



Lutheran School of
Theology *at* Chicago

CALLED INTO THE WORLD

A Community to Form Leaders to Form Community

A Strategic Plan for LSTC
2018 – 2020



1100 E 55th St Chicago, IL 60615 | www.lstc.edu

As a Reconciling in Christ seminary, LSTC seeks to offer hospitality and welcome to all who enter LSTC's academic programs. Following Jesus Christ, whose reconciling love bridged barriers and made strangers friends, we seek to welcome and learn from one another's particularity – including but not limited to one another's race, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, physical ability, social status and theological diversity.



Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Office of the President

1 November 2017

Dear Friends:

We are embarking on a journey. Actually, it's a journey we've traced for a long time – forming visionary leaders to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. That mission remains unchanged, but the landscape where it happens is ever more unclear. Unlike former days, there is no sure and certain course that we simply can follow. Instead, we must newly discover our path in this challenging terrain for faithful disciples. What you hold in your hands is therefore our plan for exploration, a mapping of the priorities we trust will guide our school to become a distinctive and influential place for preparing the leaders needed in our church and wider world.

Our mapping process didn't start with a blank slate but began on a platform of assurance and support. The recently concluded three-year strategic plan overwhelmingly realized most of its aims. As a result, we can now step forward with the confidence of having achieved such major moves as institutional rebranding, curricular revision, improved infrastructure for finance and advancement, and launching a comprehensive campaign, to name just a few items. Moreover, this new plan emerged from an extensive and inclusive process that involved many ideas and responses from faculty, staff, students, boards, alumni, and other stakeholders. It represents the active engagement of a community now fully ready to take its next steps.

Realizing that we have come this far, this new plan now centers on a core claim of becoming **a community to form leaders to form community**. That claim is rooted in seeing how faithful communities are needed as signs of hope in a contentious world that is wary about religious believing and belonging. That claim also affirms that leaders who can form such communities must themselves be formed in faithful communities. We want to be a place to explore how we might embody the body of Christ, with all its trials and joys. We want to prepare a wide range of leaders who offer this alternative vision: that God's love is freely given, that Jesus' message is lasting life, that the Spirit's work still reconciles. We want to form leaders equipped to form community like that, gatherings that declare hope and promise in public ways.

This plan points to the most important steps toward that core claim. We invite you to review the **grounding** for this plan (pages 2-4), the **overview** of its themes (page 5), the **strategies** on which it focuses (pages 6-9), and the **means** for its monitoring (page 10). Please also consider this your invitation to join us on our journey and discover our school's course over the next three years. We are blessed with an excellent faculty, committed staff, energetic students, wise boards, loyal alumni, and generous donors. We truly welcome your deeper engagement in our mission. Explore with us how the leaders we form can transform our church.

Sincerely,

James Nieman, PhD
President

Maryjeanne Schaffmeyer
Chair, Board of Directors

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Context for the Strategic Plan

LSTC’s Board of Directors charged the administration to craft a three-year strategic plan for calendar years 2018–2020. This plan, developed with the guidance of a Steering Committee from May through October 2017, builds upon the goals and accomplishments of the previous three-year plan (2015–2017). This new plan signifies our readiness to enrich and deepen the gains of our previous plan, and our commitment to thoughtful strategic planning for the future.

Steering Committee

Melody Eastman	Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church
James Nieman	President
Richard Perry	Professor of Church and Society and Urban Ministry
Michael Russell	Pastor, Jubilee Faith Community
Lea Schweitz	Associate Professor of Systematic Theology/ Religion and Science
Laura Wilhelm	Special Projects Consultant
Christine Yucha	Director of Assessment and Planning



LSTC submitted self-study reports to the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in March 2017 for reaccreditation purposes. These reports provided an informational basis for the strategic planning effort.

To complement the information in these self-study reports and to hear the perspectives and opinions of its varied stakeholders, LSTC then obtained input regarding the challenges we are facing and suggestions for how the seminary can best move forward to achieve its mission and vision. Input was gathered through one-on-one interviews, stakeholder input sessions at various stages of the planning process, and a widely-distributed online survey.

