Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

“… let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith …” —Hebrews 12:1-2

The words of the author of the book of Hebrews remind New Brunswick Theological Seminary, the oldest educational institution in the RCA and the first graduate school of theology in the United States, that the race we run together is a marathon rather than a dash. As we enter our 233rd year of service, we remain as committed as ever to a vision that gathers the rich diversity of God’s people into a community of faith and learning. The author of the above text also reminds us that we are not alone, but walk with Jesus, who leads us and supports us with his constant presence of grace.

Strategic Visions

New Brunswick Theological Seminary has just completed a ten-year strategic plan that has radically changed our physical campus as well as our identity. In the past decade, we have sold more than half of our property, which has provided the resources to build a new seminary building and parking lot in the center of a major state university. Our most recent ten-year strategic plan began with four important questions: How can we build a debt-free, technologically smart, ecologically sensitive building in the middle of the city of New Brunswick? What does it mean to be the only seminary in the United States to be located in the heart of a state university? Who will be called to our classrooms, since we are surrounded by the languages and ethnicities of the world within 50 miles of our doors? When our seminary is filled with older students who are often bivocational or second career, how can we make NBTS not only multiethnic, multilingual, and multidenominational, but also multigenerational? We know that these questions represent some of the important concerns we must face if we are to follow the call and command of Jesus to go into all the world. We have been only partially successful in meeting the challenges, and so we have spent the past two years imagining a new strategic plan that will lead us through the next five years. At the January 2017 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the following plan was adopted, as we look forward to adopting a series of measurable goals and objectives to put flesh on this inspiring skeleton of dreams.

Mission

Called by Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, New Brunswick Theological Seminary participates in God’s own laboring to fulfill God’s reign on earth.

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and centered in its trust of God’s sovereignty and grace, the seminary is an intercultural, ecumenical school of Christian faith, learning, and scholarship committed to its metro-urban and global contexts.

Our mission is to educate persons and strengthen communities for transformational, public ministries in church and society. We fulfill this mission through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.

Vision

New Brunswick Theological Seminary will become a seminary known for producing effective leaders who put their faith into action, engage in theological reflection, confront conflict in healthy ways, participate in holistic, innovative ministry, and continue to grow in their faith. Our successful metro-urban program will become a sought-after experience
for ministerial formation both locally and internationally, utilizing in-class and distance learning models.

Consequently, by 2022, we envision that NBTS will be:

- Increasingly accessible, locally and globally, through the judicious use of technology.
- Better equipped to be a global resource for the development of metro-urban ministry.
- Effectively connected programmatically to other graduate schools, especially Rutgers and St. John’s Universities.
- Richly diverse through intentionally inviting and welcoming under-represented people into our community.
- More affordable through a dramatic increase in scholarship aid.

A Successful Campaign

In January of 2014, the seminary initiated an $8 million comprehensive campaign, the largest in our history, to grow our endowments and increase our capital budget so we can imagine a mission that stretches another two centuries into the future. We are deeply thankful that at the end of 2016, three years into the campaign, we surpassed our goal! We are grateful to old and new friends who have given sacrificially so we can share this good news and imagine new ways to follow Jesus in mission, both locally and globally.

The campaign has assisted us in committing more than half a million dollars for the refurbishment of the historic Gardner Sage Library. This project will include the cleaning and restoration of the brick exterior, and the replastering, repainting, and recarpeting of the interior. In addition, the James Suydam statue, which stood for almost 100 years in front of Suydam Hall, and then, following that building’s demolition, next to the winding entrance driveway to the old seminary, has been relocated to the front of the library and is accessible by an inscribed brick walkway.

Educational Offerings

The seminary offers three degrees as approved by the Association of Theological Schools, our accrediting agency: a master of arts in pastoral care and counseling and a professional master of arts in congregational leadership; a master of divinity degree, and a doctor of ministry degree with three different foci and cohorts: pastoral care and counseling, transformational preaching, and metro-urban ministry. We are also grateful to offer a two-year certificate program in theological studies in both Spanish and English.

Global Networks and Experience

This past year, the seminary nurtured a growing number of global experiences for our students and faculty. In June of 2016, the seminary was again involved in a learning experience in the Netherlands, which this past year focused on the migration of peoples and the response of the gospel. A dozen students and professors attended the ten-day lecture series. The seminary, through the leadership of Paul Fries, began traveling to the Netherlands every other year in 1974, an experience now led by Allan Janssen.

In the fall of 2016, Jaeseung Cha spent a portion of his sabbatical teaching at the Global Institute of Theology in Korea, which provides doctoral education at no cost for 35 students from countries experiencing dramatic growth in the Christian faith but which have very limited access to Christian theological institutions. It is expected that Virginia Wiles from
NBTS will teach at the institute in May and June 2017.

In December 2016, a group of seven students and one professor spent a moving and profound time in Muscat, Oman, participating in a Christian-Muslim dialogue. All of the participants described the experience as life changing.

In February 2017, 14 students and one professor attended the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference in Richmond, Virginia, which exposed the class to sermons, conversations, and lectures at a venue and event that often draws more than 10,000 participants. Of the 200 seminary students in attendance, the 15-member delegation from NBTS was the largest.

Through a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation some years ago, the seminary has moved to establish a Center for Global Education, which nurtures global networks and relationships in order to expose our students for years to come to the global church and multifaith environments.

**Presidential Transition**

Gregg Mast was called to his role as president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 2006 and has just completed more than 11 years of remarkable leadership. As of the writing of this report, the presidential search committee is moving toward its goal of recommending a single candidate to succeed Dr. Mast for consideration by the Board of Trustees at its April meeting. We have every hope and expectation that we will be able to introduce to the General Synod our new president when it meets in June at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

**A Resolution of Gratitude for Dr. Gregg A. Mast**

R 17-63

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Gregg A. Mast has served New Brunswick Theological Seminary as its president since 2006, and has served on the faculty as the John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology during that same time, leading the seminary into a new era in its long and distinguished history; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has guided the seminary through the reconfiguration of its campus, including a new seminary building and upgrading its historic library, while at the same time putting the institution on a solid financial basis to support an innovative future; and

WHEREAS under Dr. Mast’s leadership, the seminary has become truly diverse in both race and gender, not only in its student body but in its faculty, staff, and board; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has encouraged and led the seminary in its goal of becoming an anti-racist institution, a project that includes not only students and faculty but staff and board; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has served the Reformed Church in America as a General Synod professor, offering to the church his wise counsel and genuine love; and

WHEREAS Dr. Mast has been not only a faithful and supportive
colleague to faculty and staff, but also a friend whose care and concern have touched all who have served and studied with him;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, in its 211th regular session, meeting June 8 through 13, 2017, in Holland, Michigan, expresses its deepest gratitude to Dr. Mast for his service to the seminary and to the church, and offers its prayers for a fulfilling retirement along with his wife, Vicki.

AND BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that Dr. Gregg A. Mast be declared a General Synod professor emeritus as of June 14, 2017. (ADOPTED)
Report of Western Theological Seminary

The mission, identity, and vision statements of Western Theological Seminary guide its life together:

**Mission Statement**

It is the purpose of Western Theological Seminary to prepare Christians called by God to lead the church in mission.

