

Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) Working Group Implementing Strategies for TEAC Recommendations

TEAC Recommendation 1: Claim and name the abundant gifts of our church to create and sustain a network of theological education that serves the mission of the gospel.

TEAC Recommendation 1A: To create a new advisory committee to the Church Council (hereafter the Advisory Committee) whose charge it is to sustain a robust network of theological education for the ELCA and to implement the TEAC recommendations.

Background: The TEAC Report stresses the importance and urgency of renewing this church's work in theological education in ways that can serve into the future. Accomplishing this renewal requires the involvement of many partners within and beyond the ELCA. Therefore, it is essential that the Church Council have a means to stay closely connected with developments in our theological education network, to monitor the progress of the implementation of the TEAC recommendations, and to consider what further measures might be needed.

Implementing Strategies:

- To establish an Advisory Committee as a committee of the Church Council consisting of nine members. The representational principles of this church ELCA Constitution **5.01.f.** would be used in determining the membership of this committee. The committee members shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

Members would include:

- 2 members of the Church Council, one of whom shall be named as convener by the presiding bishop
- 1 member of the Conference of Bishops
- 1 member identified by the seminary presidents and chief administrative officers
- 1 member from lay schools of this church
- 1 member from the synod vice-presidents
- 3 at-large members

Staff support:

- 1 person from the Office of the Presiding Bishop
- 1 person from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit
- Additional staff as necessary

- Committee members shall serve three-year terms on the committee without term limits. The initial appointment of members shall stagger terms so that three members would be appointed or reappointed each year.

Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee

- Advise the Church Council on the mission, shape and scope of theological education in this church.
- Monitor and report to the council on the implementation of the TEAC recommendations.

- With the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (CSM), monitor and encourage the maintenance of a robust network of theological education in the ELCA.
- Monitor and report to the Church Council the work of the seminaries in developing “a common theological education enterprise” and the work of developing a common learning platform.
- Report to the Church Council with recommended actions needed to sustain theological education and the theological education networks in this church.
- With existing seminaries and the other partners in our theological education network, report areas or resources that need to be developed to meet the current and emerging needs of this church.
- With the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, identify changes needed for theologically trained leaders for the future of this church.
- Work with the churchwide organization, the Conference of Bishops, seminaries and lay schools to review and recommend appropriate modification to the funding formula used by the churchwide organization and synods.
- Work with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops on issues of lifelong learning and rostered leader continuing education.
- Cooperate with the Executive Committee of the Church Council in an annual review of the committee’s responsibilities, with an assessment after two years whether this Advisory Committee should continue.

TEAC Recommendation 1B: To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to call on synods and congregations to join the churchwide organization in staffing and resourcing the ELCA theological education network in ways that recognize its centrality to the church’s mission and future vitality.

Background: The centrality of the teaching ministry of this church requires an intentional and collaborative effort to align both communication about the importance of this work and the resources necessary to accomplish the work across all expressions of the church.

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to organize an integrated communications plan that aligns all expressions of this church (churchwide, synodical and congregational) in a clear and compelling campaign to lift up how our teaching and learning ministry is central to the life of faith in the world. This campaign would involve all vehicles available, including print media, social media and personal testimonies by church leaders – rostered and lay – to express the clear message that the baptized are called to hear the Word, ask “What does this mean?” and live as God’s faithful people in the world – the organizing themes of our tradition and the heart of theological education.
- To direct the Presiding Bishop to work with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council to develop clear criteria for prioritizing resource alignment within the churchwide and synodical organizations (and by extension, congregations) aimed at enhancing and extending the network of theological education across this church.
- To direct the Advisory Committee to monitor the impact of these alignment efforts for communications and resources, looking for opportunities to enhance these efforts.

TEAC Recommendation 1C: To strongly encourage the seminaries in leading the development of a common learning platform that can serve to integrate and make widely accessible resources for theological education.

Background: The early TEAC research demonstrated a need for a high quality learning exchange which could offer first rate learning modules, courses, lifelong learning possibilities, and other learning opportunities for congregations, leaders and new audiences. The seminaries have been working collaboratively with a major donor to develop such a new exchange.

Implementing Strategies:

- To commend the work already underway in crafting a learning exchange and securing funding to operate the learning exchange for at least the first three-year start-up period.
- To request that the seminaries provide a progress report to the Church Council at its Fall 2016 meeting.
- To request the seminaries share an update on the learning exchange at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

TEAC Recommendation 1D: To direct the ELCA Research and Evaluation team to support the development of an ongoing robust asset-mapping process that identifies all theological education activity across the church, catalogs it and explores synergies, opportunities for scaling good practices and undoing redundancies, and that makes possible an interactive and widely accessible web-based depository of theological education resources across our church.

