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). Like the RCA seminaries (though they are quite different from one another), 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.

From its inception 20 years ago, the MFCA has both been tasked with and also embraced a mandate to expand opportunities for RCA ordination to groups not previously served. This is clearly stated in the MFCA Board of Trustees’ 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 to specific groups of candidates and working cooperatively with partners inside and outside the RCA to broaden opportunities for diverse ministerial formation.

Given the authority delegated to it by General Synod, the MFCA board, its Certification Committee members, and its staff continue to accomplish this mission by:

- Awarding the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to RCA candidates graduating from non-RCA seminaries (via Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care, or RCSC) or pursuing an approved alternate route (AAR);
- Evaluating, through the RCSC and AAR certification committees and staff, the progress of candidates and their continuation in and completion of the process leading to the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry, as their achievements dictate;
- Periodically ensuring that the RCA Standards for Preparation for Ministry are upheld in the oversight of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry 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 Certificate of Fitness for Ministry;
- Collaborating with and providing counsel to congregations and classes in the care and nurture of candidates for the ministry who are seeking the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the MFCA; and
- Interpreting and advocating for the work of the MFCA to the larger church.

The MFCA has evolved from its predecessor, the Theological Education Agency (TEA). The TEA had been established as an RCA institution to serve the then-growing Regional Synod of the Far West, with the largest number of its candidates, almost all of whom were white and male, attending Fuller Theological Seminary. The following enrollment statistics as of January 27, 2018, indicate the significant changes in just two decades:

There are currently 87 candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process; 20 (23 percent) of these are pursuing the Certificate through the Approved Alternate Route (AAR), which did not exist until the MFCA was established.

Enrollment in the MFCA continues to cluster in the eastern half of the United States. Eighty-two percent of the candidates reside east of the Rocky Mountains. More than 62 percent (62.2 percent) are east of the Mississippi.
Just over 27 percent (27.5 percent) of the candidates are female. This is again an increase from the prior year (23.5 percent).

Forty percent of the AAR candidates represent a racial/ethnic minority group. More than 34 percent (34.6 percent) of all our candidates represent racial/ethnic minorities.

Given the continuing significant changes in the RCA and its official goals as expressed by Transformed & Transforming, the current church climate, and changes in technology and the contexts of pastoral education, the MFCA will continue to 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 where 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; and
- 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.

These initiatives are not new, but they have taken on more denominational importance.

How the MFCA Board Operates

By permission and approval of the General Synod Council (GSC), the MFCA Board of Trustees operates under policy governance. In accordance with the tenets of policy governance, which are also used elsewhere in the RCA, the board intentionally focuses on visioning and policy development, setting clear goals for the agency but delegating the means of achieving them to the executive director and his staff, subject only to explicit executive limitations. The board stays abreast of the MFCA program through the monitoring reports of the director and direct experience with candidates. Some board members serve or have served on the RCSC and AAR committees and some received the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through one of these routes.

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 and have participated in 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 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's finances have been under strain for a number of years, and the agency continues to draw from reserves on an annual basis. Unlike the two seminaries, MFCA is no longer an independent corporation (as it was for several years after its chartering).
The agency receives minimal support from congregations and individuals. Whereas the seminaries have major campaigns focused on building projects available to them, the MFCA has no such capacity to raise funds. The lack of “bricks and mortar” leaves efforts and programs unfunded. This is especially true when it comes to candidate assistance and scholarships. The average candidate continues to invest more than $2,000, over and above regular education costs in order to complete the requirements for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (CFM). The agency appeals to General Synod and churches to consider financial support of the agency, even if it is through direct support of candidates.

Seventy-nine percent of the MFCA budget comes from the theological education assessment. The remainder comes from user fees, tuition, and investment income. The MFCA Board of Trustees is grateful for the generous support of General Synod through the assessments. The agency would not exist if it was not for the theological education assessment income.

### Cooperative Efforts

**Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services**

The MFCA has continued to participate in several cooperative efforts. One such effort is with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services 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. Programs have been completed in New Jersey; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Southern California. A program in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, should be close to completion at the time of General Synod.

**Western Theological Seminary**

The MFCA has also entered into what is presently an informal arrangement with Western Theological Seminary (WTS). The agency has hosted a number of WTS courses in its building in Paramount, California. Courses have been offered in both English and Spanish. The MFCA board hopes this location will become a regular site for WTS as it reaches more distance students. The MFCA has a number of Approved Alternate Route (AAR) candidates enrolled in the WTS Distance Learning Program in order to complete the requirements toward the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

### Certificates of Fitness for Ministry Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded 18 Certificates of Fitness for Ministry in the past year: 12 through the RCSC process and six through the AAR process.

**Reformed Candidates’ Supervision and Care (RCSC)**

- William Lynn Borror  Classis of Delaware-Raritan
- Tien-Heng Chiu    Classis of Queens
- Jonathan Edward Davis  Classis of the City
- Jonathan Edward DeGroot  Classis of West Sioux
- Yakuv Gurung    Classis of Great Lakes City
- Hyunsung Chris Jeong  Classis of Delaware-Raritan
Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

1. Reduction in 24-Month Requirement: The Classis of Holland request, on behalf of Mike Lamson, to substitute a period of time to make up any deficiency of the 24 months of being in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process was approved by the board (BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [pp. 44–45, 2017 edition]). The board recognized the ministry supervised by the Classis of Holland for part of the requirement.

