Report of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries
To the Synods of Regions 7, 8 and 9

Introduction

Since its founding in 1995, the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries (ECLS) has fostered strong collaboration between the three eastern schools, enhancing our common task of theological education for a broad spectrum of students. Major Cluster-sponsored programs include Diaconal Ministry Formation (based at Gettysburg), a Doctor of Ministry degree (Philadelphia-based), partnership in the LTSS-sponsored Atlanta extension center, and Project Connect, which has developed a strong network for vocational discernment and seminary recruitment throughout the three regions. A separately incorporated entity, the Cluster is governed by a Board of Directors made up of board chairs and other leaders from each of the three schools. One of the three seminary presidents serves in rotation as Cluster executive director. With only modest core funding from the seminaries, the Cluster has been blessed to receive over $6 million in grants from foundations to support common projects and subsidize seminary budgets.

Current Collaborative Programs

- The Cluster’s One Library Under Three Roofs links the collections at Gettysburg, Philadelphia and Columbia, providing students, faculty and other borrowers with access to a vast array of books, periodicals and e-resources.
- Vocational discernment emphases focused on young adults is carried out by means of Project Connect, which works in close concert with the Admissions offices of the schools.
- Theological Education with Youth (TEY), a program jointly sponsored by the two Pennsylvania schools, is in its 12th year of providing in-depth study, fellowship and service opportunities for junior- and senior-high young persons. A new TEY director, Associate in Ministry Michelle Huth, is also establishing closer connections with a companion Bishops’ School sponsored by Region 9 at LTSS.
- Intersections Institute has supported a new MA in Public Theology at LTSP, and intensive courses at LTSG that can lead to a certificate for social ministry organization executives.

Future Cluster Directions: In view of the anticipated merger of LTSS with Lenoir Rhyne University, the Cluster is revising its governing documents to accommodate this exciting development. We are also reviewing our affiliation with Yale Divinity School.

With Appreciation: The Cluster is grateful for support to theological education and our seminaries from the synods and churchwide organization. As they conclude their service as dean at LTSP and president at LTSS respectively, appreciation is expressed to Dr. Paul Rajashekar and Rev. Marcus Miller.

Rev. John Richter, Cluster Board Chair Rev. Michael Cooper-White, Ex. Director