

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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**Hard to Find:
Searching for Practical Faculty in the 1990's
January 2002**

AN AUBURN CENTER BACKGROUND REPORT
On Seminary Faculty Hired in the 1990s

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
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This report was prepared by the staff of the Auburn Center based on material prepared by Mark Wilhelm, the Center's former Associate Director. Richard Spierling, the Interim Associate Director of CSTE, conducted the first round of interviews of deans. Barbara Wheeler, Director of CSTE, analyzed survey data and wrote the final version of the report. Rachel Bundang was data manager and research associate for the project.

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SEARCHING FOR PRACTICAL FACULTY IN THE 1990s

Project Background and Design

In 1993 the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education reported its findings from a study of theological faculty in North America. The study projected that as many as two-thirds of faculty teaching in 1991 would either retire or leave seminary teaching for other reasons by the year 2006. The study also projected that the largest number of retirements would occur among faculty teaching in the so-called practical theological disciplines, with more than half (56%) of those faculty reaching the estimated average retirement age of 67 by 2006.¹ Accordingly, the study predicted an increased demand for faculty in the practical fields and a concomitant increase in the demand for the relatively small number of faculty with academic doctorates in practical areas of study.

The present study tests our earlier prediction that the pace of hiring in the practical fields would be brisk in the mid-to-late 1990s. It also addresses a series of questions about the experience of theological schools as they have sought faculty to teach in practical areas. Have theological schools in the last decade been able to hire the faculty they needed to teach in practical fields? Have they succeeded in identifying the “right” kinds of candidates, with appropriate academic and ecclesiastical backgrounds, in sufficient numbers? Have they been able to locate candidates with academic doctorates when that qualification seemed important?

¹ The estimated average retirement age of 67 is based on responses by seminary faculty to an Auburn survey and on the experiences of other institutions of higher education as reported in the early 1990s.

To address these questions, in the fall of 2000, we distributed a brief survey to member schools of the Association of Theological Schools, asking each to list hires in the practical field by year since September 1992 and to indicate for each new hire:

- whether this was a replacement or new faculty position;
- whether the position was full- or part-time;
- whether it was tenured, non-tenured/tenure-track, or non-tenured/contractual;
- whether the person hired holds an earned academic or professional doctorate
- the sub-field or teaching area(s) of the position

We asked responding schools to report all those faculty that *the school defined as* teaching in a “practical” field or area. Questionnaires were sent to the 243 member schools of the Association of Theological Schools. Replies were received from 159 schools (six of which said that they had hired no practical field faculty during the period), for a response rate of 62%.

In addition, we interviewed by telephone 130 academic deans, 38 practical field faculty hired during the period, and 26 search committee chairs about their experiences with and perceptions of current trends in hiring. We also conducted second interviews with twelve deans. In the course of attempting to arrange these interviews, seminaries were reminded and encouraged to return the project’s questionnaire.

Our findings are reported below, followed by some tentative recommendations about steps that might be taken to increase the supply of persons well-prepared to teach in the practical areas of the theological curriculum.

