

**Wabash Graduate Teaching Initiative Summative Meeting
November 2-4, 2012**

Teaching Preparation in the PhD Program of
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

How is it structured? Who is involved? Is there a teaching colloquy or class?

All PhD students take the Teaching Methods and Learning Theory course, which is designed and taught by two professors in the Division of Christian Education Ministries, one of whom is a specialist in curriculum and instruction. Students usually enroll in this course during their second spring semester in the doctoral program. Non-Christian education majors are given a list of resources to read to lay a foundation in educational psychology and learning theory. As students in all majors study an additional four required resources on curriculum design and teaching in the digital environment, the course professors guide each student in the development of a complete course syllabus for a proposed course in Christian higher education. The course cannot be one currently offered by NOBTS or one the student has taken elsewhere. Students must choose a course name, propose a rationale, develop a course description, and choose textbooks. Then they create one teaching unit consisting of four 1.5-hour lesson plans, handouts, PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, a lecture guide, and a test. Finally, students present a 20-minute portion of a selected lesson from the teaching unit, and they are evaluated by their peers at the conclusion of the presentation.

What stages do students go through? What is the place of teaching in students' programs?

After completing 33 semester hours of PhD course work, including the Teaching Methods course, and passing the 9-hour written Qualifying Examination that is used to evaluate progress in the first half of the doctoral program, students can apply to receive the ThM degree and to teach under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Research Doctoral Teaching Fellowship. The goal for the fellowship program is to allow all interested students to teach at least one contract course under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Applications for the fellowship are forwarded to the chairperson of each division of study, who then can work students into the teaching schedule if courses are available in the semester following conferral of the ThM degree.

How is supervision structured?

Students teaching under this fellowship are assigned a mentor, who meets with them to guide syllabus preparation, textbook ordering, and lesson planning. The mentor is the student's doctoral guidance committee chairperson or the professor co-teaching a team-taught course, which often is the case for the student's first teaching assignment. Mentors attend at least one class session during the semester or, in the case of online courses, are observers in the online Blackboard courses. Online courses are proposed and developed by permanent faculty and go through a process that culminates with approval by a Review Committee consisting of the Associate Dean for Online Learning, Associate Vice-President for Information Technology, and the Division Chair and/or Dean. Once approved, the online course can be offered by the developer or by another instructor, including a doctoral student working under the direction of the developer, who then serves as the mentor. Mentors offer feedback and serve as a sounding board throughout the

semester. At the end of the semester, the mentors and students complete surveys regarding the teaching experience and outcomes.

How much teaching is involved?

The number of courses a PhD student teaches depends on the major area and the need in that area. For example, PhD students in psychology and counseling often teach consistently both online and in the classroom after their initial semester due to the growth of the MAMFC program. However, PhD students are limited to no more than two graduate contract courses per semester.

During the Fall 2012 semester, 14 students taught a total of eighteen master's-level contract courses: 1 student taught the same course online and in the classroom; 2 students team taught a total of three classroom courses with a professor; 1 experienced student taught two classroom courses; and 10 students taught a total of eleven online courses only, one of which was team taught. In addition, 2 current PhD students who were appointed to instructor status each taught an online course; the student who also serves as Dean of Students taught two classroom courses, and the other student taught four classroom courses.

Three students taught undergraduate-level courses during the fall semester. One experienced student taught two undergraduate classroom courses in addition to her two master's-level classroom courses. A second student taught two undergraduate classroom courses but no graduate-level courses, and a third student taught one undergraduate online course only.

Therefore, 19 of the 60 PhD students holding the ThM degree taught contract courses during the Fall 2012 semester, and 5 more are scheduled to teach in Spring 2013. Thirty-seven of the 60 who hold the ThM degree are writing dissertations; 4 of these students already have secured positions at other institutions, 1 directs and teaches at the South Florida undergraduate extension center for NOBTS, and another 7 live considerable distances from the New Orleans campus. Although students who do not live near enough to campus for classroom courses can teach online, recent PhD graduates also are contracted for Internet courses so that a balance is maintained among current faculty, PhD graduates, and current students.