One-on-one Interviews (9 interviews)

Board of Directors
Senior Administration
Board of Trustees
Faculty
Alumni

Small Group Sessions (7 groups with 120 participants)

Board of Directors
Alumni Board
Board of Trustees
Seminary Leadership
Faculty
Staff
Student Leadership

Online Survey (170 respondents)

Board of Directors
Alumni Board
Board of Trustees
Seminary Leadership
Faculty
Staff
Student Leadership

The LSTC plan for calendar years 2018–2020 built upon and refined the goal structure of the prior three year plan, while identifying new strategies and tactics that will best position LSTC for the future.

A Community to Form Leaders to Form Community

James Nieman, President

The three-year strategic plan described in these pages will unfold in a challenging context for our church and society. To sense what is at stake, let me sketch this wider horizon and how we can respond in hope – a vision for the institution we can be in the coming decade.

Our present circumstances – From global to local, our wider world faces discord, less able than ever to rebuild the bonds for life together, let alone chart a course toward reconciliation. Trust between people is strained, and regard for the forms through which we once thrived has dimmed. Our church, though ever sustained by the Spirit’s power to heal and forgive, is also buffeted by these wider forces. Diminished ecclesial belonging and believing only mirrors the general decline in all forms of institutional life – domestic, civic, charitable, social, political, and religious. As sociologists note, we now face an unprecedented erosion of “social capital,” the practices that holds us together. Unsurprisingly, theological education is also tossed about in these same seas, trying to rediscover how to prepare the leaders our church needs in order to evoke a credible witness to the good news we know through Jesus.

Our committed response – Other seminaries have reacted to such changes mainly by pursuing efficiencies. Institutional mergers, program closures, and educational shortcuts have surely enabled some places to persist. Without a core commitment to the innovations truly needed to form leaders for the church in the years ahead, though, such changes amount to placing survival above purpose. We choose to respond differently. Our communities, religious and otherwise, cannot be restored without leaders who nurture the gifts of those who gather, organize them for shared purpose, and guide them in a sustained vision. In turn, such leaders do not happen automatically but must be formed in vibrant communities that model faithful living in all its complexity and promise. At LSTC, we are distinctly positioned to be just this kind of place, a community to form leaders to form community.

Our available resources – Many resources needed for this response are already at hand. We are the ELCA seminary with the highest proportion of residential students, also blessed with a globally rich, ethnically diverse, contextually grounded, and deeply honest community adept at face-to-face formation. Our learning technologies and networks enhance this intimate, community-based learning rather than substitute for it. Of course, such a focus also calls for further intentional effort. We must develop innovative resources to equip our students with skills for local leadership, spiritual nurture, and robust witness in all places where the church may be found. What this asks of us is nothing new. Instead, we affirm today our long-standing values of building up the body of Christ, working for peace and justice, and caring for creation. These community values are integral to our history and still resources for today.

Our supporting strategies – Far from a haphazard list of vague aspirations, this plan details the strategic risks we will take to secure our vision to become a grounded community that forms leaders. This will happen through four interacting, iterative goals: (1) to engage the actual challenges of a life together that aims to serve others, (2) to affirm the dignity of every voice in a place that treasures diversity, (3) to seek novel and flexible modes of learning where context matters, and (4) to regard our financial and facility gifts with such care that they best support our mission. Each of these goals includes specific strategies and key tactics by which they will emerge, as well as a thorough process for monitoring and reporting on their progress toward completion. These careful steps taken during the next three years will set us on the path toward the kind of distinctive, faithful community we want to be.

Mission, Vision, Values, Marks

LSTC's board-approved mission statement is an enduring sign of our school's commitments, and is further enhanced by our vision, values, and marks, first articulated over thirty years ago.

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ...

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

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.

Strategic Direction and Goals

This plan outlines four strategic goals that together contribute to how we are intentional about being **a community to form leaders to form community**, wherever that might be. These goals, which interact with each other and also contribute in their own way to our overall aims, provide the framework for the strategies and tactics we will pursue over the next three years.