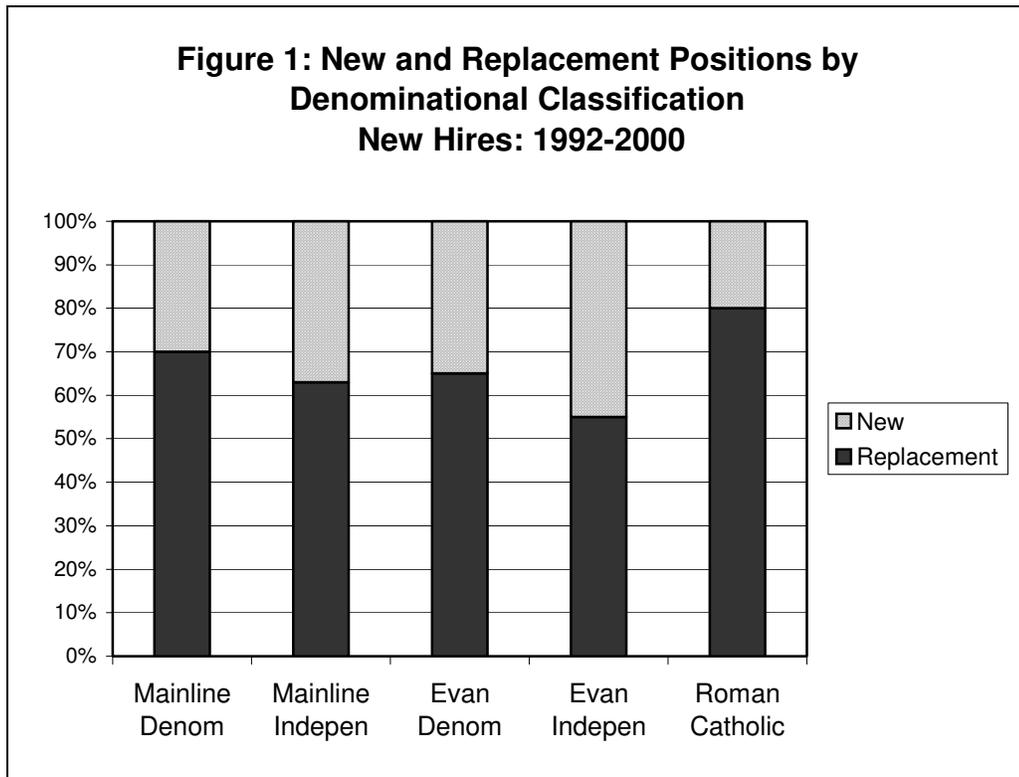
Findings: Patterns of Hiring

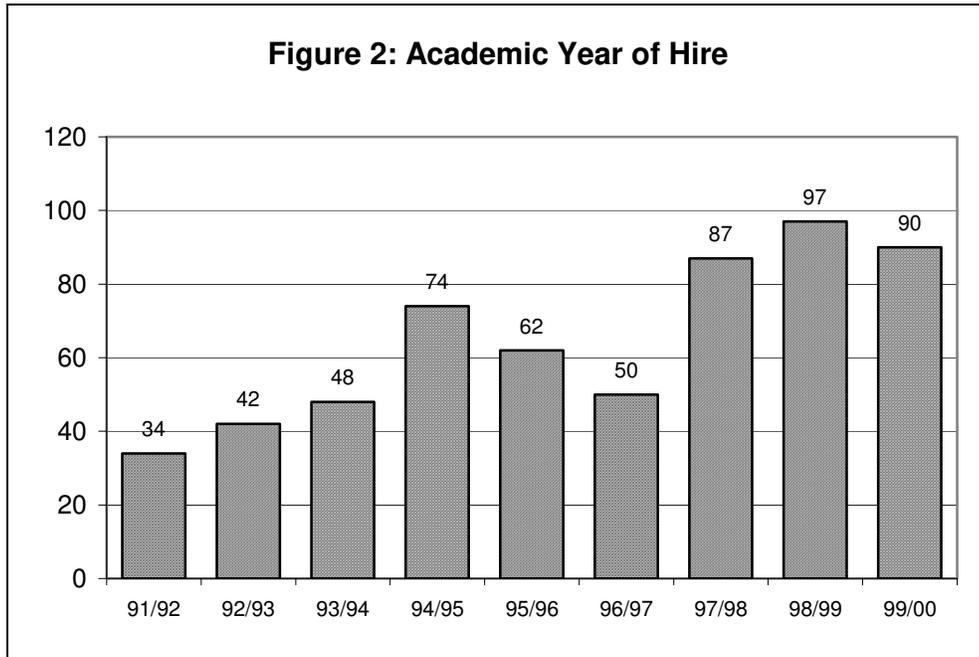
1. The Amount and Pace of Hiring

Respondents to our questionnaire reported 617 practical field faculty hires between September 1992 and August 2000. The average, in other words, was about 3.9 hires per school over the eight-year period, or one new hire in this field every two

