure, we found remarkable efforts to develop and deepen the commitment to and quality of TFE. Some key themes common to these schools include:

- *Experimenting with cohorts:* Developing sites where groups of students can be placed together, or in adjacent sites, and come together for reflection on their work;
- *Ownership of the distinctive educational contribution:* Especially on the part of the administration, raising the profile of TFE goes hand in hand with articulation of its significance to effective ministry preparation;
- *Moving towards greater curricular integration:* Developing a deeper commitment to TFE often causes broader thinking about the alignment of various pieces of student formation.



Princeton Seminary

J. Christie Wilson, a pioneer in field work at Princeton Seminary, was the first person to propose that experiential learning be called “field education,” not field work, to emphasize the learning that takes place in the field. Princeton was at the forefront of developing the practices now common across theological schools and continues to provide innovative examples of experiential learning that help students integrate their classroom learning into real-world settings.

One of the unique options for field education at Princeton is the Teaching Ministry Program, designed for those who plan on teaching adult ministries in the church or in higher education. The program helps students take what is learned in the academy and translate and apply it to the Christian formation of adults in the context of the congregation (or sometimes campus ministries or school settings). The student plans, implements, teaches, and evaluates workshops, retreats, or a series of classes that he or she designs to further the faith development of adults. Students are assigned an experienced teacher and expert in the field to mentor them and are supervised by the minister of the congregation where they are placed.

A thriving international program at Princeton offers students the opportunity to complete some of their field education requirements by working in congregations, schools, seminaries, orphanages, or agricultural projects in a dozen countries, including Brazil, France, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and South Africa. The goals of the program are to create a broader understanding of the mission of the church, greater global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and skills in intercultural dialogue and ministry. Doing theology in these varied contexts challenges students to rethink their conceptions of Christ and the Western church and to explore the theological implications of religious pluralism.



Princeton has taken advantage of several partnerships with denominations and with local churches and judicatories. An Urban Leadership Program in Trenton, New Jersey, places 10 students each year in urban churches. Although assigned to several different churches, they meet as a cohort for theological reflection, to review case studies, and to discuss social issues impacting their churches. The seminary also has long-standing relationships with urban churches in New York City, some of which host several seminary

interns, which allows for peer learning and reflection. One of these, The Brick Presbyterian Church on Manhattan's Upper East Side, has pioneered a student ministers program offering a distinctive and robust model of peer learning. A lay committee, in conversation with pastors, interviews students and selects three or four each spring. They begin in the fall, engaging in the life of the congregation over the academic year. They each rotate through a variety of leadership roles and experience a few in depth. Students are expected to spend Wednesdays at Brick, where they are included in regular staff meetings, participate in seminars with pastors or other congregational leaders on concrete ministry topics, and have one-on-one mentoring time with Doug King, the pastor who leads the program. On Sundays they participate in worship, youth activities, and other congregational events. The congregation intentionally focuses on supporting vocational discernment, especially around congregational leadership. One student, Ashley, noted that this was the biggest gift for her: "I thought I might be told, 'You'd better hold onto your day job', but instead I could explore everything in a safe way, and now I'm ready to move into ministry." Students also value travel time together, when they "chew on" their experiences in the classroom at Princeton and in their learning and leadership at Brick.

Two other distinctive cohort programs in which some Princeton students are placed are the Incubator in Philadelphia and Mosaic in New Jersey. Mosaic was started as part of a Young Clergy Initiative grant from the United Methodist Church of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. Trey Wince, lead pastor at the originating church, runs the program in partnership with Dr. Kenda Dean, professor of practical theology at Princeton. "Mosaic came out of a realization," Wince commented, "watching students going into pastorates armed with theological prowess, but getting steamrolled when they became pastors. They were,



in essence, small business managers of small churches—making schedules, hiring and firing staff, understanding the economics of their organizations, etc." He realized how ill-equipped many seminary students were to take on such practical administrative leadership.

The essence of the program is that students are placed, two by two, in small pastor-less churches in the Conference; either Wince or the district supervisor becomes their site supervisor. The students are selected and paired with great care—Wince looks for individuals who have complementary gifts and experiences. "It's a Rubik's Cube," he noted. "We're trying to find the best students, pair them with another student who complements their gifts, and pair them with a church." Students are given three to four trainings or retreats each academic year, one of them a preaching boot camp. Each makes a two-year commitment to work in his or her assigned church and is paid \$1,000 a month. Most of the churches are two-point charges; currently there are 15 students leading 14 small churches. A retired elder comes monthly to each church to lead communion.

There are specific requirements for the churches as well. The temptation may be to put students in the smallest churches, "But that's not a good rubric," said Wince. "Those are often the toxic churches, and we want

students to come out of this more prepared and excited about ministry. If we put them in a church that chews up pastors, it will take them out.” If things work out for the church, it may continue with Mosaic and get two new students after the initial placement. One church found that its attendance increased enough that it was able to hire its own full-time pastor.

There is an unintended consequence: about half the students are not United Methodists when they’re selected for Mosaic, but they join the United Methodist Church as a result of their participation. Some go on to become candidates in the local Conference.

The Incubator Program, begun by Rev. Ruth Santa-Grace, executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, is similar in some ways to Mosaic, except that students are placed in strong mid-size churches where there are pastors. Students are assigned in pairs to work in nonprofits connected to the congregation, such as an at-risk youth program, a hospitality ministry, or an adult education program. All Incubator students meet at least monthly for reflection and debriefing and to be together as a cohort, with time specifically spent discussing models

for nonprofits, sacred and public spaces for ministry, and new modes of being a church in the twenty-first century. Students receive a stipend made up of contributions from the church, the Presbytery, and Princeton Seminary.

One student, Andrew McGibbon, a third year M.Div./MSW (master of social work) student from Princeton, is working at the Church on the Mall in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. It is literally a church set in a shopping mall, next door to Legoland. His responsibilities include developing a youth program and ministry outreach to youth in crisis (who hang out at the mall). McGibbon remarked about the value of having a classmate as his colleague on this assignment. “We hit it off, it was really good to have someone to bounce things off of, a good opportunity for a spiritual friendship with someone so unlike me (one is white, the other black, one gay and the other straight). We carpoled and talked about our call, race issues, and ministry.”

About Princeton Theological Seminary

Princeton Theological Seminary, founded in 1812, is the first seminary established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Its mission is to educate leaders for the Church of Jesus Christ worldwide. Its more than 500 students and 11,000 graduates from all 50 states and many nations around the world serve Christ in churches, schools and universities, healthcare institutions, nonprofit agencies, initiatives for social justice, mission agencies, and the emerging ministries of the church in the twenty-first century.



Princeton Seminary students at Habitat for Humanity worksite

General Theological Seminary

M.Div. students at General Seminary, an Episcopal seminary in New York City, are guided through three years of formation and training in a careful sequence of courses that accompany six semesters of experiential learning and contextual education. It wasn't always this well done. Prior to the Very Rev. Kurt Dunkle being installed as dean and president in 2013, students were essentially on their own in finding placements, and no classes other than pastoral care were integrated into contextual education. Now students are guided in each step through their formation into the priesthood.

In their first year, the Foundation Year, the groundwork for students' priestly identity is begun by hearing guests reflect on how they experience their priestly roles in the world. In the second semester, students examine their past experiences with parish life and worship and begin to imagine and discern in what type of parish or ministry they hope to work in the future. Students go out in twos and threes to visit 10 to 12 congregations in the New York metro area, to have a better sense of the breadth of variety present in the church. Before each visit, they check the church's website, talk with the priest, and get an idea of the congregation. After each visit, students report on and analyze their experiences in practical theology and ministry class.

During their second semester, students meet with Rev. Emily Watcher, director of integrative programs and assistant professor of practical theology, to discern options for church placements. "What do you need? What do you need to learn and who do you need to meet to further your formation?" Watcher asks each student. Each student identifies three churches as candidates, and must apply and interview at each. In their second year, the Challenge Year, students



spend 8 to 10 hours a week, uncompensated, for a total of 24 weeks, at their field education sites. The focus is on gaining a better understanding of the scope and depth of ministry and their developing priestly identities. They are not expected to run the Sunday school or print the church bulletins, but to watch the priest, interact with parishioners, and lead and assess worship services. As part of this placement they take a two-credit integrative seminar in which topics such as church growth, stewardship, and church conflict are explored in more depth. "I hope they have conflict," Watcher noted with a laugh. "I teach adaptive leadership, and seeing conflict as a healthy thing helps them to have the language to work through it."

In the final year, the Wisdom Year, students are expected to synthesize their theological education in "real-world" parishes, where they are employed 20 hours a week as part-time employees. The field education office assists in identifying sites, but each student must interview at three sites and then apply for a position. They receive \$20,000 in compensation, plus vacation days (which they negotiate), and a contract that outlines their agreed-upon responsibilities and expectations.

Each semester, students take a two-credit integrative seminar relevant to the goals of their ministry year. Other required classes are carefully sequenced over the

three years to introduce subjects and materials that are appropriate and applicable to the challenges and issues students will be confronting in their field education placements.

The Junior or Foundation Year is, indeed, when the foundation is built. Students take courses in Old and New Testament, Christian theology, spirituality, and church history. In the Challenge Year, these areas of study are brought into dialogue with the church and a changing world in such courses as canon law, pastoral care, Christian ethics, preaching, and liturgy. In the final Wisdom Year, courses such as Theological Ethics and Social Practice seek to build students' formation as Christian leaders and to further integrate their overall academic work with the practical challenges of ministry. Because the Wisdom Year demands a great deal of students, the course load is adjusted accordingly—most of the required classes are completed in the first and second years of seminary.