I Distinctive Profile

page 6

Enhance and communicate the school's distinctive character

II Formative Community

page 7

Invest in talented, faithful people who participate in and are formed by a gospel-centered community

III Educational Impact

page 8

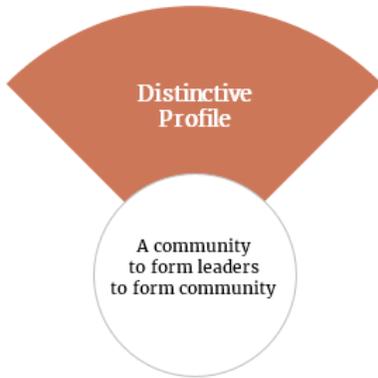
Provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs

IV Resource Sustainability

page 9

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





Distinctive Profile

Enhance and communicate the school's distinctive character

Over the last three years, our school has clarified its brand and communicated its distinctive theological voice and faith witness in the world. Our marks, coupled with our values (page 4), define some of the ways we are distinctive. In a society struggling with polarizing issues and institutional distrust, we acknowledge the benefits of faithful life together that recognizes and celebrates differences. Affirming a more public church and committing to gospel-centered community building are part of the core characteristics of LSTC. We have gifts to share that can best be offered by building and enhancing what makes us distinctive.

STRATEGIES	KEY TACTICS
I.1 Develop the identity of LSTC, including commitment to gospel-centered community building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Enhance the spirit of community at LSTC among all constituencies (addressing difficult conversations, social activities, worshipping together, interpersonal relationships, decision making, etc.) b. Communicate factors that differentiate LSTC from other institutions (commitment to anti-racism, advanced studies program, residential model, public church focus, Chicago location, etc.)
I.2 Further clarify public church as a concept central to LSTC's identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a shared understanding of our public church commitment b. Utilize LSTC's Centers* as places of conversation, inter-disciplinary dialogue, and public church connections

* A Center of Christian Muslim-Engagement for Peace and Justice, The Albert "Pete" Pero Jr. Multicultural Center, and Zygon Center for Religion and Science



II Formative Community

Invest in talented, faithful people who participate in and are formed by a gospel-centered community

We do more than educate. LSTC is a community dedicated to formation and growth. Since our mission happens through people, we want to attract and invest in students, faculty, and staff in order to be a thriving, culturally competent, and diverse community. Investment means offering robust supports for the varied needs of students and providing faculty and staff with ways to advance professionally. Because our wider church must address racism and encourage diverse leaders, we will be intentional about creating a nurturing and welcoming environment. By ensuring that our community is equipped to engage tension and work through difficult situations, we will also form leaders versed in the art of community building.

STRATEGIES	KEY TACTICS
II.1 Be a culturally competent, diverse institution intentional about formation and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create formative experiences which promote mutual respect and understanding b. Expand, integrate, and deepen commitment to anti-racism, cultural competency, and other initiatives to support all members of LSTC’s diverse community c. Establish process for addressing, managing, and transforming difficult conversations and conflict
II.2 Attract more students and increase diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement a recruitment and retention plan so all students can thrive, including appropriate financial and academic support b. Increase the number of students of color c. Enhance LSTC’s global profile
II.3 Recruit, retain, and develop accomplished and diverse faculty committed to a community of scholars and advancing the needs of the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a faculty recruitment and retention plan (assessment of long-term needs, areas of study, faculty/student ratios, faculty of color, appropriate compensation, etc.) b. Support faculty scholarship, publications, and professional development and provide needed resources
II.4 Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse staff committed to serving a gospel-centered community and advancing the needs of the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a staffing plan (staff needs for work requirements, succession, staff of color, retention, appropriate compensation, etc.) b. Support staff participation at internal/ external development opportunities



III Educational Impact

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

We continue to develop innovative models for theological education to improve our academic programs. Learning beyond classroom confines is a critical part of the educational experience. LSTC is committed to weaving such opportunities into the curriculum as well as offering paracurricular activities, while also adapting the field education program to match with the changing nature of church. We will prepare students to serve in a variety of settings with practical leadership skills and help them build habits for a healthy spiritual life.

