

**THE HEART OF THE WABASH CENTER:  
AN ANALYSIS OF WABASH CENTER EVALUATIONS AND REPORTS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the late 1990s, the Lilly Endowment introduced its “Theological Teaching Initiative” to enhance the quality of religious leadership in the United States. The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion of Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN was funded as the primary center to accomplish that goal with theological schools, colleges, and universities.

Through that grant, the Lilly Endowment set a public context for its work – enhanced religious leadership affects the quality of religious institutions and their impact on the wider public dialogue. The Wabash Center reported that public context in several of its grant reports.

The future of organized religion in the United States depends significantly on the quality of its leadership. The quality of that leadership in turn depends to an important degree on the quality of teaching in theology and religion: good teaching attracts and inspires students and helps to prepare them for effective careers. Moreover, seminaries, religion departments, and university divinity schools are themselves important religious institutions, and teaching and learning is at the core of what they do. Their morale and their reputations will not be strong unless they foster good teaching. These assumptions motivated the Endowment's Theological Teaching Initiative and continue to support its efforts in Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion has been a part of that Initiative from the start. A planning grant and initial program grant (#950 337 and #950 486) funded the beginning of the Center's work in 1996, and two full implementation grants (#1996 0208-000 and #1999 1781-000) have supported our work from July 1, 1996 through December 31, 2003. (See 2003-2006 Implementation Grant III, p. 2, written in 2003.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations in this report are drawn from the grant applications, reports, and evaluations of the Wabash Center. All are available at the center. Our references note the report and location in the report.

After over 20 years of initiating a robust national conversation about teaching in theological schools and religion departments, the Wabash Center has had a significant impact on faculty members, their institutions, and, in turn, on their graduates. The Wabash Center has sponsored workshops, consultations, and podcasts and webinars for faculty and administration in theology and religion. Through its outreach, it has funded grants for institutions and faculty members, provided consultants, and inspired scholarly reflection on teaching and learning.

For this report we have reviewed 25 years of grant proposals and evaluation reports of the leadership of the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning.<sup>2</sup> Throughout our review, the impact of the Wabash Center of Wabash College has become clear. It is the premier center in the U.S. and Canada for exploring teaching and learning in religion and theological education. As we read the reports, we considered how it has fulfilled its mission, surveyed its impact, and sought to offer insights to consider for the future.

*The question which has emerged for us is the following: What is at the heart of the Wabash Center that has affected so many faculty members and universities, seminaries, and religious institutions? We invite you into our exploration of the heart of the Wabash Center and to consider potential directions for the future.*

### **MISSION DEFINED AND REDEFINED (1996-2020)**

Throughout its history, three mission statements have directed the work of the Wabash Center (written in 1996, 2006, 2012). These statements are very similar and are built around the original purpose of the Wabash Center: “to enhance and strengthen teaching in theology and religion in theological schools, colleges and universities.” The primary differences among the three have to do with program foci. The current statement has three program foci, the original had seven, and the 2006 one had five. In fact, the program areas are themselves similar and overlap because later restatements have merged program areas.

However, our review of mission statements has discovered one significant difference over the 25 years. The original statement was accompanied by a rationale for the work of the Wabash Center – a rationale related to the Lilly “Theological Teaching Initiative.” Since 2006, that rationale has not been mentioned again in any of the reports or evaluations. We think this change significant and attend to it throughout our report.

The current mission statement guiding the work of the Wabash Center was defined for the 2012-2015 grant proposal (See 2011-2012 report, pp. 1-2.)

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<sup>2</sup> We thank Dr. N. Lynne Westfield and her colleagues at the Wabash Center for providing us with the documents, resources, information for interviews, and support as we worked on this review of 25 years of grants, reports, and evaluations. It was a privilege for us to be invited into this ongoing story that is impacting faculty and institutions of higher education.

**Mission:** The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion seeks to enhance and strengthen education in theology and religion in theological schools, colleges, and universities in the United States and Canada.

**Our programmatic emphasis is upon:**

### **I. Faculty Practices and Vocation**

At the center of the work with faculty at the Wabash Center are reflective practices that engage issues of classroom teaching and learning, explore the teaching vocation, and attend to institutional mission and context. The goal is improving classroom skills and reflective teaching practices that support student learning. Because current training within doctoral programs is heavily focused on discipline research, faculty members who are new to the teaching profession often need help in thinking about the teaching dimensions of their jobs. For more seasoned faculty, the value of the teaching profession needs to be reestablished. Thus, we employ strategies that honor the profession of teaching while introducing faculty at all stages of development to a variety of classroom practices that place student learning at the core.

We will know that we are successful when program participants demonstrate the qualities and skills of reflective teaching and best practices, and design intellectual experiences for student learning that translates beyond the classroom.

### **II. Educational Environments**

There are several environments where teaching and learning can either be nurtured or stymied because of institutional obstacles. These environments are the educational institutions themselves (theological schools, seminaries, departments of religion in colleges and universities); the graduate schools where religion and theology students earn their Ph.D. or Th.D.; and the professional societies where faculty members present their scholarship and engage in wider professional discussions. All are places where sustained pedagogical conversations can be valued as a part of the culture or where teaching can be discouraged and devalued. Thus, the Wabash Center's second area of programming consists of strategies to address each of these environments.

We will know that we have been successful when: 1) educational cultures of theological seminaries and religion departments become more sustaining of good teaching practices, are congruent with the institutional mission, and demonstrate traits of being a learning community; 2) participating doctoral programs incorporate and value sustained pedagogical conversations within doctoral students' courses of study; and 3) there is an increase in the frequency and depth of teaching and learning conversations at professional society meetings.

### **III. Teaching and Learning Resources**

A significant aspect of the Wabash Center's work is connecting faculty members with resources in the field of teaching and learning in higher education. The introduction to and use of these resources is woven throughout the workshops, colloquies, consultations, and leadership development work, and is accessible to faculty through the Wabash Center website and journal, *The Journal On Teaching (JOT)*. Our first goal in this area is to expose program participants to the literature that will support them in their various roles as teachers and faculty members of educational institutions. Our second goal is to encourage and support the creation of the scholarship of teaching and learning in the fields of religious and theological studies.

We will know we have been successful when: 1) participating faculty members make more frequent use of educational resources through our website and onsite collection; 2) scholars who have been nurtured through *JOT's* network of writers are actively contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning from the perspective of their disciplines; and 3) contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning becomes a valued practice for tenure and advancement in theological schools and departments of religion. (<https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/about/mission/> Accessed 10.19.2020.)

While enhancing and strengthening education in theology and religion is central to this current statement of the mission, the definition of program areas is the most focused. This statement begins with the work of faculty and the administrators that support their work. It then includes research on teaching and learning and on enhancing support for reflective teaching and learning in the environments of theological schools, universities, and colleges.

In comparison, the first mission statement for the Wabash Center was written in 1996 for a proposal to the Lilly Endowment by the first director, Raymond Williams, and approved by the president of Wabash College, Andrew Ford. While that statement included the same overall goal, it had a more expansive listing of ways to fulfill that goal.

The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion (a Lilly Endowment program at Wabash College) seeks to enhance and strengthen teaching in theology and religion in North American theological schools, colleges and universities.

To do so, the Wabash Center initiates studies, workshops, conferences and related activities and supports initiatives of faculty members and institutions that enhance teaching and that provide empowering environments for good teaching and effective learning by

- providing opportunities for study of teaching and learning in theology and religion;
- providing opportunities for faculty members to discuss teaching and learning in a variety of contexts and to develop and share teaching resources;
- supporting reflection by faculty members within the theological disciplines on the special contributions of these disciplines to study of theology and religion;

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- providing occasions and resources for religion departments, seminaries and theological schools to develop and implement strategies and programs that can best support excellent teaching in theology and religion;
- enabling theological teachers and graduate students who are preparing to become teachers of religion and theology to reflect upon, clarify and strengthen their sense of vocation;
- helping faculty members and institutions to keep abreast of appropriate technology that will enhance learning and teaching;
- studying the contexts of teaching and learning in religion and theology and providing resources to reflect upon the theological school or department as an excellent learning environment. (See 1996-1999 Implementation Grant 1, p. 4, written in 1996.)

Seven program areas focused the attention of the Wabash Center and remained key in proposals and evaluations through 2006. The seven were defined as follows:

The Wabash Center will undertake a large number of activities within seven program areas that are consonant with emphases of the Theological Teaching Initiative: (1) Workshops and Other Reflective Practices on Teaching and Learning, (2) Consultations on Teaching and Learning in Subject Areas, (3) Vocation of Theological Teachers, (4) Development of the Professorate in Theology and Religion, (5) Sustaining Empowering Environments in Theological Schools and Religion Departments, (6) Technologies and Theological Learning and Teaching, and (7) Creation of a New Literature on Theological Teaching. Together these program areas cover many of the crucial issues facing theological schools and religion departments. Within the program areas, we shall focus on fundamental research, consultations, workshops, publications and other forms of dissemination, and on specific activities and skills that show potential to enhance theological teaching. (See 1996-1999 Implementation Grant 1, pp. 5-6.)

*Rationale for The Wabash Center:* This first definition of mission was directly connected to the Lilly Endowment's "Theological Teaching Initiative" – to impact religious institutions and through them to impact the role religious institutions could play in public dialogue. The connection of the Wabash Center to that teaching initiative is clarified by Raymond Williams in the proposal for the second implementation grant. As Williams reflects on the first three years of activity, he noted that the center had already touched 1800 persons and 550 institutions. He begins with the purpose statement of the center: "Good teaching and learning is a penultimate goal, pleasurable and virtuous in itself, but it also leads to transformation. . . ." But then he expands the role of the center to both leadership development and the public work of religious institutions.

We also believe that the success of Wabash Center programs will indirectly contribute (1) to the creation of a group of articulate and committed leaders for religious institutions and (2) to a more informed public discourse about religion that models and expresses our best hope of preserving religious freedom and civic order in America in

the new millennium. Clarke Gilpin of the University of Chicago viewed this wider landscape from his participation in our Consultation on the Vocation of the Theological Teacher, 'The idea of vocation asks some very fundamental questions about how being a theological teacher is both an expression of your own sense of self and a contribution to a wider social and religious enterprise.' The first step in reaching these goals is "good talk about good teaching" with faculty members in Wabash Center programs and publications. The second step is improvement in the effectiveness of faculty members as teachers in their departments and schools. It is difficult after three years to make any careful assessment or longitudinal study of the second step, even though we have anecdotal reports from our participants that they are energized and refreshed by the attention they give to their teaching. It will be a long time before one can make a judgment about its impact on the larger society. We are planting seeds, others will water, and God, we pray, will give the increase. (I do recognize the possible double entendre in that sentence. Others might smile, but you understand that the reference is to something more important than an Endowment grant) (See 2000-2002 Implementation Grant II, pp. 5-6, written in 1999.)

Our review of proposals and evaluations of the work of the Wabash Center written from 1996-2019 has seen consistent attention to enhancing teaching and learning. And, without a doubt enhancing teaching and learning is an important goal in and of itself. Yet, it is interesting, that this wider public rationale has disappeared in reports from 2006 and beyond.

*Development of Program and Leadership:* In developing the programs of the Wabash Center, staff consulted widely. Their style of leadership was mutual and organic. Beginning with leadership of the Lilly Endowment, they reached out to leaders across theological education and religious studies.

Raymond Williams would regularly comment that the staff of the Wabash Center were "servants of excellence." What he meant was that the staff drew in competent and creative leaders. For example, early workshop staff leaders were drawn from persons across the United States and Canada who had a reputation of contributing to reflection on teaching and learning in theological education and higher education. As these persons were assembled to lead the early events, the Wabash Center staff would encourage, support, listen, and give freedom so that the programs could build from their mutual insights. After each event, the staff would evaluate with leaders, collect ideas, and draw their recommendations for additional persons who could be invited into the dialogue from both the wider community of religion and theological scholars, and also from participants in Wabash Center workshops and events. As programs developed, the constituency for the Wabash Center was also being developed.

Early on, the center staff also invited to campus, select faculty in each of the areas of theological education and religious study to reflect together on what was needed to enhance teaching in their specialties. A board of consultants, an editorial board for the *Teaching Theology and Religion*, and the center's advisory board were all developed in this organic

fashion. A network was being created to impact teaching and learning in theological education and religious studies.