**Identity Statement**

Western Theological Seminary is an evangelical and ecumenical community of faith and learning in the Reformed tradition that serves the church of Jesus Christ. In covenant with the Reformed Church in America, Western equips men and women for Christ-centered, biblically based, theologically integrated, culturally competent, mission-oriented Christian leadership.

**Vision Statement**

By 2020, Western Theological Seminary will be a nationally recognized center that forms leaders to empower, renew, and plant congregations and ministries that participate in God’s ongoing redemptive work in the world.

**Our New Day**

In the summer of 2016, the Our New Day capital campaign was formally launched following the approval from the Board of Trustees at their spring meeting. The $25 million campaign has two distinct projects: new construction and extensive renovation of the seminary building and growing Western’s endowment. Great progress was made in raising the necessary funds for both projects. In last year’s report to the General Synod, $8.2 million had been committed to the building project and another $4.5 million to the endowment project. At the time of this writing, more than $13.8 million of the $15 million goal has been committed for the building project. For the endowment, nearly $9 million of the $10 million goal has been secured through cash and planned gifts, bringing total campaign funds raised to more than $22.7 million. The seminary is being readied for a construction start date following the conclusion of the 2016–2017 academic year. Departments displaced during construction will be relocated to the library.

**Financial Support**

Western Theological Seminary enjoyed another strong year of giving in 2015–2016. Overall giving to the seminary reached nearly $6 million with more than $2 million in gifts to the building project of the Our New Day campaign.

**Enrollment**

Western Theological Seminary experienced an increase in overall enrollment. During the 2016–2017 academic year, a total of 286 students were enrolled: 95 candidates in the residential master of divinity (M.Div.) program, 69 candidates in the distance learning M.Div. program, and 23 in the Newbigin House cohort. There were 103 RCA candidates enrolled in all M.Div. programs. The most significant growth occurred in the master of arts program, with enrollment increasing from 24 to 41 students. Six students enrolled in the new Graduate Certificate in Disability Ministry (GCDM) program. Students were
also enrolled in the doctor of ministry program, master of theology program, Graduate Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry program, and as nondegree students.

Seminary News

The Van Raalte Fellowship

The Van Raalte Fellowship is a new partnership between the seminary, 3sixty ministries (a community development nonprofit), Pillar Church, and All Saints Anglican Church. The two-year fellowship allows students to earn internship credit, participate in a mentored peer group, and worship with Pillar Church and All Saints Anglican Church while helping connect the churches with opportunities for justice in the city of Holland. This year’s Van Raalte Fellows are first-year students Alisha Riepma, Katie Alley, and Leah Wielenga.

The Luxcast

The seminary launched a new audiovisual podcast series entitled the Luxcast. The series engages topics like music, writing, justice, theology, food, drink, and more. Its debut episode in September 2016 featured Rawee Bunupuradah, a 2017 WTS M.Div. graduate, who is planting a church in Bangkok, Thailand. Other notable guests in Season 1 include Lisa Sharon Harper, Marilyn McEntyre, and Justo González. The Luxcast is available in both mp3 and mp4 formats. Viewers can subscribe to the video version through YouTube or to the audio version on iTunes or Android podcasting apps.

Henry Luce Foundation Grant

In November 2016, Western Theological Seminary was awarded a $425,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. Established by Henry R. Luce, cofounder and editor-in-chief of Time Inc., the Luce Foundation offers grants in five program areas, including one whose focus is theology. WTS was among six institutions selected from a large field of competitors to receive an inaugural grant from the Luce Fund for Theological Education. The seminary’s approved project, *Enabling Theological Education: Preparing the Next Generation of Christian Leaders—Presence, Intention, and Dimension for Ministry to, with, and by People with Disabilities*, will expand Western Theological Seminary’s pioneering work in disability and ministry.

Celebrating 25 Years of Community Kitchen

The Community Kitchen, a ministry partnership between WTS and Community Action House, celebrated 25 years of serving meals to those who struggle with hunger in Holland. It is estimated that over the past quarter century, over 750,000 meals have been served by volunteers who have given 130,000 hours of their service. The idea for the Community Kitchen originated in 1991 in a class co-taught by WTS professors George Hunsberger, Chris Kaiser, and Tom Boogaart, along with local pastor Andy Fierro. The seminary’s capital campaign includes a thorough updating of the Commons where the Community Kitchen is housed.

Partnership with Newbigin House of Studies

For a number of years, Western Theological Seminary has partnered with Newbigin House of Studies of City Church San Francisco to provide a one-of-a-kind theological education focused on church planting in city centers. This partnering between a seminary and a church was unique in the world of theological education, and we’ve seen much fruit as a result
Our partnership agreements expired with the conclusion of the 2016–2017 school year, and Western has decided not to enter into another contract with Newbigin House for several reasons. Our commitment to equipping church planters remains strong, as well as our commitment to focusing on preparing men and women to lead churches located in the heart of great cities. However, we believe both Western and Newbigin House have evolved organizationally over the years since we began this arrangement, and many of the needs we originally looked to Newbigin to provide are adequately being met in-house. Our understanding is Newbigin House will continue to offer classes, and we are open to having our students participate in those classes.

Seminary Events

Leonard F. Stoutemire Lecture

Western held the sixth annual Leonard F. Stoutemire lecture in multicultural ministry in September 2016. This year’s lecturer, Charles Amjad-Ali, is the Martin Luther King Jr. professor emeritus for justice and Christian community and former director of the Islamic Studies Center at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Born in Pakistan, Amjad-Ali is an international expert on Islam and Christianity. He teaches regularly in Pakistan and lectures throughout Europe and the United States. He has written many articles on the intersections of Islam and Christianity throughout church history and argues for a radically grace-filled approach to Christian-Muslim relations. While on campus, Amjad-Ali was interviewed for an episode of the Luxcast.

The goal of the annual Stoutemire lecture is to equip seminarians, faculty, staff, alumni/ae, and local congregations with resources for increased intercultural competence for greater effectiveness in Christian ministry.

Installation of Dr. Padilla

In conjunction with the Board of Trustees’ October meeting, Western celebrated the installation of Alvin Padilla, academic dean and vice president of academic affairs. The service was held at Third Reformed Church and participants included Justo González, who was the guest preacher for the event.

Bast Preaching Festival

The theme of the 2016 Bast Preaching Festival was “Proclaim: Celebrating God’s Word through Preaching,” and the festival featured Frank A. Thomas, the Nettie Sweeney and Hugh Th. Miller professor of homiletics and director of the Academy of Preaching and Celebration at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. Indicative of his great love of preaching, an updated and revised version of They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching, considered by many to be a homiletic classic, was released in August 2013.

The Big Read

Western became a partner organization with The Big Read–Holland Area in 2016. The Big Read builds literacy by bringing the community together around one book and the shared experience of reading and discussion. Brother, I’m Dying, by award-winning author Edwidge Danticat, was the featured book of The Big Read. Over the first two weeks of November, more than a dozen Big Read activities were planned, including an interactive immigration workshop held at WTS.
Celebrating Women in Church Leadership

Western hosted the third Celebration of Women in Church Leadership event. The vision of this annual event is to celebrate women’s stories and empower women as leaders.

