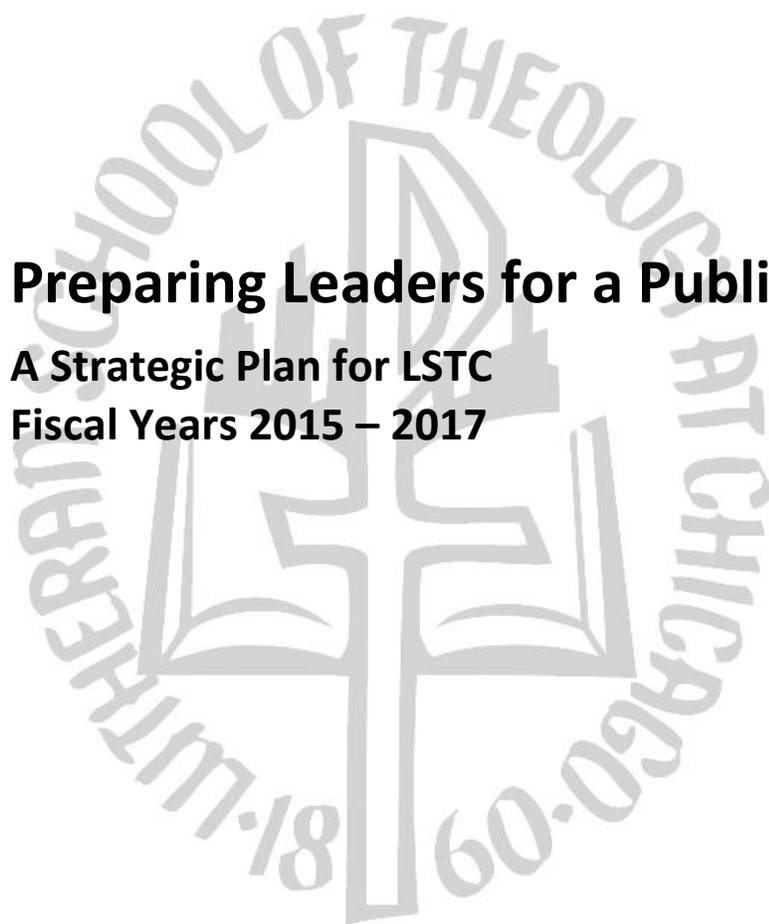




# **Preparing Leaders for a Public Church**

**A Strategic Plan for LSTC**

**Fiscal Years 2015 – 2017**



20 May 2014

Dear Friends:

You hold in your hands a portrait. In the pages that follow, you can trace the forms and features that LSTC will take during the next three years. It's a fascinating, promising portrait that moves *from our faithful history toward a hopeful future*. After a long process of gathering information, ideas, and responses from faculty, staff, students, boards, alumni, and other stakeholders, this strategic plan was approved by the Board of Directors at its spring 2014 meeting. The plan has been endorsed at every level of the institution, so now we ask you to consider it as well.

Like many other seminaries, we face a shifting landscape in theological education coupled with the challenges of a changing church. This is not the first time LSTC has addressed significant transition, though, and throughout our history we have been blessed with a resilient, adaptive spirit. We are ready now *to move forward with a bold vision and innovative ideas* grounded in our longstanding identity. Through it all, we remain thoroughly committed to the mission of forming visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

This plan is driven by *a vision for a more public church* and the leadership such a church will need. Our broader society today faces both a weakening of faith commitments and a wariness about religious claims. At LSTC, we want to prepare a wide range of leaders who can offer an alternative vision: that God's love is freely given for all, that Jesus' message is a credible source of lasting life, and that the Spirit's work still reconciles and renews. We want to form leaders for a church like that, one that declares such hope and promise in public ways.

To embrace that vision, we have prepared a plan for LSTC's sustainable future. This is not code language for mere survival, but instead ventures that we can be *a school that thrives amidst the challenges of today and tomorrow*. We therefore invite you to review the *grounding* for this plan (pages 2-3), the *overview* of its important themes (pages 4-6), the *strategies* on which it will focus (pages 7-10), and the *measures* by which it will be assessed (pages 11-12). We hope you agree that this portrait shows LSTC actively shaping a new way forward.

Consider this your invitation to participate in LSTC's future through this plan. We are blessed with an excellent faculty, committed staff, wise boards, loyal alumni, and generous donors, and would be quite thankful for your deeper role in this shared mission for the sake of leadership in our church. We welcome the chance to share how you can become more involved.