This pattern of working as “servants of excellence,” drawing on the resources of persons making a difference in theological education and religious studies, supporting them in their work, giving them freedom to develop aspects of the program, evaluating, and then reflecting together has continued throughout the history of the Wabash Center. As the program of the center has been enfolded, it connected with the insights and needs of participants. In fact, the constituencies of Wabash Center programming have had a key role in developing and expanding the program itself. Attention to their concerns has provided events that made a difference in people’s lives and, in turn, developed support and loyalty for the center. The sense of connection, fulfillment, advocacy and loyalty is captured in a phrase we heard often from Wabash Center participants and from current staff. “When Wabash calls, I say, ‘yes.’” A consistent organic working style has empowered the staff to listen, trust, free, and evaluate; to build significant programming; and to garner a loyal and growing constituency.

*Attention to Program Evaluation:* As we explore “the heart of the Wabash Center,” we consider the purposes and programs that have guided the center’s efforts. We draw on the ongoing evaluations of the Wabash Center written by its leaders and by outside reviewers (a 10-year review of the center, and subsequent reviews of the grant program and journal).<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the very first proposal requesting funding for the center sought to define how to assess the effectiveness of the center:

All programs of the Wabash Center have the overarching goal to enhance teaching and learning in graduate theological schools and undergraduate religion departments. To that end, the Wabash Center will establish itself as a central location to which we hope faculty members and administrators will look for resources and programs supporting excellence in teaching. Each program area and each activity within program areas will have specific goals and intended results that will shape the internal evaluation of programs and activities of the Wabash Center. The intermediate goals of the Wabash Center are as follow:

1. We intend to create and sustain a national conversation about teaching and learning in theology and religion. Workshops supported by previous grants to Wabash College and to the American Academy of Religion have had remarkable ripple impact through journal articles, workshops and sessions at professional meetings, book projects, and conversations in graduate schools and at informal gatherings. We intend the same kind of ripple effect generated by creative thinking and activities

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<sup>3</sup> Evaluation has been an ongoing effort. Note that the current mission statement of the center discusses in each area how leadership will know they have been successful in fulfilling the purposes.

and propelled by the enthusiasm of people reflecting with one another about their primary activities as teachers.

2. We intend to establish the Wabash Center as a well-known and respected location and source of programs to which faculty members in theological schools and religion departments will contribute their good wisdom about learning and teaching in religion and theology and, hence, a center to which they can look for many forms of assistance in their development as excellent theological teachers. We hope the Wabash Center will be recognized as a center of excellence.
3. We intend that the quality of life of faculty members and students will improve through more effective learning and better teaching in theological schools and religion departments. The premise is that perceived successes and failures in the classroom day in and day out influence quality of life decisively. Clarity about vocation and access to resources that enable faculty members and students to relate their theological teaching and learning to personal commitments and goals also enhance the quality of life of people in theology and religion. Although improvement in these areas is hard to quantify, anecdotal evidence points to despair when they are absent and joy and enthusiasm when they are present.
4. We intend that good teaching will be lifted up and valued by people in theological studies to the degree that good research is currently valued, causing some changes to occur, albeit slowly, in the reward systems of theological schools and religion departments. Ernest Boyer's theses regarding the character of scholarship provide a starting point, but his points must be refined, supplemented and applied in the arena of theological teaching to bring about change. The concrete support of Lilly Endowment, Inc. focused precisely on teaching and learning will go a long way toward accomplishing this goal.
5. We intend to inspire reflection and research on diverse topics that will create a useful literature in several media and to disseminate that material in ways that will both inspire a wider conversation within theological circles about learning and teaching and be helpful to theological teachers in their work in the classroom and with their students outside of classes.
6. We intend that programs of the Wabash Center will build bridges spanning divides that exist between components of theological education, thereby enabling more fruitful collaboration enriched by excellences contributed from several contexts of experience: Roman Catholic and Protestant, liberal and evangelical, theological studies and religious studies, undergraduate and graduate, pre-tenure and tenured, graduate study and teaching. (See 1996-1999 Implementation Grant 1, pp. 17-18.)

Without a doubt, many of these thresholds have been met. The impact has been significant. The Wabash Center has touched an amazingly large group of faculty members. Through them and through grant programs, consultations, and conferences, it has virtually touched all of the theological schools and most of the universities in the U.S. and Canada. The conversation about teaching and learning in theology and religion has been enriched. Furthermore, the new initiatives of the center in 2020-2021 have continued to expand that impact.



We will now explore how the work of the Wabash Center has made a difference. We ask: What is at its heart? Furthermore, we admit that our current context affects our vision. Our study is being written during the Covid-19 pandemic, when practices of teaching and learning have come to the forefront of religious institutions and institutions of higher education. It is therefore a good time to ask: how has the Wabash Center fulfilled its mission, what has been its impact, and what are some potential directions to consider for its future?

### THE HEART OF THE WABASH CENTER

To examine the impact of the Wabash Center, we have chosen to attend to the original seven program areas. While we could have examined the three listed at present, we chose the original seven since subsequent emendations build on these. Those seven which we systematically review are the following:

- Providing opportunities for faculty to engage in study and conversation about teaching and learning in religion and theology.
- Examining the teaching practices in the fields of theology and religion.
- Exploring the vocation of teaching.
- Supporting schools as nurturing environments for faculty.
- Enhancing training of doctoral students in teaching and learning.
- Expanding opportunities for online resources for teaching and learning.
- Engaging in research on teaching.

As we review each, we explore the ways the Wabash Center fulfilled its goals and its impact. Then, in the last section of our report, we will draw out insights and questions for the future work of the Wabash Center.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. *Inspiring conversation about teaching and learning in religion and theology.*

The first program area focused on providing workshops on teaching and learning. The goal of which was to “provide resources for theological teachers that will help them to become more effective teachers both in their classes and within their broader institutional contexts.” Without a doubt, the Wabash Center has effectively fulfilled this mission. In fact, the Wabash Center is best known for workshops for faculty members. A significant number of faculty members have participated since the beginning in the summer of 1996.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In most sections, we will use the questions for evaluating a program defined in the classic study of theory in action by Chris Argyris and Donald Schoen. They argued that program evaluation attends to three concerns: (1) Does a program or action have the results it intended? (2) What are the unintended or additional consequences of an action? and (3) What are the values and contributions of that action?

<sup>5</sup> In the July 1, 2011- Dec. 31, 2012 Wabash Center Grant Report for Grant # 2008 0471-000, it was reported that over 1000 faculty had attended workshops and colloquies from 665 institutions, p. 3.

The workshops have been organized around the contexts of faculty life. For example, the Wabash Center has offered workshops for pre-tenure/ early-career faculty in both theological schools and departments of religion, for mid-career, for African America faculty, for Asian/ Asian North American faculty, for Latinx faculty, for faculty teaching in racial and culturally diverse classrooms, and for teaching online. Potential applicants applied for participation by describing their teaching contexts and clarifying teaching and learning agenda. Fourteen to sixteen persons were accepted into each workshop. Leadership for the workshops were chosen by the Wabash Center staff, often inviting effective experienced faculty and administrators as well as drawing on workshop participants who had been shaped by and excelled in the workshops themselves.

Over the years a philosophy was developed for these workshops that is now stated in the following values:

### **I. Teaching is a Vocation**

- Discerning the *telos* or goal of one's teaching vocation is crucial to the teaching and learning task.
- Good teaching is grounded in sound scholarship and nurtures an ongoing discussion about one's subject area.
- Clarifying one's teaching philosophy and learning goals facilitates classroom decisions such as course design, assignments, and assessment.
- Faculty members gain vocational colleagues and companions when they think collaboratively about teaching and learning.
- Thinking holistically about the work of teaching and scholarship develops a sense of one's career trajectory and stages.
- When faculty members talk together about their craft, they discover a richness of teaching knowledge and experience among them.

### **II. Teaching is a Craft**

- Teaching is a craft developed over a lifetime of critically reflective practice.
- Critical reflective practice is enhanced by engagement with pedagogical research and participation in the scholarly discourses on teaching and learning.
- Improving one's skill as a teacher enhances the quality and satisfaction of one's vocational choice.
- Teaching involves understanding the power of one's persona and embodied presence in the classroom.
- Teaching benefits from increased awareness, intentionality, and commitment to student learning.
- The digital environment has significant influence on teaching and needs to be reflectively engaged in classroom practice.
- There are many perspectives about teaching and learning, each with its own particular strengths and weaknesses. Understanding this variety expands the

range of one's teaching capacity and ability to engage a diversity of students and learning environments.

### III. Institutional Setting Matters

- Appreciating the fundamental values of the institution is key to understanding the dynamics of teaching and learning in a particular place.
- The larger teaching culture of an institution deeply influences the work in each particular classroom.
- Sustained conversation about teaching and learning can transform the culture of teaching in a school or department.
- Focusing on the daily work of teaching and learning transcends boundaries between different disciplines, ranks, and other academic divisions to create a space for collaborative and fruitful discussion.
- Good teaching enhances the institutional culture and is an act of institutional citizenship.
- Teaching is integrally connected to the public interpretive role of the department, seminary, or theological school. (See <https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/programs/our-philosophy/>. Accessed 09.01.2020.)

Each workshop guides faculty members to engage in reflection on the teaching vocation and practices, advance teaching projects, build a network, and explore school contexts for teaching.

Every evaluation and yearly narrative offer evidence from both anecdotal comments and formal workshop feedback to show how these workshops have succeeded. For example, one of the earliest narrative grant reports in 2000 commented:

We continue to struggle with the challenge of being able to demonstrate the success or failure of the Wabash Center in improving learning of students in theology and religion courses. We try to stay close to the ground, but it is very difficult to get that close in any but anecdotal fashion. Some of the stories are powerful, dealing with transformation, renewed self-confidence, and a new vision of the teacher's vocation. We are buoyed by those. Still the ultimate test is how well students are learning in the classroom and what effects that learning has in their lives for good or ill." ("Narrative Report, 1998-1999." February 21, 2000, p. 16.)

The evaluation reports have commented on the impact of these workshops on enhancing teaching practice; on dimensions of teaching (from syllabus construction, to setting student learning outcomes, to classroom practices, and to evaluation); and on curriculum. Some workshops have clarified how institutional contexts hinder or support teaching and others have reviewed the crucial dimensions of race and culture for both faculty and students.

The 2006 Wabash Center 10-year Evaluation Report confirmed the success of the workshops as it concluded:

The Center's most profound and lasting impact is on pre-tenured faculty, largely through workshops on general pedagogical issues, but also through continuing relationships with them. By working with pre-tenured faculty at a crucial point in their careers on the actual practice of their own teaching, the Center makes an important difference in how well these people teach (and, no doubt, in how well their students learn), and also on their developing sense of vocation, their growing self-confidence, their chances for tenure and promotion, their leadership roles in their schools, and their contributions to the larger academy. . . . Wabash Center workshops have their greatest impact on participants' vocation, or the way they think about their role and calling as a teacher. . . . Furthermore, participants leave Wabash workshops better able to accommodate diverse learning styles. . . . These important impacts of Wabash workshops are visible in changed teaching practices by workshop alumni, who report that they design assignments and course goals and their use of technology in ways that are explicitly learner-centered. (Wabash Center Evaluation Report, February 13, 2006, p. ii.)

The evaluators further commented that the relationships created by Wabash Center participants and their interactions at other Wabash Center events at places such as guild meetings (AAR, SBL, REA, and others) continue to enhance their growth as teachers.