Background: There is no one place where all the theological education resources of this church are identified and made known to interested constituencies. An asset-mapping approach would allow for both the cataloguing of those resources and the identification of potential synergies and scaling of good practices across the church. Aware of the potential cost and effort required to build such an asset map from scratch, we encourage the Church Council to call for “pilot” asset-maps for theological education resources dedicated to two key audiences: (1) Hispanic-oriented theological education, and; (2) Young adult faith formation – audiences specifically named in TEAC Recommendations 2A and 2B in the TEAC Report. These pilot maps, if successful, will provide a model for more comprehensive mapping and cataloguing of theological education resources in the future.

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer, Information Technology, to identify potential web-based, interactive models for creating interactive asset-maps of program offerings – the requirements of these models will guide information gathering as the maps are developed.
- To direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (CSM) to work with the Global Mission unit (GM), for resources related to Latino theological education; and with GM, the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities, seminaries, and synods for resources related to young adult faith formation to identify relevant resources to include in asset maps aimed at each audience.
- To request the relevant churchwide, synodical and congregational entities to use the asset-maps for Hispanic and Young Adult theological education resources to engage constituents in the efficacy of such maps for meeting the needs of their communities.

- Based on the results of these “pilot” asset-maps, to direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to explore similar maps for other key constituencies for theological education, with the aim of expanding the asset-mapping to include a comprehensive roster of theological education resources for this church and an interactive web-based model for use across the church to identify and use those resources.
- To direct the Office of the Treasurer to work the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to explore the resources required to create and sustain the asset maps.

TEAC Recommendation 2: Link vocational discernment and theological education for specific target audiences within and beyond the church, with a focus on those whose leadership will strengthen the missional future of the ELCA.

TEAC Recommendation 2A: To direct the churchwide organization to call on synods, congregations and our theological education network to join it in encouraging young adults in vocational discernment by expanding model programs such as Project Connect and Youth Theology Institutes at the synodical level to serve as pathways for future leaders in the church.

Background: We need more young people engaged and interested in theological education and leadership. This will involve recognizing and building on the good work being done across the church to engage young people in vocational discernment while strategically pushing a more intentional and proactive effort to invite young people into church and theological leadership.

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop through Research and Evaluation to, in conjunction with the asset mapping pilot, take stock of the churchwide resources directed to leadership and discernment and assess their respective impact on calls to church leadership. Among other things, this effort should consider the impact of the church’s investment in Young Adults in Global Mission, Campus Ministry, Outdoor Ministry, and other young-adult-focused programs.
- To direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to work with the Conference of Bishops to explore and develop a proposal to fund and coordinate experiential, immersive church leadership opportunities for young adults across the church. The unit should present the proposal to Church Council in April 2017.
- To direct the Advisory Committee, in conjunction with seminaries, synods, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop through Research and Evaluation, to identify congregations across this church that regularly and effectively invite and encourage young people to consider church leadership and develop resources and tools that synodical bishops and staff can use to support congregations and rostered leaders to better invite and encourage young people to consider church leadership. The Advisory Committee should consider how sharing or receiving these resources could fit into the pilot project for continuing education requirements.
- To request synods to designate a staff member or volunteer to serve as a coordinator for young adult discernment and leadership work in the synod, collaborating with partners to explore and regularly offer vocational discernment retreats for young people
- To request each of the seminaries to designate one seminary staff member to serve as a regional coordinator and connector for the young adult discernment and leadership work in a given region. This person would, informed by the asset mapping pilot project, seek to connect the various

church and extra-church groups doing discernment and leadership for young people, including synods, congregations, ELCA colleges, ELCA seminaries, the Youth Ministry Network, Campus Ministry, Outdoor Ministries, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, and intentional young adult living communities.

- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to convene a leadership and discernment convocation, inviting those across this church identified through the asset mapping project to come together to explore, vision and plan how the church in all its expressions can more intentionally invite young people into leadership in the church.
- To direct the Advisory Committee to investigate the factors potential candidates consider with regard to the practical realities of church leadership, such as finances, assignment, and placement, in order to consider what changes could be made to make church leadership a more welcoming calling.

TEAC Recommendation 2B: To call upon the seminaries in collaboration with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Global Mission unit, the Lutheran World Federation and ecumenical partners to develop networked theological education programs, resources and opportunities for ethnic-specific communities (for example, a Latino theological education network with the capacity to reach a wide range of geographic locations with growing Latino populations).