Osterhaven Lectures

This year’s Osterhaven Lectures were entitled “Sola Scriptura? Scripture and Tradition” to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Three scholars—one Protestant, one Eastern Orthodox, and one Roman Catholic—reflected on the Reformation notion of sola scriptura. Edith Humphrey, John Thompson, and Daniel Keating were the lecture participants.

141st Commencement

On May 8, 2017, Western celebrated its 141st commencement by graduating a total of 58 candidates in all degree programs: master of divinity, master of arts, master of theology, and doctor of ministry. Miroslav Volf, Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, gave the commencement address in addition to a public lecture at WTS in the afternoon. Commencement Day was also Alumni Day at the seminary. Samuel Solivan, class of 1976, was honored as this year’s distinguished alumnus.

Faculty and Staff Appointments

Alvin Padilla was appointed academic dean and vice president of academic affairs effective July 1, 2016, after an extensive search. Most recently, Padilla served as dean of the Hispanic ministries program and professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He succeeds Leanne Van Dyk, who resigned her position in June 2015 to accept the presidency at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

Travis West was appointed assistant professor of Hebrew and Old Testament effective July 1, 2016.

David Komline was appointed assistant professor of church history effective July 1, 2016. Komline served as visiting professor at WTS during the 2015–2016 academic year.

Dawn Boelkins was promoted to associate professor of biblical languages effective July 1, 2016.

Duane Loynes was appointed visiting assistant professor of theology and director of the doctor of ministry program effective July 1, 2016. Loynes served as faculty fellow at WTS during the 2015–2016 academic year.

Doug Honholt was hired as director of development in August 2016. Honholt also served as a WTS trustee from 2013 to 2016.

Rayetta Perez was appointed director of administration and human resources effective July 1, 2016. Perez came to the seminary in 2000 to provide administrative support to the office of the president.

Grace Miguel Cipriano was hired as interim associate director of formation for ministry in August 2016. Miguel Cipriano graduated from WTS in May 2016.

Pat Dykhuis, registrar and financial aid administrator, retired in January 2017 after nearly 24 years of service. She is succeeded by Tiffany Nordé.
LuAnne Van Slooten, administrative assistant to the advancement department, retired in June 2016. Van Slooten served in her role since 1999. She is succeeded by Tamara Buikema.

Celebrating Faculty Accomplishments

Chuck DeGroat, associate professor of pastoral care and counseling, has written *Falling into Goodness: Lenten Reflections*, six weeks of daily readings for Lent. Find it at www.createspace.com/6805899.

Kristen Deede Johnson’s book *The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance* (Brazos Press, 2016) was chosen for *Christianity Today*’s 2017 Book Awards. These awards are given to books that are most likely to shape evangelical life, thought, and culture. Johnson, associate professor of theology and Christian formation at WTS, coauthored the book with Bethany Hanke Hoang of International Justice Mission’s Institute for Biblical Justice.

J. Todd Billings, Gordon H. Girod research professor of Reformed theology, developed a video series on interpreting Scripture in the Reformed tradition. Created in response to a recommendation approved by General Synod 2016, the series is designed for discussion on a congregational or classis level. The videos can be found at www.rca.org/resources/alighttomypath.

Ben Conner’s book, *Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities*, was named one of the 11 books every youth leader should read by Kindred Youth Ministry. Conner is associate professor of Christian discipleship at WTS.


Trustee Appointments

Five new members joined Western’s board of trustees effective July 1, 2016.

Eddy Alemán is the director of strategic leadership development and the coordinator of Hispanic ministries for the Reformed Church in America.

Sandra DeYoung is a retired dean from the College of Science and Health at William Patterson University in Wayne, New Jersey.

Chris Crawford is the director of national client relations at Risk Placement Services, Inc. in Itasca, Illinois.

Lisa L. Vander Wal is pastor of Lisha’s Kill Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York. She served as president of the RCA’s General Synod in 2012.

Carol Van Andel is the executive director of the David and Carol Van Andel Family Foundation in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Trustees Kent Dale, Scott DeBlock, Amy DeKruyter, Donna Lowry, and Doug Struyk completed their terms of service on June 30, 2016.

Trustee Doug Honholt concluded his term of service in August 2016 when he was hired as the director of development following the departure of Mike LeFebre.
Petitions Approved by the Board of Trustees of Western Theological Seminary

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Lisa Braunius.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Bryant Brozik.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Phillip Quinn.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Ross Hoekstra.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Michael Tubergen.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Emily Holehan.

The board of trustees approved a petition from the Classis of Holland to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the 24-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Stacey Duensing.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Eric Nichols.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Anna Gordon.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Jeffrey Hoos.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Stephen Kohl.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Andrew LaTeer.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Nicole Martin-St. Victor.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Joshua Westhouse.

The board of trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Jeremy Zoet.
Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

General Synod exercises oversight of ministerial formation and the standards for preparation for ministry through its two seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA).

The MFCA possesses a deep commitment to developing faithful, educated, and evangelical Reformed leaders. Its purpose is the preparation of men and women for the ministries of Christ and his church, most specifically those called to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

The MFCA Board of Trustees has the following as its mission statement:

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) exists to strengthen the ministry of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America by awarding Certificates of Fitness for Ministry (CFM) to specific groups of candidates and working cooperatively with partners inside and outside the RCA to broaden opportunities for diverse ministerial formation.

Board Interpretation: By the authority delegated to it by General Synod, the MFCA board, certification committee members, and staff continue to accomplish this mission by:

- Awarding the CFM to RCA candidates graduating from non-RCA seminaries (via Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care, RCSC) or pursuing an approved alternate route (AAR).
- Through the RCSC and AAR certification committees and staff, evaluating the progress of candidates and their continuation in and completion of the process leading to the CFM, as their achievements dictate.
- Periodically ensuring that the RCA Standards for Preparation for Ministry are upheld in the oversight of the CFM and are reviewed, with recommendations made to the appropriate RCA body if the MFCA board believes changes would be appropriate.
- Providing graduate-level courses designed to meet the standards for the CFM.
- Collaborating with and providing counsel to congregations and classes in the care and nurture of candidates for the ministry who are seeking the CFM through the MFCA.
- Interpreting and advocating for the work of the MFCA to the larger church.

Given the continuing significant changes in the RCA and its official goals as expressed by Transformed & Transforming, current church climate, and changes in technology and the contexts of pastoral education, the MFCA will adapt and broaden its methods of accomplishing this mission and will seek to work with all the partners God provides to accomplish this work, with special emphasis on the following:

- Adapting its operations and programs as necessary to embrace a multiracial future freed of racism.
- Arranging for instruction in Korean and Spanish to ensure that talented candidates of all backgrounds can pursue appropriate pastoral education.
- As appropriate, given our polity, working with classes and institutions to enhance educational opportunities for commissioned pastors and others and to encourage a seamless transition to study for the ministry of Word and Sacrament where possible.
By permission and approval of the General Synod Council (GSC), the MFCA Board of Trustees operates under policy governance. The board stays abreast of the MFCA program through the monitoring reports of the director, and there have been intentional efforts to focus on visioning and policy development.