Similar results continue to be reported from 2006 to the present. For example,

- For a Mid-career Workshop – “In answering the question of what they learned, the participants spoke of: 1) re-setting my imagination about my students' lives and becoming more responsive and empathetic to their situation as learners; 2) risking being creative in new assignments, new assessment methods, and new approaches to teaching seminary students; 3) how teaching and learning are a deeply relational form of practice which requires attentiveness and respect for what is unfolding in our midst; 4) how content is the least of it, although important, but no more than a beginning place; 5) the importance of multiple types of learning by engaging the arts more directly in the classroom; and 6) how this colloquy provided a degree of companionship and challenge which had been lacking in my life. . . . In his report, the director spoke of how the faculty participants gained a deeper appreciation of their creativity and how it might be freshly deployed in their teaching lives. He also noted that they learned new ways of seeing options in the given circumstances of their institutions, their teaching, and their lives.” (Report 2014-2015, pp. 8-9.)
- Or in a recent report of learning at an early career workshop – “In answering the question about what they learned, the participants named a range of skills and insights, including: 1) new teaching techniques that have been effective within my classroom context; 2) how to intentionally structure teaching tactics and be curious, rather than fearful, of how they will go; 3) how to listen to students and consider how the classroom is shaped by their experiences; 4) how to assess what we actually want students to

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learn; 5) having pedagogical empathy; and 6) realizing that scholarship and teaching are inextricably bound together. (Report 2018-2019, p. 6.)

The workshops are clearly fulfilling their purposes of assisting theological teachers to become more effective in their classes and within their broader institutional contexts.

This last comment leads to a major insight about programming at the Wabash Center. Efforts to address one of the goals of the center also affects and clarifies the work of other goals. The 2006 evaluation of the Wabash Center discovered that the workshops had an impact on both the schools of faculty participants and on their publishing.

Wabash workshops are having a strong, positive impact on institutions and the larger guild of teachers of theology and religion. This is happening for three main reasons: 1) Wabash alumni are receiving promotions to higher administrative posts- a trickle-up effect, 2) Wabash alumni tend to communicate often with colleagues at their home institutions about teaching, 3) Wabash alumni tend to look for and find connections between their research and teaching, and then publish about them. A stunning forty percent of Wabash workshop alumni have written about teaching and submitted this writing for publication. (2006 Evaluation Report, p. ii. In Educating Clergy files, p. 226).

The workshops build networks that serve as communities of support for faculty.

#### 2. *Examining the teaching practices in the fields of theology and religion.*

From the beginning of the work of the Wabash Center, the staff defined building bridges across theological education and religious studies as one of their tasks. That goal was specifically stated as to

build bridges spanning divides that exist between components of theological education, thereby enabling more fruitful collaboration enriched by excellences contributed from several contexts of experience: Roman Catholic and Protestant, liberal and evangelical, theological studies and religious studies, undergraduate and graduate, pre-tenure and tenured, graduate study and teaching.

The reality is that scholar teachers in the various disciplines of theological education (Bible, church history, theology, practical theology) draw on different cognate disciplines and methods in the goals and teaching practices. While the educating of clergy may hold the disciplines together in a theological school, each emphasizes differing commitments and approaches to study. These various commitments are united into a “curriculum” where each discipline has a role to play in the whole. In addition, theological schools are often divided by their theological commitments represented in categories such as mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and evangelical. Furthermore, while some religion departments reflect the faith perspective of the college or university where they are located, others seek to free themselves of a specific set of theological convictions. The disciplines of theological study thus in many ways are separated by

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context, faith orientation, methods of study, commitments to particular texts and traditions, and cognate disciplines on which they rest.

The Wabash Center therefore sought to define the variety of pedagogical practices that emerged across seminaries and departments of religion. The first consultations focused on religion scholars in undergraduate religion programs and faculty teaching in the discipline of systematic or constructive theology. The intentions were to explore if there were unique educational goals and if particular pedagogical strategies, tasks, and problems emerged. The answer was of course “yes.”

Explicit attention was then given to calling together faculty from a variety of disciplines to explore particular pedagogical commitments and practices for their fields of study. Within the first ten years, consultations were held, visits made to professional societies, and grants awarded to seek to understand “teaching practices in the fields of theology and religion.” Some of the faculty groups brought together included Bible, pastoral care, theology, congregational studies, religious education, field education, rural ministry, social ethics, political engagement, religion and liberal arts, interfaith study, and homiletics. In fact, a guide was published by faculty in homiletics about agreements they had made on the teaching of preaching. In addition, particular attention was paid to the teaching of Bible by creating an on-campus workshop on teaching the Bible in racially and culturally diverse settings.

This face-to-face work was complemented by articles published in *Teaching Theology and Religion (TTR)*. For example, in the 2007-2009 issues of *TTR* (about 10 years after publication began), articles explicitly addressed teaching in congregational studies, preaching, biblical languages, African-American religion, Bible, ethics, systematic theology, and history of Christianity. Additional essays explored teaching in theological education, church-related colleges, and liberal arts colleges.

Probably the two most important efforts to “bridge the divides” and provide a research-based picture of the ways that the fields of study were being taught were two projects with which the Wabash Center collaborated. The first was the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching study of the profession of ministry. *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* by Charles Foster, Lisa Dahill, Larry Goleman, Barbara Wang Tolentino which was published by Jossey-Bass in 2005. The second was Barbara Walvoord’s study of introductory religion courses in public and private colleges and universities, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* published by Blackwell in 2007. In both cases the Wabash Center collaborated and sponsored workshops on the findings as well as provided consultants and grant monies to assist theological schools and departments of religion to explore their missions, practices of teaching, and curriculum. These consultations resulted in more collaborative conversations within theological schools and religion departments about the integration of academic disciplines within the curriculum of the school.

These efforts have had an impact on faculty. Articles continue to appear in *JOT* and syllabi and online resources are collected. Nevertheless, since the 2006-2009 grant proposal to

the Lilly Endowment, there has been no continuing systematic effort to define the particular teaching practices in each field of study or across fields of study. That grant proposal merged this program area into goals 1 and 5 of a new mission statement: “Workshops and Other Reflective Practices on Teaching and Learning” and “Creation of a New Literature on Theological Teaching.” Perhaps, this result was to be expected. While there is similarity of teaching goals and practices within each field of study, there is also great diversity. For example, a course on Hebrew Bible in a department of religion may look at the history and cultural practices of Ancient Israel while in a seminary it is seen as a key text of faith to be interpreted and preached in congregational life and ministry. These contexts call for differing goals and strategies.

Notwithstanding, we wonder if these changes have resulted in a lack of attention to examining teaching practices within fields and seeking to bridge divides in theological education and departments of religion. We wonder whether renewed attention might help schools clarify the integration of fields of study within the curriculum, their wider responsibilities to their constituencies, and their fulfilling of accreditation standards. A question for the future is how the original commitment to “bridging the divides” is addressed or whether it is? Current activity in the blogs to focus on particular issues of how race is engaged in theological education and religious studies and how we teach for social justice and civic engagement as well as the continuing expansion of the syllabi collection and online resources suggest that these concerns continue to be important for the Wabash Center.

### 3. *Exploring the vocation of teaching.*

In the 1995 program planning grant, Raymond Williams listed “vocation” as an important concern. He stated, “The goal of this program area is to make public what has been a private exercise, to create and to reform vocabularies for communicating the issues involved, and to examine resources available in faith traditions for interpreting vocations of teaching scholars.” (Executive Summary, 1996-2006, p. 5, 17, & 18.)

A “three-year consultation on spirituality and the vocation of theological teachers” was part of the first proposal. Convened by Stephanie Paulsell (Chicago) and L. Gregory Jones (Duke), the result was the publication of *The Scope of Our Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002) that included reflections by several scholars on the vocation of theological educator. This important book has been used in many seminary classes and graduate programs to focus on the meaning of theological education. As this consultation ended in 2000, the group recommended two topics that needed further research and discussion: (1) the role of the institution in sustaining vocation through a career (what has become the concern for educational environment), and (2) how an individual theological teacher sustains vocation through a career.

A second consultation on vocation and teaching in theological and religious studies was then held 2002-2003 entitled “Vocation: A Career in Theological Scholarship” led by Clark Gilpin and Katarina Schuth. Four articles on vocation that were published in *TTR* out of this group.

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They focused on practices: vocation and teaching, vocation and retirement, vocation and parenting, vocation and administration. They recommended that future projects explore vocation as nested with other topics rather than address it head-on.

The definition of vocation that has consistently informed programs at the Wabash Center is the following:

Vocation is calling by God to proclaim the good news of the gospel, to help people understand the reasons for the faith that is within them, to bring about the transformations that teaching about religion within a circle of freedom encourages, to encourage the development of personal and social graces that emerge from study of the liberal arts, and to assist people to respond well to their own calling as expressed in their own potential, in the opportunities that life presents them, and in the needs of society and their neighbors.”(p. 115)

Review of executive summaries and annual reports show that this definition has remained the same, yet vocation no longer stands as a separate program area. Its work has been integrated into other areas, particularly those involving workshops and colloquies.

Lucinda Huffaker clarified the concern for integrating vocation throughout relevant program areas when she wrote:

Early on we were struck by the significant and recurrent conversations around vocation among groups of faculty. After additional programming and reflection, we are refining our analysis of that common interest, and we expect the conversations to gain clarity and depth as a result of the multiple Lilly projects. As stated above, vocation does not seem to lend itself to treatment as hypostasized entity. It becomes dull and lifeless when it is divorced from the urgent existential concerns of a teacher trying to make sense of who she or he is. Vocation is something that emerges from the interstices of individual yearnings and multiple communal and institutional commitments as they are brought into awareness and examined. We believe we have learned to create the hospitable environment that helps that happen. (pp. 150-151)

She later defined a clear direction for the work of the center in relationship to vocation: “The recurrent issue of vocation that we see in our workshops does not seem to function well as an independent topic, and we suspect that it makes more sense to explore vocation as it is nested with other topics rather than address it head-on.” (p. 173)

From 2006 forward, vocation then was integrated into the first program area, which was renamed “Workshops and Other Reflective Practices.” Evaluation questions were added for workshop and colloquy participants to assess how vocation had been addressed in their sessions. For example, “In what ways did this colloquy/workshop help you reflect upon issues of your vocation as teacher/scholar?” This and other evaluation questions helped Wabash leaders know that “vocational goals and commitments” were being addressed. An example: “It



broadened my perspective as to the three pronged arena of my vocation – personal professional development, commitment to the institution I am serving, and the importance of supporting the profession as a whole." (p.15) Several participants' evaluations affirm the integration of vocation into the objectives of workshops and colloquies.

In the 2010 – 2011 Annual Report, the Wabash staff listed criteria for developing workshops and colloquies. The first principle was "Teaching is a Vocation" with six points that clarified the meaning of this criteria. In the 2012 – 2015 Grant proposal, Dena Pence then reduced the program areas to three and the first program area was named "Program Practices and *Vocation* (our italics)" which remains today. The definition of vocation remains the same and is addressed in the important and ongoing work of the center.

From our review, we believe the definition of the "vocation of the teacher" needs to be revisited to determine if it is relevant for the current sociohistorical context. As a result of economic issues affecting theological schools and departments of religion, the pandemic, and attention to systemic racism, we are confident that new demands are being placed on teachers in theological education and religious studies and that the expectations and roles of faculty members are changing.

#### 4. *Supporting schools as nurturing environments for faculty.*

In addition to assisting faculty to enhance individual teaching practices, the Wabash Center staff has been concerned to engage the teaching and learning environments in which faculty work in theological schools and religion departments. In the early grant proposals, Raymond Williams included consultations for administrators, deans and department heads, and the development of a panel of 5-6 consultants to work with seminaries and departments in enhancing their contexts for teaching and learning as two ways to address "environment." (Executive Summary 1998- 2006, p. 36). The rationale was stated as follows:

Good teaching is always contextualized both in taking account of the specific mission and ethos of an institution and in relying upon an environment that enables good teaching and learning. The ethos, spirit, daily activities, structures of relationship, and collegiality all affect teaching and learning. The trajectory of this line of grantmaking is to discover what aspects institutional life and communal interactions create good contexts for teaching and learning and then help individuals and institutions to create such enabling environments.

Va. Fund ethnographies that focus on what creates enabling environments for teaching and learning in theological schools and religion departments.

Vb. Fund the preparation a book or monograph on the institution or department as an enabling environment for theological teaching.

V c. Fund grants to support activities in those institutions where there is ongoing attention to teaching and to encourage such ongoing attention in other institutions.

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V d. Fund a series of meetings of representatives of theological schools and religion departments with representatives of groups with different cultural experiences to discuss strategies for helping the institutions become more welcoming environments for people of diverse backgrounds.