2. Reduction in 24-Month Requirement: The Classis of North Grand Rapids request, on behalf of Jason Vermeulen, to substitute a period of time to make up any deficiency of the 24 months of being in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process was approved by the board (BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [pp. 44–45, 2017 edition]). The board recognized the ministry supervised by the Classis of North Grand Rapids at Casnovia Reformed Church, as well as at Life Spring Church in Fish Hawk, Florida, for part of the requirement.

3. Alternate Means for Biblical Languages: The Classis of Nassau-Suffolk request, on behalf of Susan Converse, to substitute the MFCA online Biblical Tools courses to meet the biblical language requirement was approved by the board (BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 3 [pp. 47–48, 2017 edition]).

4. Alternate Means for Biblical Languages: The Classis of the City request, on behalf of Diana Macias, to substitute the MFCA online Biblical Tools courses to meet the biblical language requirement was approved by the board (BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 3 [pp. 47–48, 2017 edition]).
Embracing the Vision: NBTS, a Seminary of the Reformed Church in America

Since arriving at New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS), I have immersed myself in the history and theology of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). I was honored to visit West End Collegiate Church in New York and see the millstone from mill loft in the small colonial town of New Amsterdam. I have also had the pleasure of visiting Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, the oldest evangelical church in North America with a continuous ministry.

Moreover, I am honored to serve as president of the seminary that has its roots in the Reformation of the 1500s. At one time many years ago, the church sent ministers to Holland to be ordained, but in 1784, the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church elected John Henry Livingston as professor to prepare students for the ordained ministry. When I enter my office every day and walk by the writing desk of John Henry Livingston, made in 1780, I am reminded of the history and theology of the RCA. I am also reminded of the struggle that occurred as the church shifted from Dutch-language worship to English.

As we seek to develop a Doctor of Ministry concentration in missiology, I am inspired by the RCA’s early focus on missions in Asia and Africa. I am particularly aware of our graduates Elihu Doty, class of 1836, and John Van Nest Talmage, class of 1845, who were both missionaries to China. It is my strong desire and commitment to continue in the RCA tradition of involving the seminary and the church in worldwide mission efforts and services. We are currently developing an intensive course to be taught in South Africa and will partner with the RCA Global Mission department and its rich 233-year history and experiences.

Regarding missions and church life, it is befitting that we have a Korean Christian church worshiping in our building because of our unique commitment to embrace diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. In 2007, in an effort to promote understanding and confront some of the subtle and overt forms of racism, the seminary took the bold step of forming the Anti-Racism Transformation Team (ARTT). This team is composed of students, alumni/ae, faculty, and trustees. As a result of the work of ARTT, the NBTS Board of Trustees adopted the following anti-racism statement:

We, the Board of Trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, have decided to take a stand against racism and insidious structure of privilege and power. We are committed to identifying and dismantling all such structures in this seminary. We make this commitment in full knowledge and understanding that it will involve uncomfortable and painful self-examination, both personal and corporate, and that it will require deep and difficult changes at all levels of our beloved institution, including this board. We are humbly yet firmly convinced that in making this commitment we are being led in Spirit, we are demonstrating obedience to God's will and plan, and we are following the example of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. We pray that God our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer will redeem our sins and guide, bless and help our creative efforts to let God do a “new thing” at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

NBTS has been deeply committed to missions since the 1800s. More specifically, from 1855 to 1889, NBTS sent Reformed Church missionaries to serve in India, Korea, and Arabia. From the Scudder family to the Chamberlain family, NBTS has a history of “growing” and sending Christian missionaries. Today, NBTS continues to celebrate
our 1884 graduate Horace G. Underwood, who was an ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and an appointee of the American Presbyterian Church as a missionary to Korea.

Our efforts to embrace diversity and non-discrimination have been a part of the fabric of the NBTS throughout its history. In 1879, Islay Walden and John Bergen were recorded as the first African Americans to graduate from NBTS. Additionally, in 1882 NBTS graduated two Japanese students, Kumage Kimura and Moto Oghimi.

New Brunswick Theological Seminary also made an impact on the RCA at large in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s as it sought to welcome people from non-Dutch backgrounds. NBTS alumni can be found listed among the men and women working with the RCA racial/ethnic councils throughout the years. Our alumni/ae continue to help the RCA address issues of race, ethnicity, and gender as they relate to Pacific and Asian Americans, Latino and Latina Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and women.

The first female RCA minister was ordained in 1973, and ordination to the office of minister of Word and sacrament was opened to all women by an act of the General Synod in 1979. NBTS first received a proposal to admit a female student in 1906, but it was not until 1961 that the first woman, Martha Houck, was admitted to take classes at NBTS. Margaret Yoder was the first woman to graduate from the seminary in 1971. Today women comprise more than 70 percent of our student body, and their service as pastors, members of church staffs, specialized ministers, and delegates to the RCA General Synod has increased over the years.

