Report of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries
To the Synods of Regions 7, 8 and 9
Spring, 2015

Since its founding in 1995, the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries (ECLS) has fostered strong collaboration between the three eastern schools and other partners, enhancing our common task of theological education for a broad spectrum of students and lifelong learners. In these challenging times when all seminaries seek new approaches to forming leaders for the Church, we are also engaged with the other ELCA seminaries, our regional synods and additional partners in the search for financial sustainability and programmatic flexibility.

A separately incorporated entity, the Cluster is governed by a Board of Directors made up of board chairs and other officers from each of the three schools. One of the three seminary presidents serves in rotation as Cluster executive director. With the retirement of Philadelphia’s president Phil Krey, the Cluster is pleased to welcome David Lose as the new leader of LTSP. We continue on with only modest core funding from the seminaries. One of the key partnerships that has made the work of the Cluster flourish has been the reception of over $6 million in grants from foundations to support common projects and subsidize seminary budgets.

Current Collaborative Programs

- The Cluster’s *One Library Under Three Roofs* links the collections at Gettysburg, Philadelphia and Columbia, providing students, faculty and other borrowers with access to a vast array of books, periodicals and e-resources.
- Through the Cluster-sponsored *Project Connect*, hundreds of young persons have been invited to “consider their callings” over the past half-dozen years. This project has now been completed and the Cluster is moving on to other major projects. The Cluster is working with a grant researcher who will help to identify potential partners for future work.
- The *Abundant Life Grant* was received this past year from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Totaling $750,000, this grant enables each school to engage in research on the subject of seminarian indebtedness and explore means by which to reduce graduate debt.
- Given the geographical proximity of the two Pennsylvania seminaries, Gettysburg and Philadelphia have joined forces in exploring new ways to work together, including field education, CPE, and faculty sharing. The two boards are also working together to discuss future collaborations.

Future Cluster Directions: Following the merger of LTSS with Lenoir Rhyne University, the Cluster is exploring new directions and new strategic partnerships for the coming years.

With Appreciation: The Cluster is grateful for support to theological education and our seminaries from our partner synods and churchwide organization. Special appreciation is expressed to Phil Krey for his many years of faithful service to the Cluster and the church.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Trexler, Cluster Board Chair
The Rev. Dr. Clay Schmit, Cluster Executive Director