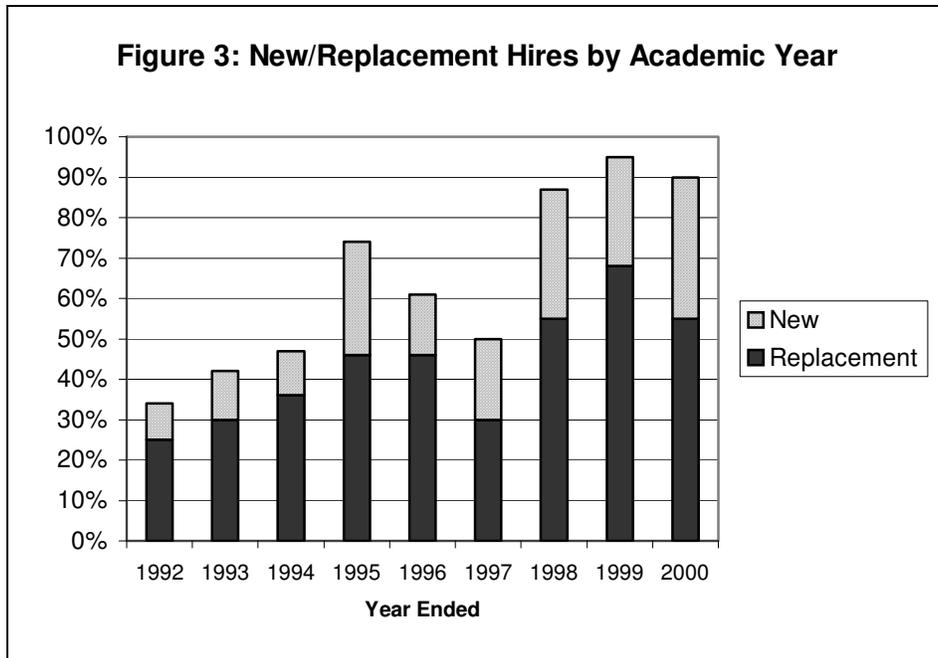
years. (If the rate of hiring was the same for the non-responding schools, there were about 920 vacancies filled in the field over the eight-year period, or 115 per year.)

Two-thirds of the positions reported to us were replacements and one-third were new positions. (If the non-respondent schools' patterns resembled the respondents', there were about 280 new positions created during the eight-year period of study, or about 34 per year and 1.1 per school.) Most of the growth occurred in Protestant schools: of the 196 new positions actually reported to us, most (88) were in evangelical seminaries, though almost as many (78) were created in mainline schools. Only 22 were in Roman Catholic seminaries. As Figure 1 shows, the highest ratio of new-to-replacement positions was in denominationally independent evangelical schools; the lowest in Roman Catholic institutions.





Of 617 hires reported to us, the hiring year was indicated for 584. As Figure 2 shows, the pace of hiring picked up considerably toward the end of the decade. Nearly 300 of the 584 faculty whose year of hire was identified were hired since 1998—more in the two and one-half years at the end of the period studied than in the previous five and one-half years. The large number of retirements in the practical field anticipated by the 1993 Auburn Study has begun to occur. The percentage as well as the number of new positions also increased through the decade (Figure 3). On average, new positions were 26% of all hires in the first three years of the decade, and 34% of hires after that.



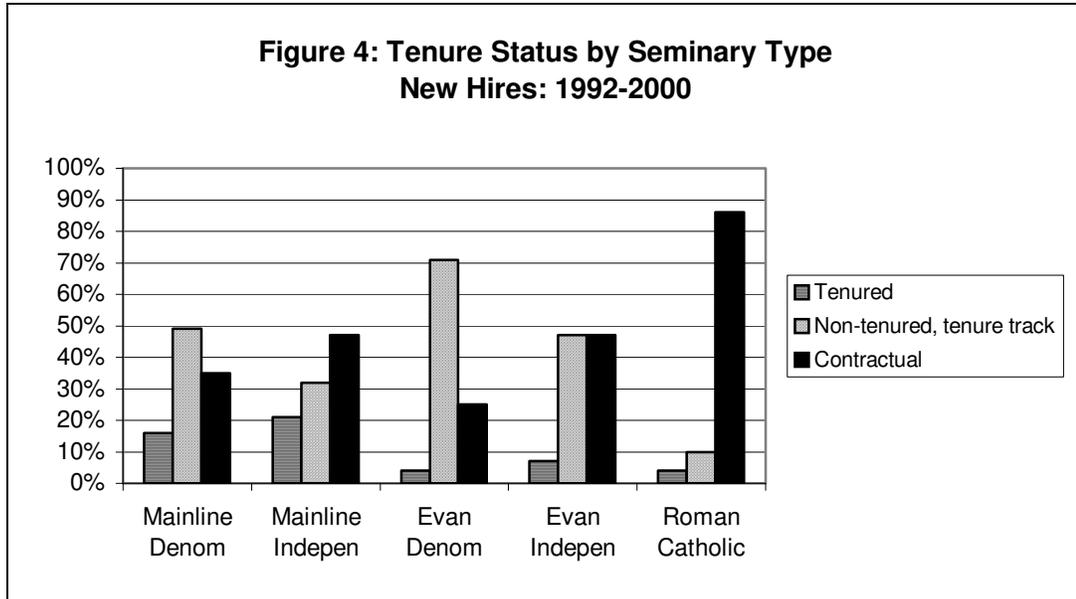
2. Terms of Hiring

Most of the positions reported to us - almost 85% - were full-time, but a significant minority of positions in Roman Catholics schools (38%) were filled on a part-time basis, while in Protestant schools less than 10 percent were hired part-time.

