

Waterloo Lutheran Seminary 2016 Annual Implementation Report

Submitted by: Dr. Mark W. Harris, Principal-Dean,
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Date: June 10, 2016

Recommendations from 2013-2014 Final Assessment Report

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| Recommendation: To proceed with anticipated curriculum changes (Reviewer's Recommendation #1). | |
| Responsibility: Principal-Dean; Management Team | Implementation Date: September 2014 |
| <p>Additional Notes: The Management Team comprised of the Principal-Dean and Academic Program Directors will continue to make changes to the curriculum in line with the changes coming with the College of Registered Psychotherapists and changes by the Association of Theological Schools to the Master of Divinity programs. Further changes will be forthcoming in the negotiations with Laurier concerning the Operating Agreement and the Provincial SMA process.</p> <p>From the FGPS Dean: The Seminary is encouraged to move forward with the proposed diploma, and to discuss with the FGPS dean plans for new graduate programs which fit within the university's academic plan and Strategic Mandate Agreement.</p> | |
| Recommendation completed (2015). | |

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| Recommendation: Because of the distance that some students live away from WLS, it may be useful to develop some protocol about how students can qualify to be virtually connected occasionally to a face to face class through a variety of digital means so it meets real needs (icy roads) and avoids easy excuses (not bothering to come in) (Reviewer's Recommendation #2). | |
| Responsibility: Faculty Council | Implementation Date: June 2014 |
| <p>Additional Notes: The WLS Faculty Council has discussed the range of circumstances and adopted a policy and protocol for students wanting to connect to class through digital means.</p> | |
| Recommendation completed (2015). | |

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| Recommendation: The pilot online class should be seriously monitored and evaluated to see its potential strengths and weaknesses, assessing what can and cannot be delivered in the purely online format, rather than jumping on some online bandwagon as "the solution" to demographic and pedagogic problems (Reviewer's Recommendation #3). | |
| Responsibility: The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee | Implementation Date: April 2015 |
| <p>Additional Notes: The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee in consultation with the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Department will consider appropriate evaluation tools for this course.</p> | |
| 2014-2015 Actions | |
| <p>Unit Response: WLS is exploring the degree to which it will offer online courses. There are two online courses currently being offered. We are in the planning phase for a third. We will be evaluating the delivery of the online courses.</p> | |

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| <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the status of the evaluation of the pilot online class in next year's report.</p> |
| <p>2015-2016 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p> |
| <p>Unit Response: Currently, we are continuing with the two, previously mentioned online courses and plans for the third are on hold, due to other staff demands. We have undertaken an evaluation of both courses by reviewing the retention rates and feedback received from students. In both cases, there is strong agreement that content of the courses fits well with the online format. Retention rates are high and both courses were rated at very strong in terms of content and learning outcome.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: A reasonable plan.</p> |
| <p>PRS Comments: Given the progress made over the past year, the committee felt that this recommendation had been completed; there is no need to report on it further.</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation: To develop a comprehensive assessment plan that has clear indicators for each of the learning outcomes in the various programs in a way that transcends success in individual courses (Reviewer's Recommendation #4).</p> | |
| <p>Responsibility: Comprehensive Evaluation Committee</p> | <p>Implementation Date: Commencing September 2014</p> |
| <p>Additional Notes: This item will be referred to the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee. Additional Faculty to be appointed to work with this Committee.</p> | |
| <p>2014-2015 Actions</p> <p>Unit Response: Each program area is reviewing its outcomes. Instructors will be asked to consider how the program outcomes will be integrated into specific course syllabi. The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee will review the progress of this process.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: Clarify the membership and mandate of the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee.</p> <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update on this recommendation in next year's report, as well as clarification on the membership of the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee.</p> | |
| <p>2015-2016 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p> | |
| <p>Unit Response: The members of the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee are Dr. Allen Jorgenson, Dr. Joy Philip, Morgan Braganza (PhD candidate in FSW) and Rev. Steven Weber. We have now developed a program map for each degree, relating course outcomes to program outcomes, and including these in course syllabi. Each department is in the</p> | |

process of working on developing clear indicators to assess overall progress in their program.

