## Interview Summary Form

We want to capture **stories**, **themes**, **ideas**, and **great quotes**. Below, provide a summary of your interview that captures these elements.

*(As you enter the results of your interviews on your computer, the table cells will expand)*

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| Date: | 10/27/21 |
| Interviewer Name: | Mary Emily Duba |
| Interviewee Name & Title/Organization  (if any): | Dr. Edwin Aponte, Executive Director of the Louisville Institute |
| Interviewee relationship: | o Current student, program: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  o Alumni, program: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  o Faculty  o Pastor or denominational leader  x Other |
| Do we have this interviewee’s **permission** to use their name alongside their comments? Yes  What **great stories** did you hear about **UDTS** (questions 1 & 2)? **Great quotes?**  He is familiar with UDTS by reputation only, but offered these as impressions of UDTS:   * It is a seminary that is serious about taking the contexts of ministry seriously, and whose curriculum is responsive context. * “I have a good opinion of seminaries that are embedded in a larger university.” When the relationship between a Seminary and its University is healthy, it helps a seminary stay grounded. Free-standing seminaries can sometimes think that theological education is the end-all-be-all, but when you’re embedded in a larger university, you tend to reminder that we’re part of a larger mission and a larger world, even as we have a particular mission within it.” | |
| What **important** **themes** did you hear in questions 1 & 2 about the forces and factors that enable UDTS to thrive?  **These times are not wholly unprecedented.** Speaking as an historian, these are certainly challenging times and they are unpreceded for us, but we ought also be reminded that the church has faced serious challenges in the past. Going forward, one of the things that we’d do well to do is to remember our history and to draw on the faith of those who came before us.  **We are in a time of extreme division.** Some are likening this time to the threshold of the Civil War. It’s hard for people who are Christians to talk to one another. They’re judging whether someone is really a Christian, or the right kind. This division and antagonism is part of our context and will be into the future.  **Contextual theological education is the way forward.** As I look at Theological Education from my vantage, I see many seminaries stuck in a model that’s embedded in the 1950s and a certain class of people. These seminaries were in the midst of debating the future of graduate theological education beyond this model. (The model being that we uproot students from the context where they received their call. We disrupt and displaces people from their context. Do we expect them to go back unchanged, do we expect the context to remain static while they were gone?) Without the debate being resolved, we are now launched into a new reality by the pandemic. Some schools are more prepared to pivot than others. | |
| What does the interviewee **anticipate for the future**? (question 3)  **“The church is not going back to where we were before**.” How do we continue to be a church that has a digital component? At it’s root this is a question of our **ecclesiology**. We’ve always said we are “one universal church” – one church not in the same physical place. Do we really believe that? Our commitment to this ecclesiology is being tested. He told the story of worshiping occasionally during the pandemic with the American Church in Paris, where friends of his are pastors. This experience impressed upon him the sense that we are, in fact, “one catholic church around the world.”  **Preparing leaders for ministry** in this new context requires training in **“multiple literacies**.” Do we value a **digital literacy** as much as Greek or Hebrew? The digital aspect can’t be peripheral. How do we bring it in to the main curriculum? This takes money to do well. We need to invest in the digital aspects of our curriculum or our educational platforms.  I (Mary Emily) liked this image of multiple literacies and asked if there were other “literacies” that he thought should be folded into theological education. He responded by talking about **art as a literacy**. Bringing the visual arts, poetry, music – this is a literacy too. This is central to who we are as human persons. He has taken to the practice of incorporating visual art, poetry, music, spoken word, etc into just about any presentation he offers, whether an opening prayer/reflection before the main event or the heart of the presentation itself. He thinks this translates well to the digital medium, as long as you appreciate the limits of human attention in this medium.  **What’s exciting about the future?** A school that may have once fallen into the “small, regional seminary” category before can now engage the entire world from where they are. There’s no reason not to think about this kind of global outreach. We should ask: **‘**What can we do *now* as an offering to the entire world?” This is not a time for 5-year plans, but for flexibility to respond to the moment faithfully. Doing this well requires a clear sense of one’s own identity and skills – both as individuals and as an institution. He offered the image of jazz musician or a basketball pick-up game. Know your instrument, your position, hone your skills and then be ready to play on a minute’s notice. “This is my instrument. This is my training. This is what I bring. This is who I am and what I can offer.” | |
| What **visions of the future** does this person have for a strategic, unified, and faithful future at UDTS? (question 4)  Looking out at the landscape of theological education in 2026, I hope to see “seminaries that are **characterized by biblical justice and its implementation in everyday life.**” People talk about justice, but they sometimes mean revenge. How do we characterize ourselves institutionally according to biblical justice, what justice really means in Scripture in terms of attention the environmental, racial injustices, poverty, etc. Biblical justice calls us to organize our lives differently, and this includes how we are organized as a seminary. Are we just using a corporate model with its roots in the 19th century Guilded Age? Or do we look different as an institution because of what we believe?  “Not every seminary is going to make it to 2026.” Those that will still exist and be thriving will be those that can commit to a changed way of being that is in line with what we say we believe. A Seminary should be living into the reign of God in every dimension. Schools that can do this are going to have a strong appeal.  This gets manifested in many ways. Imagine a seminary that has organized itself in such a way that the Trustees meet around one big table while the administration, faculty, and staff sit on the side and only get called upon occasionally. In this image the geography of the room testifies to a hierarchy that is not reflective of what the Seminary says it believes about God and the world. By contrast, a Seminary that lives what it believes at an organizational level gives just voice and compensation to workers at all levels.  Another way this gets manifested is in the curriculum. Much of the curriculum of graduate theological education is based on a model inherited from Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin. The seminaries that survive will have a curriculum that meets the needs of this moment. (He is sending me a paper he wrote on this topic -- graduate theological education’s inheritance from Schleiermacher and what is needed now.) | |
| What does this person believe arethe **most important strategic opportunities** for 2022 and beyond? (question 5)  These are the strategic questions he believes we should be asking:  1) If we have a stated mission, is it the right one? Does it need to be rearticulated for our new context?  2) Is the faculty willing to rethink the curriculum – not dinky little changes, but a wholesale kind of revisioning? Are we willing to change the way things are?  3) Are the people on our Board of Advisors committed to the future of UDTS as a part of their vocation? Is their service here part of their own sense of calling? If not, it’s time to step away.  4) What are the communities that the seminary is called to serve? Has that changed since we last asked ourselves this question? There is a danger in having a sense of scarcity about enrollments, which leads to a frantic effort to recruit rather than a missionally-driven sense of identity and calling within the arena of graduate theological education.  5) What does it mean to equip the saints for the work of ministry? | |
| Have you learned **anything else** (or had a new thought yourself) during the interview that you want to share? | |
| **Please send this completed Interview Report Form by email to Jill Dodds by November 24.**  **jdodds@dbq.edu** | |