**Enrollment and Other Statistics (as of January 27, 2017)**

There are currently 86 candidates enrolled in the CFM process; 25 (29 percent) of whom are in the Approved Alternate Route (AAR).

Enrollment in the MFCA continues to cluster in the Eastern part of the U.S. Eighty-six percent of candidates reside east of the Rocky Mountains. More than 67 percent (67.4 percent) are east of the Mississippi.

Just over 23 percent (23.3 percent) of MFCA candidates are female. This is a significant increase from last year (16.4 percent).

Forty-eight percent of AAR candidates represent a racial/ethnic minority group. More than 41 percent (41.9 percent) of all our candidates represent racial/ethnic minority populations.

**Proceedings with the Classis of New York**

At the October 2016 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the MFCA, the board voted to grant a CFM to Chad Tanaka Pack, a candidate of the Classis of New York. This decision was based on the board’s understanding of the scope of the CFM and the board’s role in granting the CFM. The granting of the CFM in this case upheld the February 2015 decision of the board that “Sexual orientation and the issues surrounding it are matters that are left with the classis. The MFCA expects each classis to walk with candidates around sexual orientation and the agency will treat all candidates with respect and sensitivity in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process.”

In November 2016, the Classis of New York examined Chad Tanaka Pack for licensure and ordination, sustaining him in his final exams and declaring him a licensed candidate for ministry. An ordination date of January 15, 2017, was set by the classis.

As news of this decision of the MFCA Board of Trustees and the proceedings of the Classis of New York reached the broader church, some ministers, elders, and commissioned pastors sent words of affirmation and others expressed clear opposition. During this time, communications with General Synod officers and members of the Classis of New York were also exchanged.

At the request of board members in response to communication received from General Synod officers and others throughout the denomination, the MFCA board met in a special session on January 6, 2017.

Through extensive discussion and conversation together, the board concluded that covenantal relationship was at stake within the board, between the board and the Classis of New York, and within the denomination at large. It was also made clear that in our October meeting and still now, there are different understandings among board members regarding our role as an agent of General Synod (what this means and the implications of our actions) and in our understanding of the role and scope of the CFM.

With the hope of continuing important conversations throughout the denomination and to ensure that the decision of the MFCA is consistent with its responsibilities, the board voted
to rescind its decision to award the CFM to Chad Tanaka Pack. This decision was reported to the Classis of New York on January 6, 2017.

**Future Vision for the Agency**

The MFCA Board of Trustees continues to dedicate significant time to discussing the future of the agency. We are grateful for the work of the Pastoral Formation Coordinating Committee (PFCC) in taking up the important work of seeking clarity and consistency in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry among the three theological agents. We are hopeful that this ongoing conversation among the agents and throughout the denomination will strengthen the work of classes and agents in coordinating and supervising candidates for the ministry.

We continue to engage in discussion around various structural options for the agency and the financial resources to sustain this important work of robust ministerial formation.

**Budgets and Finances**

The MFCA finances have been under strain for a number of years and the program continues only because there have been reserves to draw from. The 2016 budget was more than $50,000 in the red. The 2017 budget will potentially balance thanks to a special allotment of $32,000 provided by General Synod 2016. The PFCC will deliberate about future finances and infrastructure for theological education and the theological education assessment.

**Cooperative Efforts**

The MFCA has entered into several cooperative efforts this past year. One such effort is with Pine Rest Hospital and the DeVos Family Foundation. Along with Calvin Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary, the MFCA is assisting in the development of parish-based clinical pastoral education (CPE) programs throughout North America. Participants from the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the RCA will engage CPE at various locations in North America. Karl Van Harn of Pine Rest will be facilitating the program.

**Bylaw Corrections and Changes**

Each year, the MFCA board of trustees reviews its bylaws. This year, a misprint was noted in Article II, Section 5b. The section reads:

b. Determining whether ministry candidates who have received the degree of Master of Divinity or its academic equivalent from a Non-RCA Seminary meet minimum competencies as determined by the standards for the preparation of ministry established by the General Synod and designed as indispensable for the proper exercise of the ministerial office of the church.

It appears that “designed” in Article II, Section 5b of the MFCA bylaws should instead be “designated.” Accordingly, a non-substantive, editorial correction has been made to change “designed” to “designated.”

The board also revisited its membership at its meeting March 2, 2017, and decided that it would be prudent to reduce its membership to improve role clarification and efficiency. The board proposes the elimination of two voting members and that the general secretary or his or her designee be a member *ex officio* and without vote. This is the same manner in which the general secretary serves on the boards of New Brunswick Theological Seminary...
and Western Theological Seminary. The board also suggests that anyone designated by
the general secretary be a member of the General Synod Council rather than a GSC staff
member but does not propose that this be included as a formal requirement in the MFCA
bylaws.

The board noted that the seminaries do not have General Synod professors serving on their
board as members (voting or otherwise); they attend only as guests representing the faculty.
The MFCA may nominate its own General Synod professors. Accordingly, it recommends
that if the expertise of professors from the RCA seminaries and MFCA is required by the
board, they be invited as per the provision for consultants in the MFCA bylaws (Article
III, Section 5).

The removal of two voting members would result in nine voting members on the MFCA
Board of Trustees.

For the foregoing reasons, the board of trustees of the Ministerial Formation Certification
Agency has approved the following amendments to its bylaws and now makes the following
recommendation to the General Synod:

R 17-64
To approve the following amendments to Article III, Sections 1 and
2 of the Bylaws of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency
of the Reformed Church in America (additions are underlined,
deletions are stricken):

Article III
Structure; Membership of Board of Trustees

Sec. 1. The Agency shall be governed by the Board. The Board
shall consist of eleven-nine voting members, each of whom shall
be a confessing member in good standing of the RCA. Voting
membership of the Board shall include at least three people who
are not ordained to the office of Minister of Word and sacrament,
at least two people who are ordained to the office of Minister of
Word and sacrament and serving an RCA congregation, at least
one Minister of Word and sacrament who is engaged in specialized
ministry such as Clinical Pastoral Education supervision or
chaplaincy, one General Synod professor from an RCA seminary,
the General Secretary of the RCA or his or her designee, and
one GSC member recommended by the GSC, and the general
secretary of the Reformed Church in America or a representative
of the general secretary appointed by the general secretary, either
of whom shall serve ex officio and without vote. The presidents
of the RCA seminaries are not eligible to be on the MFCA Board.

Sec. 2. Each Trustee (other than the general secretary or his or her
designee) shall be nominated by the General Synod’s Commission
on Nominations (in consultation with the Agency and, in the case of
the GSC member recommended by the GSC, in consultation with
the GSC) and elected by the General Synod. The General Synod
professor from an RCA seminary will be restricted to one term;
and The term of the Trustee who is a GSC member recommended
by the GSC shall be coterminous with his or her term on the
The advice of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance was to vote in favor of R 17-64.

The board also rewrote the membership criteria of the certification committees and shares the changes with the 2017 General Synod for information. These changes have no effect on the bylaws of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency.