Recent graduates from General Seminary testify to the value of the Wisdom Year, and more than one described it as a residency year, contrasting that with the internship in the second year. "Part of the gift of the Wisdom Year is

that there is something about receiving a paycheck. It's a responsibility and bridge to what I'm doing now in a parish," Rev. Charlie Bauer, now the curate at Hickory Neck Episcopal Church in Virginia, remarked. "Finding that pastoral voice takes an adjustment, and a normal internship would not have given that to me. I was on staff, as an associate...I felt very well prepared for ministry. I can't yet remember a moment when I thought I had no idea I would be doing this."

A third-year student, John Shirley, commented on his responsibilities: "I needed the day-to-day experiences (of parish life) the most...hospital visits, parish finances, pastoral care, liturgical planning, cleaning bathrooms...I love the people, the diversity, the fact that there's deep spirituality amidst the poverty. The palpability of people's faith is evident...It's been deeply satisfying." Typically, in the Episcopal Church, a recent seminary graduate would serve for two or three years as a curate under a priest before being given his/her own parish. "This is like one of those years," remarked Shirley.

About General Seminary

The mission of General Seminary, chartered by General Convention in 1817, is to educate and form leaders, both lay and ordained, for the church in a changing world. Church leaders conceived a theological institution that would belong to the whole Episcopal Church, where students from all parts of the country would come to prepare for ordination. Since 1822, the Seminary has graduated over 7,000, and today living alumni/ae total around 2,400.



General Seminary, Blessing of the animals

The Saint Paul Seminary, University of St. Thomas

The mission of The Saint Paul Seminary, situated high on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, has always been to prepare men for priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, a challenging task in our rapidly changing culture and society. Pastoral formation takes place over four years of study and parish assignments, as seminarians experience both the depth of spiritual and personal formation and the breadth of ministry they will engage in upon ordination.

Students are placed in a single teaching parish for all four years of the M.Div. program in order to build and sustain relationships, engage with parishioners and the worshipping community, and create accountability. They are expected to spend at least 40 hours a month in their parishes, and their responsibilities are thematically divided according to what is being taught or covered that semester. They meet regularly with their supervising pastors and once a month with their parish committees. During J-terms, however, they are exposed to the wider church through studies in Ireland, Jerusalem, and Rome.



The focus of each semester is carefully sequenced to build on the foundation of the previous semester and summer. The first semester is focused on how a parish works, looking at structures, committees, and so on. In Theology I, students take part in a diocesan practicum in which they

“I’m more of a visual learner. It’s one thing to do all these readings for class, but if I can’t apply it, it’s hard to hold on to.” - Deacon Peter Ly

are assigned to interview different priests about life and ministry and interview the diocesan archivist about the history of the diocese. One faculty member equated it to an engagement period, when you get to know your fiancé in a deeper way. “This is the diocese you are going to marry—you’d better get to know it!”

The second semester’s focus is on listening skills, honed while visiting the sick and nursing home residents. The third semester is centered around passing on our faith, teaching children and youth. The fourth semester moves to teaching adults who will be confirmed into the faith through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Semester five focuses on diversity in all its breadth, including religious diversity and Catholic social teachings. By the sixth semester, students are ready to become deacons and to observe and participate in the celebration of the sacraments. By this point, they know their congregation very well and understand the issues that concern them. In their seventh semester, they practice preaching and presiding at the parish. In their eighth and final semester the focus is on administering a parish, including the supervision of staff and parish committees, stewardship, and financial management.

Seminarians’ summers are also designed to sequentially build upon earlier learning in the classroom and parish and to provide exposure to at least three different parishes. In the summer prior to their first academic year, students focus on evangelism and outreach, going door-to-door with church staff and parishioners, meeting their neighbors. A student’s second summer (between his first and second year) includes eight weeks of clinical pastoral education through the seminary’s custom-designed Spiritual Pastoral Ministry (SPM) program. SPM concentrates on the spiritual, liturgical, and pastoral elements of the pastoral care of individuals and the community. The summer between the second and third year, the focus is on Spanish language and cultural immersion in Mexico or a Spanish-speaking parish, and

between the third and fourth years, students serve for 10 weeks as deacons in parishes other than their teaching parishes.

Although integration between the classroom and parish ministry is the goal and purpose of this careful sequence of practicums and programs, integration continues to be a challenge, Sr. Charlotte Berres, CSJ, associate director of pastoral formation, commented. “We have to be very intentional about telling faculty what we are doing in the parish, and ask them to integrate that into their courses. Sometimes it happens, and sometimes it doesn’t.”

Deacon Peter Ly is two months away from graduation and ordination, and he’s ready and eager to begin his work as a priest in the Diocese of Saint Paul. What stand out for him in his many field and parish experiences over the last four years are the opportunities he has had to connect with and minister to individuals whose lives have intersected with his. He was briefly introduced to one man after mass one day, but then serendipitously ran into him again when he was out walking in the neighborhood. Soon the two men were regularly walking together, and the man opened up about the pain of his recent divorce, his relocation in a new neighborhood, and his despair in starting over. Ly was able to be present with him, literally walking alongside him in his journey and encouraging him to see how God was at work in his life.

One of the things Ly has appreciated about his studies at Saint Paul are the efforts professors have made to bring the practical and experiential into the classroom. “I’m more of a visual learner. It’s one thing to do all these readings for class, but if I can’t apply it, it’s hard to hold onto it,” he commented. “We do a lot of role-playing in class, and although we may joke about how artificial it is sometimes, in the end we find it very

helpful to act out real scenarios in the classroom. It helps to remove some of the fear and nervousness of the unknown and to apply the theoretical when we move into real-life situations.”

Rev. T. J. McKenzie, a 2015 graduate, is now solo priest at a changing parish on the East side of Saint Paul. The World War II parish members are dying, and their children have moved away. In their place have come immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia, primarily Vietnamese and Hmong. Some of the new residents are Catholic, but prefer to go to ethnic parishes outside the neighborhood. The church runs a school (K–8, 140 students) and a preschool (70 children), but new residents struggle to pay the tuition. McKenzie wishes he had had more training while in seminary in administrating a parish and running a parish school.



Rev. T.J. McKenzie

McKenzie says that his summer assignments as a deacon in various parishes were probably the most essential for his learning how to be a priest. The assignments gave him practical, real experience in the rhythm of parish life, whether that was helping couples prepare for marriage, officiating at funerals, or assisting at mass. “The lifestyle and schedule were so different; you don’t have office hours,” he remarked. “You have to learn how to lead a balanced life in the midst of all the demands. But looking back, the biggest thing I would change [about my seminary education]: The very first time I spent an extended time in a parish was after I was ordained as a deacon, so that was in my third year. I’d allow people to spend more time in a parish earlier in their training.”

About The Saint Paul Seminary

The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity has a twofold mission: as a seminary, to prepare men for ordination to the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church; and as a graduate school of theology, to prepare women and men for service and leadership in the Church and society. Since its founding in 1894, Saint Paul has ordained over 3,000 priests. There are currently more than 80 seminarians from 17 dioceses, one institute of religious life, and one religious order in formation at The Saint Paul Seminary.

Model Two: Classroom Work and Field Education Sites are Deeply Integrated

In some schools a deeper commitment to TFE, along with some other precipitating factor(s), leads to an overhaul of the programmatic and curricular process of ministerial formation to deeply integrate classroom and context. In both cases below, a highly respected senior faculty member in Bible (Luke Timothy Johnson at Candler, Joel Green at Fuller) articulated the intellectual significance of what is learned in TFE. Often, because of their academic formation and because of the promotion and tenure requirements tied to academic productivity, faculty members are resistant to becoming more involved. So, in these cases, it was crucial that respected faculty leaders led the way and made the case for change. After all, with deeper integration of TFE, faculty must make room in the curriculum for new and different courses, share course design and teaching of various sorts with practitioners from contextual sites, and adjust pedagogical assumptions, among other substantial changes. Such a commitment on the part of the institution to deep integration raises the profile of TFE, and often raises its leadership to a more central place of parity and power alongside other faculty. Moving to a more deeply integrative model entails a crucial shift in the accountability of the whole faculty to a different kind of formation for public ministry leadership. Some key themes across these schools include:

- *Shift in role of TFE from appendage to spine:* The recognition of an integrative kind of knowing—what we call practical wisdom—means that unfolding TFE experiences often become a spine or nerve center connecting the curricular and co-curricular whole;
- *Alignment with student callings in the world:* When concern for teaching academic areas shifts to student learning, the orientation of the whole shifts to dynamic engagement with the world and the various callings for which students are preparing;
- *Investment in long-term partnerships:* Heightened concern for and centrality of TFE leads to deeper investment in partner contexts/organizations, supervisors/mentors, and patterns of shared work in teaching and learning, strengthening all sides.