Like the Reformed Church in America, NBTS has moved into the twenty-first century, rooted and established in a theology of education, mission, and service that is based on Scripture. The seminary continues to embrace a theology of ministry, requiring scholarship, critical discernment, and dialogical learning rooted in the tradition of the Reformed Church in America.

I am humbled and honored to be the new president and lead shepherd of such a phenomenal institution as NBTS. I also appreciate the Classis of New Brunswick, which is open to receiving me as an RCA minister of the Word and sacrament. I am further honored that the NBTS Board of Trustees is willing to confer upon me the title of Livingston Professor of Theology, which has been bestowed on each president of NBTS since 1959.

Accomplishments of 2017

Notable Changes among Existing Personnel

Alycia Bencivengo was promoted to executive assistant to the president. Willard Ashley was promoted to vice president of strategic institutional initiatives and faculty director of the Center of Social Justice and Leadership Development. Ken Termott was promoted to vice president of operations. Beth Tanner was appointed as dean of academic affairs for three years. Terry Ann Smith was promoted to associate dean of institutional assessment and assistant professor of biblical studies. Faye Taylor was appointed director of field placement and director of the NBTS-NY campus. Jinhong Kim was appointed to the Horace G. Underwood Chair in Global Christianity.

Notable New NBTS Positions

In January 2018, R. Scott Sheldon was hired as director of seminary advancement and
relations. Sheldon comes to NBTS with more than 30 years of strategic leader and advisor experience in the nonprofit sector. He has a broad background with philanthropic organizations and is a seasoned fundraiser with excellent donor relation skills. Sheldon will use his skills in development, communications/marketing, and financial management within the nonprofit sector for the benefit of our wonderful seminary.

John Coakley will serve as interim director of the Gardner A. Sage Library, effective March 1, 2018. Coakley will be on site for ten hours per week, supervising library staff, assisting the staff in proving library services to students and community patrons, and representing the library as a member of the administrative and faculty councils. A formal search for a permanent director has been launched.

In addition to serving as the part-time director of the Reformed Church Center at NBTS, James Brumm will assume additional duties to further develop both the Center for Theological Writing and the NBTS Archives. Brumm has been working with the library staff to equip students for the rigors of theological writing, analytical reading, and critical thinking for theological education. As the director of seminary archives, in consultation with the archives of the RCA, which is also housed in the Sage Library, Brumm collects, preserves, and provides access to archival materials of NBTS.

Doctor of Ministry Restructure

The Doctor of Ministry degree program has been restructured so that all faculty are involved in the program. A key faculty member is the concentration advisor, and each student is assigned a faculty reader for the doctoral thesis. We now have a full-time program director who directs all the concentrations and cohorts. The new Doctor of Ministry concentration and cohort director is Carol Patterson. This fall we will initiate a new concentration in missiology and global Christianity. We will also start a new cohort in pastoral care and another cohort in counseling and transformational preaching.

Association of Theological Schools and Middle States

NBTS hosted a successful Association of Theological Schools (ATS) focused visit. A summary of that visit is included with this report.

We received a “Yes” recommendation to proceed to the next step by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education liaison. An accreditation visit from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education will occur in August 2018. We also received a Future Ministers Peer Learning Group Grant from ATS.

Strategic Planning

We received invaluable feedback from the ATS and Middle States accrediting bodies regarding our strategic planning process. Most notably, an institutional assessment plan was identified as the primary mechanism by which we can guide and measure institutional outcomes over time. A plan for ongoing institutional assessment will be included in the final strategic plan. A financial plan will be developed with input from working groups that will include financial needs for each group’s area of focus. Additionally, a plan for student recruitment is critical to the institution’s goals and should have strategies for expansion and enhancement formulated in an appropriate place in the strategic plan. Terry Ann Smith is leading the ongoing strategic planning process. Smith has convened meetings with the staff, faculty, board, and students. The final strategic planning document is available on our website, www.nbts.edu.
Roundtable Discussions

In February 2018, President McCready began holding roundtable discussions with various constituencies of the seminary, including students, alumni/ae, churches, and denominational representatives. To date we have received very positive feedback from participants.

Presidential Inauguration and Graduation (May 18–19, 2018)

The Board of Trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, along with its faculty, staff, students, alumni/ae, and other invited guests, are pleased to share our joy for a two-day celebration on our campus with the theme of “Rejoice and Be Glad.” On the afternoon of Friday, May 18, our Board of Trustees held its spring meeting, and alumni/ae gathered for our annual reunion. Following a reception for the seminary community, we came together in the evening at Mast Chapel for the inauguration of President McCready as the twelfth president of NBTS and the baccalaureate ceremony for our graduating students, their families, and our supporting community.