The MFCA does its work through two certification committees. The Reformed Candidates’ Supervision & Care (RCSC) Certification Committee works with candidates completing the Master of Divinity degree at a Non-RCA seminary and who are seeking a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry toward ordination as an RCA Minister of Word and sacrament. The Approved Alternate Route (AAR) Certification Committee works with candidates that are seeking the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry toward ordination as an RCA Minister of Word and sacrament, but not earning a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary.

Each certification committee will consist of seven-six members and the director. All members will be confessing members in good standing of an RCA congregation/classis and include two Elders, two General Synod Professors and three-two Ministers of Word and sacrament. At least one member, and no more than two, shall be an active member of the MFCA Board of Trustees. The faculty of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the faculty of Western Theological Seminary will each nominate one General Synod Professor. At least one Minister of Word and sacrament will serve in a local parish and one will be in specialized ministry. The third Minister of Word and sacrament may be chosen from the faculty of an RCA college or a Non-RCA seminary. The director will convene and moderate each committee. Each certification committee will be a “standing committee.” The committees will perform a self-evaluation annually and review each person’s membership and availability to serve.

Nomination of General Synod Professor

The MFCA Board of Trustees, meeting in regular session on October 29, 2016, at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, unanimously approved nominating Chad T. Pierce to the office of General Synod professor in the Reformed Church in America. Pierce has had substantial involvement with candidates in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process by teaching for both the MFCA and Western Theological Seminary for the past seven years and serving on the Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care Certification Committee for five years.

The board invites the 2017 General Synod to consider the following nomination:
R 17-65
WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has served in Christian higher education for 12 years and has been an ordained minister of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America since 2002; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has been committed to growing in his own theological education at Calvin College (BA), Jerusalem University College (MA), Western Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Durham University (Ph.D.); and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has served as a professor of New Testament at Central College in Pella, Iowa, a college of the Reformed Church in America; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has been an adjunct faculty member of Calvin College, Kuyper College, and Western Theological Seminary for 12 years; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has served as an ordained minister of Word and sacrament in both the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, where he has supervised and mentored students in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has served the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency of the Reformed Church in America through regular teaching in the field of biblical languages, evaluating case studies, and serving as a member of the Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care Certification Committee; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has been an active member of classes in the Reformed Church in America, including serving on the student care committee of Zeeland Classis and serving as president of Central Iowa Classis; and

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce has served on the Pastoral Formation Coordinating Committee, formerly called the Call, Care, and Standards Collaboration Group, and has been the moderator of this group for six years;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 211th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Holland, Michigan, from June 8 to 13, 2017, declares the Rev. Dr. Chad T. Pierce a General Synod professor. (ADOPTED)
Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded 21 Certificates of Fitness for Ministry, 17 through the RCSC process and four through the AAR process.

Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care (RCSC)

Shawn Lee Abbas Classis of Dakota
Chad Phillip Blake Classis of California
Timothy S. Bowyer Classis of the City
Ryan Walter Cogswell Classis of Schenectady
Carlos Armando Corro Classis of the City
Joshua James DeKok Classis of Dakota
Cory Dean Grimm Classis of Minnesota
Eric D. Hodges Classis of Queens
Russell Howard Jacobson Classis of California
Justin Daniel Karmann Classis of New Brunswick
Jared Michael Lee Classis of Dakota
Sung Su Lee Classis of Queens
Mark Everett Lohman Classis of California
Cody Michael Miller Classis of the City
Matthew Philip Rose Classis of Zeeland
Robert Vernon Schuller Classis of California
Dustin Jay Sperlich Classis of Dakota
Benjamin James Videtich Classis of Great Lakes City

A Certificate of Fitness for Ministry was awarded to Chad Tanaka Pack on October 29, 2016, and rescinded on January 6, 2017.

Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

Jose Dario Camilo-Gonzalez Classis of Central California
Michael Jon Daling Classis of Zeeland
Luis Antonio Ruiz Jr. Classis of Holland
Daniel Toot Classis of Great Lakes City

Alternate Means and Petitions

Reduction in 24-Month Requirement: The board approved a request from the Classis of Great Lakes City on behalf of Yakuv Gurung to substitute a period of time to make up any deficiency in the 24 months of being in the CFM process.
Report of the Professorate

It was John Calvin who first recognized four offices in the church: minister, teacher, elder, and deacon. In the office of the professorate, the Reformed Church in America is one of the few denominations in the world which has maintained this fourfold ministry in our life and mission. Elected and installed by the General Synod, General Synod professors remain amenable to the General Synod in matters of doctrine, striving at all times and in all ways to fulfill our calling faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully.

The *Book of Church Order* describes General Synod professors in this way: “The office of General Synod professor is to offer, collectively and individually, the ministry of teaching within the RCA as a whole, and to represent the living tradition of the church in the preparation and certification of candidates for its ministry” (*BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 1; 2016 edition, p. 70). There are presently nine General Synod professors: Drs. Cha, House, Janssen, and Mast from New Brunswick Theological Seminary; Drs. Bechtel, Brown, Brownson, and Boogaart from Western Theological Seminary; and Dr. Kors from the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency. Each professor was nominated by a theological agent of the General Synod. They exercise a substantial and continuing role in preparing candidates for ministry in the RCA under the authority of their nominating agency.

The professorate has met twice in the past year. Our fall meeting was held September 30–October 1, 2016, at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Our spring meeting was held on March 24–25, 2017, at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

Part of our collective calling is to facilitate theological reflection throughout the church so that our witness as a church may be more faithful and effective. One of the ways we lived into this calling this year was by engaging with General Synod president Dan Gillett in a rich discussion of a Reformed understanding of the nature, purpose, authority, and interpretation of Scripture. We welcomed this opportunity, which came at President Gillett’s invitation and in response to a recommendation from the General Synod of 2016 (*MGS 2016*, R 16-18, p. 87). While this discussion took place at our September meeting, it laid the groundwork for continued reflection in our March meeting regarding the centrality of Scripture, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the unity and diversity of the church in the Holy Spirit. As a body and as individuals, we continue to look for ways to help the RCA deepen our life and witness in light of these crucial themes.

We have been active this year, as always, in matters of theological education and the formation of persons for ministry. We spent significant time reviewing a paper on the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry, discussing its role and scope as well as clarifying the roles and interaction of the various agents of the General Synod that grant the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. We are represented on the Pastoral Formation Coordinating Committee (PFCC) and share with that group the task of evaluating the RCA’s eight Standards for the Preparation for Ministry. We are also represented on the committees of the MFCA that recommend the granting of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to, respectively, students at non-RCA seminaries and candidates pursuing the Approved Alternate Route (AAR) to ordination. We also set and evaluate the written examinations for the AAR candidates.

In response to an invitation from Monica Schaap Pierce, the RCA’s ecumenical associate, we contributed feedback on an ecumenical statement on justification: the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). This request came at the behest of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (of which the RCA is a member), and is symbolically
connected to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We were glad to respond and hope that our insights have added a uniquely RCA voice to this important ecumenical conversation.

As a body and as individuals, we mark with sadness and appreciation the upcoming retirement of our friend and colleague, the Rev. Dr. Gregg Mast. It is impossible to overstate Dr. Mast’s positive and enduring contributions to the professorate, to New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and to the RCA as a whole. We will miss him but pray God’s abiding blessings on him and his family in all the years ahead. Well done, good and faithful servant!