Fuller Theological Seminary

After a meteoric rise from upstart evangelical seminary in the 1940s to the world's largest seminary in the 2000s, Fuller Theological Seminary is well on its way to a near-total reorientation of its educational enterprise. Rebuilding the engine while driving full speed is no mean feat, but for most existing seminaries it is the option before them if they wish to survive and even thrive. Broader challenges impacted Fuller's move: With nearly a one-third drop in student enrollment over the last decade and rising student debt, the seminary found itself facing an increasingly unsustainable financial model. In addition, an in-depth alumni study found significant disconnect between the more traditional academic curricula and the challenging and diverse ministry contexts in which graduates found themselves working. After a failed curricular revision process in the mid-2000s, a new leadership team was formed in 2012 to again seek change. Rather than merely reducing credits to make the programs more affordable, key leaders saw an opportunity to redesign core programs around leadership formation rather than academic, discipline-based learning.

An "Educational Models Team" led planning for the changes. Membership was drawn from every division, including respected leaders from Bible and theology. Two particular leaders were crucial, both from the Bible area: Joel Green, a well-regarded senior faculty member, became a champion for the changes—a crucial move for gaining wide faculty buy-in. And Love Sechrest, a junior faculty member with extensive executive experience in the corporate world, led the new models work. Dramatic challenges face the faculty as they transition to these newly redesigned curricula. Like most faculty of theological schools, they remain organized by academic disciplines (theology, Bible, history, missions), although these silos no longer organize their shared work within the curricula. However, as Sechrest put it, the "misalignment between the curricular arrangement and the organizational structure creates organizational inefficiencies, producing stress." It remains to be seen if they will do away with traditional faculty divisions or departments. In fact, they currently have parallel structures—the long-standing departments divided by academic disciplines, and new interdisciplinary teams who design and lead the four integrative courses that focus on vocation.

A focus on practices—vocational and leadership—helped focus the rebuilding. Vocational practices include worship and prayer, community,



Love Sechrest, Associate Professor
of New Testament

and mission. Leadership practices, cleverly encompassing traditional academic areas, include interpreting, theologizing, ministering, and contextualizing. Traditional courses in Bible, history, theology, ministry, and mission were recast and became less about mastering a body of knowledge and more about using classic disciplines for the sake of leadership in a changing global context for ministry. While reducing the overall credits dramatically, Fuller added a new backbone of four integrative vocational formation courses with the goal of forming agile leaders for a changing church and world.



The first-year “touchstone” course taken by all masters students flips theory and practice by taking seriously the changing nature of students. They arrive with a looser sense of vocation, unsure about direction and in need of immersion in vocational discernment, spiritual practices, and self-assessment in conversation with peers and practitioner-mentors. This course embodies—and launches—a whole curricular shift to a focus on practices of vocation and leadership. The three subsequent vocational courses—focus on worship (relation to God), community (relationship to church), and mission (relationship to the world)—include “vocation and formation” groups with the same practitioner-mentor throughout. Each course asks the fundamental question: “How do you envision your call to God’s mission in the world?” Along with this, students do a nine-

month “apprenticeship,” which they have support in locating and structuring. These can be “in a church or a marketplace, nonprofit, or mission organization” and their design allows students to integrate their studies with an exploration of calling.

In order to launch a conversation about change, Academic Dean Scott Cormode got the whole faculty to view the lecture by Clayton Christensen on the Internet as a disruptive innovation in higher education. In light of the major changes in the world and in education, they shifted the whole goal of the school to focus on “educating the church for the world.” Key to real-world engagement, President Labberton appointed a new dean, Tod Bolsinger, a pastor and professor of theology, to tend the four key integration courses and to guide integrative course planning in partnership with faculty, ministry practitioners, and their diverse contexts of ministry. These partnerships allow for an ongoing grounding in real-world challenges. For example, a Latinx immigrant student working in a new-immigrant Korean Methodist church applied for funding to support a social justice internship project that mobilizes and trains mentors to provide college preparation for girls, helping them overcome significant obstacles.

About Fuller Theological Seminary

Founded in 1947, Fuller is one of the world’s most influential evangelical institutions, the largest multid denominational seminary, and a leading voice for faith, civility, and justice in the global church and the wider culture. With deep roots in orthodoxy and branches in innovation, Fuller is committed to forming Christian women and men to be faithful, courageous, innovative, collaborative, and fruitful leaders who will make an exponential impact for Jesus in any context.

Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Candler has invested heavily in their contextual education program, making it a signature part of the school's identity and the centerpiece of the master of divinity curriculum. Luke Timothy Johnson, Candler's Robert W. Woodruff Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Christian Origins and a key contributor to the development of the program as it exists today, notes that the school's "long commitment to contextual education certainly exhibits a certain pedagogical conviction: namely, that people learn theology faster, and better, and more deeply while engaged in practice."

Candler's master of divinity curriculum requires two units of contextual education—Con Ed for short—which are taken during the first and second years of the program. The program integrates hands-on ministry experience with learning and reflection in the classroom, where students, supervisors, and faculty come together to process and learn from the ministries and contexts in which students are engaged.

Prior to arrival on campus for their first semester, students choose a contextual education site from a pre-approved list. The options include nonprofit organizations, social service ministries, and clinical settings: a refugee resettlement agency, a homeless shelter, a women's prison, a juvenile detention center, an HUD-supported retirement community, a hospital, and a transitional center for women nearing the end of their prison sentences. A cohort of 8 to 12 students is assigned to each site, and there is no stipend. All first-year students take a three-credit pastoral care class that is organized by site assignment and thus contextual to where students are assigned to work.



Several Con Ed I sites involve students in working with refugees. The city of Clarkston, Georgia, located just outside of Atlanta, is one of the most diverse square miles in the country. More than 20 years ago, the U.S. State Department identified the community as a good place to resettle refugees, and today, almost a third of the residents are foreign-born. Candler students have gotten to know the community in Clarkston through several Con Ed sites that serve refugee communities: Lutheran Services of Georgia's Refugee and Immigration Services, where students are involved in a cultural orientation program for recently arrived refugees, a family mentoring program, and employment services; Friends of Refugees, a nonprofit organization that provides the city's only English classes available to refugee women with small children; and two area congregations that support refugee families with cultural mentoring and after-school programs.

One of the most popular options for contextual education is work in a nearby women's prison. Some students, in fact, come to Candler because they specifically want to work in prison ministry or criminal justice advocacy. Involvement in the prison has directly benefited prison residents as well. After spending time as a student chaplain with women serving time in prison, a Candler M.Div./MPH (master of public health) student with a focus on theology and public health helped to launch a project

called “Motherhood Beyond Bars.” This program offers nine weeks of childbirth education and prenatal yoga at the Helms Facility (which houses all pregnant inmates in the Georgia prison system) and a six-month health class for newly delivered inmates at Lee Arrendale State Prison that covers postpartum holistic health and parenting from prison. These programs are now operated primarily by students affiliated with Emory’s Rollins School of Public Health, but they would not exist if not for Candler’s contextual education program.



Some students come to Candler because they specifically want to work in prison ministry

Because Candler has a critical mass of students working in prisons, this work has become part of the institutional culture and the school now offers a concentration in criminal justice ministries. Students who have served in previous years via Con Ed may return to Arrendale to distribute Christmas presents or teach in a theology certificate program for incarcerated women, and Arrendale’s Voices of Hope gospel choir performs annually at Candler.

Each year, 10–12 Candler students serve as chaplain interns at the Campbell-Stone Apartments, an HUD-supported affordable housing retirement community with

two locations in the metro Atlanta area. Each student serves a “parish” of 45–55 residents, getting to know them over the course of the year and providing worship, pastoral care, and advocacy for the elderly in these communities. Residents know they get a new crop of chaplains each fall, and they eagerly wait to show them the ropes and tell them their life stories.

Students choose an ecclesial site for their second-year Con Ed placements. This is usually a congregation, although there are a steady number of students who work with a campus ministry, a prison chaplaincy, or other ministry setting in which they can gain experience in core practices of ministry—administration, worship and preaching, pastoral care, mission and outreach, and religious education. No more than three students are assigned per site.

In the second year, students take part in a bi-weekly Con Ed II reflection group facilitated by a teaching supervisor. Students are also required to take one Contextual Education Elective (CEE) course. These are offered across the full range of the curriculum (Bible, church history, theology, etc.) and are designed to be integrative, so that students explicitly bring learning from the class into their site work and vice versa. This class can satisfy requirements in another subject area in addition to the CEE requirement. Faculty design one or more CEEs that intersect with their primary disciplines, and most faculty members teach one every three years.

One of the most striking and unique things about the Candler program is that all faculty—regardless of department and position—are on the three-year cycle to teach in the contextual education program. There has been some resistance on the part of faculty as they stretch into this model, but a great deal of enthusiasm as well. Across more than two decades, the centrality of contextual education to Candler’s curriculum has

become an established part of the school's ethos, and during the hiring process all new faculty hires are made aware of the expectation to participate in Con Ed, helping to ensure the faculty's continued commitment to the approach.

The outcome is clear: Faculty members bring their academic expertise to their Con Ed integrative seminars and, in turn, they take their experience with field education back into their classrooms. For example, in a CEE course on the history of the clergy, Professor of Church History and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Jonathan Strom assigns readings on models of the ministerial office in different time periods. Students then conduct oral history interviews with clergy and laypeople in their ministry settings with the aim of identifying change and continuity in the role of clergy in a particular local church. A clear benefit of this model is that faculty and students together engage contexts and ministry experiences beyond the traditional classroom, thus helping to build relationships between faculty advisors and student advisees.

