



Cyclical Program Review of the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary Final Assessment Report

Programs:

Master of Divinity (M.Div.)

Master of Arts in Theology: Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy

Master of Arts in Theology: Christian Studies

Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)

Diploma in Multifaith Spiritual Care and Counselling

Submitted by:

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Part 1: Synthesis of Review Documents

a. Summary of Self-Study

In the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary's (WLS) Self-Study, we reviewed the history and origins of the institution which has led to it being a premier professional school offering a range of theological, counseling and leadership programs. WLS celebrated its centennial in 2011. WLS is presently a federated college of Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier).

The WLS Self-Study submission notes a number of areas where work is being done: faculty workload, accreditation processes, marketing of academic programs, institutional advancement, assessment of curriculum outcomes and strategic directions identified in the WLS Strategic Plan 2012-2015.

WLS has been aware of the faculty workload issue. Theological Schools tend to have higher "teaching" expectations regarding the number of courses taught. The current teaching load is six with reduction for additional administrative duties. WLS has been consulting with other similar schools about an appropriate teaching assignment and other expectations.

Research in professional theological schools is important but is assessed somewhat differently given the limited research grants available to faculty in religious institutions. Research by WLS faculty seems to be above the average of similar faculty in schools in our cohort. Faculty have been publishing on average two articles a year and have published a number of books. Additionally they are regular presenters at their professional and academic associations. Research is important at WLS but in addition to the scholarly focus, community focused research and research that serves professional practice both in faith and the wider community is a priority.

The number and increasing requirements of various accreditation processes is an issue. Currently WLS programs must be reviewed through Laurier's quality assurance processes, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), is required to meet various church standards for ordination candidates, and may soon face accreditation regimes for the new College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO). The Self-Study pointed out that many of these processes cover similar terrain to rightly assure the quality of programs but they have different systems and timetables and tend not to coordinate or foster collaboration in their respective assessment approaches. For a school with limited resources, this places a considerable additional burden on faculty and administration, impacting the time with students, workload and research capacity.

WLS is also mindful of the need to undertake more marketing of its academic programs to different groups. The WLS graduate student profile has moved more to adult learners

and commuter students. WLS has introduced more flexible models for course delivery. Much of the program and degree redesign initiatives of the past few years are also reflective of addressing new and emerging student markets and needs. WLS continues to assess the new models for delivering our academic programs.

Similarly, the traditional church donor base is shifting and aging for WLS. The WLS Board has made institutional advancement a priority. They have engaged some special help in developing and redesigning the advancement strategy. This includes reaching out to alumni from the Counselling programs who have not previously been regularly included in various fund raising and advancement initiatives.

WLS is also developing more concrete approaches to assessment of outcomes for academic programs and courses. We have been working with the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence at Laurier to identify ways to introduce better assessment procedures. The WLS MDiv and MA Theology: Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy programs have been selected to be included in a pilot project that will link program outcomes to courses outcomes and provide a means for tracking progress. This project is commencing in Summer 2014. We are also exploring how to utilize e-portfolios to determine how students are progressing.

The WLS Strategic Plan 2010-2015 remains the guiding document for changes being made. This plan was included in the Self-Study submission. A key feature was its contextual analysis that provides some insights into how the current environment is changing and the issues that are emerging for academic programs. WLS is largely on track to complete this plan and implementing the changes it proposed. The Board is involved in a process in revisiting the current plan with an eye to developing a new strategic plan for 2020.

b. Summary of External Reviewers' Report and Recommendations

Members of the Review Committee:

- The Rev. Dr. Robin Steinke, Chair, Luther Theological Seminary
- Dr. Hans-Dittmar Mündel, University of Alberta
- Dr. Heidi Ahonen, Music Therapy Program, Wilfrid Laurier University

Summary of the External Reviewers' Report

The External Reviewers' Report offers a fairly comprehensive picture of the current very healthy state of academic programs at the graduate level at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The importance of being a "community of learning" and academic excellence is one of the features that has attracted students to study at WLS. The size of the school enables the development of important relationships between faculty and students and among students themselves. This provides an important setting for

students not only to acquire knowledge and competency in their fields but also to integrate what they learn with who they are becoming both as persons and in their profession.

The Report also rightly captures the important pedagogical values that shape WLS as a faith-based school in the Lutheran tradition committed to “providing a community environment, new and integrated interdisciplinary communities of application, community focus and global engagement, and learning through experience” (page 2). It is these values that enable the “high standards of teaching, instruction and standards of student’s well-being.”

We appreciated that this process reminded WLS that our programs reflect “...the current state of the discipline or are at the cutting edge of the discipline.” This is a nice reminder of the direction to which WLS is committed in continuing to pioneer in the area of “spiritually integrated psychotherapy” and in the area of multifaith leadership and “global citizenship.”