On Saturday, May 19, we will offer a symposium led by Frank M. Yamada, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, who will moderate an academic panel on “Theological Schools and Transformative Learning.” Other guests will have opportunities to gain “Insights on Our History” at the Gardner A. Sage Library, led by John W. Coakley, professor of church history emeritus and current interim librarian. Later that morning we will proceed to Kirkpatrick Chapel on the Rutgers campus and gather for commencement to honor our graduating students for their achievements.

This year marks our 234th commencement at NBTS. The commencement addressee will be John W. Kinney, pastor for more than 40 years at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Beaverdam, Virginia, and professor of theology and director of the Center for African American Pentecostalism and Leadership Development at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. A reception and a concert in our new courtyard will feature Urban Doxology, a professional ministry group based in Richmond, Virginia, that writes and sings songs of reconciliation and inspiration. We welcome all who will come to wish us well as we celebrate our mission and vision going forward with God’s guidance.

Two Recommendations

New Brunswick Theological Seminary would like to offer two recommendations to the RCA General Synod.

Accept with Regret the Resignation of Renée House from the Office of General Synod Professor

Upon the request of Renée House, the Board of Trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary acted at its January 2018 meeting to accept with regret, but with thanks for her service to the seminary, the resignation of Renée House as General Synod professor, and to forward this as a recommendation to the General Synod.

TE 18-2
WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Renée S. House has taught at New Brunswick Theological Seminary since 1987, serving as director of
Gardner A. Sage Library from 1987 to 2005, as associate professor of practical theology from 1996 to 2013, as dean of the seminary from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2008 to 2012, and as adjunct associate professor of practical theology from 2013 until the present, inspiring generations of students as Christian educators, mentoring countless pastors into their ministries in Christ’s church, and nurturing the RCA’s unique and irreplaceable treasury of resources in Sage Library; and

WHEREAS Dr. House has brought her ministry, consistently and enthusiastically, to local congregations throughout her career, through regular preaching and worship leading as well as teaching in local Christian education programs and providing leadership for various and sundry workshops and lay education courses; and

WHEREAS Dr. House has served as a General Synod professor from 2003 to 2005 and again from 2009 until the present, serving not only within the professorate but on multiple commissions, boards, classical committees, and task forces of the RCA, its classes, and its regional synods—for several of them taking on added responsibility as moderator—and as an RCA representative to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches; and

WHEREAS Dr. House has brought her gifts and insights to other ecumenical dialogues as well as professional associations, community boards, and social service groups, working for justice, peace, and the welfare of all God’s people wherever they may be; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, Dr. House has served as pastor and teacher of Old Dutch Church in Kingston, New York, engaged in leading that congregation in its ministry to bring God’s justice and transformation to all of those living on the margins in that particular corner of this lost and broken world so loved by God; and

WHEREAS Dr. House now seeks to answer the Spirit’s call on her life to devote her full time energy and attention to ministry in that particular role while continuing to offer prayers and encouragement to her colleagues, friends, and family at the seminary she has served for more than three decades,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 212th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7 through 12, 2018, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, expresses gratitude to God for the life and ministry of Dr. Renée House, along with the deepest gratitude to Dr. House for her ministry among us, and offers its prayers for continued fulfilling ministry and life with her husband, Richard;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Synod accept with regret, but with thanks for her service to the seminary,
the resignation of the Rev. Dr. Renée House as General Synod professor. (ADOPTED)

Acknowledging the Retirement of Allan Janssen and Recommend He Be Declared General Synod Professor Emeritus

Dr. Janssen will complete his teaching at New Brunswick Theological Seminary with the completion of the International Summer School in the summer of 2018. As a result, he will no longer be eligible to be a General Synod professor. The Board of Trustees therefore recommends to the General Synod that he be declared retired and that he be declared a General Synod professor emeritus.

TE 18-3

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Allan Janssen has served the Reformed Church in America as a General Synod professor since 2012; and

WHEREAS Dr. Janssen, who was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America in 1973 and served several congregations in the 40 years that followed, has taught at New Brunswick Theological Seminary since 1999, becoming an affiliate faculty member in 2006 and, from that same year, has regularly taught courses through the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency; and

WHEREAS Dr. Janssen has served the Reformed Church in America faithfully on its boards, committees, and commissions and in ecumenical bodies; and

WHEREAS through his teaching, his service on the Commission on Church Order, his publications, and his wise advice in settings formal and informal, Dr. Janssen has earned the church’s deep appreciation for his insights into the Book of Church Order and its value for shaping our ministry and mission; and

WHEREAS Dr. Janssen, through his teaching and writing as well as through his leadership of New Brunswick Seminary’s biennial International Summer School of Theology in the Netherlands, has introduced many students and others, both in and beyond the Reformed Church in America, to the rich traditions of Dutch theology;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 212th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7 through 12, 2018, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, expresses its deepest gratitude to Dr. Janssen for his years of service, and offers its prayers for a fulfilling retirement along with his wife, Colleen;

AND BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Rev. Dr. Allan Janssen be declared a General Synod professor emeritus as of June 13, 2018. (ADOPTED)

Micah McCreary
President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary
References


Report of Western Theological Seminary

The mission, identity, and vision statements of Western Theological Seminary (WTS) 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 (WTS) 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. We are nearing the completion of the $25 million campaign. The campaign has had two sides: an endowment side with a goal to raise $10 million for scholarships, facilities, and faculty support; and capital side with a goal of $14.9 million for extensive renovation and new construction. At the writing of this report, we are happy to have surpassed our endowment goal with $10.4 million committed. We are very close to meeting our capital goal with $14.6 million committed. Construction is in full force with various parts of the building coming online throughout the summer and fall of this year. Students arriving to Western this coming academic year will be treated to a seminary that has had 95 percent of its physical space either renovated or newly constructed.