About Candler School of Theology

Candler School of Theology is part of Emory University and one of 13 seminaries of the United Methodist Church. It was founded with a vision not only to serve present congregations, but to envision and bring into being the church as it could or, indeed, should be. Seventy percent of the 8,200 living alumni serve as pastors in churches, while others minister in colleges, hospitals, the military, and social service organizations. Over 400 students representing 39 denominations and 12 different countries are currently enrolled.



One of the most striking and unique things about the Candler program is that all faculty-regardless of department and position-are on the three year cycle to teach in the contextual education program.

Model Three: Center of Gravity in the Community Context

One of the most remarkable trends emerging from our study is the functional disappearance of the need for TFE in some cases. We draw these cases together into Model Three because they all share a commitment to centering the formation of leaders for ministry in local contexts, congregations, and nonprofit organizations. In part, this shift from a more classroom-based, university model has happened by virtue of traditions—like Vineyard—that fundamentally feel the local congregation and the model of apprenticeship is the more historic, effective, and faithful mode of forming Christians for their work in church and society. Others have gone in this direction because of (usually a gradual) embrace of fully online ministry programs that expect students to be in and make use of ministry contexts as a primary learning context for their whole program. These changes (as evidenced by the case studies below) have often been driven by a combination of institutional instability and enrollment decline, alongside convictions about the formative power of learning-in-practice. Their pedagogical commitments most robustly engage in forming the wisdom leaders needed for practical-prophetic engagement with the biggest challenges of our time.

- *Integrative continuity of learning-in-practice:* The real-world setting invites a pedagogical shift so that faculty, and their courses, are intentionally responsive to the learning-in-practice students engage in every day;
- *Real stakes in leadership challenges, risks, outcomes:* In comparison to a typical classroom and curriculum, here students try out their learning in real time, with real people, with real risks and consequences, which deepens learning.

Lexington Theological Seminary

Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky has very old roots, but new branches and fruit. Begun as a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) College of the Bible in 1865, the Seminary acquired its own charter in 1878 and was renamed Lexington Theological Seminary in 1965. It established the first chair of religious education in the country, was the first seminary in the United States to offer clinical pastoral training as part of its curriculum, and instituted one of the first courses on ecumenism. Today it is intentionally ecumenical, with students, faculty, staff, and trustees from a number of denominations.

It continues that pioneering spirit by being one of the first schools in the country to transition to a non-residential model, moving to an online curriculum in 2010 and selling its campus in 2013. Dr. Loida Martell, vice president for academic affairs and dean, remarked, “Some say technology is the answer—we need more students and we’ll get access to students by going online. Often what they’re doing is taking a program and simply putting it up online; they’re using the old paradigm. They’re taking old wine and putting it in new wineskins, and it doesn’t work. At Lexington, we built a whole new curriculum from the ground up around distance education.”

The new curriculum flipped the locus of learning from the classroom to the congregation. This, of course, upends the traditional model of contextual or field education, for all learning takes place in the context of ministry.

Currently there are 64 students enrolled in the M.Div. program, a third over the age of 40 and in their second careers. Many, but not all, were working in churches when they began their studies. The draw for students is flexibility in the program, the fact that they don’t have to leave their home congregations, jobs, or families in order to begin their degrees, and the requirement that students get hands-on training in a local congregation.

Barbara Blodgett, assistant professor in pastoral leadership, commented, “The model invites the local congregation to become fully integrated partners in the education of clergy, thus helping to nurture and mentor students into a richer understanding of the rhythms of pastoral life while upholding the seminary’s tradition of rigorous, spirit-filled academic preparation and critical thinking.”



President Charisse Gillet

The curriculum is built around developing competencies in key subjects or areas, not simply passing classes. Every course should contribute to the formation for ministry and the practice of ministry, while providing a critical foundation for theological reflection. Professors develop learning goals centered upon congregationally focused assignments. For example, if students are taking a course on Christology, they will be required to show not only that they understand the theology but also why it is important or relevant for the life of the believer. Students may be required to then preach (and videotape) a sermon that further develops these themes, or teach a Sunday school class on the subject. They are then evaluated on how well they communicated the essence and application of Christology to their congregations.

Students choose a mentor, usually a pastor of another local church, who volunteers to spend an average of an hour a week with the student in theological reflection and then assists the school in evaluating the student's competency in core areas. This mentor is in addition to the supervising pastor at the student's assigned church.



Students come from across the country and overseas, although most are located in Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, and Ohio. Most classes are asynchronous, so students can listen to lectures as their time permits. Despite the distance that may separate them, students

form strong relationships with each other, particularly through covenant groups that meet online. These groups help students integrate coursework with their personal lives and the lives of their churches, as well as aid in spiritual formation and vocational discernment. The groups are co-led by a professor and an experienced pastor. On-campus intensive classes, held each January and June, are another way that students meet classmates and the faculty. (M.Div. students are required by the ATS to have one-third or 24 credits in face-to-face instruction.)

The benefits for students of this contextual-based learning goes beyond bridging the academic and the experiential; it also makes financial sense. Lexington's previous curriculum cost an estimated \$27,310 per year, and the current cost of attendance per year is \$12,460 for full-time students. Students can keep working and attend school on their own schedules, so they are not adding living costs to their tuition costs. Because courses are taught in three-day intensives or month-long online modules, students can register course by course rather than registering (and paying) for an entire semester at a time. This has helped end students' dependency on student loans because they no longer need a large lump sum up front—they can, in essence, pay as they go. Anecdotally, staff members hear of congregations who are supplying scholarship funds to help defray tuition costs, again because it is a reasonable fee.

“If I hadn't had the opportunity to study mostly remotely, I couldn't have done it,” Rachel Leslie commented, reflecting the fact that she has been stationed overseas for most of her studies. One of her placement sites was an international church. Although she was supervised by the pastor and a ministerial committee at this church, her home pastor in the United States was her designated mentor throughout her studies. He provided consistent support and

guidance, and she found it valuable to have a mentor who could be objective in his feedback.

Most of Leslie's classes included a hands-on experience or assignment, whether it was teaching a class on the subject she was learning, writing a sermon, doing a congregational analysis, or writing a narrative budget for the church. Her capstone project will be on interreligious engagement as part of Christian formation, a topic that will inform her future ministry as she moves on to another overseas assignment.

"It has been challenging and sometimes a bit lonely to be in my own context," she noted. "Despite the geographic distance, I have been able to develop strong relationships with both faculty and students. Faculty are generous in offering assistance and willing to speak with students by phone, Skype, or other convenient platforms. Friendships with students



Rachel Leslie

are cemented during intensives at LTS, when we break bread together and catch up with one another. Students also have a private Facebook group where we ask questions, seek advice about classes and assignments, vent frustrations, express our joys and concerns, ask for prayers, and even share inside jokes." Leslie has previously taken online classes at a number of other institutions, but at LTS, she said, "I have found that the community connections that LTS students share are unrivaled."

About Lexington Theological Seminary

Lexington Seminary, founded in 1865, is an accredited graduate theological institution of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It is intentionally ecumenical in its welcome and currently has 126 students enrolled. The Seminary's vision is rooted in the recognition that a twenty-first-century church must change if it is to remain relevant and capable of educating and sustaining clergy in transformative, life-giving ministries. The Seminary offers a unique family of programs, with flexibility to meet the diverse needs of people who wish to pursue a theological education.

Meadville Lombard Theological School

“At Meadville Lombard, the core of our education model is that we do not think ourselves into new ways of being. Rather, we act ourselves into new ways of thinking and being. So the learning that is transformation is grounded in acting first, not thinking about it.” —Former Provost and Professor of Religion and Society Sharon Welch, now affiliated faculty

Meadville Lombard, one of two Unitarian Universalist seminaries in the country (the other is Starr King in Berkeley), in 2009 radically changed the way it organized and delivered its curriculum, moving from a residential format to a low-residency, integrated education model rooted in contextual learning—learning by doing. Two years later it sold its campus in Hyde Park to the University of Chicago and moved to South Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago.

A key component of Meadville’s program is that students are engaged in a field education site throughout their M.Div. program, the first year in a social service agency (students have worked in homeless shelters, food pantries, nursing homes, and after-school programs, and with refugees) and the second and third years in a congregation.

A second component, which is built into the fabric of the curriculum, is an emphasis on cross-cultural and multiracial leadership pushing students (and perhaps their congregations) to cross boundaries and engage with the “other.” As seminary leaders note: “We created a curriculum that requires our students to interact in a multicultural and interreligious setting to gain experience, context, and ideas for creating congregational life that celebrates the joy and beauty of diverse expressions of thought and belief of Unitarian Universalism in the twenty-first century.”



A final component is the Signature courses that accompany these placements. These year-long, multi-unit courses, dependent on site work in the community or congregation, are the backbone or spine of the overall curriculum, accounting for 33 of the required 90-credit program. Students come to campus for their core courses (always team-taught), which are offered in January, March, and July, but much of the academic work is continued online and in their local contexts.

In their first year, students are expected to spend eight hours a week in a ministry site that stretches them and forces them to cross boundaries. Their courses that year focus on social analysis, multicultural and diversity issues, and a theological justice frame that speaks to their work. Students are required to have a spiritual practice that builds on and accompanies them on this journey.

Second-year students are expected to spend 20 hours a week in their assigned congregations, with the focus on exploration and observation to the various aspects of congregational life and work. Teaching pastors (experienced ministers leading congregations) help direct and evaluate the work of the students. Courses



cover the theory of church administration, fundraising, boundary issues, and ethics. In the third year, students continue to work in their congregations for 20 hours a week; the focus is specifically on ministerial leadership. They are taught how to be change agents within a congregation, leading their congregations in some type of border crossing. This might be exploring ministry to the elderly in the community, learning how to be a welcoming congregation for LGBT persons, or wrestling with issues of diversity.