FGPS Decanal Response: Good progress on this recommendation. All members of this committee should be appointed to the Graduate Faculty if not already.

PRS Comments: It sounds like good progress has been made toward implementing this recommendation and the committee did not feel that it needed another update on it. There is no need to report on it further.

Recommendation: Work with Laurier and their Director of Teaching Support Services [now CTIE] to be a pioneer in the new module for assessment that has been created and is being funded by Laurier, since this promises to give important evaluative data from the course to program to degree levels (Reviewer's Recommendation #5).

Responsibility: Director of Leadership and Ministry; Director of the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Program

Implementation Date: August 2014

Additional Notes: The Directors of the M.Div. and M.A. Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy programs have begun a pilot project to implement models for assessment.

2014-2015 Actions

Unit Response: The Director of the M.Div. program worked with CTIE during the Fall Term to pilot a new assessment module that was being prepared in partnership with Desire2Learn. The intent of the module is to step beyond merely connecting course outcomes to program outcomes, but assessing student performance vis-a-vis the course outcomes, such that it could be tracked through to the program. Specific assignments in each course are weighed and graded in connection with specific outcomes. We are awaiting their report on the success of the pilot. Apparently, they are also continuing to work with D2L to refine the software.

PRS Comments: The committee appreciated the Seminary's willingness to participate in this pilot project. Please provide any relevant updates in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Response: Further progress on this recommendation has been delayed because D2L has yet to refine the software to enable the use of this assessment module.

FGPS Decanal Response: None

PRS Comments: The committee recognized that progress on this recommendation was outside of the control of the WLS. There is no need to report on it further.

Recommendation: We would further recommend that the many informal forms of evaluating courses, programs, and degrees that occur in such a collegial and well-connected faculty be made more formal so it both gives a trace of the history of decisions and can guide future decisions, e.g., terminating or initiating programs. Clear documentation of the assessment processes and the content of the assessment seem to be a real need (Reviewer's Recommendation #6).

Responsibility: Comprehensive Evaluation Committee

Implementation Date: April 2015

Additional Notes: The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee will discuss and consult about possible modalities for adopting a system of evaluation in the light of the new Laurier Course Evaluation process.

From the FGPS dean: The Seminary is encouraged to include the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies in early discussions of program changes, including terminating and initiating programs.

2014-2015 Actions

Unit Response: The Seminary is continuing to re-engineer its academic programs. The Doctoral programs are in the middle of a renaming process. The focus of the M.A. in Christian Studies is the next program to be reconsidered. Initial conversations are underway in the Department. Once some preliminary ideas are identified, a conversation will be initiated with the FGPS Dean.

FGPS Decanal Response: Senate approved the change in name of the DMin to a PhD in Human Relationships.

PRS Comments: The committee felt that the spirit of this recommendation; that is, a more formal documentation record of assessment work being undertaken within the Seminary's programs, has been lost in the comments provided. In next year's report, please address the recommendation more directly.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Response: Amidst the change in leadership and other programmatic demands of this last year, the seminary has made little progress in terms of developing clear documentation of assessment processes. Toward this end, particularly with an ATS assessment visit being scheduled for 2018, the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee has been instructed to make the compilation of such documentation a priority in the coming year.

FGPS Decanal Response: The most urgent matter is to address the issues raised by the Quality Council regarding the change to a PhD. The acting dean will be involved in these discussions.

Acting Dean FGPS: Much progress has been made in responding to the Quality Council requests for additional information. WLS has been diligent in compiling further information and presenting a more compelling case for the renaming. I would urge them to continue keeping track of quality indicators around publications (student and faculty), types of

dissertation (title, content, methodologies) projects, and changes in the field that could lead to future enhancements of the program. It will be very important to retain emphasis on the research emphasis of the program.