Ve. Fund a series of competitive minor grants to institutions that will enable them to undertake activities, that will create a welcoming and enabling environment for people of diverse backgrounds.

Vf. Fund studies of the teaching and learning styles of people from various cultural backgrounds and diverse life experiences.

Vg. Fund a program of trained consultants to be made available to institutions requesting such assistance. Funds will be used to select and train of a small group of consultants (perhaps 5) who will be prepared to assist institutions in programs of faculty development in teaching and learning and in programs for improving the enabling environments in theological schools and religion departments. Then provide a sum of money each year to fund consultations. (pp. 2-21)

Several of these items have been addressed and others have not. Many of the research items listed may still be important for future effort and reflection.

Upon assuming leadership as director, Lucinda Huffaker provided funding for several initiatives for enhancing the environments for faculty and for several research projects. Examples include consultations and workshops for deans and theological librarians, and several collaborations with ATS, AAR/SBL, and Religiously Affiliated Institutions (RAI) to stimulate reflection on empowering environments for teaching and learning.

Attention was given to increasing the number of consultants and enhancing their work in seminaries and religion departments by providing collaborative reflection time and professional development. As Huffaker saw consultation projects unfold, she raised the concern that many schools only relied on consultants to assist them after they were involved in a major crisis or accreditation concern. She wondered how to publicize the program to assist schools to be proactive in addressing concerns of faculty ethos, environment, curriculum, or accreditation.

She discovered an important way. In her last report before retiring December 2006 (Report dated July 1, 2006 – June 31, 2007), she indicated that with the “Educating Clergy” conferences in the Spring of 2006 the number of consultations significantly increased. Through the information shared at these conferences and attention to the learnings at individual schools, administrators saw the potential of using a consultant. The topics of consultations were then expanded to include curriculum, integration, institutional mission, and assessment.

The consultant program continued to be funded and developed as Dena Pence became director. She again enlarged the pool of consultants. In 2009 the concern about the contexts of learning was merged into the program area of “Theological School and Religion Department Environments.” (July 1, 2009 -June 30, 2010 Report). To her and her colleagues, it was apparent that schools needed assistance in addressing the realities of institutional life. In fact,

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she noted that faculty members who had attended Wabash Center workshops advocated for the use of consultants in their home environments.

Faculty members newly committed to excellent pedagogical practices will often lose heart if they do not receive support from their home institutions and administrators. Therefore, the third area of the Wabash Center's work focuses on the institutional sites where teaching and learning take place through offering a consultant program and specific colloquies for Theological School Librarians and Theological School Deans. We will have been successful in this area if the environments of theological seminaries and religion departments become more sustaining of good teaching practices and if they demonstrate traits of being learning institutions. (July 1, 2009- June 30, 2010 Report, p. 3)

Dena Pence also organized an area of work titled “re-granting activity” to provide funding for consultants. As Lucinda Huffaker before her, she worried about how to promote the program to assist schools to be proactive. She even wondered whether

Teaching and learning is still seen primarily as the individual work of the faculty member rather than the corporate work of the school. Most schools reported greater energy and focus on issues of pedagogy after a consultation and the ability to put together solutions for lingering problems in their programs.” (p. 11)

She then made plans for a longitudinal study of how consultations had built the pedagogical capacity within institutions. (However, we see no evidence that study actually materialized. The July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012 report notes that Helen Blier was commissioned to do a study, but no report is found in the files.) Completing this study might clarify the impact of this program on the actual environments of schools.

Renamed in the annual report for July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013 as “Educational Environments,” this concern continued to be assessed and developed both by staff members and by consultants during gatherings for professional development. One example of new, expanding directions for programming came from such a gathering with Eboo Patel and Interfaith Youth Core. In the July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018, Pence writes: “The purpose of the gathering was to encourage increased understanding of the teaching strategies and learning goals of pedagogies of interfaith and interreligious studies.”

The Wabash Center has sought to enhance school contexts for teaching and learning through the consultant program and through meetings with department chairs and deans. Schools continue to request consultants to help complete specific projects, address the climate among faculty colleagues, and to fulfill institutional commitments to accreditation agencies. Again, in the midst of the emerging economic concerns of theological schools and colleges and universities, the impact of the pandemic, and growing concerns for racial justice, we see continuing and significant potential in the consultant program to continue to assist schools to enhance their teaching and learning environments.

5. *Enhancing training of doctoral students in teaching and learning.*

The preparation of doctoral students as teachers in religious and theological institutions was important from the inception of the Wabash Center. Raymond Williams, in the "Planning Grant," July 1, 1995 – December 31, 1995, wrote that the theological teaching initiative was to support: "programs on teaching at graduate schools (and during the period of transition from graduate study to theological teaching) for doctoral students preparing to teach in theological schools and religion departments." (Executive Summary 1996-2006, p. 13.)

The initiatives to encourage preparation for teaching among doctoral students were more fully described in section 4, "Transition into Careers as Teachers in Theology and Religion."

Hence, our major emphasis thus far in this area has been with PhD and ThD granting institutions regarding their programs to prepare graduate students for careers as teachers. This included sponsoring meetings of representatives of the twenty-five primacy PhD/ThD producing schools, a grant program to support new initiatives with their graduate students, and special meetings such as a Special Topics Forum on "Preparing Graduate Students for Careers as Teachers" scheduled for the 1999 Annual AAR/SBL Meeting in Boston. We have undertaken a modest project to help with the transition of graduate students into their careers as teachers that included a dinner meeting of first and second year teachers at the AAR/SBL meeting. We want to identify people who are committed to helping graduate students become excellent teachers and to set up networks so they can support each other. We want to keep teaching on the agenda of doctoral programs. (Executive Summary 1996-2006, p. 116.)

Over the last 20 years, the center has addressed this concern through meetings with graduate program directors, with meetings with graduate students, and with direct teaching workshops with graduate students. We will look at all three areas.

*Meetings with Program Directors:* Concrete plans were made to meet with representatives of PhD and ThD granting institutions to discuss their programs for preparing graduate students for careers as teachers (Executive Summary 1996 – 2006, 117). The first biennial meeting of schools with doctoral programs which was held October 17-18, 1999 (p. 94). There were 29 representative schools.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> However, the Executive Summaries and annual reports do not include the 1996/7 and 2002 biennial conferences, which were the first and third conferences respectively. Please note that we have indicated that the first conference as 1996/7 because the Executive Summary of 2004-2008 indicates a group meeting of doctoral programs in 1996. The Executive Summary 2003-2006 has documents from the September 30 – October 2, 2004 biennial conference of doctoral programs. The list of participants are found on page 236, the program on page 237, and the arrangement of the small groups on pages 238-239. Notes of the meeting are on pages 240 – 247.

For one of the meetings, Lucinda Huffaker summarized what had been learned in previous meetings, "Ideas Generated by Previous Meetings of the PhD/ThD Programs, *"Things I intend to try..."* on page 248. She organized the document under the following headings 1) Involve all faculty; 2) Address the whole program; 3) Institute a Pedagogy Course; 4) Improve our mentoring of graduate students; 5) Name a "Master Teaching Fellow;" 6) Improve teaching assistantships; 7) Use teaching portfolios. (Extensive notes of participants evaluations are found on pages 256 – 261 in Wabash Center evaluation files.)

Several doctoral program directors then described the strategies they implemented at their institutions as a result of attending the conference (p. 258). Some of the things they suggested to "try at your school" are below:

- Enhance our models of training for teaching in terms of visibility and accessibility. We want better "connective tissue." Explicit stand-alone course on the history of teaching religion
- My strategy will be to initiate conversations that will lead to incremental changes in the way faculty and students approach this issue.
- The centrality of mentoring TA's. Lots of ideas for strengthening our required teaching seminar and workshops.
- Mentoring teaching experience. Faculty conversation.
- Incorporating a professional development course or series of workshops for students. Enhancing our Teaching Seminar. An exercise suggested in the handouts to work on faculty conversation around grading of papers and assignments. Increasing opportunities and processes for student teaching and mentoring.

A follow-up with some of these institutions or with doctoral students could help assess the impact of the Wabash Center. The center could also collect and publish a list of some of these program activities and share them for doctoral program directors to consider.

*Doctoral Student Meetings:* Gatherings with doctoral students began through luncheons at AAR/SBL. On November 19, 2006 at the AAR/SBL in Washington D.C. the Wabash Center hosted a luncheon for doctoral students. The purpose was stated as:

First, they highlight the role of teaching for the graduate students and emphasize the need for attending to that task; second, they introduce the graduate students to the programs and resources of the Wabash Center; third, they begin the process of networking future faculty across disciplines and schools; and fourth, they offer a first taste of the respect and honoring of the teaching role that the Wabash Center promotes. To provide a lunch and table conversation with peers and a mentor-teacher may seem like a very ordinary act to some people, but when one is in graduate school, it can become a very welcome moment of respite from the competitive and demanding tasks of one's program.

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These four purposes have been true of subsequent luncheons (and now half-day workshops) at AAR/SBL and other professional meetings. For example, the Wabash Center has hosted a breakfast for religious education doctoral students at the Religious Education Association (REA) since 2007. Other student meetings included topics such as “Things I wish I had known luncheon for doctoral students” at the 2009 and 2010 AAR/SBL. It complemented the first teaching workshop for FTE doctoral students, which was facilitated Carolyn Medine and Stephen Ray on March 25-29, 2010 (pp. 9-10). Also, in 2010 two workshops were held with Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) Dissertation Fellows in conjunction with its regularly scheduled seminars.

*Teaching Workshops with Doctoral Students and Schools:* In 2010 Graduate Program Teaching Initiative (GPTI) was established to assess how well doctoral programs prepared graduate students for teaching in religion and theology.

This initiative is an effort to begin the work with doctoral programs on the teaching preparedness of their graduates. We will offer a second round of grants this fall to see if another six schools may be interested in joining the program. After the Summative Conference of 2012, we will consider future program initiatives that build on this effort.

By June 30, 2011, Wabash had held 12 teaching initiative gatherings. A key goal was to discover how Wabash could help doctoral programs better prepare graduate students for teaching and to offer assistance with that teaching.

This attention to doctoral students and programs was strengthened in 2015 with the hiring of an Associate Director of Special Programs, Mary Stemming, to establish Regional Doctoral Teaching Seminars as written the supplemental grant “Preparing Future Faculty.” In addition to meetings with programs directors, research with former doctoral students, and direct seminars with students, weekend teaching workshops for under-represented racial minority doctoral students (FTE, HTI, and Asian doctoral students) were scheduled.

*Suggestion:* Review of Wabash reports indicates that the Wabash Center has helped form the teaching identity and practices of doctoral students. The idea has blossomed into extensive and intentional programming that is implemented year round. The current challenge of the center is how it can directly impact the attention to teaching and learning in the policies of the institutions who are teaching doctoral students and preparing future faculty.

#### 6. *Expanding opportunities for online resources for teaching and learning.*

Last spring in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, theological schools, colleges, and universities moved classes, advising, student services, and administration online. While some schools have returned to some face-to-face or hybrid forms of instruction, many others are operating exclusively online or in a hybrid fashion. This transition was difficult for many faculty and students. Some faculty had never taught online, even though they had some awareness of learning technologies and could upload syllabi on Moodle or Canvas. While some continued

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their lecture practices over Zoom, others engaged in comprehensive revising of courses for online learning.

For theological education and religious studies, the Wabash Center and the Lilly Endowment were key leaders in the development and expansion of “online teaching and learning.” In the late 1990s the Lilly Endowment provided financial and training resources for theological schools to begin to plan for and use learning technologies. The Wabash Center became the administrative and training center for the expansion of learning technologies into theological schools (first 30 schools followed by another 40 schools; Info Tech I Grant 1996-1999 and Info Tech II Grant 1999-2004).

The goals of those programs were the following:

Technology is a tool-or set of tools rather than an objective; hence, specific goals are essential in this program:

- faculty members and theological schools abreast of appropriate technology, with access that will enhance teaching and learning;
- the academic infrastructure of the schools will be enhanced by increased ability to use information technology;
- models of teaching and learning using information technology effectively from which helpful information will be shared with other seminaries (Info Tech II Grant, 1999-2004, pp. 1-2)

Initially there was much fear and resistance in theological education and religious studies to the adoption of learning technologies and online classes. Many faculty were concerned about the loss of community building that face-to-face classes allow. In fact, accrediting agencies re-enforced these concerns by setting limits on the acceptability of online classes within the curricula of schools.