Sincerely,

  
James Nieman, PhD  
President

  
Sarah Stegemoeller  
Chair, Board of Directors

## CONTEXT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

LSTC's Board of Directors engaged in the development of a new three year strategic plan. A Steering Committee provided additional input and direction in the development of the plan. The planning process occurred from September 2013 – April 2014.

To understand the perspectives and opinions of its varied stakeholders, LSTC obtained input regarding the challenges facing LSTC and suggestions for how the seminary can best move forward to achieve its mission while sustaining financial viability. Input was garnered through one-on-one interviews, faculty input sessions, and a widely-distributed online survey.

### Steering Committee

Clarence Atwood, Board of Directors / Trustees  
Terry Baeder, Director of Field Education  
Christina Garrett Klein, Student (MDiv 2014)  
Dale Landgren, Board of Directors / Trustees  
James Nieman, President  
Richard Perry, Professor of Church and Society  
Barbara Rossing, Professor of New Testament  
Carrie Smith, Alumna (MDiv 2009)  
Laura Wilhelm, Executive for Administration



In addition to the stakeholder perceptions, data were gathered and analyzed, and an information profile was developed for LSTC in the following areas:

- Financial position
- Enrollment profile and trends
- Student profile
- Student course satisfaction
- Curriculum review
- Alumni profile
- Buildings & grounds
- Institutional relationships
- Peer/competitor schools profile

A strategic plan draft was completed in February 2014 and reviewed by faculty, senior staff, and all three boards. This review process involved 54 participants in four additional meetings, as well as individual suggestions submitted by e-mail. The Steering Committee revised the draft for final approval by the board of directors at its May 2014 meeting.

# MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND MARKS

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA),

## Mission

Forms visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Vision

Seeks to build up the Body of Christ and work for a world of peace and justice that cares for the whole creation.

## Values

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago is:

**Christ-centered** – Strives by God’s grace to follow Christ’s call to loving service.

**Responsive to context** – Embraces its diverse urban setting and exciting academic environment that enable learning from and ministering to the community. Relationships with synods and congregations provide academic and practical experiences that meet the needs of the church.

**Attentive to diversity** – Emphasizes knowing and honoring the perspectives of all nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, Christian traditions, and religions to form leaders whose witness to the Gospel will build communities of hospitality and reconciliation.

**Committed to excellence** – Sends leaders into church and world who are prepared academically, practically, and spiritually to serve in a variety of vocational and ministry settings. Faculty members are faithful Christians who are internationally recognized scholars and teachers. Administration and Staff strive to provide exemplary service to all constituents.

## Marks

### Urban

LSTC is an urban seminary that believes the best way to prepare leaders to witness to the gospel in any setting is to provide them with a diversity of experiences found in a large city. This context is also crucial for those intending to specialize in urban ministry.

### University-Related

LSTC is located by intention near the University of Chicago. Through interaction with the university faculty and students and other educational resources, including the university’s libraries, LSTC relates theological education and ministerial preparation to the wider search for wisdom in society.

### Multicultural

LSTC’s theological commitment to diversity is a high priority and makes the seminary a rich environment in which to equip leaders of all cultures.

### Ecumenical

LSTC is a member of one of the largest theological consortia in the world, the Association of Chicago Theological Schools. This resource and the contributions of its own ecumenical staff, faculty, and student community members give students access to a broad array of opportunities for education that is thoroughly Lutheran yet respectful of other Christian traditions.

### Global

LSTC equips leaders for the church in the United States and the world, engaging the gifts that international faculty, students, and their families bring to the community, and structuring a curriculum that integrates care of creation and worldwide peace and justice into its degree programs and daily life.

### Interfaith

LSTC’s specializations in Christian-Muslim and Jewish-Christian relations and its wide-ranging studies in world religions and interfaith dialogue prepare students to exercise pastoral and public leadership in an increasingly multi-faith world.

# PREPARING LEADERS FOR A PUBLIC CHURCH

At LSTC, we are unwilling to settle for a narrative of depletion or decline in religious life. Amidst the changes and challenges that faithful Christians face today, there is still a vast opportunity for people and communities of faith actively to declare the good news of mercy, hope, justice, and peace in a world that, from local to global, often knows little of this. As a place of learning and formation, LSTC exists to support our church in making such a witness.