Denominationally-independent evangelical seminaries, which as already reported had the highest ratio of new-to-replacement positions over the past eight years, also had the highest ratio of full- to part-time positions. Only 6% of the positions such schools filled were part-time.

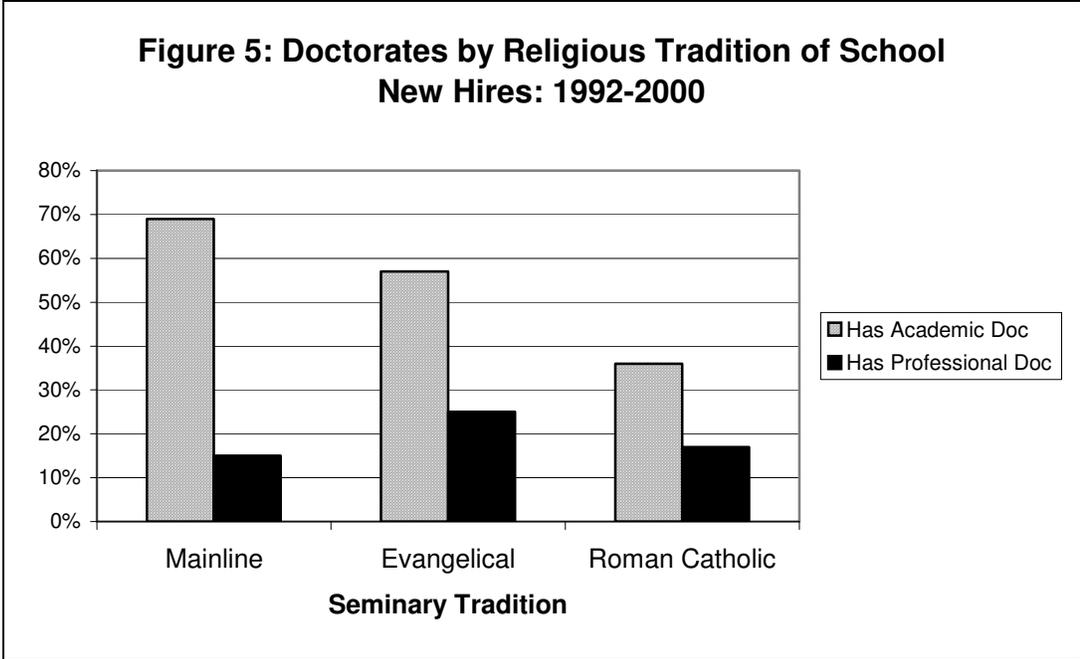
Though more than half of those hired in the period studied (56%) were in tenure-track positions, less than ten percent were tenured. The differences by religious tradition are great, as illustrated in Figure 4. Roman Catholic institutions, as is well known, are far less likely than Protestant schools to hire their faculty on a tenured or tenure-track basis. The chart also shows that Protestant denominational seminaries

(both evangelical and mainline) are much less likely than independent schools to hire practical field faculty on a contractual basis.



3. Doctorates

Of the 617 hires reported in this study, 480—or 78 percent—hold an earned doctorate. A majority of the total (58%) has earned an academic doctorate; the rest of the doctorate-holders (20%) have a professional doctorate, in almost all cases a Doctor of Ministry degree or its equivalent. The doctorate-holding patterns differ significantly by the religious traditions of the schools doing the hiring, as Figure 5 shows. Hires by evangelical institutions are more likely to be persons holding the professional doctorate (25% of those hired in this period did); by comparison, 18 percent of Roman Catholic hires and 15% of mainline Protestant schools' hires hold professional doctorates. Academic doctorates dominate the hiring of mainline Protestant schools (69% of hires in this period had them); a majority of evangelical hires do too (57%); but only 36% of Roman Catholic faculty hired in practical field hold academic doctorates.