Connie Simon, a senior at Meadville Lombard, is serving in a church in Philadelphia. She unexpectedly found herself called to ministry and seminary at age 50. "My ministry already was healing people from the inside out, so they can do the outside work," she commented. "But I didn't know what that would look like for me, a 30-year corporate lawyer. My pastor asked me, 'When are you going to go to seminary?' I was missing that piece." She needed a low-residency program so she could continue working, and decided on Meadville-Lombard.

Low residency might have meant that she was rarely face-to-face with her fellow students and faculty, but Simon never felt isolated. She notes, "As students we have used Facebook to create a students' community page and you can talk about anything that goes on. For each class, there is also a Facebook page as well.

The community very much exists, in a very 2018-type of way...Once we are together (for intensives), it only takes once to know "this is my tribe." She has also felt supported and guided along her path towards becoming a UU minister. In addition to a faculty advisor, each student has a field education director who oversees her progress, a teaching supervisor in her church, a mentor from her denomination's Ministerial Formation Network if she chooses, and colleagues in her ministerial association.

Rodney Lemery, a classmate of Simon's, has also found the support and training he needs for his journey towards ordination. Lemery lives and works in California, having been in the field of epidemiology for 20 years before his calling to ministry. Meadville's program "made it completely doable for me to stay in California and both work and go to school full time for my first two years," he remarked. In his first year he spent 10 hours a week working in a homeless shelter for families. In his second year, he was assigned to First Unitarian Church in San Jose, where he remained for his third year as well. "I love the two years in the same church," he remarked. "The two years has allowed me to develop deep relationships with the congregation, something I don't think I would



have had if I was only there part-time for one year. I can't wait till I preach! I have a trust and knowledge of the congregation that has grown because of my time there." Asked if he will be prepared upon graduation to take on the ministerial duties of his ordination, he readily responded, "I will be prepared. I can't imagine doing my education any other way."

About Meadville Lombard Theological School

Meadville Lombard's roots date from the 1930 merger of two institutions, Meadville Theological School (founded in 1844) and Lombard College (1853). Its mission is to educate students in the Unitarian Universalist tradition and to embody liberal religious ministry in Unitarian Universalist congregations—and anywhere else they are called to serve. Its unique program completely integrates the practical and academic; students partner with congregations, community agencies, clergy, and church- and faith-based leaders around the world. Currently there are 87 students enrolled.

Vineyard Institute

It is appropriate that the offices of Vineyard Institute (VI), the worldwide Vineyard partnership for theological training, are housed in a local church. The Columbus Vineyard Church's main campus in Ohio houses the handful of full-time employees of VI in just a few unassuming offices. Yet from there, they coordinate a global network of faculty serving nearly 700 students. Founded in 2013 and drawing on the longer history and experience of two prior organizations—the Vineyard Leadership Institute and the Vineyard Bible Institute—they have partnered with over 400 Vineyard pastors and churches to help them find, equip, and deploy leaders “to develop their leadership calling or spiritual walk, together with substantial Biblical teaching.”



Dr. Scott Engebretson, pastor at Vineyard Columbus (Ohio) teaching a class for Vineyard Institute

In almost every way, Vineyard Institute is distinct from typical seminaries in the United States and Canada. In fact, Academic Dean Derek Morphew said that Vineyard explicitly modeled its program in ways that were the mirror opposite of traditional seminaries. They have no campus, no library, no full-time, tenured faculty; they do not grant degrees, M.Div.

or otherwise. They are not part of The Association of Theological Schools, nor do they want to be. Modeling themselves on fast-growing Methodists and Baptists of the nineteenth century, they desire a more entrepreneurial mode for raising-up leaders.

One of the founders of Vineyard, John Wimber, felt strongly that local churches should train and develop ministry leaders and that theological teaching should be brought to the church. Therefore, a hallmark of the culture of Vineyard is local churches discerning God's call in the lives of their members, and seeking to provide pathways for training to equip them for diverse callings in their everyday lives and as ministry leaders for the church. Their model is to deliver all courses via an online teaching platform, and recruit teaching faculty from every region in which they have students to assure a contextualized curriculum for each national or regional part of the VI global network. Through local pastor-mentors and local or regional cohorts, space for disciplined reflection and practice is integral to the process.

VI is designed for "leaders and members at any level of church life." Its integrated curriculum begins with the first tier, the Certificate in Biblical Studies, designed for everyday Christians seeking deeper knowledge and capacity for living Christian lives. A second tier, the Certificate in Biblical Leadership, builds on the first and includes the same fundamental courses, but adds ministry leadership classes paired with ministry praxis courses, offering a choice among various topics such as homiletics, pastoral care, and ministry to the poor. Praxis courses are paired with ministry leadership classes. Students are empowered to co-design a ministry practice course within a ministry leadership area in partnership with their local pastor as a mentor. Finally, a third tier, the Advanced Certificate in Biblical Leadership, requires all of the foundational and ministry courses, along with a more robust set

of required electives, depending on one's ministry track: church planter, missionary, social justice work, pastor, or ministry leader. The emphasis is on educating the whole church for the whole kingdom of God. One student remarked, "I'm in VI because being a follower of Jesus is kind of like being a life-long learner. Everything I'm learning in VI ripples out into every other part of my life." Dean Morphew describes an intentional layering of pedagogy: learning by online lectures and readings, by online asynchronous courses and in-person forums, student-to-student and between students and faculty as well as pastor/mentors, and by practice in congregational contexts. Crucial to this whole structure, Morphew noted, is "the experience of God; God equips and encounters us, we're not just educated, and this is part of the DNA of the Vineyard movement."

About Vineyard Institute

Vineyards from around the world formed Vineyard Institute in 2013. Vineyard Institute offers three certificate courses of study that build on each other: Biblical Studies (15 units), Biblical Leadership (15 units), and Advanced Biblical Leadership (30 units), the latter two designed for those founding, pastoring, or leading churches. Programs are designed to be flexible, affordable, and accessible, allowing students to study when and what they want. Seven other countries or regions currently run their own Vineyard Institutes: Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg), Norden (Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden), South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, and the United Kingdom and Ireland.

V. Concluding Questions for Conversation

The intention, as we conclude, is to step back and ask some questions we hope are helpful to our many colleagues working to form faith leaders today. This is not to hide our convictions. The report not only clearly shows our findings; it also makes clear our convictions about (some) of their significance for the field. Still, we are clearer than ever about the variety of experiments that are changing models and practices of theological education broadly speaking, and find questions more conducive to the hoped-for conversations that we intend this report to spark.

- What significance does it hold for your school that students value field education experiences as among the most helpful, formative experiences of their seminary education?
- What practical training for leadership (administration, budget, staffing, social change, use of conflict, organizing, and other such matters) are taught or offered at your school?
- What change needs to happen in a seminary if a field education supervisor says your graduates, while theologically sophisticated, get “steamrolled” as ministry leaders?

- Do you agree with Sarah Coakley that the structural and pedagogical divides of modern seminary education are a “wound” that prevents ministry students from embodying the practical-prophetic leadership required by ministry today?

What key reforms would heal this wound in the specific contexts of your school?

- How are the traditional courses in Bible, history, and theology on the one hand, and the experiential learning found in field education placements or opportunities (in congregations, faith-based nonprofits, or chaplaincies) on the other, related in your school?

Who knows or understands how they are related, and why does this matter?

If the whole faculty, the administration, and the board were to understand the connection or disconnection and the significance it has on effective leadership preparation, what difference might this make?

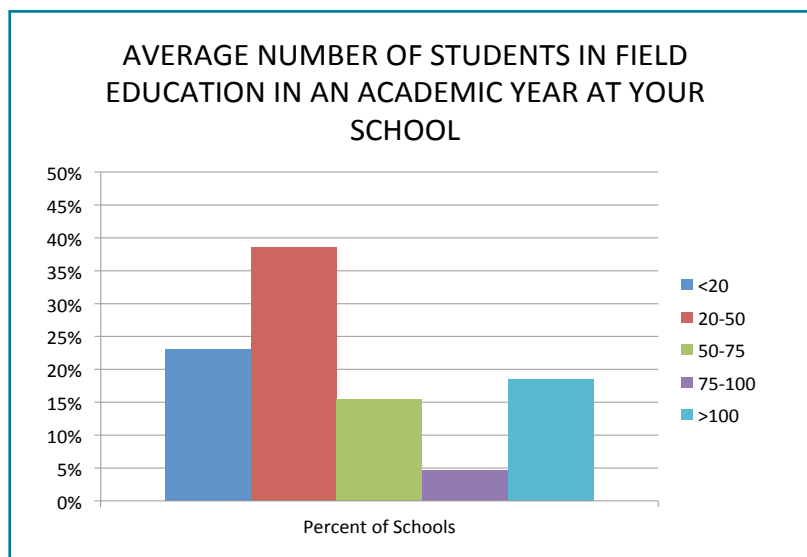
- Which of the three models for TFE—and case studies within those models—most relates to your school?
- Which of the three models for TFE—and cases within those models—represents what you aspire to for your school? Why? What might be next steps?