Waterloo Lutheran Seminary wishes to express its appreciation to the External Examiners on the Review Committee. Likewise we are grateful to the staff at Laurier – and especially Michael Daly and Sally Heath – for the time, energy and wisdom accorded us in this important review. We also want to express our thanks to Dr. Joan Norris and her staff for their thoughtful guidance and encouragement.

c. Summary of Unit Response

Waterloo Lutheran Seminary’s Management Team which includes the Principal-Dean, Assistant Principal, Assistant Dean, and Director for Leadership in Ministry worked to prepare the Unit Response. The “Response from the Unit” pertaining to the recommendations is repeated here in its entirety. The Executive response from the Seminary’s Principal-Dean is principally to endorse the responses within the Unit Response. The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies has added additional commentary where indicated.

Recommendation #1: To proceed with anticipated curriculum changes.

Response: WLS remains committed to developing and expanding its programs, and reviewing these by way of systematic evaluation. We are in the process of deciding the curricula for the new diplomas and are currently monitoring the recent changes that have been approved for the curricula of the MA and MDiv degrees. The WLS faculty has held a one day retreat to explore possible new programs and ways in which it can work with other Faculties and Departments at Laurier. The joint Faculty/ WLS Board of Governors meeting in early April 2014 discussed and reviewed future directions in consultation with representatives from Laurier.

Response 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 Laurier's academic plan and Strategic Mandate Agreement.

Recommendation #2: 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).

Response: A task force has been assigned the responsibility of developing a policy regarding this, attentive to the needs of the student, the demands on the professor and the integrity of the courses, degrees and institution. The Seminary will also be reviewing its current technological capacity for providing online access.

Recommendation #3: 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.

Response: WLS is moving forward with online courses in a strategic and modest manner. We have the good fortune of having had the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence as a partner in our development of an online course at the BA level. We will utilize evaluations from this project, and engage them in ongoing conversations as we offer further online courses. Currently, our area of focus is blended courses, which seem to be the most attractive to our students. The Faculty will consult with the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence about potential concerns with our programs and new approaches.

Recommendation #4: 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.

Response: We recently had Sandy Hughes, director of the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence (CTIE), speak to us about a pilot project that will enable us to gather data regarding the achievement of learning outcomes as they are met across courses using the Desire2Learn Insights tool in MyLearningSpace. Our commitment for the 2014/15 academic year is to pilot data retrieval of one learning outcome across various courses in the MA and MDiv programs. We anticipate that this will be successful and allow us to broaden this project to include our successes in all of our outcomes. Thereafter we will be able to establish a committee of the faculty council that will regularly assess this data using a tool that correlates these results with the mission of WLS.

Recommendation #5: Work with Laurier and their Director of Teaching Support

Services (now CTIE) to be a pioneer in the new module for assessment¹ 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.

Response: See above.

Recommendation #6: 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.

Response: In response to this recommendation, the Principal-Dean has commended to the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee², which is charged with ongoing evaluation and assessment of WLS activities and services, the task of reviewing every change to the calendar to ensure that the following criteria are met:

1. Decisions are made in concert with the mission of WLS.
2. Decisions are evidence based.
3. Decisions are made in an open manner, in consultation with, and respecting the academic freedom of, the faculty.

Response 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.

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

Response: While not every classroom has wired access, all have wifi. Consideration is being given to making wired access available in all rooms. The Board of Governors' Development Committee will be reviewing the current building and consideration will be given to ways to improve accessibility through the appropriate use of technology

Recommendation #8: 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

¹ Laurier is one of five institutions participating in a five-year Productivity and Innovation Fund (PIF) pilot program on learning outcomes assessment using the Desire2Learn Insights tool.

² The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee resulted from the 2006 Accreditation Visit of the Association of Theological Schools. It is part of their efforts to encourage and ongoing culture of evaluation and assessment.

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.

Response: Starting in the 2015/16 academic year, a proposal will be going to the Board of Governors to establish a five course load for full time faculty; with four for those with administrative responsibilities.

Recommendation #9: 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 or their teaching, but the traditionally measured "outputs".

Response: This is an important point for consideration. Of course this is not only true of degrees in theology. This will be more clearly articulated in future briefs.

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

Response: The Principal-Dean has instructed the Assistant Dean to facilitate a "Research Meeting" with the Office of Research Services in order to explore opportunities to leverage further our location in a university with such an exceptional record of research.

Recommendation #11: 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.

Response: WLS will invite a person from Laurier's Office of Research Services for a roundtable on possible approaches regarding research funding. The Principal-Dean will continue to discuss research plans and ways WLS can support faculty during their regular performance reviews.