Yet, through the help of the Wabash Center, schools discovered how to effectively develop the learning resource infrastructures of their schools and train faculty to teach in face-to-face, hybrid, and fully online strategies. Slowly more faculty tried online learning and institutions reached out to new populations through online curricula.

In addition to attending to the pedagogical processes of learning technologies, the Wabash Center assisted in the development of digital resources in religion. Beginning in 1998-1999, the center convened groups of librarians to work on the development and use of digital resources for learning (Digital Grant, 1998-1999). In addition, by the early 2000 a collection of online resources for teaching and learning in religion was published on the Wabash Center website. These online resources have been essential to provide resources for learning as classes have gone fully online in 2020.

The Wabash Center has become a key location for the development and training of faculty leadership in online teaching. In June of 2006, the Wabash Center launched its first

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formal and systematic teaching of faculty for by scheduling its first “Online Course for Faculty Teaching Online.” Interest in these courses expanded and the Wabash Center teamed with the University of Wisconsin-Madison to offer access to Wisconsin’s online learning classes and certificate. Six of these courses were held between the Wabash Center and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Many faculty entered into these programs and some finished.

To address the completion rate, in the summer of 2013, the Wabash Center developed a hybrid course that included on-campus time both before and after the University of Wisconsin online learning program. This hybrid format increased completion and learning:

Overall, the leadership team and Wabash staff thought this was the best workshop that we have offered on online pedagogy. This should not surprise us: much of the Wabash Center work is built on face-to-face reflective engagement about design and assessment that is focused on student learning. This foundation needs to also undergird our work in online pedagogy (Report 2012-2013, p. 22)

Center staff determined that all future online workshops would follow this hybrid strategy. They also determined that the goal of each course should result in a fully developed online course that faculty participants would then teach. This new style continued with the regular summer online teaching hybrid workshops through 2019.

Each year goals and practices were refined and enhanced.

For many seminars, technology plays a positive, even exciting, role. But if this new pedagogical method is driven only by the financial needs of institutions, it can be seen as a "delivery system" with no regard for how teaching and learning changes when it is utilized. The Wabash Center's role is to help people think about the important questions concerning how teaching and learning can and should take place within this new and rapidly evolving digital environment and to help schools become more informed about its costs and benefits. (2012-2013 Report, p 21.)

Participants who completed the summer 2019 course reflected that the workshop “was helpful not only in terms of online and hybrid teaching, but also for teaching in general and especially for theological education.” The Wabash Center staff added to these positive evaluations that some of the consistent elements of other summer teaching workshops had become part of these online teaching experiences: “backwards design, student-centered learning, and the scaffolding of a teaching experience.” (Report 2018-2019, p. 10.)

Throughout all of the online workshops, the issue of institutional support and institutional mission arose. Increasingly, it became clear to the Wabash Center, that while attending to the pedagogical practices of online learning and instructional technologies was important that they would have to work with institutional leaders about the role that online learning played in the wider theological school and departmental curricula. They talked about partnering with the Auburn Center for a study of online learning in theological education.



Teaching at a distance through a digital format continues to increase throughout theological education, yet faculties and institutions are often ill prepared to make the transition. Not only is the format challenging to some of the traditional assumptions about formation and ministry, it is also demanding in terms of its technology and staffing resources. While our workshops currently work with the pedagogical challenges of online teaching, we continue to look for ways to also attend to the institutional curricular and resource decisions that need to accompany its adoption (2014-2015 Report, p. 12).

This concern for expanding the attention to address both pedagogy and institutional support is reflected in many of the yearly reports.

As we have seen, because of the pandemic, the move to online learning in many formats has become a necessity. Now is the time to look back at what has been learned by this 20-year move to online learning. What kinds of support have faculty needed? How have the resources of seminaries and departments of religion been stressed? What additional resources are needed for the continuing expansion of online learning?

Moreover, basic training in online learning is being provided elsewhere. For example, Magna Publications has a full set of resources to teach faculty how to move courses online. See <https://www.magnapubs.com/product-category/faculty/online-course-design-and-preparation/>. There are also other organizations that provide the basics of learning to teach and to teach online.

The Wabash Center has clearly succeeded with the goal of “expanding online resources for teaching and learning.” What then is the current role of the Wabash Center? While providing basic resources to assist faculty will continue to be of interest, there are deeper questions about how the faculty and institutional responses to the pandemic affects the shape of institutions of learning for the future and how religious institutions will engage the wider public dialogue. From providing the first steps of schools to learn strategies of online teaching, to providing an infrastructure for faculty members to learn full-fledged practices of online learning, and to looking at how the culture is impacted by theological and religious education, the center has had an amazing impact.

#### *7. Engaging in research on teaching.*

The Wabash Center is the primary site where research on teaching in theology and religion is reported. Initially the development of the academic journal *Teaching Theology and Religion (TTR)* was the means by which the scholarship of teaching was encouraged and disseminated. Yet, the Wabash Center has also encouraged major publications and worked to develop digital and online resources in theology and religion, including its own website with a growing collection of syllabi in religion. In all of the yearly grant reports, attention was given to this expansion of the scholarship of teaching and learning in theology and religion and growing

the library of resources that the Wabash Center curated. Also, in the last year, the staff of the Wabash Center has expanded its already growing collection of podcasts and online resources (offering over 80 podcasts and webinars). We will examine all of the efforts of the Wabash Center to enhance research and scholarship in teaching: an academic journal, publications, and online resources.

*An Academic Journal: Teaching Theology and Religion (TTR) / The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching (JOT)* – After the founding of the Wabash Center, the goal of publishing a journal on teaching quickly emerged. In 1996, the Wabash Center fulfilled this dream with an agreement with Blackwell Publishers. *Teaching Theology and Religion* was launched in February of 1998. In the inaugural issue, Raymond Williams stated the purpose of the journal as follows:

The goal of *Teaching Theology and Religion* is to make public and vital what has been private and hidden -- to sustain a discussion of teaching and learning in theology and religion at a high level. Scholars generally lack experience reflecting upon and writing about their teaching. This journal provides the invitation, opportunity, and forum for such reflection and writing (*TTR*, 1:1).

A print, peer-reviewed scholarly journal provided a forum to review the growing scholarship of teaching and learning, to explore the philosophy and practice of teaching in the various disciplines of religious and theological studies, and to provide approaches to teaching practice.

Each of the yearly reports noted the consistent growth and development of *TTR* to become the premier journal in the scholarship of teaching in religion. When *TTR* was founded, there were few journals in the academy that reviewed the scholarship of teaching. During the last 20 years, attention to scholarship of teaching and learning has significantly expanded. For example, hundreds of journals now reflect on teaching and learning in academic fields of study. (See <https://cetl.kennesaw.edu/teaching-journals-directory>.)

As is clear in the Wabash Center reports, consistent attention was given to enhancing the quality of the journal. Board members were chosen to assist in defining quality research on the scholarship of teaching in religion, articles were solicited to shape important issues, workshop participants were encouraged to write for the journal, and a colloquies scheduled to enhance the quality of scholarship and writing. Repeated in several reports were comments like the following:

Developing scholarly literature on teaching and learning in theology and religion facilitates the public dialogue about teaching in the field, legitimates teaching and learning as a valid field of writing and inquiry, and contributes to the larger conversation in the scholarship of teaching and learning. To further these goals, we will continue to publish *Teaching Theology & Religion* and offer two colloquies on "Writing the Scholarship of Teaching." We will know that we are successful when the quality of the scholarship in this field increases and when publishing in this field becomes a recognized

practice for tenure in theological schools and departments of religion. (2010-2011 Report, p. 2)

The impact of *TTR* became significant. It is listed in the “Web of Science” in the Emerging Sources Citation index.<sup>7</sup> Access to the *TTR* has expanded significantly from 24,000 article downloads in 2015 to over 40,000 in 2019 and citations of its articles in other scholarly writing have gone from 25,000 in 2015 to over 60,000 in 2019. These numbers are comparable for many and exceed other scholarly journals in theology and religion.

In a 2015 survey of the use and satisfaction with *TTR*, the author, Helen Blier, discovered an interesting difference between those respondents who had been directly involved with Wabash Center programming and those that had not. She concluded: the differences suggest

a unique 'Wabash culture' into which participants are initiated, a culture that shifts significantly their identity and work as teachers – from teacher-centered to student-centered, from content delivery to engagement, from cognitive apprehension to integration, engagement, and reflection. . . . I would submit that the journal probably speaks a language and offers content at a level that is most easily 'heard' and understood by those who have been prepared to receive these insights -the 'tilled soil' of Wabash attendees (Report 2014-2015, p. 23).

This finding, as well as some struggles with Wiley/Blackwell, the academic publisher of *TTR*, about access to articles caused staff to raise questions about the direction and purpose of *TTR*. They commented:

Is it the purpose of the journal to support the programming of the Wabash Center through the various levels of its work, including further inculcation of the Wabash culture, promotion of its programming, and development of faculty members as authors and scholars of the scholarship of teaching and learning? Or is its purpose to be a journal of scholarly conversation and reflection on that scholarship within the fields of religious and theological studies? These may overlap in places, but they are different enough in focus to dictate different sets of decisions when making editorial decisions about working with authors, quality of manuscripts, and the international scope of the journal. . . . In sum, this study of the function of *TTR* for teaching faculty within the fields

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<sup>7</sup> With the emergence of digital publications, the “Web of Science” developed an impact factor to review the quality of print and open access journals. The impact factor simply is a statistical determination of the number of times an article in one journal is quoted or accessed internationally in other journals, particularly other high-quality journals – its impact on scholarship. The impact factor of a journal began first in the sciences and spread to social sciences and arts and humanities. Determining the impact factor takes several years as articles may be accessed for many years. Some major universities during the review of faculty members consider the quality/ impact of the journals in which faculty have published. In 2015, *TTR* was chosen along with 3000 other journals in the founding of the Emerging Sources Citation index. These were deemed high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. The plan of the Web of Science was to review these journals over time and move them as warranted into the Science, Social Science, or Arts and Humanities Citation indexes. See <https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/web-of-science/>.

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of theological and religious studies has raised some important and not easily answered questions for us (Report 2014-2015, p. 24).

In the beginning of the Wabash Center these goals of the scholarship of teaching and of the programming of the Wabash Center would never have been in conflict.

Eventually the Wabash Center staff decided to sever their relationships with Wiley/Blackwell. They concluded that the restricted access as well as a desire to more directly control the direction of the journal meant that they should proceed in developing their own journal, *Journal on Teaching (JOT)*. The goal was to be similar. In fact, Thomas Pearson, the editor for the first issue of *JOT* defined the goal of the new publication:

*The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* will continue publishing the high-quality, peer reviewed scholarship on teaching in the fields of theological and religious studies that has been the hallmark of *TTR* for over two decades. The new journal carries forward the same scope and focus of scholarship – but now our efforts will be freely available online. (*JOT*, 1:1).

This change has occurred. As of 2020, *JOT* and *TTR* are now competing or complementary journals. *TTR* is a journal of Wiley/Blackwell edited by colleagues at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/pb-assets/assets/14679647/Announcement\\_of\\_GTU\\_Partnership\\_TETH-1564496570547.pdf](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/pb-assets/assets/14679647/Announcement_of_GTU_Partnership_TETH-1564496570547.pdf). *TTR* retains the reputation that was built over 20 years by the work of the Wabash Center and *TTR* retains the wide network of search platforms and access. *JOT*, in turn, is in direct service of the mission of the Wabash Center. It is accessed through the website of the Wabash Center and with a new relationship with ATLA (<https://www.atla.com>) is rebuilding both the search platforms on which it can be accessed and its impact factor. The staff of the Wabash Center as well as the board of *JOT* need to continue to reflect on the journal's particular direction and potential impact.