## WHY THIS VISION FOR PUBLIC CHURCH?

Our commitment is to serve and encourage a more “public church.” Aligned with our Lutheran heritage, LSTC longs for a church that follows the cross of Christ into every place God is found, joyful or sorrowful. A public church does not remain at a distance from the wounds of our world but instead fully shares that plight and brings an alternative word of lasting life.

We resist the caricature of church as uninformed or uninvolved. We want faith communities equipped for a more credible, gracious, and effective witness to the gospel in the many ambits of life they encounter. Amidst the several other languages that predominate today, like science, commerce, law, and entertainment, we seek a distinctively Christian discourse.

## WHAT KINDS OF LEADERS ARE NEEDED?

Such a public church will not happen by accident. In a time of institutional mistrust, our church must explore the practices that can enable our evangelical witness to thrive. While this will surely happen in many different ways, it will mainly be set in motion through the leaders our church forms and the gifts and capacities they bear into unforeseen situations.

We affirm church leaders of many kinds, not simply ordained ones. We prepare visionary leaders who will in turn nurture the gifts of all of God’s people to be more amply equipped to witness in public life. We look for those who embrace the risk, creativity, care, and persistence such leadership will require, a practical wisdom that is durable and adaptive.

## HOW COULD LSTC MAKE THAT HAPPEN?

Such leadership will also not happen by accident. Long committed to the intensive preparation of people for a variety of ministries, domestic and worldwide, LSTC is now distinctively poised to rethink and improve its diverse formation of leaders for a public church yet today. This plan represents the first move along that longer trajectory of our educational mission.

Our heritage is a key resource for our future, drawing from our enduring strengths to adapt to emerging needs. We bring a particular theological voice, faithful community life, great scholarly rigor, deep practical sensitivity, and resilient institutional history to the task of providing a rich space for leadership formation. We now wish to turn these gifts toward our future.

## WHERE WILL THIS PLAN TAKE US?

This strategic plan is oriented by a bold vision of the kind of school we think LSTC can become—excellent, influential, and resilient. By the **middle of the next decade (2025)**, we will be...

A school sought by a diverse range of excellent students, a place our wider church wants to send them and from which they will be gladly received **EXCELLENT**

A source of respected religious research both within the academy and society, with our faculty members well-known as scholars attuned to the needs of the world

An incubator for leadership needed in our church, mainly through our graduates from all degree programs and our active involvement with emerging issues

A standard in theological education for teaching and curriculum focused on clear missional aims and rooted in competencies, contexts, and collaboration **INFLUENTIAL**

A model for the enduring benefits of a firm commitment to church and heritage, treating these as strengths that elicit deeper learning and authentic dialogue

An exemplar for ministry formation grounded in a practical wisdom that takes risks, discerns gifts, and nurtures all the faithful to witness to the good news

A place of vitality, preserving a diversity of revenue sources and the value of our financial and physical assets, acting with ethical, ecological stewardship **RESILIENT**

A partner with other institutions, academic and religious, in ways that enhance our mission, bring mutual benefit, and connect us with local and global settings

An organization with a proper scale and arrangement of faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds, a generative blend that supports our shared mission

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

This plan outlines the four strategic goals that contribute to how we intend to form leaders for a public church. During the **next three years**, we seek to...

**I. Distinctive Profile**

Enhance and communicate the school's distinctive character

**II. Learning Community**

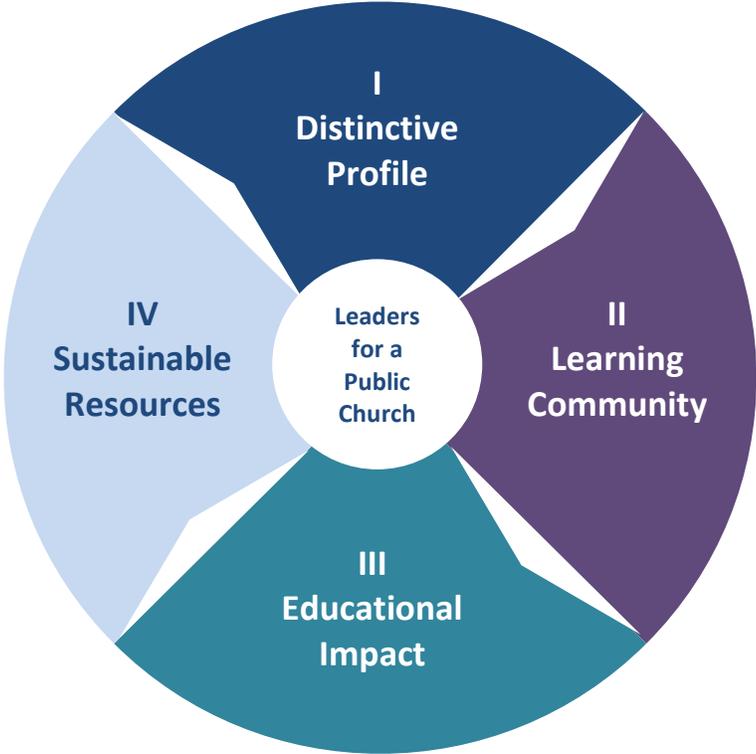
Attract talented, faithful people who seek to engage the gospel