In all of this work, we continue to explore new possibilities for our collective role. We are grateful for having been charged with this call and are deeply sensible of our responsibility to the church. We solicit your prayers and your advice, and we are committed to engaging conversation at all levels of the RCA’s life and work.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Bechtel, moderator, together with the entire professorate, including:
Tom Boogaart
Tim Brown
Jim Brownson
Jaeseung Cha
Cornelis Kors
Renée House
Allan Janssen
Gregg Mast
Report of Central College

“The greatest among you will be your servant.” —Matthew 23:11

“Central has a deep and abiding commitment to service.” —Mark Putnam, president of Central College

Central College, founded in 1853, is a private, residential four-year liberal arts college in Pella, Iowa. Central values its long-standing, covenantal relationship with the Reformed Church in America—a relationship that has endured for 100 years. Central is known for its academic rigor and strength in global experiential learning, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), sustainability education, athletics success and tradition, and leadership and service.

Service is one of the backbones of a Central education—a value shared with the Reformed Church in America and central to the Christian tradition. One person can truly make an impact that is felt by the community, and Central encourages students to serve and to take an active role in promoting social justice in a variety of ways, both locally and around the world.

100 Years with the RCA

This year, Central celebrated 100 years of relationship with the Reformed Church in America. In 1916, Central College was nearly lost but was saved when the RCA purchased the college from the Baptist Convention of Iowa.

The college marked the anniversary in a number of ways. A special celebration on September 30, 2016, during Homecoming’s Heritage Day featured a reception in Central’s chapel courtyard, followed by a worship service in the chapel. Tony Campbell, associate general secretary and director of mission engagement for the Reformed Church in America, delivered the morning message at the Heritage Day worship service. At the Heritage Day luncheon, Nathan Busker ('89), pastor of Ponds Reformed Church in Oakland, New Jersey, delivered a keynote address. Marjorie Postma Vander Wagen, a member of the 50-year reunion class of 1966, provided an invocation.

Today, Central’s relationship with the RCA connects students to missions and internship opportunities, and many RCA members contribute to Central’s future as part of the board of trustees. Reformed churches across the country support students through the Journey Scholarship Fund. RCA students can also receive the Heritage Award. Meanwhile, hundreds of Central graduates serve as leaders in RCA congregations, also supporting Central’s students and mission in their turn.

Campus Ministries and Missions

Campus Ministries students play an active role in leading activities on campus, such as Bible studies, worship, and organizing many service events throughout the year. Central students serve through a number of mission trips. In October 2016, students returned to Grace Covenant Ministries in Kentucky to support needy families with donations. In January 2017, students again traveled to south Texas to build houses, assist elementary education teachers in the public schools, and feed the poor. During spring break, two mission trips took students to Robert, Louisiana, where they worked with World Renew to participate in flood relief, and to Gretna, Florida, where they worked with impoverished community members. Each May, students partner with Many Hands for Haiti for a mission trip to Haiti.
Campus Ministries students also planned activities for Angel Tree children in the Des Moines area, hosted at Meredith Drive Reformed Church and Bethany Reformed Church in Des Moines. The Campus Ministries Justice Team partnered with Water to Thrive to raise money to build a well in Africa. Various fundraisers were held throughout the year. Students have also been tutoring at-risk kids in a rural school district in Marion County.

Service

Service is part of the fabric of Central College, and this year, 412 students participated in service-learning activities. The college worked with 89 community partners, more than 20 of which explicitly state expression of faith as part of their mission or affiliations.

Service Learning

Supporting Central’s many opportunities for meaningful service, the college maintains close relationships with more than 120 community partners in the region. More than 45 academic courses across 15 departments include semester-long components in service learning, and Central provides transportation to ensure every student can participate. Many students also complete custom-designed service opportunities, using their unique skills to enhance community partners’ work in specific ways, such as grant writing, research, managing websites, and planning events.

Service at Central

A key aspect of a Central College education, service is integrated into many courses and programs on campus. Central has been recognized for a commitment to service by being named to the Honor Roll with Distinction in three categories for the 2015 President’s Award for Community Service by the Corporation for National and Community Service (released in 2016). Central earned the honor for each category entered: general community service, education, and interfaith community service.

General Community Service and Civic Engagement

School Visits: Central provides college visits for children and youth who are served by nonprofit community partners. This is part of the college’s goal to increase college access to students who represent diverse socioeconomic and cultural perspectives.

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week: Last November, the college collaborated with several community partners to host Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week on campus. Activities included the Oxfam Hunger Banquet, held in collaboration with Oxfam America, a global organization working to right the wrongs of poverty, hunger, and injustice. The banquet was an interactive meal for which participants’ food quantity and quality was determined by the luck of the draw. Facilitated reflection helped all in attendance consider the impact of hunger as well as personal and collective responsibility to address the world hunger crisis. Other activities included fresh produce drives for local food pantries and the creation of food information cards for Pella Community Food Shelf.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service: “Let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:24) provided the theme for this year’s MLK Day observance. Along with a convocation and other MLK Day activities, the college sponsored a water purification kit assembly event with Safe Water International Ministries (SWIM). The college assembled 100 kits to be distributed worldwide.

All-Campus Service Day: Central College Service Day was held April 11, 2017. Each year
on Service Day, classes are cancelled so students, faculty, and staff can work together on projects that address community-identified needs.

**Student Athletes:** Central’s student athletes are active in service. SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Council) hosted blood drives in the fall and spring, as well as a canned food drive, a toiletry drive, and an outerwear clothing drive throughout the year. Athletic teams come together to support these activities, and individual teams participate in numerous additional service projects.

**Exploring Post:** Central launched Exploring Post 1853 for high school students in Marion County. Exploring is a vocational reflection experience affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America that is for both girls and boys. Post 1853 is a collaborative venture with Central College faculty, students, and staff as the lead organization, supported in a variety of ways by community partners, including Partnership for Excellent Educational Resources for STEM (PEERS). The post will provide experiences for youth that build awareness and skills within the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.

**Social Justice**

A commitment to social justice is an expression of the belief that all of our neighbors—both near and around the world—should be treated with compassion.

**MLK Visit Anniversary**

This year, Central marked the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech at Central College. On March 22, 1967, he spoke at Central about the power of positive change through courageous individuals. Central celebrated this anniversary in March with a full week of activities, including educational events with Jacqui Patterson, director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program.

**Racial Equality Workshop**

Central hosted a workshop on racial equality on September 20 as part of the college’s Learning for Justice series. Jennifer Harvey, professor of religion at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, presented “Charting Shifting Water: Race (and Whiteness) in the College Environment.” Harvey focuses on encounters of religion and ethics with race, gender, spirituality, justice, and other social issues.

**Water Week**

Senior Katie Gatzke organized Water Week, October 24–28, to shine a light on how lack of clean water harms people around the world. The week featured speakers and educational events as well as fundraisers and interactive activities.

