Preparation for Wabash March 2014 Summative Meeting

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Trinity Evangelical Divinity School's PhD program offers three primary emphases: Theological Studies (THS), Intercultural Studies (ICS), and Educational Studies (EDS). Our report includes targeted summaries for each of the three emphases regarding teaching preparation and Teaching Initiative findings.

I. Teaching Preparation in your Doctoral Program

A. The THS program includes a required two-credit course devoted specifically to the practice of teaching: Principles of Higher Education – A discussion of the educational process, activities, and the instructional techniques used in higher education. This course involves theory as well as practice in the application of those principles in the classroom.

Each student takes at least six (6) doctoral seminars. Three of these seminars are in their own major field of concentration (Church History/Historical Theology, New Testament, Old Testament, or Systematic Theology), and one in each of the three concentrations. This is the core of the formal course instruction in the program. The interaction of a doctoral seminar is much more than a discussion; it is a mode of learning. The assumption is that ideas are not a person's own until they can be shaped into one's own language and used in disciplined conversations. Each student prepares a substantial research paper in the topic under study, the professor and other students in the course read it ahead of time, and the author makes a presentation of their work in class leading into extensive interaction.

B. Although many of the students in the ICS program enter already with some significant teaching experience and many are hired for teaching positions in Christian colleges and seminaries upon completion of the program, there is very little intentional preparation for teaching within the program itself. What preparation there is tends to be incidental and depends upon the initiative and interests of the student. Those especially interested in education and teaching can avail themselves of the following opportunities:

- Elective courses such as Teaching the Bible in Intercultural Settings.
- Some students enroll in the PhD program while teaching full time or part time at a Bible college or seminary so they have ongoing opportunities for teaching.
- Take a minor in Educational Studies by taking 9 hours of courses in Educational Studies in educational theory.
- Some PhD students teach basic masters level courses at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (on the main campus or through extension centers) or undergraduate courses at Trinity College. Opportunities for such teaching are contingent upon the needs of any given semester.
- Some PhD students teach basic undergraduate courses at community colleges in the area (again, as needs arise).
- On occasion, students with special expertise are invited to teach sections of a regular masters level course alongside the regular professor.

But these are all optional and depend largely upon the interests and desires of the student. There is nothing within the program itself that provides intentional and structured opportunities for teaching with informed and constructive assessment.

C. Most participants in the EDS program have extensive teaching experience representing a variety of educational levels. The modular delivery format of the program enables most participants to continue working in their context. Teaching and/or team teaching is included in nearly every course, including foundational, elective, and research courses. "Teaching and Learning" is one primary elective focus area. Electives such as Transformative Teaching and Learning, Teaching in Higher Education, Curriculum Theory and Design, Ethics in Teaching and Learning, and Teaching Others to Teach the Bible are taught on a rotational basis every two or three years.

Each student is required to take a teaching practicum. Participants design, teach and evaluate two (1) credit electives or one (2) credit elective under the supervision of an EDS faculty member. Practicum teachers will have already achieved candidacy, will teach in their research areas, and will often team teach these elective courses with EDS faculty members or other similarly qualified participant colleagues.

II. Summary of Findings from Teaching Initiative Work

A. THS: It became clear in the discussion with our alumni that there is unevenness in the needs of students for teaching background and opportunities when they enter the program. Some already have good background in teaching while others do not. Some have positions already waiting for them which others do not.

Our response to this reality needs to include the initiation of a "student profile" upon their entrance into the program. We need to find out whether they have significant teaching experience already or not. If not, we need to see to it that they gain some of that needed experience while they are in the program, under supervision. The profile would need to include this and also many other concerns such as academic advising to deal directly with deficiencies in their previous training, their need to become known in the academy through attendance and participation at professional society meetings, etc.

The alumni made it clear that there is a problem with how we currently attempt to do theological integration. Taking a seminar in each of the student's non-concentration fields (see IA above) does not accomplish this and, at the same time, reduces the seminar's level of effectiveness for students in their field of concentration. A more clear process of integration needs to be developed.

It is proposed that we move to a system of integration seminars, where students in all four concentrations participate in the same seminar focused on a particular theological topic (e.g., Atonement, Christology, Ecclesiology, etc.). One professor from each concentration would participate in the seminar each semester, making a presentation early in the semester and interacting with the student papers throughout the semester. The students would be expected to write papers that contribute to the theological topic under consideration from the perspective of

their own concentration. All students will read each paper before its presentation in the class by the author. Two students from other concentrations will present a brief review of the paper from the perspective of their own concentration, and the paper would then be open for discussion among the whole cohort of students and professors.

There would be two such seminars in the student's experience: one in the spring semester of their first year, and a more advanced one in the fall semester of their second year. The first semester of their first year they would take the ST 9100 Advanced Theological Prolegomena seminar in preparation for these integrative seminars.

This kind of integration process would also lend itself to the "cohort" effect for each entering class of students. They would interact extensively with each other and learn from each other through this process. This was another concern reflected in the remarks of the alumni for needed improvement in the THS program.

B. ICS: It became very clear from the feedback from alumni that the PhD ICS must make some changes in order to prepare its graduates better for the profession of teaching. Doctoral students need to be prepared not only for effective classroom instruction (knowing how to design a course, various modes of instruction, etc.) but also how to participate effectively as educators within the guild (applying for jobs, securing grants, presentations at professional meetings, administrative duties, committee work, etc.).

The PhD ICS program will undergo a major evaluation and redesign beginning in the 2014-15 academic year. As part of this evaluation, special attention should be given to ways in which the program might encourage participants (students and faculty alike) to think intentionally about "teacher formation". Some elements in this rethinking might include:

- Building into the program structured opportunities for all students to engage in some classroom instruction in a mentored setting.
- Including in the PhD ICS curriculum seminars which enable students to develop skills in curriculum design and modes of instruction.
- Encourage faculty to foster a "culture of reflective teaching" so that as students participate in classes and seminars there is an ongoing reflective conversation about how these activities relate to broader concerns of the teaching profession.
- Structured opportunities for students to learn how to write applications for grants, interview for jobs, participate in professional societies, etc.
- Greater intentionality in providing preparation for and guidance in the job search as doctoral students complete their programs.

It is important that the ICS program not merely add a few more courses that are designed to assist in these areas. Rather, what is needed here is both structural realignment of parts of the program to enable these emphases and a pervasive awareness on the part of all faculty of the importance of making clear connections between the various components of the program and the teaching profession the students are likely to enter upon graduation.

C. EDS: The EDS curriculum was substantially revised during the 2012-2013 academic year. The revision was highly informed by surveys, focus groups, and conversations with current students, alumni, practitioner colleagues, adjunct faculty, and full-time faculty members. As such, the Teaching Initiative experience served to substantially confirm the findings of the research and the eventual curricular revision.

Findings from the Teaching Initiative are informing how EDS courses and methods could be better utilized by the other two programs. Further, the findings make it clear that the EDS faculty and students should extend whatever proficiency regarding teaching and learning they have for the mutual benefit of all three programs.

Conclusion:
We are grateful for the significant spirit of collegiality that exists among the three program directors but lament the limited opportunities for students from the three programs to take courses, conduct research, or even socialize together. The Teaching Initiative has provided substantial impetus for the three programs to explore how to promote fruitful cooperation, develop a culture of reflective teaching, and deepen our commitment to the formation of scholar/practitioners.