**III. Educational Impact**

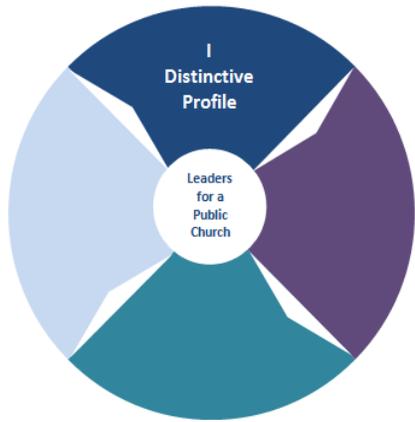
Provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs

**IV. Sustainable Resources**

Develop an operational model and infrastructure to support learning and financial vitality



These goals each have a discrete focus, but also intersect and complement one another to enhance LSTC's ability to prepare leaders for a public church.



## Distinctive Profile

Enhance and communicate the school's distinctive character

In order to present its strongest presence in all areas of public life, LSTC will define its special characteristics, ensuring that these features are clearly conveyed to both potential students and other external stakeholders. The “marks” of the seminary (page 3) show several ways that LSTC is distinguishable from many other schools. In particular, it will be crucial to develop a shared understanding of what it means to be a Lutheran seminary set in a dynamic urban environment that has a wider global horizon, with its rich ethnic, religious, and economic mix. The school's character derives from its own longstanding identity, its relationship with other partners, and its active presence in public life. By refining these three, it can better express the benefits of leadership formation that effectively engages this remarkable setting.

### STRATEGIES

### KEY TACTICS

I.1 Clarify the distinctive attributes of LSTC and use these to shape the internal and external character of LSTC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Express the meaning, merits, and narrative of being a seminary in Chicago's distinctive and dynamic urban environment.</li> <li>b) Show the value of a Lutheran confessional heritage and how this impels ecumenical and interfaith engagement.</li> </ul>
I.2 Enhance the depth, intentionality, and focus of LSTC's engagement with the communities and constituencies to which it most closely relates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Identify and improve working partnerships and outreach in the seminary's wider setting and the institutions therein.</li> </ul>
I.3 Clarify the school's distinctive theological voice and faith witness as a positive contribution in the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Share the seminary's message and increase its visibility in public forums and relevant media.</li> <li>e) Explore how to make this credible public message readily available through new forums and relationships.</li> </ul>



## Learning Community

Attract talented, faithful people who seek to engage the gospel

The mission of LSTC is to form visionary leaders who bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ, in order to encourage wider witness by all the faithful in public life. Attracting talented students is essential to achieving this purpose, along with retaining excellent faculty who can resource this rich learning environment. In a time of remarkable opportunity and change, LSTC can draw upon its distinctive character, revised curriculum, and proven learning community to be the seminary of choice for those who can benefit from such a dynamic environment. LSTC seeks to grow its student base in all academic programs to support a broad scope of courses, allow for a robust variety and depth of faculty, and utilize campus resources fully.

### STRATEGIES

### KEY TACTICS

II.1 Identify and attract students who would be a good fit for LSTC's mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Develop a targeted recruitment plan.</li> <li>b) Train alumni, faculty, and boards to seek potential students and advocate for LSTC.</li> <li>c) Engage churchwide, synod, and local church leaders to seek potential students and advocate for LSTC.</li> <li>d) Expand the venues/communities, local to global, where LSTC recruits students.</li> </ul>
II.2 Ensure students have an excellent experience in the classroom <i>and</i> as part of the LSTC community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) Expand competency-based assessment.</li> <li>f) Identify needed improvements in facilities and educational technology.</li> <li>g) Improve services for students at all levels.</li> </ul>
II.3 Attract and retain faculty who are wise scholars, academically rigorous, creative teachers, and committed to the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) Find the right balance of time for teaching, scholarship, and administrative activities.</li> <li>i) Ensure fair compensation.</li> <li>j) Explore partnerships with other academic institutions.</li> </ul>
II.4 Seek a variety of partners who will support new forms of lifelong learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>k) Engage LSTC alumni as resources and recipients in educational programs.</li> </ul>