*Publications:* In addition to initiating research projects, book projects emerged through Wabash Center workshops and consultations and were supported by Wabash Center grants. While several could be named, three examples include Thomas G. Long and Lenora Tubbs Tinsdale, *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2006) as the result of a homiletics conversation group at the Wabash Center; Victor J. Klimoski, Kevin O'Neil, and Katarina Schuth, *Educating Leaders for Ministry: Issues and Responses* (St John's, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005) from a Capstone Project with which the Wabash Center cooperated; and N. Lynne Westfield, ed., *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008) initiated in a Wabash Center workshop and supported by a Wabash Center grant.

Yet, three other publications directed significant work of the Wabash Center: *The Scope of Our Art* edited by L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub Co. 2002); *Educating Clergy* by Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon and

Barbara Wang Tolentino (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006); and *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* by Barbara E. Walvrod was published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2007. We will briefly describe the impact of each.

*The Scope of Our Art*, as mentioned above, was written out of the Wabash Center consultation on vocation. This book provided a beginning conversation among leading theological educators of the vocation of theological teaching and the best practices of teaching in theology and religion. It has been used in many PhD seminars on teaching in graduate schools of theology and religion.

*Educating Clergy* was written as the result of a major study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As has been mentioned above, The Wabash Center sponsored major consultations on this report attended by a significant number of theological schools. In addition, the center offered a number of grants encouraging theological schools to review of their missions, practices of teaching, curricula, and impact. The Educating Clergy conferences and consultations expanded the impact of the Wabash Center.

Thirdly, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion* was again a research project sponsored by the Wabash Center. This project examined the place of introductory religion courses in the curricula of colleges and universities. The efforts of 60 outstanding teachers of introductory courses were reviewed. In a similar fashion to *Educating Clergy*, this project examined the mission, teaching practices, curricula, and impact of college religion courses. The Wabash Center again sponsored major consultations and then provided grants for departments of religion to consider the role of these courses in their schools as well as review teaching practices.

Within the first ten years of the Wabash Center, these three teaching projects were recognized as advancing theological education and religion departments. They focused attention of the work of the Wabash Center and the ways that scholarship, vocation, and teaching practices could be linked. As one moves from the evaluation reports to the ongoing work of the Wabash Center, the question is raised of whether there are other such projects that should be initiated and encouraged.

*Online Resources:* Since the early years of the Wabash Center, developing digital content was a concern. Theological librarians assisted in reflecting on what digital resources were needed in the study of religion. Following that was the development of a collection of syllabi for classes. The Wabash Center had given much energy to curating online resources on its website. (<https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/>).

The staff has continually wondered how resources could be best displayed to be accessible to educators. Therefore, as the impact of the site has grown, the staff has used

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consultants to redesign the website.<sup>8</sup> Then in June of 2015, a “Framework for New Wabash Center Content” was defined. Developed in conversation with *TTR* review board and the website review committee, this framework defined the publishing agenda of the Wabash Center. Central to it was an academic journal. In addition, they defined a book collection, videos on YouTube, a refining of the syllabus collection to make it more searchable, a curated “Religion on the Web,” and the continued development of public access to blogs, book reviews, conversations arising *TTR*, program learnings, and podcasts (See Appendix D in 2014-2015 Report, pp 111-112).

These refinements with the website have continued as well as the work and support of a “digital media” committee. Over the last few years, attention has been given to a searchable set of book reviews as well as more attention to blogs and podcasts and an expanding social media presence. In 2014, blogs on “Stories from the Front” and “Race Matters” were initiated. By 2018, the blogs have expanded to include others: “Teaching and Traumatic Events,” “Teaching, Religion, Politics,” “Teaching Islam” and “Theological School Deans.” A series of videos and podcasts were begun also in the fall of 2018 with “The ‘I’ that Teaches.”

Interestingly in the 2017-2018 report, the staff suggested that further production of video resources would probably be limited because of the great cost to staff to complete such a project (2017-2018 Report, p. 20). This is clearly ironic as the 2020 pandemic drove the energies of the Wabash Center to its podcasts, video resources and web conversations. While we do not have current evaluations of these efforts, the impact has been important. Without a doubt, these efforts are stimulating a wide-reaching conversation in religious studies and theological education about the impact of the health and economic crises and of racism on the academy.

The current resource section of the Wabash Center website is expansive. It includes the following sections: *Wabash Center Journal on Teaching*; scholarship on teaching – a set of online curated public resources on teaching; a searchable syllabus collection; a set of important websites on religion; book reviews of books related to teaching and learning; video interviews with religion scholars about their vocations and work; teaching tactics listing creative teaching activities; and blogs on topics ranging from teaching for social justice and civic engagement to teaching during crises, to teaching in a time of trauma, to resources to enhance teaching online.

This set of published resources and conversations has returned to an original purpose of the Wabash Center, i.e., how its attention to teaching practice in religion and theology has a concurrent impact on how religious institutions affect public life. The ongoing and significant “publishing” of the Wabash Center is asking schools to explore the impact of trauma and racism on the mission of schools and their public impact.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in from July of 2013 to June of 2014, “63,590 visits” were reported on the website and the activity on social media sites doubled (2013-2014 Report, p. 16).

*Suggestions:* Without a doubt, the goal of engaging in research on teaching as well as its communication is a multi-faceted process. It includes written scholarship, collection of resources, podcasts, webinars, and personal reflections. A task for the Wabash Center is to coordinate this multi-faceted approach. The reality is that each component is part of a wider effort to engage in and disseminate research about teaching and learning and about the culture of schools, institutional mission, religious identity, and public impact.

Beginning with its support of book publishing and surrounding those significant book resources with conferences and grant, the Wabash Center raised questions about the shape of theological education and its mission as well as the role of basic religion courses in the college curriculum. Through attention to *Educating Clergy* and *Educating Leaders for Ministry* the Wabash Center opened up conversations about the very mission and impact of both Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish theological schools. Its attention to supporting groups of scholars who explored topics such as teaching of preaching and teaching of the Bible as well as those attending to the impact of race and culture in the teaching of religion and theology has had a profound impact on theological education and religious study.

The Wabash Center has engaged cultural and political realities and how faculty impact the wider culture. While the attention of the center has been and will continue to be on teaching and learning, how teaching and learning enhances the work of religious institutions and their impact on public life are continuing questions that must focus the scholarship of the Wabash Center.

### **THE IMPACT OF THE WABASH CENTER AND INSIGHTS FOR NEXT STEPS**

As we complete this report, the U.S. has just begun vaccinations for the Covid-19 coronavirus. While the pandemic still has many months, commentators are speaking about the “beginning of the end.” Nevertheless, the impact of the pandemic and the social realities it has revealed are not “beginning” to end.

The primary audience of the Wabash Center – colleges, universities and seminaries – are reeling from the pandemic. While many scheduled classes and some sporting events occurred during the academic year, these have been accomplished only with great care. Schedules were randomly changed in light of outbreaks. Many seminaries have remained online for the whole academic year and are exploring options for the future. Virtually all faculty have had to learn to teach online.

In turn, the Wabash Center adroitly moved its face-to-face workshops, consultations, and events online. Current workshops met via Zoom, salons and consultations were scheduled online, and the repertoire of podcasts and webinars expanded significantly. The center’s website was also revised and expanded its usefulness for research and class preparation. Furthermore, the *Wabash Journal on Teaching* produced a second volume. The Wabash Center engaged the current realities with much success.

Yet, the context of higher education has changed. Even seminaries that had strong endowments have had to make cuts in staff and programs. Several liberal arts and church-related colleges have initiated processes to close departments and reduce faculty – some even closing religion departments. Many large universities speak about how they have weathered the storm, but know that resources are taxed looking forward. In addition, many of these same institutions have expanded their educational outreach using digital resources to move into the wider community through webinars, Zoom consultations, panels, and “public” education.

Greater than its effect on higher education, the pandemic has revealed many social gaps. Economic distress has spread through communities and highlighted long-standing injustices and inequities in economic opportunity, racial justice, food insecurity, educational access, and health care. As the vaccines begin to be given, the gaps between developed and developing world are seen starkly as well as the gap of wealth. All of these realities call for religious communities to provide visions for the future at the same time these same religious communities are stressed, with reduced funding. These same religious institutions have had to pivot in methods of education and service. Again, one response has been an expansion of educational offerings into the public.

How religious institutions, theological schools, and religion departments in colleges and universities engage these realities into the future is a fundamental and critical question as we look at the impact and work of the Wabash Center. In many ways, the Wabash Center has begun to walk into that future. Not only has it continued to support and resource faculty in theological schools and departments, but it already is also focusing its efforts on historical realities. The programming of the Center, its attention to connecting justice and education, its expansion of leaders through podcasts and webinars, its enlarging of access to research about teaching and learning, and its development of a “mobilization pedagogy” that connects the webinars and podcast to local on-site small faculty groups reflecting on their teaching as well as the school’s environment for supporting teaching and learning are examples of how it is moving into “such a time as this.”

In the next sections, we seek to clarify some of the impacts of the center and suggest insights for its future. We focus our insights about next steps in nine areas: missional priorities, faculty conversations about teaching and learning, teaching practices in fields of theology and religion, vocation of faculty members, environments of schools, formation of doctoral students, online education, research in teaching and learning, and leadership development. All of these areas have been previously mentioned in the report, but here we look at how the past and present may suggest directions for the future.

#### *1. Missional Priorities and Program:*

The original mission statement of the Wabash Center was approved by both the Wabash Center and Wabash College. It has guided the work of the center for 25 years. While program areas have been revised, the fundamental principles have not changed. As our report has



demonstrated, the Wabash Center has succeeded in engaging all of the streams envisioned at the beginning of its work with appropriate and timely shifts in focus.

Nevertheless, the original mission of the Wabash Center and its funding were set in the context of the “theological teaching initiative” of the Lilly Endowment. The founding of the Wabash Center built on early work at the Association of Theological Schools where grants had been given for projects in teaching and learning as well as for scholarly research. Six years of these ATS grants revealed that theological faculty were struggling with new students (second career as well as those trained in sciences and business instead of religion), that students were being prepared for careers in social service and community leadership as well as church service, that disciplines of theological study were expanding with attention to cultural and social realities, and that the impact of religious reflection and conversation in public life was profoundly shifting. The Lilly Endowment emphasis on theological teaching was to enhance both the preparation of religious leaders serving churches, and also attend to the impact of religion on the wider dialogue about public life in the U.S.

The Wabash Center claimed this public vision in its founding. Forums were scheduled to attend to the vocation of teaching; connections were made with the major academic guilds supporting education in religion; consultations with schools were established; and workshops brought faculty from across the U.S. together to shape a dialogue on teaching and learning. As the work developed during the first ten years, workshops expanded to include the social, racial, and cultural contexts of faculty; attention was given in research, workshops, and consultations on “educating clergy” and the impact of the basic religion courses; and the content of consultations expanded from teaching and learning in classrooms to the dynamics of schools and departments as well as to their educational missions and curricula. As the number of scholars connected with the Wabash Center grew, the realities of culture, race, and gender became more and more a part of the work of the Wabash Center. These efforts continued the inspiration of the Lilly Endowment teaching initiative using teaching and learning to both enhance the quality of religious leadership and the impact of these leaders on religious institutions and on their impact on public life.

Over the last ten years, the Wabash Center has continued to attend to many of these concerns, yet the explicit purpose of attending to the impact of religion on culture has no longer appeared in its literature or evaluations. We believe that this mission was a crucial impetus for the Wabash Center, is an essential part of its practice, and should be made more explicit in its priorities and programs. Clearly, the efforts of the Wabash Center in 2020 and 2021 have enhanced attention to this public work.

The knowledge about pedagogy generated by the Wabash Center is a unique resource that needs to be more widely shared. The Wabash Center has demonstrated that attention to teaching and learning has an impact on faculty members, on their students, on their institutions, and, in turn, on the impact of religious leadership and institutions on the public. Pedagogy indeed affects personal, social, and public change.

We encourage attention to the original seven goals of the Center as well as explicit attention to the hoped-for impacts of the theological teaching initiative on religious institutions and public life. Moreover, we recommend consideration about how the learnings of the Wabash Center about the linking of pedagogy and change can be more widely shared. For example, other groups seeking to affect the shape and impact of theological education (like FTE, ATS, Louisville Institute, and HTI to name a few) might draw on the pedagogical resources of the Wabash Center. The Wabash Center has learned how teaching can be enhanced and content disseminated so that it can have impact. That is a gift of the Wabash Center.