Financial Support

Western Theological Seminary enjoyed another strong year of giving in 2016–2017. Overall giving to the seminary reached more than $8.5 million with close to $5.5 million in gifts to the building project of the Our New Day campaign. This represents the strongest single year of giving in the history of the seminary.

Enrollment

Western Theological Seminary experienced an increase in overall enrollment for the 2017–2018 academic year. This was due in part to the new Hispanic Ministries Program and 55 students making up two cohorts enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry. During the 2017–2018 academic year, a total of 337 students were enrolled: 84 candidates in the residential Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program, 81 candidates in the distance learning M.Div. program, and 15 in the Newbigin House cohort. There were 107 RCA candidates enrolled in all M.Div. programs. The Master of Arts program
continues to grow with enrollment increasing to 43 students. Consistent with industry trends, we continue to see level numbers of in-residence students and growing numbers in the distance-learning programs. Eleven students are enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Disability Ministry (GCDM) program. Students are also enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program, Master of Theology program, Graduate Program for Christian Educators, and as non-degree students.

Seminary News

Hispanic Ministries Program Launched

In May of 2017, Joseph Ocasio arrived on campus to begin his role as director of the Hispanic Ministries Program. During the summer of 2017, we contextualized our existing Graduate Certificate in Urban Pastoral Ministry (GCUPM) into a program specifically aimed at preparing and empowering Hispanic men and women to lead the church. So far, three cohorts (in Delaware, Southern California, and West Michigan, each consisting of more than 20 pastors and leaders) have launched, and these students are taking courses in leadership, biblical studies, theology, urban ministry, and the ecclesial concerns of the Hispanic church. While the denominational mix of these students tends to be varied, the cohort in Southern California is entirely made up of RCA students.

Providing Theological Education to Underserved Markets

WTS is reaching more men and women seeking theological education by implementing a new cohort model of learning in the Doctor of Ministry program. In November, WTS partnered with Mario da Silva and Filadelfia University (or UNIFIL) in Londrina, Brazil, to provide a Doctor of Ministry program for a group of about 20 students. The UNIFIL group is the first in a new model of cohort-based learning that will characterize the D.Min. program moving forward. D.Min. director Mark Poppen believes this new model will revolutionize the program. Not only will it allow more students to study (usually 12 per cohort), but the topics of study will be more directed, and learning will be more community-based. Also, the model works well cross-culturally where a strong group dynamic is valued.

Student Debt Falls 40 Percent

In 2013, Western Theological Seminary became one of 67 seminaries to receive a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to address the economic challenges facing people entering ministry. Chief among the concerns was the high levels of educational debt new pastors were carrying into their ministries. Over the last four years, Western added a required financial literacy workshop to the in-residence M.Div. curriculum and offered other financial training and tools to students. The topic of money management has become part of seminary conversations. The Class of 2017 was the first to graduate under this new culture, and we are pleased to report significant progress. The average seminary debt among borrowers has decreased from $36,396 for the Class of 2012 to $22,541 for the Class of 2017—a drop of 40 percent.

Graduate Program for Christian Educators

The seminary introduced a new graduate program in 2017 specifically for Christian school educators looking to enrich integration between faith and learning in their classes. This 15-credit-hour program involves four core classes in Old and New Testament, theology, and discipleship, as well as an elective in counseling, disability and ministry, leadership, or spiritual formation.
New Full-Tuition Merit Scholarship

The Girod Fellowship is a full-tuition scholarship for the research assistant to the Gordon H. Girod Research Chair of Reformed Theology. It is meant for high-achieving M.Div. students with outstanding research and writing skills who have a heart for the church’s ministry in the world. It is renewable for three years and involves a part-time paid position as a research assistant. Already this scholarship is generating interest in undergrad religion departments. The first fellowship was awarded in the spring of 2018.

Seminary Events

Stoutemire Lecture

During the seventh annual Leonard F. Stoutemire Lecture in Multicultural Ministry on September 19, 2017, Soong-Chan Rah of North Park Theological Seminary and author of *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* spoke about the American church’s need for lament in order to move forward from a history of racial injustice. Rah suggested that American Christianity’s narrative of triumphalism and exceptionalism has cultivated subtle forms of white supremacy that prevent it from addressing the suffering of minorities, immigrants, and refugees. The Stoutemire lectures seek to equip seminarians and Christian leaders with resources for increased intercultural competence for greater effectiveness in ministry.