The 480 doctoral degree recipients earned their advanced degrees at 180 schools. Only twenty of these schools provide more than 1% each of the degrees earned. The top-supplier schools are:

Princeton Seminary	4.8%
Fuller Seminary	4.6%
New Orleans Baptist Seminary	4.2%
Southwestern Baptist Seminary	3.8%
Vanderbilt University/Divinity School	3.4%
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	3.0%
Northwestern University/Garrett	2.8%
Catholic University Theology Dept.	2.4%
Southern Baptist Seminary	2.4%
Graduate Theological Union	2.4%
University of Chicago Divinity School	2.2%
Claremont School of Theology	2.2%
Emory University/Candler	2.2%
Columbia University/Union	2.0%
Drew University Theological School	1.6%
Boston University/School of Theology	1.6%
Boston College/Institute of Religious Ed. and Pastoral Ministries	1.4%
Talbot School of Theology/Biola	1.4%
Columbia Theological Seminary	1.2%
Dallas Theological Seminary	1.2%

In 1992,² when Auburn Center analyzed the doctoral sources for all faculty teaching in practical fields, it reported that Southwestern Baptist, Southern Baptist, the University of Chicago Divinity School, and Princeton Seminary were the top supplier schools—in rank order—for all practical fields with the exception of education. In religious education, the rank order of chief suppliers was Southwestern Baptist, Southern Baptist, Princeton Seminary, and Union Seminary/Columbia. The 1992 list of all practical faculty in all schools cannot be compared with our list of new hires in about two-thirds of schools, but it does appear that some doctoral programs (for instance, Fuller and Princeton) have become more important as suppliers of practical field faculty in the last decade.

Although not all the suppliers in the top twenty list have doctoral programs specifically identified as programs of study in the practical theological disciplines, all the schools on the list have academic doctoral programs that relate to the arts of ministry, such as Northwestern's program in communications, the University of Chicago Divinity School's program in psychology and sociology of religion, and Emory University's program in person, community and religious practices.

Certain characteristics of the list of top supplier schools (which is further broken down by religious tradition in Appendix II) are significant. Almost all the programs are either heavily dependent on a single faculty member (Chicago and Vanderbilt³), or relatively new (Fuller, Trinity, Dallas), or located in an institution which is in considerable educational, financial or theological flux (the Southern Baptist seminaries, the Graduate Theological Union, Drew). Indeed, on the whole list, only Princeton, Catholic University,

² Barbara G. Wheeler and Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., *Theological Faculty: A Current Profile and Estimate of Future Needs*, unpublished paper, Auburn Center Faculty Study, August 1992.

³ The single faculty member at Vanderbilt retired and its doctoral program in preaching was shut down.

Claremont, Emory and Garrett/Northwestern have a long-standing, broad-based commitment to provide doctoral education in the practical fields.

The academic doctorate is statistically associated with the tenure status of a position and whether it is full- or part-time. More than sixty percent of full-time positions went to persons who have academic doctorates; the same percentage of part-time positions went to persons who do not hold an academic doctorate. Similarly, 90 percent of tenured positions and 68 percent of non-tenured/tenure-track jobs went to persons with academic doctorates; 59 percent of contractual positions went to persons who do not hold an academic doctorate.

Certain fields are more likely than others to have hired persons with academic doctorates. The highest percentage of academic doctorates were in these fields:

	<u>Percentage</u>
Religious Education	77.6
Homiletics	71.8
Music/Arts	70.6
Worship	68.8
Pastoral Care	63.3

The same fields were the least likely to have hired faculty who hold the professional doctorate.

4. Hiring by Teaching Field

The following table shows, on a percentage basis, the areas in which most hiring occurred during the period researched, based on the sample of the 617 new hires in the practical field. The subsequent tables show that the priority among fields differs by the religious tradition of the school.