*2. Inspiring conversation about teaching and learning in religion and theology:*

The Wabash Center is known for its on-campus seminars on teaching and learning. As every evaluation has shown, these have succeeded beyond expectations. Through them, the Wabash Center has had an impact on the teaching and learning practices of faculty. Networks and friendships have been built across schools that have affected the quality of teaching, reflection on curricula and mission, and even faculty hiring.

Younger scholars have been supported as they moved through promotions and attended to their research, teaching, and vocations as faculty members. Mid-career scholars have reviewed their vocations and enhanced their teaching. Networks of racial/ethnic faculty have been built that have resulted in mutual support and the exploration of the dynamics of hiring, promotion, and campus environments. The impact of the Wabash Center has been significant.

Moreover, a Wabash Center curriculum for teaching has emerged from these workshops and the conversations they inspired: attention to student learning, syllabus construction, backward design, learning outcomes, and the alignment of classroom practices and assignments with class goals. The fact that these have emerged is quite interesting since the Wabash Center staff gave significant freedom to a diverse group of leaders.

As the pandemic ends, we recommend the Wabash Center return some of its effort to face-to-face on-campus workshops. Not only is the formal time in workshop sessions important, but the informal time is where participants develop networks and refine conversations about their work and the environments in which they teach. Nevertheless, the outreach of the center has been expanded through the use of digital options. The Digital Salon and Peer Mentoring approaches have allowed persons to participate with less travel. Initial reports suggest that these new efforts have been quite effective. In the future, we encourage a combination of face-to-face and digital formats. Both have their advantages and costs. Online workshops reduce costs and still encourage learning and community building. Face-to-face workshops attend even more to community building and networking.

In particular, we want to affirm the pedagogical impact of a new effort of the Wabash Center that began in late 2020 – what the Wabash Center staff call “mobilization pedagogy.” The initiative combines and focuses the activities of the center to make a difference. The

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particular project in 2020-2021 has been race in the classroom and faculty contexts. Led by Dr. Lynne Westfield with Drs. Melanie Harris and Jennifer Harvey. The initiative combined a series of public webinars with support for local faculty leaders to draw together at their own sites groups of faculty colleagues.

Mobilization pedagogy draws together several strengths of the work of the Wabash Center. The webinar was publicly available and impacted all who attended or viewed it later. In turn, as the local small groups met (mostly by technologies like Zoom), members participated in the webinars and reflected and explored with each other strategies for impacting their own contexts. Building on the learnings from workshops, mobilization pedagogy reaches out and draws together many of the strengths of the Wabash Center – support for important webinars, support for a local faculty leader, providing of guided interactions of local faculty members, and the development of local pedagogical projects to impact local contexts. Attention to pedagogy is therefore providing outstanding public reflection, affecting the work of individual faculty members in their courses, building coalitions of faculty colleagues attending to their faculty environment, and developing pedagogical projects to affect those sites. We affirm this model of mobilization pedagogy and look forward to its expansion.

Finally, the historic topics of workshops seem important to continue into the future: early career, mid-career, and racial and ethnic groups. However, we wonder if there are other constituencies on which to focus. For example, at the beginning of the Wabash Center, only faculty in tenure-track appointments were allowed into workshops. With the recognition that more and more faculty were being hired in regular term appointments or some were hired with combined administrative and faculty positions, participation in the workshops was expanded. This expansion significantly benefitted both faculty members and their schools. The Wabash Center responded to a reality of academic hiring.

As we look to the future, a similar shift may be occurring. We know that the trend of term appointments and regularized part-time faculty positions will continue to increase. We also know that many faculty will combine part-time teaching positions with non-academic work. While none of us know how academic landscape will develop, the significant impact the Wabash Center has had on current religion departments and theological schools will be diminished if the Center ignores dynamics of academic hiring. If more and more future faculty are in some form of contingent faculty appointments, the outreach of the Center will need to expand.

### *3. Examining the teaching practices in the fields of theology and religion.*

Early efforts at the Wabash Center supported reflection on the differences of teaching practices in the several of the theological and religious studies disciplines. How biblical studies is taught may be significantly different from pastoral care or historical studies. Furthermore, how these are taught in a religiously-affiliated institutions versus secular universities or theological seminaries may be very different.

After the initial work of the Wabash Center gathering faculty members in distinct disciplines, little attention has been paid to this disciplinary concern. Recently there has been new attention to issues of teaching political involvement and social justice within courses as well as attention to the teaching of Islamic studies. We believe that these directions are fruitful.

Research, podcasts, and consultations identifying important teaching characteristics of individual disciplines warrants attention in the future plans of the Wabash Center. Moreover, many faculty in religious studies and theological education are working across disciplines and methodologies. Interdisciplinary teaching is expanding significantly and will impact curricula. The Wabash Center can assist faculty to continue to explore teaching in both their individual disciplines and how they draw on interdisciplinary resources.

Furthermore, attending to how the teaching of faculty addresses the impact of religion in U.S. society may itself be an important area of focus for the Wabash Center. The impact of religion on the public is increasingly unclear. For example, some reports suggest that university-aged students are increasingly becoming religious “nones” because they fear religion institutions are only uncritical and confessional. We know this does not have to be the case. Nevertheless, it raises the important question of how teaching attends to the development of practices of critical reflection and public dialogue. Faculty members combine in their teaching scholarly, faithful, open, and critical religious options. Moreover, during the pandemic, theological schools and universities have expanded the number of workshops, lectures, podcasts, and panel discussion they have offered online to students, alums, and the wider public. The Wabash Center has resources to assist faculty and schools to examine how this wider public reach may be claimed and enhanced.

#### 4. *Exploring the Vocation of Teaching.*

From the beginning, the Wabash Center has attended to helping faculty members clarify the vocation of theological educator and professor of religious studies. Vocation extends beyond classroom practices to the multiple callings of a teacher in teaching, research, and service. Early on Raymond Williams defined this work as making “public what has been a private exercise . . . to create and to reform vocabularies for communicating the issues involved, and to examine resources available in faith traditions for interpreting vocations of teaching scholars.” (Executive Summary 1996-2006, p. 5)

The Wabash Center has diligently attended to vocation as a central aspect of its mission and programming. Vocation is woven into every Wabash program in explicit and implicit ways.<sup>9</sup> One of the first efforts of the center was the publication of a book and set of articles on vocation. This was followed by attention to vocation in workshops and colloquies. Among the many comments found in workshop evaluations is one where a participant stated, "It

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<sup>9</sup> The definition of vocation that currently informs programs at the Wabash Center is found in the Executive Summary 1998-2006 and indicated on page 16 of this report.

broadened my perspective as to the three pronged arenas of my vocation – personal professional development, commitment to the institution I am serving, and the importance of supporting the profession as a whole" (2006 Annual Report, p.15). The center has advanced scholarship and reflection on vocation.

The impact of the Wabash Center's work leads to three insights for the future. First, the definition of vocation needs to be revisited to determine if it is relevant for the current social and historical context. New demands and expectations are clearly being placed on teachers in theological education and religious studies. For example, how does systemic racism and white supremacy in North America influence the reconceptualization of the vocation of a teacher? How do the responses to the pandemic reshape theological education and religious study? How do faculty assist their students connect study to their own lives and contexts, locally, regionally, and globally?

Second, Lucinda Huffaker's words focus attention on the expressions of vocation in the lives of faculty members. She wrote, "Vocation is something that emerges from the interstices of individual yearnings and multiple communal and institutional commitments as they are brought into awareness and examined" (Annual Report 2006 -2009, pp. 150-151). The center needs to focus on the existential concerns of a teacher. How does the social location of the teacher affect his or her identity – her/his race/ethnicity, economic history, gender, and sexual identity? How are faculty members assisted to consider vocation from a sociocultural and sociohistorical context?

Finally, with the current job situation, vocation may necessarily be coupled with bi-vocational or multiple job settings. How does one define one's vocation as religious studies teacher and theological educator when it is simply one part of a wider career? New realities demand attention to the vocation of contingent faculty, laid-off faculty, and faculty members who will have to play multiple roles in their institutions. What are new roles for graduates of theological schools in congregations, non-profits, and public life?

##### *5. Supporting schools as nurturing environments for faculty.*

The program area on sustaining empowering environments was "to discover what aspects of institutional life and communal interactions create good contexts for teaching and learning and then help individuals and institutions to create such environments" (Executive Summary 1998-2006, p. 5). While this topic was always addressed in workshops, consultations with institutions were a primary means of fulfilling it.

Alums from pre-tenured and mid-career faculty workshops have consistently encouraged their institutions to create more amicable contexts for quality teaching and learning by recommending consultations from the Wabash Center. Wabash alums know that attention to teaching benefits the ethos of the institution and inspires constructive institutional change. Wabash consultants constantly receive high praise as they listen, clarify, and counsel faculty and administrators. The institutions that utilize a consultant comment on a new

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solidarity among the faculty. Yet, Wabash annual reports indicate that consultants are under-utilized for reasons that include the reluctance of administrators to request a Wabash consultant for curricular problems and/or the lack of awareness that concerns they face can be engaged by focusing teaching and learning.

We offer four insights to assist the Wabash Center to address the environments of religious studies departments and theological schools on the policy level. The insights are interrelated and seek to transform religious and theological institutions into sites where teaching is a priority. First, we believe the Wabash Center should review the character of theological education with some of the new leaders and administrators. Specifically, the center can build on its podcasts from 2020 – e.g., revisiting what Matthew Williams, Stephen Lewis, Serene Jones, Angela Sims, and Stephen Ray have offered. Attention should also be given to racial/ethnic leaders in religious studies departments such as Carolyn Medine. These conversations would be easy to schedule given the substantial networks of the Wabash Center.

The second insight involves the consultants' program. Given the energy and interest for consultations that resulted from the Educating Clergy conferences, perhaps Wabash can build on another research project that is relevant to the current sociohistorical context in North America. For example, the current project on race and white supremacy connects webinars and with local teaching/ learning projects. This initiative will affect both teaching and learning at the schools involved and their environments. This project of "mobilization pedagogy" could be enhanced further by offering grants and consultants to the schools to extend the work they have begun.

Third, we suggest that the Wabash Center director consider publishing some of the learnings of the center on the connection of teaching and institutional change. Publications in *JOT* or on the website hold the promise for transforming the ideology of institutions into "pro-teaching institutions."

Finally, Wabash needs to think about how to affect the teaching of clergy and religious studies students in public discourse and impact so they can enhance their contributions to religious and theological reflection in the public. The sociopolitical context of the United States during 2021 is evidence that religious and theological leaders are needed to accompany people in every walk of life where flourishing is the ultimate concern.

#### 6. *Enhancing training of doctoral students in teaching and learning.*

The Wabash Center has helped doctoral students develop teaching skills and awareness. The center has also worked to assist doctoral programs to enhance their attention to teaching and learning. Extensive programming has been offered to schools, directors, and students that builds opportunities for networking. Doctoral students, in particular, comment that they have sustained relationships that they formed during Wabash workshops.

We believe that formation for the vocation of a teacher ideally happens in the doctoral program of the institution where the student matriculates and is then later nurtured in the institution where one teaches. Wabash Center evaluations indicate the primary reason for failure to form doctoral students as teachers is because the institutions themselves do not place a high priority on teaching. Additionally, doctoral program directors tend to be faculty members who agree to serve in that capacity for a short time. In light of these realities, we recommend that the center focuses its attention on supporting institutions in understanding how good teaching and teacher preparation for doctoral students is essential to fulfilling its mission of doctoral student preparation.

As such, there are two insights that could advance the formation of PhD and ThD students as teachers in their institutions. The Wabash Center should seek to address formation of the vocation of a teacher from the standpoint of policy. First, the center could draw together a select group of doctoral programs/directors that have a strong reputation for addressing teaching and learning in their programs. Together these program leaders could share insights, resources, and policies that enhance the preparation of doctoral students. In turn, these insights could be summarized, shared among the schools, and published through articles in *JOT*.

Second, for other schools who want to enhance their preparation of doctoral students, the Wabash Center could provide consultants to work with presidents, deans, and faculty to clarify policy and its implementation. In these ways, the Wabash Center could build on the work of schools that are making a difference and support those schools who are seeking to enhance their programs.