Disability as an Aspect of Diversity

Among seminaries and divinity schools, Western Theological Seminary is leading the way in disability ministry. After the completion of our renovation and additions, our facility will be beyond the compliances required in the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), but we want our culture to be as welcoming and accessible as our buildings. On November 2, 2017, faculty and staff participated in a half-day workshop under the guidance of Lennard Davis to consider how we might prepare our environment to receive people with disabilities. Davis, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is an internationally known expert in disability studies who has written or edited some of the most impactful books in the field. Later that day, Davis gave a public lecture to a large audience in Mulder Chapel. The lecture can be viewed at www.westernsem.edu/dr-lennard-davis-disability-as-an-aspect-of-diversity. Afterward, RCA coordinator for Disability Concerns Terry DeYoung and director of CRC Disability Concerns Mark Stephenson facilitated a discussion on how the concepts set forth by Davis apply to congregational ministry.

Bast Preaching Festival

The Bast Preaching Festival in November featured Richard J. Mouw of Fuller Theological Seminary. Richard Mouw taught in the Calvin College philosophy department for 17 years. In 1985, he moved to Fuller Theological Seminary, and beginning in 1993, he served as Fuller’s president for two decades. He has now returned to full-time teaching at Fuller as professor of faith and public life. Mouw presented two plenary lectures: “Discipleship Today: Some Major Challenges” and “Formation for Holy Worldliness.” Other workshops were led by James Ellis of Hope College, Jared Ayers of Liberti Church in Philadelphia, and Ron Rienstra and Sue Rozeboom of WTS.

Osterhaven Lectures

The Osterhaven Lecture Series on Theology was pleased to present “Recovering Biblical Christianity: Roman Catholic and Reformed Perspectives” on March 12–13, 2018. This
year the event was co-sponsored by the Saint Benedict Institute at Hope College. Scholars Matthew Levering of Mundelein Seminary and Kevin VanHoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School gave lectures, and a panel discussion was held with Levering, VanHoozer, and Jared Ortiz of Hope College and Sue Rozeboom of WTS.

“The Prosperity Gospel and the Dying”

On April 16, 2018, Kate Bowler—a Duke Divinity School expert on the prosperity gospel, a cancer patient, and a stunning speaker—was a guest of Western Theological Seminary. In the afternoon, Bowler discussed “The Prosperity Gospel in the American Church Today” with Dennis Voskuil, who has done a great deal of research on movements of positive thinking and the prosperity gospel in the church. In the evening, Bowler gave a plenary address, “The Prosperity Gospel and the Dying,” followed by a time for discussion.

142nd Commencement

On May 7, 2018, Western celebrated its 142nd commencement by graduating 48 candidates in the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theology, and Doctor of Ministry degree programs. Scottish theologian John Swinton gave the commencement address in addition to a public lecture at the seminary in the afternoon. May 7 was also Alumni/ae Day in which we celebrated the reunions of the Classes of 1968 and 1978. David Bast (’76) was the Distinguished Alumnus.

Friendship House Anniversary

This year we celebrated ten years of the Ralph and Cheryl Schregardus Friendship House. On May 7, the six Friends walked across the stage at commencement as some of them prepared to transition out of the Friendship House and into their next stage of life and independence. Some of the Friends will be moving into the Red Bricks apartments together. The Friends have each grown tremendously in confidence and independence over the last decade and are excited for this next step in their lives. The following evening, on May 8, the seminary held a banquet in their honor, inviting family members, former Friendship House roommates, and donors who made the whole successful endeavor possible. Applications are being received for the new Friends who will become part of the WTS community in the fall of 2018.

Staff and Faculty Transitions

Joseph Ocasio was hired as director of the Hispanic Ministries Program in April 2017.

Lannette Zylman-TenHave was hired as executive assistant to the president in April 2017.

Dawn Boelkins, associate professor of biblical languages, retired on June 30, 2017, after more than 25 years of service.

Theresa Latini, associate dean of diversity and cultural competency and professor of practical theology and pastoral care, concluded her work at WTS on June 30, 2017, to become president of United Lutheran Seminary in Pennsylvania.

Duane Loynes, visiting assistant professor of theology and director of the Doctor of Ministry program, concluded his work at WTS on June 30, 2017, to become the professor of African-American religion and theology at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.
Ben Conner was promoted to professor of practical theology and appointed director of the Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry program effective July 1, 2017.

Chuck DeGroat was promoted to professor of pastoral care and counseling effective July 1, 2017.

Sue Rozeboom was promoted to associate professor of liturgical theology effective July 1, 2017.

Gordon Govens was appointed faculty fellow for the 2017–2018 academic year.

Jeff Munroe was promoted to executive vice president in September 2017.

Jill English was promoted to director of admissions in September 2017. Jill succeeded Mark Poppen, who now serves as senior admissions officer and director of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Andy Bast was promoted to director of development in November 2017. Andy succeeded Doug Honholt, who retired in November 2017 and re-joined the WTS Board of Trustees in February 2018.

Kyle Wigboldy was hired as registrar and financial aid administrator in December 2017.