<u>All Schools</u>	<u>Percentage of New Hires</u>
Homiletics	13.2
Practical/Pastoral Theology	11.5
Religious Education	11.2
Field/Contextual Education	9.2

Counseling	8.6
Missiology/Evangelism	6.8

Mainline (Denominational and Independent)

	<u>Percentage of New Hires</u>
Homiletics	15.5
Religious Education	13.6
Field/Contextual Education	9.7
Practical/Pastoral Theology	9.3
Pastoral Care	8.9

Evangelical (Denominational and Independent)

	<u>Percentage of New Hires</u>
Counseling	15.6
Religious Education	12.0
Homiletics	11.1
Practical/Pastoral Theology	10.2
Missiology/Evangelism	9.8

Roman Catholic Percentage of New Hires

Practical/Pastoral Theology	19.6
Field/Contextual Education	16.8
Homiletics	12.1
Counseling	10.3
Canon Law	8.4

Fourteen of the faculty hired during the period had one of two teaching fields identified in non-practical field disciplines, such as church history, philosophy, or comparative religion. Based on interviews with some of these faculty, we conclude that most faculty hired to fill these positions were required to teach in both so-called classical and practical disciplines or—in the case of at least one school that formally has no practical theology faculty appointments—were required occasionally to teach courses in ministry arts. It was not possible to obtain information about the doctoral field of the new hires, but from our interviews we know that at least some of those hired did their doctoral work in a “classical discipline” but now teach exclusively in the practical field.

Findings: The Hiring Experience

1. The Employers' Experience

In general, the deans and search committee chairs we interviewed report that they eventually found the faculty they need to fill practical field vacancies, although searches for practical field faculty were considered difficult. Deans and search committee chairs told us that there was almost always a large pool of applicants, but they also said that the right combination of doctoral training, ministerial experience, and denominational or theological identity was often very hard to find despite the large numbers of applicants. Some deans and search committee chairs believe that doctoral programs in practical subjects do not encourage the students enrolled in them to make connections between the subjects they study and the religious traditions they profess, and/or between theological reflection and ministerial practice. Nevertheless, the employers we interviewed prefer candidates with academic doctorates. In a few schools the professional doctorate is a sufficient credential for most practical teaching positions; in many others, under certain circumstances, it would be an acceptable alternative in a candidate who had a particular sought-after mix of doctoral training, ministerial experience, and religious identity. The exception is university-related schools, where the hiring of a person without an earned academic doctorate is usually not possible.

As our phone interviews neared completion and the testimony to the difficulty of practical field searches mounted, we realized that we had no way to tell whether these searches are especially difficult or whether all searches these days are viewed as difficult. To shed light on this question, we called back twelve of the deans we had interviewed and asked whether their practical field searches were more difficult than others during the same period. All said yes, but two-thirds said that the practical searches were only marginally more difficult than others.

Roman Catholic seminaries present a distinctive case. Those we interviewed said that they would prefer a combination of doctoral work and ministerial experience for practical field faculty, but in practice they place higher priority on the capacity to oversee the process of priestly formation than on scholarly credentials. Open academic searches were much less common for practical field appointments in Roman Catholic schools, and among the new hires during this period, only 53% held earned doctorates of any kind, compared with 85% among new hires at mainline and evangelical Protestant schools.

The areas of teaching most frequently cited as difficult to fill by deans and search committee chairs from all schools of all traditions and types were preaching, worship, and liturgy. As one dean commented, the announcement of a homiletics search to a group of peers at a regional consortium meeting elicited a collective “groan.” One school held open for twelve years a search for a preaching appointment until the right candidate was identified. Religious education and pastoral care were also cited as difficult vacancies to fill. Preaching/worship, religious education, and pastoral care are also teaching fields for which search committees were least likely to allow candidates to be hired who lacked an academic doctorate. In other words, schools have been resistant to yielding on either the doctoral or experiential/religious requirements, even though the combination remains difficult to find.

The Appendix lists the current top suppliers of academic doctorates in the fields where the academic doctorate is most common, which are largely the same fields that we were told presented most difficulty.

2. The New Hires’ Experiences

The new faculty hires we interviewed agreed with deans and search committee chairs that the practical field appointments present more complications than appointments in the classical fields because they require a mix of academic preparation,

practical experience, and grounding in a particular religious tradition. The new hires also believed, however, that “timing” significantly complicated the task of finding candidates. Very often there is no current position for the particular mix of religious tradition, experience and academic training that a candidate presents. Twenty-two of the thirty-eight new hires interviewed for this study spent substantial periods of time (the average seemed to be about three to five years among those we interviewed) in other employment, mostly congregational or other church-related work, while awaiting an opportunity to join a theological faculty following the completion of doctoral study. They took these non-academic jobs not to enhance their “marketability” for a future practical field appointment, but because they had to. They said they were frustrated by the “need to wait” and the uncertainty of whether they would find a teaching job.