Background: In order to strengthen our ministry with ethnic-specific communities, it is important to expand our capacity for theological education that well-prepares and supports leaders in their work. We have resources to do this work, but they are dispersed across many institutions both within and beyond the ELCA. We need to develop networked theological education programs that link up these resources.

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Global Mission unit to convene the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the LWF and the seminaries to develop a common global theological education strategy and report back to the Church Council by the fall of 2016.
- To direct the Global Mission unit to convene the Conference of Bishops' representatives and the seminary leadership to develop a strategy to deploy some companion synod funds in service to theological education with our global partners and report back to the Church Council by the fall of 2016.
- To direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to convene the Conference of Bishops' representatives and seminary leadership to create a strategy on coordinating ethnic-specific leadership training with measureable and realistic goals and report back to the Church Council by the fall of 2016.

TEAC Recommendation 2C: To call upon the theological education network to organize and make available a variety of opportunities for education, training and certification of lay leaders for missional service in congregations and communities.

Background: TEAC acknowledges that the opportunities for lay leaders to pursue theological education for missional service are numerous across this church, if sometimes redundant and disjointed. The asset-mapping approach suggested in TEAC Recommendation 1D should over time help to make these various opportunities more accessible and integrated. What seems lacking in the meantime are appropriate ways to tie these opportunities together as part of meaningful curricular paths, to recognize the progress lay

leaders make in pursuing these various opportunities as part of an integrated and coherent curriculum, and to create communities of practice among lay leaders. **We aspire to build a culture of high expectations for continuing theological education for rostered and lay leaders across this church.**

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to convene key providers of Life Long Learning opportunities to share, reimagine and coordinate the learning outcomes of their programs so that they can better advance the mission of the gospel by creating integrated curricular paths for lay leaders. This will serve both individual growth needs and help to link communities of learning.
- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to work with the Conference of Bishops to design appropriate ways to recognize and credential lay leaders who complete a curricular program in theological education so that the various gifts of these leaders – gifts of teaching, preaching, service and so on – might be lifted up and put to work in ways that honor the leaders, build up the church in service to the world, and serve the gospel mission.
- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop through Research and Evaluation to explore the creation of a social media tool (ala “Linked-In”) that would enable lay leaders to create virtual communities of practice in their work on behalf of the church and the world. Such a tool would allow these lay leaders to communicate with each other; to share good practices, helpful resources and common experiences; and to invite others committed to this work to become part of the community of practice.

TEAC Recommendation 2D: To authorize the Advisory Committee, in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops and the leaders of theological education network partners, to develop recommendations for how continuing education for rostered leaders can become the norm, widely recognized as essential if rostered leaders are to lead and exercise their teaching office faithfully and effectively in a changing church in a rapidly changing culture.

Background: If the teaching ministry of this church is to be central to its work in the world, rostered leaders – those charged with creating a teaching and learning community within congregations – must be supported in their efforts to model lifelong theological education and to encourage the baptized in their theological learning and reflection. Currently, there are inconsistent patterns of accountability across this church for lifelong theological education for rostered leaders.

Implementing Strategies:

- To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to work with the Conference of Bishops, in consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, to develop consistent requirements for all rostered leaders of this church for continuing theological education – requirements that are communicated as part of the call process, supported by both synods and congregations, and enforced through an annual reporting process monitored by synod bishops and councils (through the appropriate synodical committees).
- To direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to work with the Advisory Committee, the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities, seminaries and related organizations – with the assistance of Research and Evaluation – to develop a web-based catalog of theological education opportunities – delivered in person, on-line and in hybrid formats – that are available to meet the continuing theological education requirements for rostered leaders.

- To request the Conference of Bishops to implement the continuing theological education requirement for rostered leaders on a three-year trial basis across the church, at the conclusion of which the experience of the trial period will be evaluated by the Advisory Committee and revised as appropriate.
- To direct the Office of the Treasurer to determine the human and financial resources needed – through churchwide, synodical and congregational sources – to undertake this recommendation.

TEAC Recommendation 3: Ensure the mission vibrancy and financial stability of the seminaries of the ELCA as they serve their crucial roles in our theological education network.

TEAC Recommendation 3A: To call upon the seminaries of the ELCA in the next three years to form a common theological education enterprise that has the necessary planning structures and appropriate decision-making authority to (1) enable regular strategic sharing of the faculty resources of the seminaries along with other qualified teachers; (2) organize common recruitment and a common application process; (3) generate a common research agenda that serves the flourishing of the church; and (4) enable operational efficiencies that free up the resources needed for expanded work and new experiments in theological education.