Steven VanderMolen, director of Journey, retired in December 2017 after five years of service.

Mary Huisman, manager of the Sacred Page Bookstore, retired in December 2017 after 14 years of service.

Drew Peirce, WTS M.Div. ’02, was hired as associate director of development in January 2018.

Celebrating Faculty Accomplishments


Kristen Deede Johnson, associate professor of theology and Christian formation, authored several articles:


“Are We Missing the Point of Spiritual Disciplines?” Christianity Today, September/October 2017.

Han-luen Kantzer-Komline, assistant professor of church history and theology, was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA on December 17, 2018. She spoke at the Wheaton Theology Conference in April on Marilynne Robinson and Augustinian theology. Other presenters included Pulitzer Prize winner Marilynne Robinson, former archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, and Lauren Winner. Kantzer-Komline was appointed a member of the steering committee of the Development of Early Christian Theology program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature and also authored two articles:


David Komline, assistant professor of church history, was ordained as minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA on December 17, 2018.


Professor of New Testament Robert Van Voorst’s course on world religions, based on his book World RELG (Cengage Learning Company), was made into a nationally-offered electronic course by Savant Learning Systems in Belmont, Tennessee.

Trustee Appointments

Two new members joined Western’s Board of Trustees effective July 1, 2017. Percy Gilbert is vice president of systems product engineering and memory development for IBM and a member of Hopewell Reformed Church in New York. Fred Johnson is an associate professor of history at Hope College and a member of Messiah Missionary Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Trustees Wilbert Hamstra and Robert Hilarides completed their terms of service on June 30, 2017.

Trustee Kenneth Harris resigned from the WTS board in September 2017, citing his added responsibilities as the new president of Ecumenical Theological Seminary. He was replaced by former trustee Doug Honholt, who retired from WTS in November 2017. Honholt will serve the remainder of Harris’s term through June 30, 2018.

Petitions Approved by the Board of Trustees of Western Theological Seminary

The Board of Trustees approved a petition of 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 David Celeskey.
The Board of Trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Sheri Harris.

The Board of Trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Rodolfo Rubio.

The Board of Trustees approved the request for an alternate means of meeting the biblical languages requirement for Jason Pierce.

**Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation**

Earlier this year, the seminary and its board executive committee decided to eliminate one of the standing committees referenced in its bylaws, and this prompted a full formal review of the bylaws. In the course of that review, many needed updates and revisions were identified. The revised draft was reviewed and further revised by an attorney, who also reviewed the articles of incorporation and proposed necessary updates to those as well.

On May 8, 2018, Western Theological Seminary’s board of trustees voted to adopt restated bylaws and articles of incorporation for Western Theological Seminary. Western now presents these restated bylaws and articles of incorporation to the General Synod for its approval, pursuant to *Book of Church Order* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 7, Section 1 (2017 edition, p. 118).

**Summary of Changes**

The following summary of changes was presented to Western’s board of trustees prior to its adoption of the restated bylaws and articles of incorporation and is presented here to General Synod delegates to provide an overview of the changes represented in the revised enabling documents.

Article I, “Name” – Added section 2, which gives the board latitude to change the name of the seminary.

Article II – Changes name from “Members” (which was inaccurate) to “Member.” Removes sections 2 and 3, which were extraneous. Adds a new section 2 clarifying the General Synod’s role.

Article III, “Purpose” – Simplifies this article.

Article IV, “Powers” – A new section, stating things misplaced under “Member” and “Purpose” in the earlier document. Adds boilerplate language about IRS regulations and political activity.

Article V – Title changed from “Membership” to “Trustees.” Changes from “give of time and talents” to “contribute wealth, wisdom, work, and witness.” Gives the faculty the power to waive the requirement that the faculty representative to the board be a tenured faculty member or General Synod professor. Incorporates the previous Article V on nominations and elections into “Trustees” section. Removes language “inactivity or incompetence of a trustee (determined by the remaining trustees)” and “disciplinary suspension or disciplinary termination of the membership of a trustee in his/her church shall create a vacancy.” Locates the responsibility for board performance under Article IX, section 3, “Executive Committee.”
Article VI – Changes the title from “Meetings” to “Meeting of the Board.” Removes the responsibility of the executive committee to call meetings, changes the notice requirement from “Written notice of each stated meeting shall be by mail” to “Notice of each meeting must be given.” Section 3 adds language about how notice of meetings will be given and provides more options than mail. Section 7 recognizes that the president of the seminary is present for executive session and gives the board the right to go into executive session without the president. Sections 8–12 are additions stating that the board will follow parliamentary procedure, that members may participate via conference telephone, and that the board has the right to act via writing or electronic transmission without calling a board meeting.

Article VII, “Officers” – Changes the name of the moderator and vice-moderator to “chair.” Removes the language about duties of officers since there is a section about that below. Changes the election of the president from “the president of the seminary shall be elected by a majority of the Board by secret ballot” to “the president of the Seminary must be elected by the Board.”