## Educational Impact

Provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs

As a progressive and adaptive school, LSTC is committed to curricular programs that engage new challenges in forming church leaders for public life. Revising a competency-based masters level curriculum will continue to be a significant focus for the institution, one with spillover benefits to all other programs of learning. LSTC will monitor and refine these improvements to ensure they meet stakeholder expectations. In concert with this, varied learning models will enable students from diverse backgrounds to complete their desired studies within and beyond the six degree programs. All curricular structures will thoroughly review the role of distance learning, on-campus requirements, and the place of contextual learning in order to be more flexible for diverse students and more attuned to the preparation of religious leaders today.

### STRATEGIES

### KEY TACTICS

III.1 Revise/refine the masters level curriculum to be oriented toward competencies needed for faithful leadership in a public church.

- a) Complete curriculum revision, monitor its effectiveness, and refine as needed.
- b) Clarify and convey the benefits of these changes in forming leaders.
- c) Leverage LSTC’s place within a dynamic urban environment and its distinctive commitments (like ecology) as resources for contextual learning.
- d) Explore how these revisions imply changes in other degrees and non-degree learning.

III.2 Develop flexible approaches to learning coupled with experimentation in teaching methods.

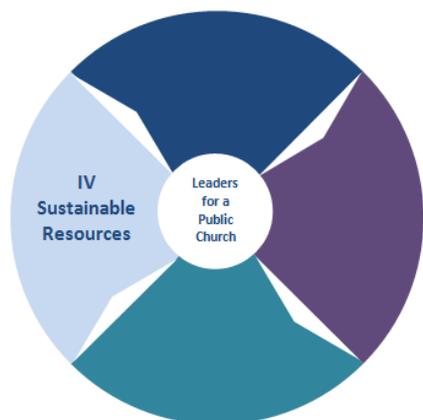
- e) Identify preferred approaches and resources for distance learning.
- f) Clarify and claim how on-campus and contextual learning contribute distinctively to the formation of religious leaders.

III.3 Create a transformative learning environment that brings together faculty, students, staff, alumni, and laity in active engagement.

- g) Discern resources for educational innovation and integrative learning.
- h) Evaluate the feasibility of offering lifelong learning for all.

## Sustainable Resources

Develop an operational model and infrastructure to support learning and financial vitality



Amidst the challenges facing all seminaries, LSTC has been resilient in addressing its financial situation. The school’s expense structure has been managed wisely and effectively. Even more demanding, revenue sources have also been carefully addressed by reducing the endowment draw rate and increasing annual giving. Understanding the features of a sustainable operating model will be crucial for defining future scale and growth. Besides financial assets, the physical and technological infrastructure of the school cannot be neglected. Developing resources for a phased reinvestment in this core infrastructure will be critical for the school to carry out its educational mission. Administrative effectiveness will be important as the school evolves, along with developing a culture of self-assessment across all levels of the institution.

### STRATEGIES

### KEY TACTICS

<p>IV.1 Define the operating model that will lead to ongoing financial vitality that promotes the educational mission.</p>	<p>a) Determine the proper balance of expense elements (faculty, staff, facility, etc.) that can realistically be sustained. b) Determine the proper balance of revenue sources (tuition, giving, endowment, etc.) that can reliably support LSTC’s mission.</p>
<p>IV.2 Reinvest/renew the physical facilities for greater efficiency, and update information technology for administration and education.</p>	<p>c) Deploy a specific and phased plan for campus reinvestment. d) Develop and implement a multi-year plan for information technology. e) Conduct a comprehensive campaign.</p>
<p>IV.3 Improve administrative functioning in terms of skill, structure, and retention.</p>	<p>f) Utilize an HR audit to review/restructure the roles and duties of administrative staff. g) Ensure plans to reach fair compensation.</p>
<p>IV.4 Achieve a culture of institutional self-assessment across the organization.</p>	<p>h) Weave assessment elements into all aspects of work at LSTC. i) Identify the role of the boards in all areas of this strategic plan, especially this goal.</p>

# MONITORING STRATEGIC PROGRESS

LSTC will monitor its performance in achieving the four strategic goals. On an annual basis, the Board of Directors will review the overall institutional performance of LSTC compared to these outcome measures, understanding that other intangible attributes will also be considered. Because in some cases there is presently no performance baseline, a crucial initial task during the first year of this plan will be to establish a current baseline and the FY2017 aims.