How are the faculty trained or oriented?

PhD students teaching their first contract course attend Adjunct Faculty Orientation before the beginning of the semester. At orientation adjuncts meet one other and some of the seminary administrators, complete necessary forms, and get an overview of seminary policies and classroom protocol. They also receive the Adjunct Faculty Manual and have an opportunity to ask questions. All faculty are trained by the Information and Technology Center staff in the use of Blackboard for teaching Internet courses or as a supplemental component of classroom courses.

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Summary of Findings from the Teaching Initiative Conference at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Discussion with alumni and observations from Wabash conference facilitator Dr. Willie Jennings highlighted two main areas which should be addressed. Alumni described variety in ways the faculty mentored them through the doctoral program. They also experienced varying degrees of assistance and evaluation in teaching contract courses during their PhD programs.

Mentoring

One of the outcomes of the Wabash Graduate Teaching Initiative conference was a realization that students and faculty have a variety of concepts of mentoring. Relationships between faculty and current students, experienced and incoming students, and current students and alumni are the topics of ongoing discussion.

Faculty-student mentoring

A goal of the PhD office for the 2012-2013 academic year is to develop a rubric of specific benchmarks for faculty mentoring. Faculty and students will respond to a survey regarding their ideal of mentoring, and the range of concepts will be compiled into a list. The Associate Dean of Research Doctoral programs will work with division chairs to set goals for faculty mentoring based on faculty and student feedback, and the PhD office will develop a rubric incorporating these goals. The mentoring rubric will be introduced in the existing doctoral recertification process for faculty who are approved for PhD guidance and teaching, and a separate faculty training session will be designed to discuss and initiate the use of the rubric in mentoring. We hope to enlist personnel from the Wabash Center to assist in facilitating this mentor training.

Student-student mentoring

We also are exploring ways to establish mentoring relationships between new students and experienced students. Informal mentoring currently occurs among students whose seminars meet on block schedules because the students spend three days together three times each semester. During meals as well as in the classroom, the second-year students share their experience and insights with the new students. Among students in other majors, leaders with a heart for others emerge and provide guidance for those coming behind them. We can consider their examples and incorporate intentional mentoring into the experience of students in the form of organizing gatherings, assigning new students to students willing to guide them, and creating online opportunities for students to dialog.

Alumni-student mentoring

Relating to alumni has been on an individual, personal level as faculty and current students associate with them in settings outside NOBTS. For example, the practice of the Division of Biblical Studies has been to get together with alumni for dinner at the Society for Biblical Literature annual meetings. During the meal, faculty and current students have an opportunity for informal dialog with alumni regarding their teaching experiences. These dinners have included any NOBTS students who are present at the meetings, but other divisions could be encouraged to meet alumni for dinner at professional society meetings in their areas of study as well.

The session at our Wabash conference during which alumni shared insights and answered questions was appreciated by current students. We will explore other means for bringing these groups together in the future by gatherings and/or online connections. These settings would provide opportunities to address questions of problems faced by all faculty as well as particular issues that might apply to women and faculty of various ethnicities. Open discussion of navigating institutional protocols and political systems would provide insight for students seeking positions in teaching and graduates entering new positions.

The alumni who attended the Wabash conference also suggested developing a site for sharing syllabi. Teaching in an undergraduate environment in particular often requires students to develop courses in areas outside the narrow focus of their PhD programs. A syllabus bank could provide a good start for graduates in new appointments to get insight into teaching in peripheral areas.

Student Teaching

Although off-site teaching by PhD students is uncommon at this point due to Compressed Interactive Video capability connecting the main campus to the extension center campuses, online teaching is increasing. This semester we are ensuring that mentors are enrolled in each Internet class their students teach and encouraging the mentors to observe the activity in the classes and provide feedback to the PhD student instructors. We will monitor the results of faculty and student mentoring surveys at the conclusion of each semester to see whether they reflect increased support in the teaching experience.

Students with contract courses at the undergraduate level have not been receiving the same level of mentoring as those with graduate courses. The PhD office can work with the faculty and students to determine the assistance students are receiving and areas in which more guidance and evaluation are needed.