New hires whom we interviewed were happy with their work, as would be expected generally of those who had gained employment. No one, including those who had held prior appointments in the classical fields, expressed any discontent with their teaching assignments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study shows that searches for faculty to fill positions in the practical areas of the curriculum are difficult. Most of our data suggest that such searches are more arduous than for other faculty appointments. Some of the difficulty is due, no doubt, to the rapid turnover in this decade that we predicted and that seems to have accelerated in the last three years. In addition, there are indications of real growth in the number of positions. Two other major causes, however, are evident from in our findings.

First, there are not enough people to teach in practical areas who hold relevant academic doctoral degrees, and clearly there are not enough programs to prepare the numbers that would be required if most institutions were to decide that most of their practical faculty should have academic doctorates. Among the hiring institutions, there is a decided preference for doctorate-holding faculty to teach in practical areas. Deans told the Auburn interviewers that the research skills, capacity for analysis, and emphasis on critical thought that are important in the so-called classical fields are just as necessary in practical areas. All types of Protestant schools, including denominational evangelical schools whose deans expressed more willingness to hire faculty without academic doctorates, demonstrate by their hiring practices a clear preference for faculty with academic doctorates. And even the deans and search committee chairs of Roman Catholic seminaries, a majority of whose new hires did not have earned doctorates, say they would have preferred doctorate-holding faculty if they could find them. In many cases they cannot. Less than two-thirds of the recent hires in all the institutions in this study held academic doctorates, and less than three-fourths in mainline Protestant schools—those whose leaders most likely to say they have a very high stake in finding faculty with research doctorates.

As we noted earlier, the circumstances of institutions that are currently the top-suppliers raise serious questions about whether there is an adequate number of secure, well-resourced programs to produce the number and variety of doctorate-holding persons that schools would like to find. Many of the current top-suppliers are so unstable that the number of producer programs could be greatly reduced in the next period.

Second, there is the problem of fit. Institutions want candidates who are not only well-trained but who also have grounding and, where relevant, a record of ministerial or professional service in the schools own religious tradition. In practical studies in particular, it seems to matter a lot that the teachers be of the same religious “flavor” as the institution and its students, and there simply are not enough persons who have all the qualifications that the school is seeking, including an academic doctorate, a record of ministerial or professional service, and knowledge of and commitment to the school’s own religious tradition. The surprising finding that a number of new hires spent several years searching for academic employment after completing the doctorate is additional evidence that part of the problem is “fit” between the school and the candidate’s academic and religious profile as well as gross numbers of persons academically qualified to teach practical subjects

What are the possible remedies for this two-sided problem—lack of an adequate number of doctoral level practical faculty who fit the profiles of hiring institutions? Those we interviewed did not have many suggestions for steps that schools can take to make searches easier. A few argued that schools should become more open to accepting the D.Min. as adequate preparation for teaching, but this was not, as we have just noted, the majority view. Some suggested higher entry-level faculty salaries, observing that persons who do use their advanced education in church positions (senior pastorates, executive and agency positions) often are making more than they would if they moved to

academic posts. One dean suggested that ministerial experience should be used by schools to determine faculty rank in the case of certain positions.

These changes that individual schools might make are unlikely, however, to make a substantial difference. It will take more ambitious measures to produce substantial numbers of candidates who have the combination of qualities most often sought. Our findings lead to two tentative recommendations, both of which would require substantial support from a variety of sources:

1. More doctoral programs

The evidence of this survey is that more academic doctoral programs in practical subject areas are needed. There are relatively few such programs at present. The university programs that are top suppliers of theological faculty in non-practical subject areas offer few opportunities for specializing in subjects related to ministry practice. Indeed, most of the university programs that supply large numbers of faculty in other fields (notably Harvard, Yale and Duke) are not prominent among the top suppliers of practical faculty. As we have already reiterated in this report, many of programs that are top suppliers are facing uncertain futures. The core group of programs that are firmly established is very small, and even if the newer programs become well established, only a handful of institutions can be depended on to supply the faculty resources and funding for doctoral students that will produce significant number of graduates eligible for practical positions on seminary faculties.