STRATEGIES	KEY TACTICS
III.1 Prepare students academically, experientially, and spiritually to be leaders in creating communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a program focused on leadership skill development b. Provide opportunities for spiritual formation and reflection c. Advance academic excellence and integrate with leadership and spirituality d. Explore opportunities for incorporating public church components through and beyond MDiv program
III.2 Explore innovative models of theological education to adapt to changing student and congregational realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Incorporate new methods in teaching models (hybrid classroom, technology, pedagogy, etc.) b. Ensure the current model of LSTC’s education supports LSTC’s students and meets the needs of the greater church c. Support contextual curricular components and paracurricular activities that enhance classroom learning
III.3 Provide field education opportunities that meet “public church” criteria and align with wider goals of the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Select field education sites that align with LSTC’s values/goals and address the changing nature of the church b. Collaboratively develop funding for sites that cannot support an intern on their own



IV Resource Sustainability

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

Like other seminaries, we face challenging financial circumstances, and resolving these calls for significant effort and focus. Developing a clear approach for managing expenses and finding ways to increase revenues will be critical to a viable operating model over the long term. Achieving the goals of the current comprehensive campaign will also be essential in providing LSTC with needed resources. A shared understanding of our financial position by all stakeholders will contribute to a deeper commitment to achieving financial viability. We are also committed to reinvesting in our facilities and technology, including the residential housing that provides many of our students with an opportunity to live and learn together.

STRATEGIES	KEY TACTICS
IV.1 Ensure revenues exceed expenses by an appropriate margin, and ensure a positive operating cash flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a clear and comprehensive business plan for controlling costs and increasing revenues b. Effectively communicate financial position to all stakeholders
IV.2 Achieve annual goals of the current comprehensive campaign: <i>Go Forth: Our Campaign for the Church in a Changing World</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communicate goals and progress of the campaign to all LSTC’s constituents
IV.3 Complete needed facility and technological upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review, reassess, and implement prioritized plan for needed improvements b. Maintain and leverage residential housing as a key asset of LSTC’s mission and community

Strategic Progress Implementation and Oversight

The strategies will each be assigned to an individual (or small group) who will serve as the implementation lead. The strategy leads will develop annual action plans with budget implications and measures of success, provide status updates, and identify other tactics and action steps as appropriate to successfully implement the strategy.

A Strategic Plan Oversight Team (SPOT) will be responsible for monitoring overall plan implementation and success. This multidisciplinary team including staff, faculty, and board representatives will meet twice a year to review annual action plans and status updates, provide feedback to strategy leads, identify and discuss issues, and deliver updates to their constituencies.

In addition to reviewing the implementation of individual strategies, SPOT will assess the 2018–2020 Strategic Plan for overall progress and success based on the following measures:

	Outcome Measure	Basis of Measurement
I Distinctive Profile Did LSTC enhance and communicate the school’s distinctive character?	Shared understanding of LSTC’s vision and purpose	LSTC constituency survey
II Formative Community Did LSTC invest in talented, faithful people who participate in and are formed by a gospel-centered community?	Shared identity as a gospel-centered community	Qualitative assessment
III Educational Impact Did LSTC provide instruction relevant for a church active in the world and for diverse student needs?	Shared understanding of public church	LSTC constituency survey
IV Resource Sustainability Did LSTC develop an operational model and infrastructure to support learning and financial vitality?	Student enrollment	Total FTEs
	Enrollment of students of color	% FTEs of color
	Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) utilization and impact	% IDI participation by staff, faculty, students
		Growth along the IDI continuum
	Satisfaction with cultural competency and diversity within our community	LSTC constituency survey
	Academic performance	TBD
	Graduates feel equipped when they leave LSTC	Alumni survey at 3 years post-graduation
Revenues > expenses	% margin	
Meet goals for each year of the campaign	Annual campaign goals	

These measures, which were defined considering the four goals of the strategic plan, will provide a high-level indication about how well LSTC has achieved the intent of the strategic plan. Other indicators and outcome measures will be developed and used as necessary.

The Board of Directors will regularly review the overall performance of LSTC in light of updates provided by SPOT and the goals and strategies articulated in the strategic plan.