The outcome measures are structured to provide indicators of progress for each goal, helping to answer the following questions:

- Distinctive Profile** Did LSTC enhance and communicate the school’s distinctive character?
- Learning Community** Did LSTC attract talented, faithful people who seek to engage the gospel?
- Educational Impact** Did LSTC provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs?
- Sustainable Resources** Did LSTC develop an operational model and infrastructure to support learning and financial vitality?

The outcome measures will provide a high-level indication about how well the strategies and tactics in this plan are moving LSTC toward achievement of its strategic goals. This information will help in assessing the need either to modify those strategies and tactics or to find ways to improve the institution’s ability to execute the strategies and tactics as currently envisioned.

	Outcome Measure	Baseline	FY 2017
<b>Distinctive Profile</b> <i>Did LSTC enhance and communicate the school’s distinctive character?</i>	1. Shared understanding of what being a seminary in a dynamic urban environment means among boards, faculty, students, administration (judgment)	Current mark(s)	LSTC’s mark(s) refined based on complete contextual review
	2. LSTC “positive” social media presence (activity)	TBD	Increase activity by __%
	3. Faculty publications and invited presentations (number)	# publications: TBD # invited presentations: TBD	# publications: increase __% # invited presentations: increase __%
	4. % student body with field experience with partner organizations	50% of MDiv/MA students	90% of MDiv/MA students

	Outcome Measure	Baseline	FY 2017
<b>Learning Community</b> <i>Did LSTC attract talented, faithful people who seek to engage the gospel?</i>	1. FTE enrollment	199 (Fall 2013)	≥ 220 (Fall 2017)
	2. Ratio of FTEs to headcount	MDiv: 88% Other first degree: 50% Advanced degree: 76%	MDiv: ≥ 90% Other first degree: ≥ 50% Advanced degree: ≥ 80%
	3. Ratio of advanced degree FTEs to total FTEs	40%	Maintain
	4. Ratio of international student FTEs to total FTEs	First degree: 6% Advanced degree: 44%	First degree: ≥ 10% Advanced degree: ≥ 44%
	5. Yield (% of admitted students who enroll)	50% (approx.)	≥ 75%
	6. % students (headcount) who are Lutheran	67%	≥ 67%
	7. Satisfaction with student life (survey)	TBD	TBD
	8. Satisfaction with lifelong learning offerings (survey)	Alumni: TBD Lay leaders: TBD	Alumni: TBD Lay leaders: TBD
	9. Faculty satisfaction (survey)	TBD	TBD
<b>Educational Impact</b> <i>Did LSTC provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs?</i>	1. Alumni rating of applicability of education to calling/vocation (ATS alumni survey)	TBD	TBD
	2. 5-year geographic distribution of MDiv/MA alumni (alumni database)	51% outside IL & WI 3% outside USA	Same or more distributed than baseline
	4. Congregational and synodical assessment of LSTC graduates (survey)	TBD	TBD
	5. Success of four competencies from new curriculum (as reported to ATS)	Current outcomes assessment results	Ratings ≥ current level
<b>Sustainable Resources</b> <i>Did LSTC develop an operational model and infrastructure to support learning and financial vitality?</i>	1. Operating surplus	End-of-year deficit	End-of-year surplus
	2. Endowment draw	5.3% (FY 2013)	≤ 5%
	3. Viability ratio (comparison of expendable net assets to outstanding direct debt)	- 0.320 (FY 2013)	≥ 1.25
	4. Revenue stream benchmarks and monitoring in place (ATS categories)	Tuition/fees: 23% Contributions: 39% Investment Income: 13% Other: 25%	Plan established No category > 30%
	5. Achievement of IT key performance indicators (KPIs)	Any indicators of present network capacities	Successfully achieve KPIs
	6. Carbon footprint	TBD	Decrease by ___%
	7. Administrative effectiveness (HR audit)	TBD	TBD
	8. Investment in facilities	0.45% of insured replacement value	≥ 1% of insured replacement value