One example illustrates how thin and limited the doctoral resources are in practical theology. Recently Vanderbilt terminated its doctoral program in preaching, the area that our respondents say presents the most challenge in the search for faculty. That leaves only one mainline Protestant institution (Princeton) with a well-funded homiletics program. More programs are quite evidently needed, not only in preaching,

but also in worship, religious education, and pastoral care. Though our respondents did not report such a “need,” the recent literature on practical theology has called for a general rather than functionally specialized approach. If this is indeed desirable, more programs are also needed with such a broad focus.

Both the strongest free-standing seminaries and university-based divinity schools and doctoral departments should be encouraged to develop specialties in practical theology and its sub-fields. Such programs require large resource bases and produce little income, so special funding from foundations and donors will be required to bring them into existence.

2. Planning for replacements

Producing more doctoral level faculty will go a long way toward solving the reported problems, but it is also important that denominations and hiring institutions play an active role in identifying future hiring needs and candidates for advanced training. A number of the deans we interviewed had considered the strategy of “growing their own” faculty for practical slots, selecting an able leader in their religious community whose advanced study they would support in return for a commitment from them to teach in some area of practical theology. Although only two of the deans we interviewed had actually tried to do this (they reported mixed results), we think that it is a promising strategy for avoiding the timing problem that both new hires and deans reported to us: when some students (especially those from smaller denominations and traditions) complete their doctorates, there may be no institution on their religious wavelength that has a job open; and when schools need a faculty member in a practical subject area, there may be no candidate who has both academic training and commitment and experience in their specific religious community.

Projecting future retirements, replacements and likely faculty additions is easy. Arranging for the training of suitable persons where there are no potential candidates on the horizon, is, however, an expensive business, because the institution has to pay for both someone to teach and someone to study for a period of time. And it is risky: the designated person may not succeed at doctoral work or teaching. For both reasons, few religious groups or institutions will be able to afford to nurture their own practical faculty without special gifts or grants for that purpose.

APPENDIX I

Top Supplier Graduate Schools for Fields with Highest Percentage of Academic Doctorates

<u>Field: Religious Education</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
Boston College/Institute	4 (8%)
Princeton Seminary	3 (6%)
Southern Baptist	3 (6%)
Trinity Evangelical	3 (6%)
Talbot/Biola	3 (6%)
Columbia University	3 (6%)

<u>Field: Preaching</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
Princeton Seminary	11 (20%)
Vanderbilt	5 (9%)
New Orleans Baptist	5 (9%)
Southwestern Baptist	4 (7%)
Graduate Theological Union	3 (5%)

<u>Field: Pastoral Care</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
Vanderbilt	4 (7%)
New Orleans Baptist	4 (7%)
University of Chicago	3 (5%)
Claremont	3 (5%)

Field: Worship

Eleven institutions supplied one each: Boston University, General Seminary, Candler, Emory University, Notre Dame University, Notre Dame Seminary, GTU; the other suppliers were non-U.S. or unaccredited.

Field: Music/Arts

Twelve suppliers of one or two each were all secular universities without religion doctorates except New Orleans Baptist (2), Southwestern Baptist (2), Yale (1) and Columbia University (1).

APPENDIX II

Top Supplier Graduate Schools by Tradition Academic Doctorates Only

<u>Mainline Protestant</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
Princeton Seminary	18 (10%)
University of Chicago	10 (6%)
Southwestern	10 (6%)
Graduate Theological Union	10 (6%)
Claremont	8 (4%)
Vanderbilt	7 (4%)
Southern Baptist	7 (4%)
Northwestern	4 (2%)
Drew	4 (2%)
Boston University	4 (2%)
Duke	4 (2%)
Candler	4 (2%)
New Orleans Baptist	4 (2%)
Columbia University	4 (2%)
Emory	4 (2%)
Boston College/IREPM	4 (2%)
Luther Northwestern	3 (2%)
Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago	3 (2%)

<u>Evangelical Protestant</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
New Orleans Baptist	16 (12%)
Trinity Evangelical	10 (8%)
Southwestern	8 (6%)
Fuller	5 (4%)
Vanderbilt	4 (3%)
Dallas	4 (3%)
Talbot/Biola	4 (3%)
Purdue, main campus	3 (2%)
Louisiana State, Baton Rouge	3 (2%)

<u>Roman Catholic</u>	<u>Number (Percentage) Supplied</u>
Catholic University, Theology Dept.	6 (15%)
University of Notre Dame, Theology Dept.	2 (5%)
Pontifical Gregorian, Rome	2 (5%)
Graduate Theological Foundation	2 (5%)
Boston College/IREPM	2 (5%)