Appendix

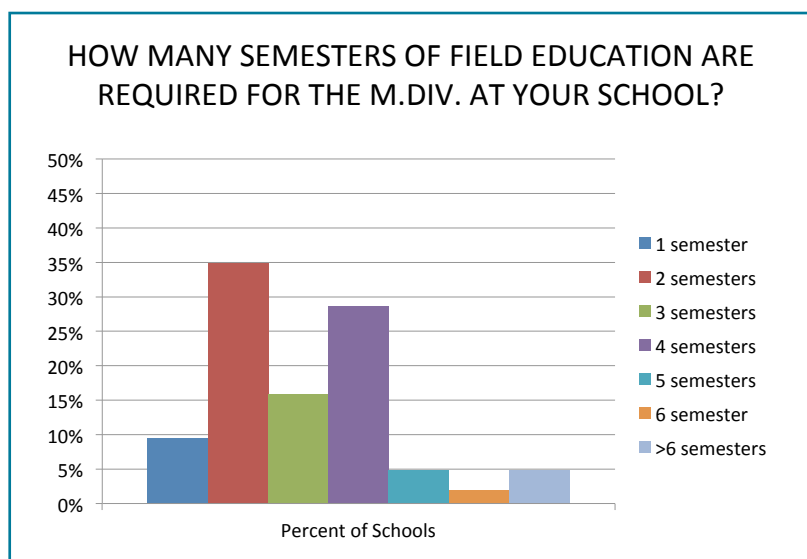
Data from the Field Education Directors' Survey

To find out how field education is structured across schools, what the usual requirements are and, more broadly, what the view is 'on the ground' of how things were going, in 2016 we sent a letter to the academic deans of all ATS-accredited schools, asking them to forward an online survey to the person who directs their field or contextual education program. We ultimately received responses from 66 schools. We are unable to calculate the response rate, as we don't know how many directors received the information from their deans, but this represents 24 percent of the membership of the ATS. We cannot assume the findings are truly representative for all theological schools in the ATS, but they are a glimpse at an often-overlooked corner of our curriculum. One thing will be quickly evident: the diversity of requirements and structures TFE takes in schools is unique to each school, and one cannot describe a "typical" program. The following are summaries of the findings from that survey.

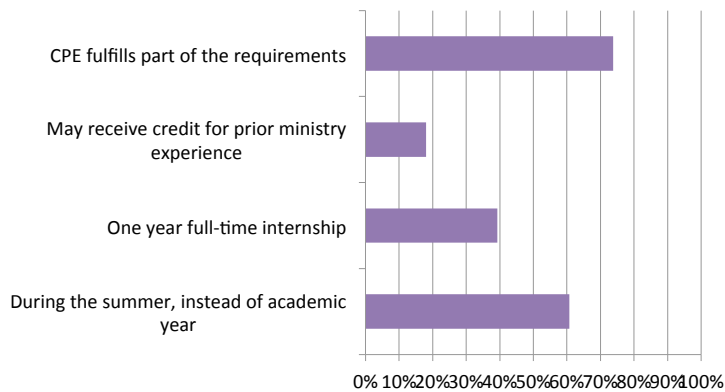
Sixty-two percent of schools reported fewer than 50 students and three-quarters of schools reported fewer than 75 students enrolled in TFE in an average academic year. This reflects the fact that 86 percent of schools have a full-time equivalency enrollment below 300.³⁶



The numbers may appear to be small, but the total number of M.Div. students enrolled in all ATS schools in 2017 was over 28,000³⁷ and, since virtually all of them (and a good number of those enrolled as well in the ministerial MA—enrollment over 12,000) must at some point in their program have a field education experience, this reflects literally thousands of students each year who are enrolled in TFE.



OPTIONS TO FULFILL THE M.DIV. FIELD EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AT YOUR SCHOOL



REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE OR HYBRID DEGREE STUDENTS

- Same requirements for online and on-campus students in the same degree: 38%
- Only minor differences in the requirements between the two: 8%
- Significant differences for online and on-campus students: 2%
- *Most schools do not offer online/hybrid M.Div. programs and other masters' programs frequently do not require field education.*

Requirements, both in terms of number of semesters (or their equivalent) and work-hours, differ widely by school and even within a single denomination. At Saint Paul Seminary (see earlier case study) students engage in some form of field education every semester they are enrolled.

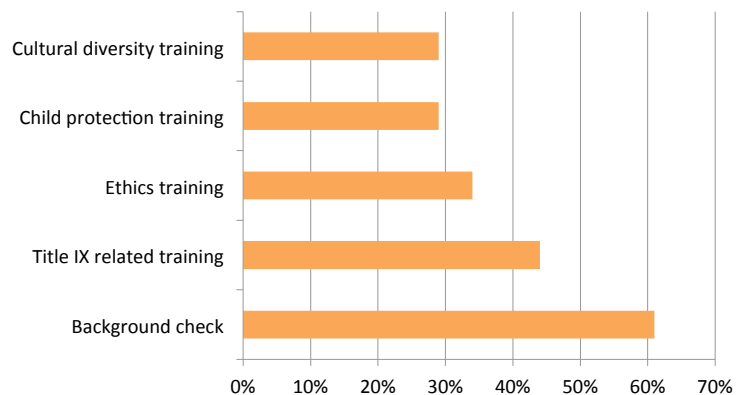
In many schools, CPE can fulfill part of the required number of semesters of field education, although in some schools this is an additional requirement and is not counted towards the required TFE hours. Many students take their field education during the summer, or in a full-time internship. Fewer than 20 percent of schools waive some of the TFE requirements because the student has significant prior ministerial experience.

Many schools require a background check prior to students being assigned to a field site. Other schools leave it up to the assigned ministry whether to require background checks. Often diversity training, training in ethics issues, and child protection training, when required, take place at the same time the student is engaged in TFE. Sexual harassment and Title IX-related training is sometimes required of all students in their first year of theological school.

WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WITH EXTENSIVE PRIOR CONGREGATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

- All students in the same degree program, have the same requirements for FE: 54%
- Consideration is given for experienced students and requirements may be reduced: 25%
- Such students may be able to waive the requirements for FE: 6%
- *Schools often work with experienced clergy to match them with FE assignments that continue to stretch them and help them grow.*
- *If their worksite is their own congregation, they are assigned an outside clergy person to supervise and engage in regular theological reflection with them.*

REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS BEFORE BEGINNING FIELD EDUCATION AT YOUR SCHOOL



HOW DO STUDENTS FIND THEIR FIELD EDUCATION SITES?

- Student submits a site for approval before assigned: 39%
- School provides a list, but up to students to find placement: 13%
- Student assigned by school or church oversight committee or bishop: 10%
- Students must choose from an approved list of churches/ministries: 6%
- Mixture of above options (collaborative discernment): 26%

POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Can students do FE at their home church?
 - Yes: 34%; No: 31%; Maybe – need waiver/approval: 35%
- Can M.Div. students fulfill their FE requirements by working in a non-congregation-based ministry?
 - May work in a ministry, in addition to a congregation: 30%
 - Must work in both a ministry and congregation: 16%
 - May work only in a ministry: 54%

How do students find their field education sites? This was far too simplistic a question for multiple-choice responses. Even those who checked one of the options listed here often noted in the comment section that some of the other options applied as well. Frequently schools have a list of approved sites that students can use if they need suggestions, but they also work with students who have identified a specific place they would like to work. The one-on-one meetings that take place during the assignment process are an opportunity for field education staff to get to know students and for students to engage in clear vocational discernment.

A third of schools allow students to fulfill their TFE assignments by working in their home churches. Usually this is because they are already senior (or solo) pastors of churches and are not in a position to take on additional assignments. If this is the case, most schools require the student to have a pastor from another congregation act as their mentor (rather than supervisor) while they are enrolled. Other schools may require the student to be working (with or without pay) in a congregation throughout the M.Div. program, in which case a senior member of the church staff must supervise the student.

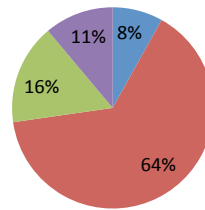
Student stipends from schools are rare. Only 8 percent say their institutions almost always provide one. Another quarter of respondents indicate that some students receive one, while others do not, or that “it’s complicated.” The complication for most, which they commented on extensively, was that they had limited funds and were thus only able to help a limited number of students—those who were serving in a site with few resources or facing financial challenges of their own.

Stipends from the worksite were more common, with over one-third (36 percent) saying students always or frequently received one. Sometimes this happens when the student is already on staff at a church (and thus receiving a salary) or is doing a full-time summer internship. Some schools require the site to offer a minimum stipend, while other schools ask the site to provide student housing (particularly with full-time summer internships) or gas money. Some survey respondents provided the typical amount of the stipends, and these varied widely from \$10 an hour to \$1,700 a month, plus housing.

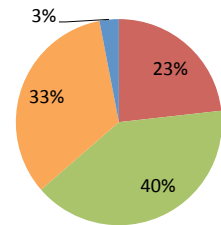
One-on-one meetings with a supervisor, mentor, or faculty member are the most common avenue for students to engage in structured reflection and integration. Over half the schools have a linked academic course or other required courses that help students in this process. Most schools have a variety of ways students can reflect and integrate the academic with the practical.

DO YOUR STUDENTS RECEIVE STIPENDS FOR THEIR FIELD WORK?