#### *7. Expanding opportunities for online resources for teaching and learning.*

Through the early work of the Wabash Center, the Lilly Endowment helped develop the online infrastructure for theological schools and religion departments. The impact of this early training, coupled with the work of other institutions in higher education, was demonstrated in the pivot to online learning in the Spring of 2020. As a result of the pandemic, we are at a totally new place in terms of face-to-face, online, and hybrid teaching and learning. Even though we are unclear about the impact of this pivot on higher education instruction, we know it will make a difference in institutional planning.

In addition, the outreach of higher education has significantly expanded beyond the walls of the school in response to the pandemic with podcasts, webinars, panel discussions, and continuing education moving to online and digital modes. The audience for the work of higher education and theological education has expanded. An important question for the staff of the Wabash Center is how and whether it will address these new audiences for theological and religious education and support schools in their extending of education.

At present, we think there are multiple institutions and programs offering basic teaching in online learning. We do not think the Wabash Center needs to duplicate this excellent work, although it may need to publicize some of it. Yet, the broader questions of how the teaching

and outreach of religion and theology will continue to be expanded could be a unique role of the Wabash Center. How can schools enhance the quality of their online outreach and teaching through webinars, panel discussions, lectures, and podcasts. Higher education can make a significant impact on religious literacy in the public as well as enhance the quality of religious reflection on public life. Yet, too many institutions simply offer lectures and panels without attending to how these can be enhanced through attention to pedagogy. How can these events and their expansion in the pandemic in fact, enhance the role religion plays in public education?

8. *Engaging in research on teaching.*

During the time of the founding of the Wabash Center, Ernest Boyer and Lee Shulman, both directors of the Carnegie Institute for the Advancement of Teaching, focused the attention of the academy on the “scholarship of teaching.” Boyer, for example, expanded research to include discovery, integration, *teaching and learning*, and service (italics added). Advocacy for research on teaching profoundly affected the ongoing dialogue within the Wabash Center and its constituencies.<sup>10</sup>

The goal of the founders of the Wabash Center to attend to scholarly research on teaching in theology and religion has succeeded. Not only did *Teaching Theology and Religion* grow to have a significant impact, but the new *Journal on Teaching* seeks to enlarge that impact through an open source format. These journals have undergirded a lively conversation about the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Yet, the scholarship of the Wabash Center has not been limited to academic journals. Its website is a rich resource that includes syllabi, book reviews, and links to sites examining teaching and learning. The move to hosting and publishing blogs, podcasts, video series, and webinars as well as their expansion and refinement in 2020 and 2021 has enhanced the scholarship of the Wabash Center. Furthermore, the updating and streamlining of the website has made access to these materials even more available for the use of faculty seeking to enhance their own teaching, to focus on a major issue in theology and religion, or to explore new directions and build partnerships.

Our suggestions build on what the center is already doing. First, The current center efforts at a “mobilization pedagogy” (with its attention to race in the classroom and schools) has demonstrated a means of extending the impact of teaching on individual faculty, their institutions, and the missions of these schools. This model needs to be described and encouraged.

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Hutchings, P., & Shulman, L. E. (1999). *The scholarship of teaching: New elaborations, new developments*. *Change*, 31(5), 10–15.



Second, we have learned that participants of Wabash Center events speak of a “Wabash pedagogy” or “Wabash curriculum” for teaching. We encourage the director to explore and write about this pedagogy.

Finally, as we have noted, dynamic changes are occurring in theological education and religious studies that include reduced resources, new students and populations, new vocations intended by students, and new processes for learning. These are all important topics for *JOT*. Some of the areas we have identified above about teaching practices within disciplines, about school environment, and about the vocation of educator today are such foci. Others might include issues like the following: with so many classes being taught by adjuncts, how are institutional goals and shared expectations of faculties being continued and embodied? With growing attention to the prevalence of practice of white supremacy embedded in institutions, how does school environment need to be uncovered and addressed? With so much online teaching, what practices of liberative and transformative pedagogy are being developed to complement the learning centered dimensions of online learning? With so many students seeking careers in NGOs and social service agencies, how is the focus of classes being changed. We recommend that the Wabash Center draw on the wide network it has developed and ask what specific teaching and learning questions need to be addressed and then use that same network to respond by writing for the journal and website.

### 9. Leadership

While leadership is not explicitly listed among the original seven program areas, it is a tacit thread woven throughout the Wabash Center program areas. More than shaping teachers, the Wabash Center has groomed leaders for religious and theological institutions. Leadership for the Wabash Center has meant any who “enhance and strengthen education in theology and religion in North American theological schools, colleges, and universities” (Report July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2018, p. 2).

The staff of the Wabash Center has been about leadership development. They began by choosing strong workshop leaders and consulting with key leaders who could help them fulfill their hopes for the center. They trusted the workshop staffs that they had chosen, freed them, and learned from them as they developed programs for the center. In addition, the same practice of trusting, freeing, and consulting occurred in their development of consultants. Furthermore, they assessed each event and encouraged the leaders. The Wabash Center directors and staff succeeded amazingly to build a networks of leaders and consultants on which they could draw in the development of the center. Frankly, through this leadership development process, the Wabash Center itself became a learning community – acting, reflecting, responding, developing program, acting anew, and reflecting again.

The Wabash Center events inspired many participants to claim leadership in their schools. Faculty learned to reflect on teaching and learning in their classrooms and also in their schools’ curriculum and mission. Workshop alums took the center’s ideals back to various school committees that included academic affairs committees, curriculum review committees,

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and peer teaching review committees. These committees shaped policies that would govern teaching practices, attend to student learning, and assess teaching. Alums have sought to motivate their schools to apply for Wabash Center grants that brought consultants to address teaching and learning concerns as well as grants that promoted innovations in teaching for their institutions. The center taught faculty to reflect, respond, act, and reflect again.

The learning community pattern of acting, reflecting, responding, and acting anew is being lived out again in the 2020-2021 year. Dr. Westfield arrived at Wabash College and the Wabash Center just before the pandemic closed most face-to-face gatherings. The Wabash Center had been built on these gatherings. She listened to her colleagues at the center, the college, and the endowment; spoke with chosen leaders of workshops, events, consultations and review boards; and consulted with those scheduled for podcasts, blogs, and webinars. Then Dr. Westfield and the staff reflected on the actions planned. They then responded developing a rich array of online podcasts and webinars, moved most face-to-face gatherings online, and developed “salons” and peer consultations. They listened as faculty members asked for assistance with the trauma of the pandemic and the racial violence seen in the country. They responded richly. In fact, the development of a “mobilization pedagogy” emerged linking education with action and connecting online webinars, with grants for local leaders, and with support to assist faculty in personal and institutional change. As it has worked in the past, the Wabash Center again grew its program and impact. By being a dynamic learning community, the Wabash Center responds to its constituency and empowers their learning and action.

Finally, the Wabash Center has inspired leadership development across higher education. The Wabash Center offered a context in which faculty members could consider their wider contributions to higher education and theological education. A quick snapshot of past and current deans and vice presidents for academic affairs indicates the number of alums that have become leaders in various theological schools. To name a few examples: President Stephen G. Ray and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean Stephanie B. Crowder at Chicago Theological Seminary; Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean Mai-Anh Le Tran at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; former Executive Vice President and Dean Joretta Marshall at Brite Divinity School; former Vice President and Dean Daisy Machado at Union Theological Seminary; and former Dean Roger S. Nam of Portland Seminary at George Fox University.

Wabash Staff identified potential leaders for workshops, colloquies, and consultations from among workshop participants during the evaluation process. Among these emerging leaders were Lynne Westfield, Katherine Turpin, Tat-siong Benny Lieu, Eric Barreto, and Lisa Thompson, to name a few, as well as some of the deans mentioned above. Leaders selected from workshops, colloquies and consultations meet annually to share best practices and strategize for their work.

Finally, the Wabash staff are themselves a group of leaders that merits considering. Clearly, they are essential to the Wabash Center fulfilling its mission. Staff include associate directors, technology assistants, and administrative assistants. Annual reports indicate some of

their activity but does not specifically indicate their grooming for personal and professional growth. Some of the staff have represented the center at conferences and meetings with affiliate organizations. Lucinda Huffaker reflected on the work of the staff in collaboration with their “ecology group” that included representatives from In Trust, the Fund for Theological Education, the Association of Theological Schools, the Louisville Institute, and Auburn Seminary (Executive Summary 2005-2006, p. 13). Providing for development and growth of its own staff is a task for the Wabash Center to explore.

The Wabash Center has groomed leaders for its own needs as well as for the needs of other institutions. However, leadership evaluation of participants in workshops, colloquies, and consultations as well as the Wabash Center staff deserves focused attention.

- For Wabash Center programs, we encourage the staff to explore criteria for selection and evaluation of program leaders. To be clearer about expectations and support would be helpful to those who carry Wabash programming.
- Moreover, in light of the wider impact on leadership development that the Wabash Center has had, we suggest convening of focus groups of Wabash Center alums who have moved into leadership in theological schools and departments. Considering with them how the center has developed, launched, and supported them will be helpful for future programming. Without a doubt, the center has extended its reach by mentoring, training and encouraging leaders who are making a difference.
- Finally, we encourage the staff to claim its role in leadership development and explicitly put mentoring and developing leadership in its future proposals to the Lilly Endowment.

## IN CONCLUSION

Looking back over 25 years of the Wabash Center evaluations demonstrate a remarkable contribution. The number of people touched by workshops and consultations, the networks of colleagues developed, the leaders who have been nurtured, the foundations set for online and digital learning, and the scholarship on teaching that has been generated is amazing. Wabash College and the Lilly Endowment cooperated to build a leader in the theological education and religious studies. The investment of resources that the Lilly Endowment has placed in the Wabash Center has been richly rewarded and has had a major impact on theological education and religious studies. The center has built a foundation on which it can expand into the future.

Simply continuing with the current pattern of leadership, programming, and consulting would itself be significant. The podcasts, webinars, journal, and website continue to enlarge the research on teaching and learning in theology and religion and explore new directions for the study and impact of religion. The salons, workshops, and doctoral colloquia continue to shape teachers, encourage networks, and build communities in schools. The consultations continue to assist schools to advance their teaching and learning visions and refine their

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missions. With regular evaluation and the ongoing refinement of efforts, the impact of the Wabash Center will continue.

Yet, this report suggests there are many areas where the work and impact of the Wabash Center could be expanded. The key “public” aspect of the early vision of the Wabash Center should be made more explicit. Wabash Center staff are making a difference in theological schools and college and university departments of religion. They are enhancing religious institutions. They are assisting these institutions in how they are making a difference in public life. Of course, we know the Wabash Center has been about this “public” work for a long time, but we do not think it has been an explicit part of the planning at the center, at Wabash College, or in interactions with the Lilly Endowment. We think it should be.

As we have mentioned, the context for the study of religion has changed significantly in the last 25 years. The emerging realities of 2020 and 2021 have shifted the energies and directions of many schools, theological seminaries, and religion departments. A number of academic programs will close, and many will revise their mission statements and teaching practices. Some will expand missions to include the religious education of the wider public, some will seek to draw new and interfaith constituencies into their programs, and some others will refocus on their immediate constituencies. All continue to offer more online options and thus the teaching of religious studies will be changed. While some will continue long-standing pattern of fulltime faculty, promotion and tenure, others will turn to term contracts and hire more and more regular part-time faculty and adjuncts. The number of aspiring PhD students in theology and religion finding fulltime academic jobs will decrease. In fact, the vocation of theological education and religious studies are themselves in the midst of rethinking.

We believe that the Wabash Center is a key catalyst for this broader revisioning of the role of the religious and theological education of the public. The network of scholars thinking about teaching and learning, and the impact of theology and religion is present to consider these broader questions. In fact, the attention in 2020 and 2021 of the Wabash Center to the impact of white supremacy and addressing racism in the academy is one example of what can be done. Another is the webinars that invited leaders to think about the future, impact, and environments of theological and religious studies. We believe considering these broader questions will build on and refocus some of the ongoing work of the Wabash Center and its impact on Wabash College itself. Building on and refining a significant ongoing impact is the task of the leadership of the Wabash Center.