**Social Justice in the City Course**

A faculty-led program during summer 2016 functioned as an immersive hybrid between a service-learning class and an internship program, all focused on social justice. The eight-week program took students out of the classroom and into the day-to-day work of organizations throughout Des Moines to learn about social justice in the real world. Organizations included Children and Family Urban Movement (CFUM), Youth Emergency Services & Shelter of Iowa (YESS), Des Moines Social Club, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Iowa, and the Altoona Police Department.
Iowa Campus Compact

Central enjoys a close affiliation with Iowa Campus Compact, an organization committed to providing leadership for the civic mission of higher education. In 2016, President Mark Putnam was named to the board of directors. Putnam will serve a three-year term, helping the nine-member board set direction and vision for the statewide association. Also in 2016, Keith Yanner, professor of political science, won Iowa Campus Compact’s Engaged Campus Award for Civic Mission Leadership. The award recognizes Yanner’s leadership and efforts toward the organization’s mission.

Financial Aid

Community service scholarships are an important way to recognize incoming students’ service accomplishments. Currently, 174 students are receiving more than $200,000 in Community Service Awards. These scholarships are based on prospective students’ past community engagement and their expression of future plans for engagement in and after college. Central also recognizes the importance of welcoming students who have national service experience. The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is matched for incoming students, and current students have the opportunity to earn an education award as part of the AmeriCorps State program—the Iowa College AmeriCorps Program (ICAP).

Conclusion

Central works to equip and inspire students to lead lives in which service and compassion are integral. To this end, Central’s relationship with the RCA, both overall and through individual churches, is invaluable. The college is immensely grateful for the prayers, gifts, and support that help to fulfill the mission of preparing future leaders.
Report of Hope College

Hope College is a four-year liberal arts college where academic excellence and vibrant Christian faith integrate in a supportive and welcoming community. Hope offers an academically rigorous, coeducational, and residential education to 3,200 undergraduate students from more than 40 states and 45 countries. Affiliated with the Reformed Church in America since the college was founded in 1866, Hope College is known for its invitational, ecumenical Christian atmosphere, friendly campus community, and outstanding academic and cocurricular offerings.

Hope’s beautiful campus is located just steps from downtown Holland, Michigan, a city of 35,000 enriched by an ever-growing diverse population. Located on the scenic shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Macatawa, the area features white-sand beaches, parks, miles of hiking and biking trails, and a historic downtown. Holland has been recognized by a host of organizations, including by Forbes Magazine as one of the top five cities in the U.S. with the lowest crime rate; by Money Magazine as one of the nation’s top five places to retire; by A.G. Edwards as one of the top ten cities on its Nest Egg Index; and on the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index as the number two happiest, healthiest place to live in America.

Enrollment and Innovation

Hope College has been blessed with a strong student enrollment. The student body continues to increase in geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity, a goal set forward in the Hope for the World: 2025 strategic plan. However, Hope is not immune to the enrollment challenges facing all higher education institutions. The college-age student population is in decline across the country; this is especially true in Michigan and other Midwest states from which the majority of Hope students originate. Hope has approached these challenges with a steadfast commitment to providing a liberal arts education within the context of the historic Christian faith and infusing the college with innovation in the academic and cocurricular programs. One example of this is an increase in scholarships available for students from the RCA as well as legacy students, whose parents or grandparents are Hope graduates.

Commitment to Christian Formation

Hope College is committed to being an ecumenical community, welcoming students, faculty, and staff into a vibrant experience of faith formation and intellectual engagement with the historic Christian faith. Hope’s invitational approach to supporting students in the exploration and development of faith is shared by faculty and staff, many of whom engage with their students on matters of faith and vocation. Three times weekly, Dimnent Memorial Chapel is filled to capacity for chapel, a time of sharing songs of worship, prayer, and Holy Scripture. On Sunday evenings, students, faculty, and staff are again welcome at Dimnent Memorial Chapel, where they gather around Christ’s table for Holy Communion. Recognizing that Hope students come from a variety of faith traditions, the college has established covenant partnerships with several local congregations to ensure that students have access to different denominational and liturgical worship opportunities and learning experiences. In recent surveys, 83 percent of Hope students indicate that they are satisfied with the services they receive to explore and grow their Christian faith, and 74 percent of our recent graduates indicate that Hope has equipped them to understand Christian theological perspectives as part of their critical thinking about complex issues.
Academic Excellence and Graduate Outcomes

Hope College has long been home to superb faculty and staff, a fact the campus community has come to appreciate greatly. Thanks to the dedication of faculty and staff to our students, Hope continues to be included among 40 institutions featured in the college educational guide, originally by Loren Pope, entitled *Colleges that Change Lives*. It has been gratifying for employees to see their dedication recognized among the best liberal arts colleges in the nation in the annual rankings compiled by *U.S. News & World Report*, which has placed Hope in the top 20 among all national liberal arts colleges for “Best Undergraduate Teaching.” Hope is honored to be one of only 286 colleges and universities in the country with a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa; the Hope students selected for membership in this academic honor society are among the brightest and most well-rounded students in the country. Hope students and graduates are also highly competitive for national merit awards and fellowships, such as the prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the National Science Foundation graduate fellowship program, Lilly fellowships, and Fulbright awards.

Hope consistently has the highest graduation rate among private colleges in Michigan. Our graduates are experiencing success as well; 95 percent of last year’s graduates were satisfactorily employed or in graduate school within six months of completing their degrees. Ninety-four percent of those who went on to graduate studies were accepted to their first- or second-choice graduate school.

Artistic and Athletic Excellence

Hope College was the first private, liberal arts college to hold national accreditation in art, dance, music, and theater. Last year, the college’s department of dance sent its H2 Dance Company, a pre-professional repertory dance company, to Edinburgh, Scotland, to perform at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It was a tremendous experience for Hope students to be selected to perform in this international festival, the largest art festival in the world, which featured talent from 49 countries performing in thousands of shows in over 300 venues.

In addition to the broad-based and active program of intramural athletics, Hope competes successfully in Division III of the NCAA. At Hope, the athletic program is housed in the kinesiology department, where many coaches also serve as faculty. This increasingly unique commitment to maintaining the connection between the academic and athletic program has distinguished Hope as a leader in Division III athletics. Over the past academic year, Hope made NCAA Division III Tournament appearances in women’s cross country, women’s soccer, volleyball, and women’s and men’s basketball, and earned Michigan Intercollegiate Athletics Association (MIAA) titles in five sports. Hope students have also received several individual honors, including athletic all-American honors, all-region athletic honors and all-MIAA athlete awards, and two College Sports Information Directors of America Academic All-American honors.

Financial Strength

Undergirding Hope College’s strengths in enrollment and academics is a commitment to careful financial stewardship. Hope ended the last fiscal year with a balanced operating budget as it has done for over five decades. The college’s careful stewardship was recognized for the second time in a row by *U.S. News & World Report*, which ranked Hope the #1 national liberal arts college for efficient management of financial resources. At a time when the cost of college is on the minds of families and political candidates alike, Hope’s culture of stewardship allows us to keep our tuition and other costs well below those of our peers of comparable quality.
Physical Campus

Hope has been blessed with several new facilities that support our curricular and cocurricular programs. We are eager to complete construction on the Jim and Martie Bultman Student Center this spring and fill it with student life and activities in the 2017–2018 academic year. As we look to the future and consider how to support and maintain Hope’s attractive and high-quality facilities, the college is engaging in a campus master plan study to identify where the college should focus its resources to meet future demands on facilities and infrastructure for the next 10 to 20 years. This process will result in a road map for the campus for both short-term and long-term projects to ensure that decisions regarding new construction, renovations, and infrastructure improvements are made within a larger, long-term context.