STIPEND FROM SCHOOL



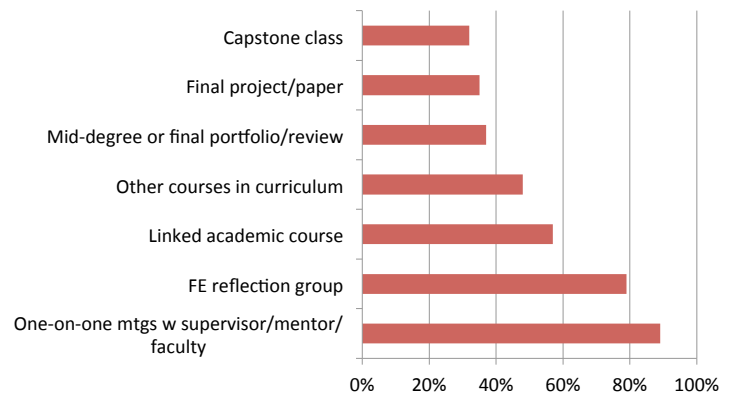
STIPEND FROM WORK SITE



■ Almost always ■ No
 ■ Some do/some don't ■ It's complicated

■ Never/rarely ■ Sometimes
 ■ Frequently ■ Always

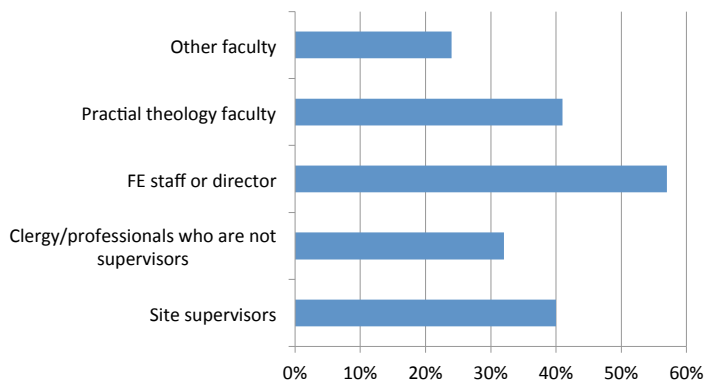
OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR STUDENT TO REFLECT AND INTEGRATE



ARE YOUR STUDENTS ASSIGNED A MENTOR?

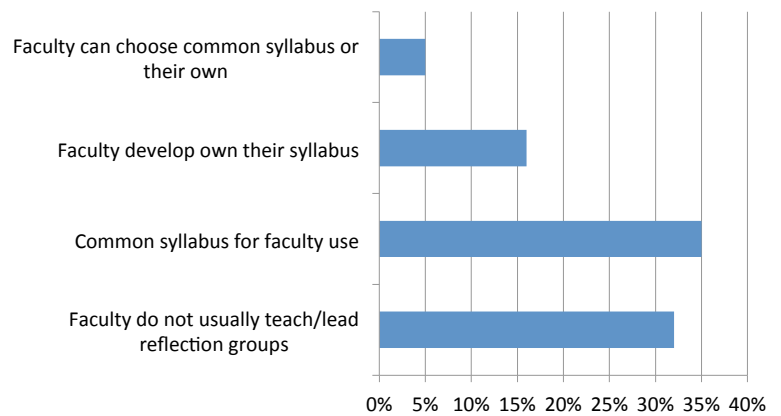
- YES
 - The site supervisor often/usually functions as the mentor: 61%
 - A faculty member: 21%
 - Someone from the congregation or ministry site, but not the supervisor: 6%
 - A practitioner who works in the same ministry area: 3%
- NO: No specific mentor assigned
- *If a site supervisor lacks a theology degree, students are frequently required to have a mentor with such a degree.*
- *Some denominations assign mentors for students in the ordination process.*

WHO LEADS YOUR STUDENTS' FIELD EDUCATION REFLECTION GROUPS OR SEMINARS?



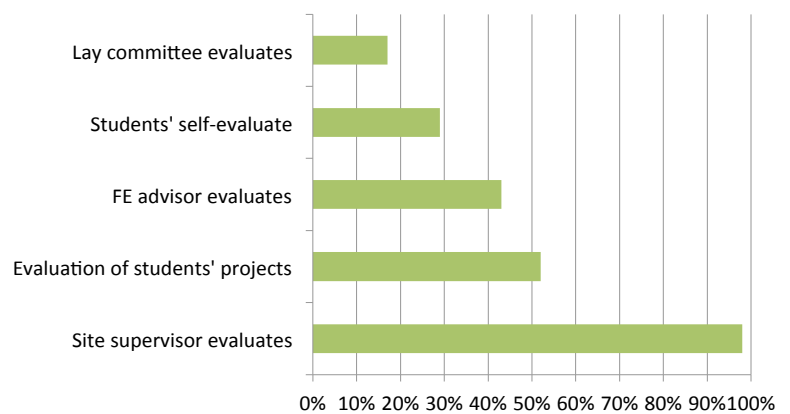
Many schools use a variety of individuals to lead student TFE reflection groups. They often call on site supervisors and others working in ministry, some of whom are given adjunct faculty status at the institution. TFE staff and practical theology faculty frequently lead these groups as well. Sometimes other faculty co-lead a group along with a site supervisor or other professional in the field. There are a few schools, such as Candler School of Theology (see case study) and Wesley Theological Seminary, that require all faculty to periodically lead a reflection group. But as the following slide shows, over 30 percent of respondents say that faculty at their institution do not usually teach or lead these groups.

A COMMON SYLLABUS OR DO YOUR FACULTY CREATE THEIR OWN?



In addition to the response choices for evaluation and assessment, some schools use student self-assessment or congregational lay committees who play a role in mentoring and evaluating students.

EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT OF YOUR STUDENTS' FIELD EDUCATION EXPERIENCE



SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES YOUR STUDENTS LEARN IN FIELD EDUCATION

(Percent of respondents agreeing their students should learn these skills through their FE experience)

- Administrating a congregation or non-profit: 77%
- Assessing the needs of a community: 73%
- Dealing with workplace conflict and personnel issues: 73%
- Building a leadership team with which to work: 68%
- Working with people from other racial/ethnic or economic backgrounds: 68%
- Organizing a community/congregation for engagement in social justice work: 59%
- Using social media for outreach and ministry: 59%
- Working with people from other religions/faith traditions: 52%
- Managing a congregation's or nonprofit's budget: 49%
- Leading stewardship or fund-raising campaigns: 40%

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES COVERED IN ELECTIVE OR REQUIRED COURSES OR SEMINARS AT YOUR SCHOOL

(Required; Elective)

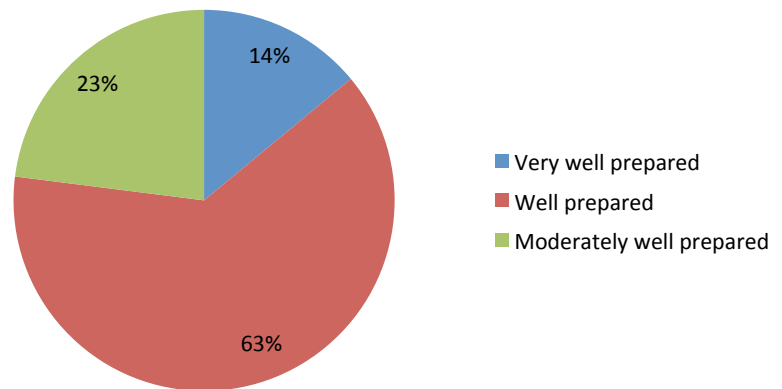
- Administrating a congregation or non-profit: 35%; 40%
- Assessing the needs of a community: 35%; 37%
- Dealing with workplace conflict and personnel issues: 46%; 34%
- Building a leadership team with which to work: 36%; 46%
- Working with people from other racial/ethnic or economic backgrounds: 57%; 38%
- Organizing a community/congregation for engagement in social justice work: 37%; 51%
- Using social media for outreach and ministry: 8%; 51%
- Working with people from other religions/faith traditions: 50%; 42%
- Managing a congregation's or nonprofit's budget: 25%; 49%
- Leading stewardship or fund-raising campaigns: 16%; 58%

There are many different skills needed for leading a congregation or another ministry. We were curious to know whether field education faculty see it as their job to provide this specific training or if it happens elsewhere in the curriculum, through required or elective courses. The only items that drop below 50 percent in respondents' answers to field education's role in training students are financial: managing a congregation's or nonprofit's budget or leading a stewardship or fundraising campaign. Almost half (48 percent) say that working with people in other religions or faith traditions is not a skill that students are expected to learn through field education.

This is a competency, however, that most schools cover in required (50 percent) or elective (42 percent) courses. Managing a congregation's or nonprofit's budget and leading a stewardship or fundraising campaign are more frequently offered in electives at the institution, but only a quarter of the schools have required courses that cover this information. Given the high visibility of seminary student debt and the alarm it has raised, it is surprising that so few schools require more training in financial and fundraising matters.

