Seminary Assessment Report, October 13, 2021

At today’s meeting of the faculty/staff council, the following assessment spreadsheets were discussed.

**Doctor of Ministry (DMin).** This degree meets on a calendar year, rather than the academic year. The spreadsheet measures work submitted by students in cohort (the classroom portion of the degree) for the 2020 calendar year. It also measures final projects/theses submitted by students who graduated in May 2021. It contains aggregate scores from four ongoing DMin cohorts in various stages of completion: some were still in the cohort phase with no finished projects, and some had only finished projects.

For all Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s), the benchmarks were met.

**Master of Arts in Mission and Discipleship (MAMD).** This spreadsheet measures the 2020-2021 academic year (August 2020 – May 2021).

It was noted that the GSQ scores (3-year averages) continue to be consistently higher than those for ATS as a whole. Relevant to this degree are scores on “ability to think theologically,” “ability to relate social issues to faith,” “ability to pray,” and “trust in God.”

It was also noted that results for the artifacts met benchmarks, but the “n” is small (usually 2 or 3 students). However, this degree program is growing, and it is expected that there will be more data in future years. Another issue of note is that there are several artifact/measurement tools from the course “Gospel in Context” (two papers and an immersion experience), for which there is no data this year. This is a travel course and was not offered in its regular format in August 2020 due to a travel ban during the global pandemic. Another set of artifact/measurement tools refer to the course “Starting Missional Communities,” and there were no MAMD degree students in the course during this academic year.

**Master of Divinity (MDiv).** This spreadsheet measures the 2020-2021 academic year (August 2020-May 2021).

It was again noted that the GSQ scores (3-year average) continue to be consistently higher than those for ATS as a whole. Relevant to this degree are scores on “ability to pray,” “trust in God,” knowledge of church doctrine and history,” “ability to use and interpret scripture,” “ability to preach well,” “ability to conduct worship,” “ability to think theologically,” “respect for own religious tradition,” “ability in pastoral counseling,” “empathy for the poor and oppressed,” “ability to relate social issues to faith,” and “ability to live faith in daily life.”

There are eleven Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for the degree, and for the majority of these there was sufficient data and benchmarks were met or met with strength. Of note, under SLO #7 (Evangelize the world with faithfulness and contextual sensitivity), there were only three students in the required course “Gospel in Context.” This is a travel course that was not offered in the regular format in August 2020 due to a travel ban during the global pandemic. A tutorial was offered to three seniors who needed to complete the course prior to December graduations. The benchmarks were met, but there continues to be a strong preference to offer the course in residence with group travel. Also under this SLO, the course “Starting Missional Communities” was taught in spring 2021 by an adjunct who was not able to provide assessment.

Two benchmarks that were not met involved scores on PC(USA) ordination exams. The UDTS passing rate (3-year average) was lower than 90% of the PC(USA) passing rate for both “Worship and Sacraments” and “Theology.” There are some students who continue to need study in order to understand Reformed worship or theology, but the majority of unsatisfactory exams are due to student failures to directly address the questions on the exams. The faculty discussed several measures to improve scores, including offering a Zoom Q&A session with relevant faculty during the week before the exam, strengthening course expectations for directly addressing assignment questions, and encouraging students to take the seminary exam prep courses at the Master’s level during the summer term.

Post-graduate placement rates for the seminary continue to be excellent. Of those who graduated at the Master’s level five months ago in May 2021, two are not yet certified for call. Of the remaining, one is employed in a non-religious NGO and the rest have received calls and placements in religious vocations, for a placement rate of 100% among graduates who are able to explore a call.

Student debt continues to successfully decrease. Among this year’s graduates, 19% incurred debt over $30,000, down from 38% in 2020 and 42% in 2019. Discussion around this reduction included a recognition of the Young Adult Ministry Scholars (YAMS) program, in which all tuition and a housing stipend are provided, as well as an increasing number of students who are choosing to reduce their course loads in order to avoid debt. 57% of 2021 graduates incurred no debt.

**Overall Assessment.** All assessments were accepted by motion and vote, with confidence that the seminary is meeting our goals.