PRS Comments: In next year's report, the committee would appreciate hearing an update on any progress that has been made in developing clearer documentation of assessment processes. In addition to the upcoming accreditation visit, this will be helpful for WLS' next cyclical review.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given for providing standard internet access in all teaching rooms and data projection (Reviewer's Recommendation #7).

Responsibility: Principal-Dean

Implementation Date: June 2014

Additional Notes: All classrooms have access to internet and media technology. WLS has secured some additional equipment to support instruction and promote communication. The Principal-Dean will monitor the functioning of information and digital technologies to insure they are working effectively.

2014-2015 Actions

Unit Response: There is Wi-Fi throughout the building. We have checked this with Laurier IT. It may not be as seamless given some of the walls and building materials. Currently we are developing a Master Plan for the Seminary Building. The initial report will be completed by September 2015. Consideration will then be given to major renovations to the building in 2016.

PRS Comments: Please provide any updates on this recommendation in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Response: The seminary is in the process of preparing for a major renovation that will begin in early 2017. This will include the upgrading of technology (i.e. data projectors) and internet access throughout the facility.

FGPS Decanal Response: none.

PRS Comments: The committee recognizes that completing this recommendation is beyond the control of the WLS, and anticipates that it will be dealt with as part of the upcoming building renovations. There is no need to report on it further.

Recommendation: The workload is very heavy and thus it is a challenge to balance teaching, supervision and research. It appears to be a good idea to have a person (maybe the assistant dean) assigned to have annual reviews of the overall workloads of each of the core faculty members. At that time, it would be helpful to have the faculty members articulate their research plans for the coming year and express what support they would need for that (Reviewer's Recommendation #8).

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| Responsibility: Principal-Dean | Implementation Date: September 2014 |
| Additional Notes: WLS will begin phasing in reduced teaching loads Regular faculty will move from six to five courses for the academic year May 1 to April 30 th . The Principal-Dean will review faculty workloads at time of performance reviews. | |
| Recommendation completed (2015). | |

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| Recommendation: At the same time, it is important for WLS to articulate to the university that the nature of their teaching, supervision, and community-engagement, will from time to time reduce not their capacity of research and critical reflection on their field nor their teaching, but the traditionally measured "outputs"(Reviewer's Recommendation #9). | |
| Responsibility: Principal-Dean and WLS Team for the Seminary/Laurier negotiations | Implementation Date: October 2014 |
| Additional Notes: WLS will begin a conversation with Laurier on the future direction of the Seminary with a possible name change to become a small University within Laurier. As such it will be a professional and teaching focused school. This will be the WLS contribution to Laurier that will help in the provincial process for differentiation among Ontario Universities. | |
| 2014-2015 Actions | |
| <p>Unit Response: This process is underway with Laurier. We have begun a negotiations process concerning our Operating Agreement. It is anticipated that the name change will proceed over the summer and a plan will be undertaken over the next year to implement the new business plan and transition to the new name.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: the dean looks forward to the outcome of these negotiations to clarify the roles of WLS and FGPS in the admission and progress of students in the Seminary's graduate programs.</p> <p>PRS Comments: The committee felt that the comments provided did not directly address the spirit of this recommendation; that is, the way in which the Seminary communicates to the university community its commitment to teaching, supervision, and community engagement. Please provide an update in next year's report, addressing the recommendation more directly.</p> | |
| <p>2015-2016 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p> | |
| <p>Unit Response: The seminary places a very high priority on teaching, research, and community engagement, all of which are understood as different but interrelated facets of our institutional priority on integrated learning, among both students and faculty. One of the implications of this is that the seminary faculty do not necessarily meet the university's traditionally measured outputs for research and publication. A reduction in faculty course loads has been, in part, an effort to free up time for more traditional research. At the same time, faculty has begun to develop a position paper to clearly articulate, to the university, both the range of approaches that are embodied within our faculty and the variety of outputs, some of which fall within the range of "traditionally measured outputs" and some which do not, yet which are appropriate to the nature of our field.</p> | |

FGPS Decanal Response: FGPS looks forward to this position paper, especially with regard to questions about changing the DMin nomenclature to PhD.