Part 2: Executive Response

a. Identification of Program Strengths

- The sense of "Community,"
- The "nimbleness" and responsiveness of the faculty to student, "well-being" and the development of the "whole person,"
- A program that helps students integrate academic knowledge with their life and professional vocation,

- WLS is a "...treasure the university should tap."

b. Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

- WLS has been committed to a process of outcomes based curriculum reform. Many of our programs have been renovated to reflect this new approach.
- WLS has been creative in developing new vehicles for course delivery in intensive (e.g. day-long plus online delivery) and blended courses (e.g. week-long intensives plus online delivery). These have been developed often with partnerships in the wider community (e.g. St. Joseph's, Grey Bruce Health care Systems).
- WLS has come a long way in rationalizing the degree architecture to be more integrated with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at Laurier. In an increasing dynamic environment in the post-secondary education sector, change will continue to characterize curriculum changes. WLS is considering further changes to its degree architecture in order to remain relevant to student's vocational aspirations.
- WLS will continue explore new models for course delivery particularly for students at some distance from Waterloo.
- WLS will continue to harmonize our programs in spiritually integrated psychotherapy to comply with the expectations of the new College of Registered Psychotherapists.
- WLS will explore the possibility of changing our current professional Doctor of Ministry degree into a flexible professional PhD program in two fields, Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy and Leadership. This would enable graduates to hold a more publically recognizable credential among the members of the College.
- WLS will continue to adapt and reform our newly redesigned Master of Divinity program. Currently, it can be completed in as short as two years, down from three.
- WLS will also be reviewing the Master of Arts in Theology program in the light of the WLS focus on the theme of "Global Citizenship."
- WLS will continue to develop assessment vehicles to accompany these changes and play an important role in this process as the report rightly acknowledges.

c. Prioritization of Recommendations Approved for Implementation

The implementation plan below outlines the basic priorities for the recommendations. The main priority will be to find ways to reduce the overall workload of the faculty. The second priority will be to address the research concerns outlined in the report.

d. Personnel Issues (confidential and if applicable)

As a faith based professional school, the conventional research metrics of the academy are not always applicable. Many faculty feel that they are doing important research in the fields that have application in the real world beyond the academy. However, there is a feeling that they are often ineligible for the grants available to others and that their

research is not always recognized. WLS will explore ways to help communicate this important research more effectively to others.

WLS is also in the midst of a Strategic Planning process. The new Strategic Plan will be developed over the course of the 2014-2015 Academic Year. The cyclical review findings have been shared with the Seminary's Board of Governors. It will be part of the consideration in developing the 2015-2020 WLS Strategic Plan.

Part 3: Implementation Plan

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Implementation Date	Additional Notes
<p>Recommendation #1: To proceed with anticipated curriculum changes</p>	<p>Principal-Dean Management Team</p>	<p>September 2014</p>	<p>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>
<p>Recommendation #2: 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</p>	<p>Faculty Council</p>	<p>June 2014</p>	<p>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>

bothering to come in).			
Recommendation #3: 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	The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	April 2015	The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee in consultation with the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Department will consider appropriate evaluation tools for this course.
Recommendation #4: 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.	Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	Commencing September 2014	This item will be referred to the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee. Additional Faculty to be appointed to work with this Committee.
Recommendation #5: 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.	Director of Leadership and Ministry Director of the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Program	August 2014	The Directors of the M.Div. and M.A. Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy programs have begun a pilot project to implement models for assessment.
Recommendation #6: We would further recommend that the many informal forms of evaluating courses, programs, and degrees that occur in	Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	April 2015	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.

<p>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.</p>			<p>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.</p>
<p>Recommendation #7: Consideration should be given for providing standard internet access in all teaching rooms and data projection.</p>	<p>Principal-Dean</p>	<p>June 2014</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Recommendation #8: 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.</p>	<p>Principal-Dean</p>	<p>September 2014</p>	<p>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 30th.</p> <p>The Principal-Dean will review faculty workloads at time of performance reviews.</p>

<p>Recommendation #9: 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 or their teaching, but the traditionally measured "outputs".</p>	<p>Principal-Dean and WLS Team for the Seminary/Laurier negotiations</p>	<p>October 2014</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Recommendation #10: Consideration for faculty to apply for SSHRC funding with faculty from across the university may provide a way to access these research funds.</p>	<p>Principal-Dean</p>	<p>December 2014</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>WLS also gained access to a searchable data base for Foundation funding.</p>
<p>Recommendation #11: 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</p>	<p>Principal-Dean</p>	<p>December 2014</p>	<p>The Principal-Dean will organize a session with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to explore possible approaches.</p>