TEAC Recommendation 3B: To encourage the seminaries, as they pursue the development of a common online learning platform (as stated in Recommendation 1.C) that could bring together the theological education resources of seminaries, lay schools, colleges and universities and other partners, to include an experimental online portfolio that could support lifelong learning for all the baptized and a continuing education requirement for rostered leaders.

TEAC Recommendation 3C: To support the efforts of the seminaries to balance their budgets and increase reserves while also reducing seminarian student debt by exploring alternative organizational models, exploiting underutilized property assets, sharing administrative infrastructure, testing alternative degree models and expanding coordinated scholarships and degree-accelerating arrangements that can make theological education more affordable for more persons.

TEAC Recommendation 3D: To develop a process for making available synodical and churchwide funds for innovation in both academic and administrative practices as incentives to strengthen the work and financial condition of seminaries.

Background: TEAC began its work in fall 2013 to fulfill its mandate from the Church Council “to consider how our interdependent network of theological education providers can best serve the church as it seeks to address in a holistic manner, issues in leadership development, theological education, candidacy and call, and the rosters of this church.” (CC13.04.12). Though the seminaries of this church were not the sole focus of TEAC’s work, it is clear that the vitality of the ELCA seminaries is critical to the entire ecology of theological education in this church. To that end, the following implementing strategies are concrete measures that serve to implement the four specific (and interrelated) recommendations.

Implementing Strategies:

- To commend to the Presiding Bishop the convening of seminary presidents, board chairs, and representation from the bishops on seminary boards on a regular basis to seek common ground in implementing specific strategies that lead to a more integrated, strategic, faithful and effective theological education system across the eight seminaries of this church. Regular reports on these conversations should be made to the Advisory Committee and concrete plans for collaboration and integration should be documented and supported. Among the key themes for these consultations are:
 - How the concept of an integrated system of theological education can be implemented and governed among the seminaries.
 - Ways in which curricular reform can be integrated and supported across the system.
 - Ways in which student registration (common registrar) can be centrally coordinated/integrated among the schools.
 - Ways in which a common application for all ELCA seminaries might streamline the enrollment process.
 - How enrollment in on-line educational offerings can be maximized through expanded offerings made available to other campuses.
 - How to establish a cross-bridge between the TEEM certificate and the M.Div. degree through a common program for assessment of demonstrated competencies.
 - How to create and sustain a system-wide research agenda for theological education.
 - How to prioritize faculty sharing (dually appointed), common back office management, distributed-learning and other forms of seminary/seminary and seminary/college collaboration that serves intentional movement toward system-wide coordination.
 - How to establish common accounting and general ledger modules for use by all seminaries. (relates to TEAC Recommendation 3A)
- To request seminary leadership as they develop the shared learning exchange, to include creation of a personal portfolio that can be developed and accessed by each rostered leader in support of his or her lifelong learning goals, and encourage the continuation of rostered leader learning cohorts and the formation of cohorts which may emerge out of using the portfolio. (relates to TEAC Recommendation 3B)
- To call upon each of the seminaries to share with the Advisory Committee by September 2016 (a) a progress report on its efforts to move toward meeting the fiscal benchmarks identified in the TEAC Report; and (b) a plan of action to advance this work in the next two years, including measures to:
 - Improve liquidity and operating results (Net Income, Net Operating Revenue, Viability and Composite Ratios, student enrollment and student debt)
 - Maximize use of property assets (achieving efficiencies from rental/lease agreements and/or sale of unused property).
 - Coordinate and integrate systems across the seminaries with proposed Common Platform (identify level of involvement, investment and short- and long-term benefits)
 - Establish educational partnerships to reduce costs, improve efficiencies while anticipating increased affordability for students. (relates to TEAC Recommendation 3C)

- To task the Advisory Committee with bringing to the fall 2016 meeting of the Church Council both (a) a proposal for developing a new pattern of establishing benchmarks for synodical support to seminaries, including the designation of some portion of this support for innovative work that the seminaries and their supporting synods together identify as ways to strengthen their partnership in theological education; and (b) a proposed revision of the ELCA churchwide funding formula for seminaries which would be effective at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, designating a portion (10-15 percent) of the total grant to be directed to promote and facilitate measures undertaken by the seminaries to move toward a common theological enterprise that enables operational efficiencies and innovation that free up resources needed for expanded work and new experiments. (relates to TEAC Recommendation 3D)