Honoring the Reformation

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation is the focus of the 2017 Presidential Colloquium. The colloquium will offer several lectures, panels, and concerts to explore the broader influence of the Reformation over time, as well as how the world has changed because of it. The colloquium will commence in the spring semester and continue into the fall, in coordination with events taking place at churches throughout the Holland and Zeeland communities and at Western Theological Seminary.

Serving the Community

Hope students have a heart for service. The college is home to several programs that engage students in outreach, mentoring, and volunteer opportunities. Hope students provide thousands of volunteer hours to local nonprofit organizations, including the Children’s After School Achievement program, in which Hope students mentor and tutor more than 150 first- through fifth-graders who are at risk of falling behind and potentially dropping out of school. This spring, hundreds of Hope students participated in the 18th annual Dance Marathon fundraising event for Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital. In the 17 years from 2000 through 2016, Hope’s Dance Marathon has raised a total of more than $1.74 million in support for children receiving treatment at the hospital and their families.
Report of Northwestern College

Mission

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community engaging students in courageous and faithful learning and living that empowers them to follow Christ and pursue God’s redeeming work in the world.

Felipe Silva (’12) Receives CCCU Young Alumni Award

Felipe Silva, a 2012 NWC graduate, was named the 2017 recipient of the Young Alumni Award from the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU). The award is given to individuals who have graduated within the last ten years and have achieved uncommon leadership or success in a way that reflects the values of Christian higher education. President Christy introduced Felipe at the awards ceremony at the CCCU’s 41st annual Presidents’ Conference in Washington, D.C., the last week in January.

Felipe and his wife, Janelle (’11), have been working in Romania for the New Horizons Foundation since 2013. New Horizons partners with Northwestern to offer the Romanian study abroad semester, for which Janelle previously served as administrator. Now Felipe directs Fara Limite Sala de Catarare (No Limit Climbing Gym) in Vulcan, Romania, and Janelle serves as its administrator. The Silvas use rock climbing to help impoverished youth learn lessons about trust, discipline, courage, persistence, confidence, problem solving, and teamwork.

Felipe, who majored in religion, minored in sociology, played soccer, and was an assistant resident director at Northwestern, credits his campus experience for greatly influencing his life and direction. “Everything came together with faith as the focus of my life. I got my vision for Christian community development and the tools to work where I am working today. It was not just the academic part of my education that made the biggest impact, but the great example I saw in many of the staff I encountered in my college years.”

What an honor to see one of our own being recognized for his service! Felipe and Janelle are excellent examples of Northwestern’s mission. Their passion for the people of Romania is inspiring, and they are bringing honor to the Lord and to Northwestern College through their service.

Science Building to be Ready by Fall 2018

As of March 1, $22.2 million had been raised toward the goal of $24.5 million for a new health and natural sciences facility, and plans were being made to begin construction in the spring. The 61,000 square foot building is slated to be in use by the fall of 2018.

The new building will bring the biology, chemistry, and nursing departments under one roof, add a greenhouse, and increase the number of classrooms and labs available for learning and research.

Growing Master of Education (M.Ed.) Program

Northwestern’s M.Ed. program, which began in 2015 and already has 160 students enrolled, is adding a fourth track: special education. Classes in the new program will begin this summer.
Offered entirely online and designed to be completed in two years or less, the M.Ed. program also includes tracks in early childhood, master teacher, and teacher leadership. The program has been named among the nation’s most affordable by www.bestmastersdegrees.com and www.affordableschools.net.

Northwestern Launches Bridge Scholars Program

Northwestern College is launching a new program, Bridge Scholars, that offers scholarships and campus learning and leadership opportunities for students from historically underrepresented populations.

The Bridge Scholars program is under the direction of Rahn Franklin, Northwestern’s director of multicultural student development. Franklin hopes to have a Bridge Scholars cohort of about ten students in each class year at Northwestern for an eventual total of around 40 Bridge Scholars on campus.

“Our classrooms and campus life will be further enriched as students from diverse backgrounds join us in pursuing God’s redeeming work in the world,” says Franklin. “The Bridge Scholars program encourages multicultural students on our campus to thrive academically and socially and to develop as leaders. As they thrive, the whole institution does.”

Bridge Scholars will meet for courses, discussion, mentoring, and experiential learning, all aimed at developing the ability of each student to be a campus leader and advocate for an inclusive campus and curriculum. Bridge Scholars will be “ambassadors of reconciliation,” helping Northwestern to exhibit the values expressed in the college’s Vision for Diversity (www.nwciowa.edu/about/vision-for-diversity).

The Vision for Diversity establishes that reconciliation between people—particularly between people separated by racial prejudice—is not simply a good social goal; it’s part of what it means to follow Jesus in this world. Northwestern hopes the Bridge Scholars program is another way to attract more diverse people to campus and equip them to become transformative leaders in college and, ultimately, throughout their lives.

NWC’s Leadership Conference and Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit

Northwestern will host the third annual Northwestern Leadership Series conference June 8–9. Staff in graduate and adult studies and the Franken Center put together an amazing lineup of speakers, including keynote presenters Wess Stafford (former president and CEO of Compassion International), Ann Bilbrew (Chicago pastor and social worker), and Shelly Vroegh (2017 Iowa Teacher of the Year). New in the conference schedule this year is a teacher leadership track that enables educators to earn graduate or licensure renewal credit.

The June leadership conference is just one professional development event on campus this summer as Northwestern will also be a satellite site for the world-renowned Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit, which will take place on August 10 and 11. This is a wonderful opportunity for Northwestern not only to partner with another organization interested in Christian leadership but also to develop further in our individual and college-wide calls to be Christlike servant leaders.

NWC Website in Spanish

In response to parent requests, Northwestern now has several web pages that are in Spanish. The public relations and admissions offices worked together along with several Spanish
instructors to provide webpages for prospective students and families. The Spanish-language pages can be accessed in a variety of places, most easily from the main webpage in the upper righthand corner under “Español.”

Northwestern also plans to provide student interpreters from the translation and interpretation program for families who may request that service for their campus visit. Often, when parents need translation, it’s provided by their student, leaving the student unable to enjoy and focus on his or her college visit. While practically these additions are helpful for our Spanish-speaking prospective students and families, they are also another reflection of Northwestern’s desire to live more fully into our Vision for Diversity.

NWC’s Paid Parental Leave

Northwestern College has established a new policy offering six weeks of paid parental leave to full-time and three-quarter-time employees upon the birth or adoption of a child. The benefit is available after 12 months of employment and can be used by the birth mother, birth father, adoptive parents, or an employee acting in place of a parent.

Northwestern is offering paid parental leave as a result of requests from faculty and staff to offer a benefit beyond what is available under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which is government mandated but not required to be paid. With increasing costs of health coverage and the expenses of adopting a child, it’s one more way Northwestern supports families.