

**Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Graduate Program Teaching Initiative Grant
Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion**

Teaching Preparation in the SWBTS Doctoral Program

1. Process of Preparing Future Teachers in Theology and Religion

In addition to the discipline-specific courses taken by Ph.D. students to prepare them for teaching and research in their chosen fields of study, each of the four graduate schools at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) offers students either a specific seminar or opportunities to teach in their major and minor fields, or both.

a. School of Theology/Fish School of Evangelism and Missions

The School of Theology and the Fish School of Evangelism and Missions at SWBTS offer a common seminar to their Ph.D. students, a course called “Teaching in Higher Education.” The Fish School is planning a new concentration: Teaching in Global Higher Education for missionaries on the field who plan to teach in an international context.

b. Terry School of Church and Family Ministries

The Terry School of Church and Family Ministries, formerly the School of Educational Ministries, prepares future teachers in a variety of ways, including a supervised internship and peer-critiqued seminar papers presented live before the seminar group.

c. School of Church Music

The School of Church Music offers advanced pedagogy and applied areas of piano, voice and conducting. At present, there is no academic pedagogy seminar offered to Ph.D. students, although there are teaching opportunities afforded to doctoral students.

2. Content of Courses/Seminars in Teaching

a. School of Theology/Fish School of Evangelism and Missions

The “Teaching in Higher Education” course taken by Ph.D. students in the School of Theology and the Fish School of Evangelism and Missions focuses on many issues, including governance and academic administration, accreditation, and an

emphasis on different aspects of teaching. Students have to construct a syllabus for a course in the field in which they are doing research. Attention is given to issues such as faculty work, balancing research and teaching, and the use of student/peer evaluations of instruction. In the case of the Fish School of Evangelism and Missions, missionaries come to the main campus for an intensive “Teaching in Higher Education” seminar at the end of their course work and then teach for two weeks at overseas seminaries in a cross-cultural situation, including having their teaching evaluated by international faculty members and students.

b. Terry School of Church and Family Ministries

The Terry School teacher preparation program includes completing a supervised internship, with four options from which to choose: (1) Teaching—this involves teaching a portion of a regular master’s level course and requires students to submit course outlines, teaching plans, and evaluation plans. The student is supervised and critiqued by the major professor; (2) Administration—assisting or leading in a project or program under the direction of the major professor; (3) Research—assisting or leading in a research project as negotiated by the student and the major professor; and (4) Clinical—this option is for psychology and counseling students, with the counseling practicum constituting their supervised internship, and will no longer be offered when the licensure program comes to an end. A second form of preparation for teaching occurs in the doctoral seminars where students are required to produce and present research papers that are then critiqued by peers and the instructors involved using rubrics that evaluate the content of the paper and the effectiveness of the presentation.

c. School of Church Music

Although the School of Church Music has no academic pedagogy seminar as such, it had at one point an interdisciplinary seminar team-taught by the chairs of the music theory, history, and ministry departments of the School that included guest lectures by faculty from the School of Church and Family Ministries on learning styles, examination design, and educational methodology. Students did a research paper that they presented to the seminar, and in addition conducted teaching sessions in regular classes that were videotaped and critiqued by the professors involved. The School decided that although the design of this seminar was well thought out, it was too demanding and no longer served the purpose of preparing future teachers as well as providing teaching opportunities in applied courses in piano, voice and conducting.

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Summary of Findings from Teaching Initiative Work

- **Core Learnings**

A number of insights were gained about the teaching preparedness of SWBTS' alumni from the Teaching Initiative effort, including the following: (1) as expected, the graduate faculty at SWBTS are generally willing to help individual doctoral students prepare for their respective callings to teaching, but students in most of the graduate schools of the Seminary need to take the initiative to seek out that help; (2) again as expected, the formal courses and other opportunities provided to help doctoral students in general at SWBTS prepare for a teaching career cover some issues related to teaching better than others, with the non-content issues being less well covered; (3) less expected was the insight that many doctoral candidates receive relatively little help, with those who commute receiving the least help; (4) somewhat surprising was the insight that international students have difficulty contextualizing the help that is provided as far as teaching in their own culture is concerned; (5) also surprising was the insight that the current requirement of a minor field is less helpful than allowing doctoral students to take as much work in their major field as possible.

- **Implications for Graduate Program**

Based on the core learnings outlined above, it is clear that: (1) the formal courses and informal opportunities provided to research doctoral students at SWBTS to help them prepare for their callings as teachers need to be reviewed; (2) more emphasis and help need to be placed on strengthening the aspects of the preparation doctoral students receive at the Seminary in the non-content related areas of developing teaching tools, improving communication skills, as well as the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to students; (3) special attention needs to be paid to doctoral students who commute and do not have jobs on campus that bring them into contact with faculty members; (4) intentional teaching opportunities and feedback need to be provided to research doctoral students to insure that they do not enter teaching careers without acquiring some of the basic skills needed to be effective classroom and/or online teachers; (5) given the significant number of international students at the Seminary, a structured program enabling them to contextualize what they learn about teaching needs to be provided; (6) the issue of requiring doctoral students to take a minor field as well as a major field of study needs to be explored; (7) perhaps most important of all, research doctoral students and doctoral faculty need to have opportunities for systematic interaction outside of the classroom that will encourage as well as permit a mentoring relationship between faculty and students to occur.

- **Next Steps**

SWBTS has a research doctoral council representing all the graduate schools that meets twice a year to review matters pertaining to the various research doctoral programs offered by the Seminary. In the next several years, with the guidance of the provost and under the leadership of the vice provost, this council will be charged with exploring the implications for teaching arising out of the various graduate programs at the Seminary. The school representatives, under the leadership of their school deans and associate deans, will be charged with reviewing what is offered to help prepare doctoral students for a calling to teaching in their respective schools, and bring their schools' perspectives to bear on the discussions that will take place in the research doctoral council over the next 2-3 years. Any recommendations arising out of these discussions will be brought to the provost for his consideration and determination.