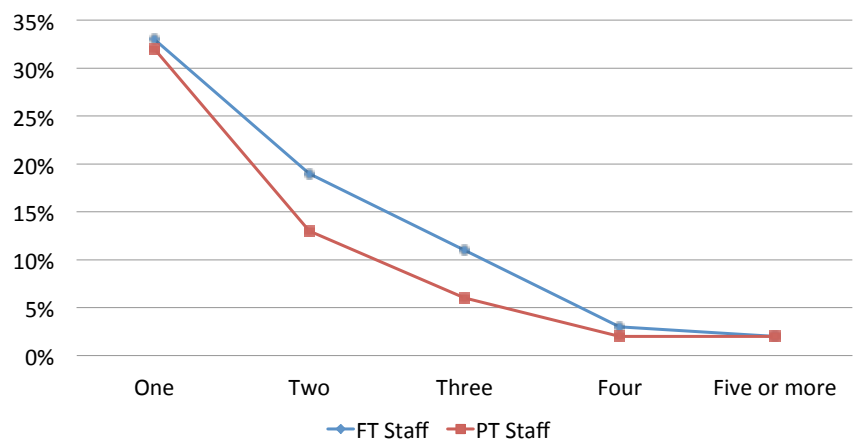
Despite gaps in specific skills training, 77 percent of respondents say their students are well or very well prepared for ministry upon graduation.

HOW WELL PREPARED ARE YOUR STUDENTS FOR MINISTRY UPON GRADUATION?

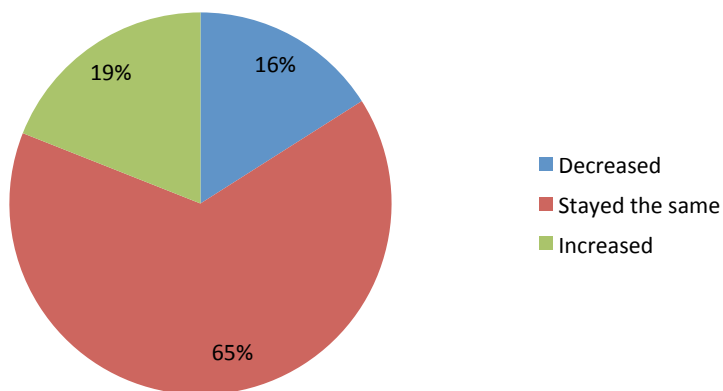


Most TFE offices are small shops. One-third of them have only one full-time employee and one part-time employee (sometimes a work-study student). A number of schools have faculty at least tangentially involved in the administration of field education, while a few have faculty directors who also teach full-time. Directors frequently note that they have other school administrative responsibilities outside of TFE. Suffice it to say, very few offices feel well-staffed.

NUMBER OF STAFF OR FACULTY INVOLVED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF YOUR SCHOOL'S FIELD EDUCATION



CHANGES OVER LAST FIVE YEAR IN REQUIRED NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS FOR FIELD EDUCATION



Given the number of theological schools that have restructured in the last five years, often decreasing the number of required credit hours for the M.Div. (see Fuller Seminary's case study for an example), it is encouraging to see that credit hours for TFE have not decreased for the most part. In fact, a few schools are even increasing the number of credits.

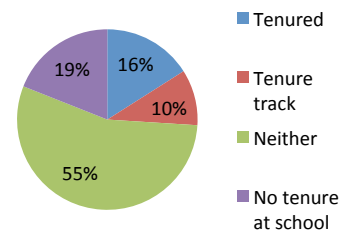
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Gender: Female: 37%; Male: 63%
- Age: 30-40: 16%; 41-50: 19%; 51-60: 24%; >60: 40%
- Highest degree: PhD/ThD/EdD: 48%; D.Min.: 34%; Master's: 17%
- Has M.Div. or other ministry degree: 85%
- Ordained or Licensed: Yes: 79%
- Held a leadership position in a congregation: 92%

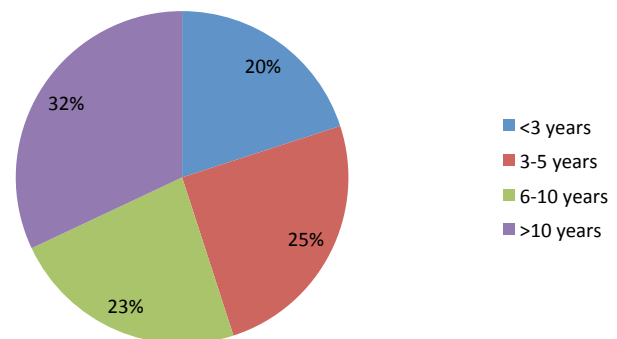
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Rank/Position	
Administrator	56%
Lecturer/adjunct	18%
Asst. professor	19%
Assoc. professor	19%
Professor	19%

Tenure Status



RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE IN FIELD EDUCATION (EITHER IN THIS INSTITUTION OR ANOTHER)



About The Authors, Funding and Support

Sharon Miller was Director of Research at Auburn until her departure in April 2018. She was on the research staff at Auburn for 17 years, co-authoring 13 Auburn Studies reports, of which this is her last. Relocating to Seattle, Sharon will continue to freelance as an independent scholar.

Christian Scharen is vice-president for applied research at Auburn Seminary. Formerly, he was on faculty at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was director of contextual learning and taught practical theology and worship.

We are grateful to Stewart Clifford and Mark Hostetter for their generosity in helping fund this project, that emerges from their deep commitment to congregational ministry and life. Our gratitude also to the Association of Theological Field Educators (ATFE), to the many field education directors we talked with, and to the schools that allowed us to highlight their contextual and TFE programs. We hope we did justice both in describing their programs and articulating the challenges schools face as they train clergy and lay leaders for the complex world in which they will work.



Endnotes

1. David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About Theological Schools* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

2. Sarah Coakley, "Ministry is not Easier Than Theology," interview with Faith and Leadership at Duke Divinity School, October 22, 2012, <https://www.faithandleadership.com/sarah-coakley-ministry-not-easier-theology>; See also an expanded version of these ideas in an article form: "Can Systematic Theology become 'Pastoral' Again, and Pastoral Theology 'Theological'?" in ABC Religion and Ethics, 24 July 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/07/24/4706747.htm>.

3. In our recent study of innovation in theological education, "Bright Spots in Theological Education," *Auburn Studies* 22 (2016) we learned Olin College of Engineering graduates benefited from a curriculum grounded in a learning-in-practice pedagogy. Employers consistently find Olin graduates to be equal to other recruits who have 3-5 years of on-the-job experience. <http://auburnseminary.org/report/bright-spots/>.

4. Theodore Brelsford, "Introduction," in *Contextualizing Theological Education*, ed. Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008). See also Donald F. Beisswenger "Field Education and the Theological Education Debates," *Theological Education* 33, no. 1 (1996): 49-58. At the 1993 biennial meeting of the Association for Theological Field Education, Beisswenger surveyed the membership and by far the most popular answer to the question about the primary purpose of TFE in the seminary curriculum (by a factor of 3 to 1) was offering students the capacity for integration of academic study and practical ministry leadership.

5. Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Towards Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 143-145.

6. Chad Wellmon, *Organizing Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2016) is an excellent history not only of the rise of academic disciplines but of disciplinarity itself—the infrastructure of specialization that has come to characterize the modern research university.

7. Cherry, *Hurrying Towards Zion*, 6.

8. Cherry, *Hurrying Towards Zion*, 7.

9. William Sullivan, "Introduction," in *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, ed. Charles Foster, et al., (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 6.

10. Sullivan, "Introduction," 5.

11. Sullivan, "Introduction," 7.

12. Stephen Toulmin, *Return To Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

13. Sullivan, "Introduction," 7.

14. Sullivan, "Introduction," 11.

15. Foster, et. al., *Educating Clergy*, 320.

16. Foster, et. al., *Educating Clergy*, 320.

17. Dorothy Bass, et. al., *Christian Practical Wisdom: What it is, Why it Matters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1.

18. Ibid, see especially chapters "Eclipsing" by Christian Scharen and "Discipling" by Bonnie Miller-McLemore.

19. Kathleen Cahalan, Edward Foley and Gordon Mikoski, *Integrating Work in Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 206.
20. Foster, et. al., *Educating Clergy*, 323.
21. While the data is ever-changing, and reports of various sorts are available via many sources, this article offers a simple summary of 2017 Census data on demographic trends in the USA. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thewo-way/2017/06/22/533926978/census-finds-a-more-diverse-america-as-whites-lag-growth>.
22. 2016 FIRST Robotics Competition Kickoff Broadcast, access at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lBi-wlt2Xh8>.
23. Martin Linsky and Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Change* (Cambridge: Harvard Business, new edition 2017).
24. Francis Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How The World is Changed* (New York: Vintage, 2006).
25. Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), see the chapter on field education, 591-616.
26. Her efforts in this project are described in her provocative book, *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2015).
27. <https://www.faithandleadership.com/leah-gunning-francis-leadership-lessons-intersection-faith-and-justice-ferguson>.
28. Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton, *Getting to Maybe*.
29. Sarah Coakley, Faith and Leadership interview.
30. Coakley.
31. Coakley.
32. Among other things see Emily Click, Contextual Education, 347-356, in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2012); also the excellent edited volume by Barbara Blodgett and Matthew Floding, *Brimming with God: Reflecting Theologically on Cases in Ministry* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015).
33. Elizabeth Bounds, "Theological Reflection in Contextual Education: An Elusive Practice," 17-28 in *Contextualizing Theological Education*, eds. Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).
34. Bounds, 26-7.
35. This quote draws on framing for learning ministry, especially through TFE, found in Auburn's previous study of theological education from the perspective of student learning. See Christian Scharen and Eileen Campbell-Reed, "Learning Pastoral Imagination: A Five-Year Report on How New Ministers Learn in Practice," *Auburn Studies* (2016).
36. 2017 Data Table, Association of Theological Schools.
37. 2017 Data Table, Association of Theological Schools.

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