Acting Dean FGPS: Such a position paper would also be useful in clarifying graduate faculty status for WLS faculty.

PRS Comments: The committee would like an update on this recommendation in next year's report, and recommends a conversation between the WLS and the VP: Research about how to better communicate the research output of WLS faculty to the university community.

Recommendation: Consideration for faculty to apply for SSHRC funding with faculty from across the university may provide a way to access these research funds (Reviewer's Recommendation #10).

Responsibility: Principal-Dean

Implementation Date: December 2014

Additional Notes: The Principal-Dean has discussed this issue with the Laurier VP-Research. WLS Faculty feel it remains difficult to access funding through these granting Councils and Foundations. WLS also gained access to a searchable data base for Foundation funding.

2014-2015 Actions

Unit Response: Plans had to be postponed for a workshop on research funding. This was aimed at helping faculty apply for research funds. This initiative will be rescheduled once a new VP-Research is appointed.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Response: The seminary has scheduled a workshop, with staff from the Laurier Office of Research, to explore funding sources and approaches.

FGPS Decanal Response: Some discussion of the outcome would be helpful. Were there more applications for research funding? The expectation of the Quality Council that faculty members actively engage in research to support the PhD program will continue to be an issue.

PRS Comments: As with the previous recommendation, the committee would like an update on the outcome of the workshop with the ORS and on any initiatives that have taken place in the past year to further encourage WLS faculty to apply for SHRRRC or other related external funding opportunities.

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| Recommendation: It may be useful to find someone at Laurier, contract someone, or appoint someone internally at WLS who can help faculty members identify potential external funding sources for their research projects, if they need it for the nature of their work (Reviewers' Recommendation #11). | |
| Responsibility: Principal-Dean | Implementation Date: December 2014 |
| Additional Notes: The Principal-Dean will organize a session with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to explore possible approaches. | |
| 2014-2015 Actions | |
| <p>Unit Response: Some cross disciplinary partnerships are being initiated (e.g. Psychology, Political Science etc.) As these develop they may enable further initiatives in research funding.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: Now that the DMin has become a PhD, research expertise on the part of faculty members is even more important. The dean encourages WLS to explore sources of research funding that will also benefit doctoral students who currently are not covered by the university's minimum guarantee of funding. Acting Dean FGPS: A big part of all graduate programs in Ontario is the training of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP), which are greatly facilitated through research grants, and I encourage WLS to keep this at the forefront of faculty engagement with WLS graduate programs.</p> <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.</p> | |
| <p>2015-2016 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p> | |
| <p>Unit Response: As noted in recommendation #10, we are holding a workshop with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to discuss possible research funding sources for faculty. In addition, Dr. Olena Darewych has been appointed to serve as a resource to the WLS faculty, to assist in identifying external sources for research funding.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: As above.</p> | |
| <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update in next year's report on the outcome of conversations that have taken place in the past year between the WLS and the Office of Research Services. With the PhD program now approved, it will be increasingly important to demonstrate the research activity of the WLS faculty to both internal and external communities.</p> | |

Additional Comments (PRS): Several of the recommendations made by the external reviewers in 2013-2014 have been completed this year, or were deemed to be out of the control of the WLS and therefore not useful to continue to report on. The PRS would also like to congratulate the WLS on the successful approval of the PhD program. Several of the remaining recommendations are related to research activity of WLS faculty; the opportunities they have to apply for external funding and the way in which the research

activity is communicated both internally and externally. The committee felt that, especially in light of the PhD approval, these recommendations had become even more important than they were when they were first made, and looks forward to hearing an update on progress made toward their implementation in next year's report.