Article VIII, “Duties of Officers” – Removes the responsibility of the vice-moderator for worship and new member orientation. Removes the requirement that the treasurer be bonded, with the premium paid by the seminary. Adds that the board must perform an annual performance review of the president.

Article IX, “Committees” – Changes the name of one standing committee from “Student Life” to “Student and Community Life” and eliminates the continuing education committee. Adds that all standing committees must consist of trustees.

Article X, “Indemnification” – Adds article indemnifying trustees.

Article XI – Adds article titled “General Provisions.”

Article XII – Adds article titled “Dedication of Assets.”

Articles of Incorporation

These are a rewrite to bring them into compliance with nonprofit standards and Michigan law. Nothing substantive is changed. For historical notes, the board [and the General Synod] may be interested to learn that the seminary’s articles of incorporation were originally filed with the state on June 25, 1940. The seminary had existed, in one form or another, for 70 years prior to that.

New Texts

Following are the revised texts of both the bylaws and articles of incorporation of Western Theological Seminary, which General Synod is being asked to approve.
RESTATED BYLAWS
OF
THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

Article I

Name
Sec. 1 The name of this corporation is The Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America (the “Corporation”).

Sec. 2 The Corporation will operate under the assumed name Western Theological Seminary and such other assumed names as may be approved by the Board of Trustees of the Corporation (the “Board”).

Article II

Member
Sec. 1 The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (the “General Synod”), or its successor by any merger or consolidation, will be the sole member of the Corporation. The General Synod, acting in accordance with applicable law, may exercise all rights granted to members of nonprofit corporations by the laws of the state of Michigan.

Sec. 2 The date, time and purpose of the annual or any special meeting of the General Synod intending to take any action required or permitted to be taken by the General Synod pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation of this Corporation (the “Articles”) or these Bylaws will be determined by the General Synod.

Article III

Purposes
Sec. 1 The purposes of this Corporation are as stated in the Articles.

Article IV

Powers
Sec. 1 The Corporation may exercise any power that is consistent with the purposes described in the Articles and that a nonprofit corporation organized under the provisions of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act may exercise. The Corporation may deal with and distribute the Corporation’s property in any manner as will best promote the Corporation’s objectives and
purposes, without limitation except as may be contained, if any, in instruments under which the property is conveyed to the Corporation.

Sec. 2 Notwithstanding any other provision of the Articles or these Bylaws, the Corporation must not carry on any activity or have any purpose that is not permitted for (a) an organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and other related legislation and regulations as they now exist or may in the future be amended or (b) an organization contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code and related legislation and regulations as they now exist or may in the future be amended. No substantial part of the Corporation’s direct or indirect activities is to consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The Corporation must not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

Article V

Trustees

Sec. 1 The General Synod entrusts to the Board all authority and power necessary for the proper oversight and direction of the Corporation and its seminary (the “Seminary”), as well as the control of the Corporation’s finances, securities, and property.

Sec. 2 All members of the Board must be confessing Christians who acknowledge a commitment to the authority of the Bible over all matters of faith and practice, the sovereignty of God, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life. The members also must be interested in and willing to contribute their wealth, wisdom, work and witness.

Sec. 3 The Board must consist of a minimum of twelve and a maximum of twenty-four members who are to be elected for a term of three years beginning the first day of July following their election by the General Synod and continuing until the end of June when their successors have been elected. Members may serve three consecutive full terms but must be off the Board for two years before becoming eligible again for re-election to the Board.

Sec. 4 All trustees must be recommended by the Board and elected by the General Synod at its annual meeting or at any special meeting. The membership of the Board must at all times include one member from each of the regional synods of the Reformed Church in America.

Sec. 5 The president of the Seminary will be an ex-officio member, without vote, of the Board.
Sec. 6  One member of the faculty of the Seminary who is tenured or who holds the office of General Synod Professor of Theology of the Seminary must be elected by the faculty to serve as an *ex-officio* member, without vote, of the Board. The faculty may waive the tenure/General Synod Professor requirement.

Sec. 7  The student council president of the Seminary is to serve as an *ex-officio* member, without vote, of the Board.

Sec. 8  The general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, or a representative appointed by the general secretary, is to be an *ex-officio* member, without vote, of the Board.

Sec. 9  A trustee may resign by written notice to the Corporation’s secretary. The death or resignation of a trustee will create a vacancy. Vacancies must be filled for the remaining portion of the term by the Executive Committee, subject to approval by General Synod, at any regular or special meeting of the General Synod. The General Synod may remove a trustee with or without cause.

Sec. 10 The Board assumes the responsibility for providing the Corporation with such property and buildings, information resources, equipment, and supplies as are necessary for the effective accomplishment of the Corporation’s mission.

**Article VI**

*Meetings of the Board*

Sec. 1  The Board must meet at least three times per year, with the annual meeting to be in the spring. Notice of each meeting must be given thirty days prior to the date of the meeting.

Sec. 2  A special meeting of the Board may be called by the chairperson or vice-chairperson of the Board. The chairperson or vice-chairperson is obliged to call such a meeting if so requested in writing by any five trustees. If the chairperson or vice-chairperson fails to call the meeting within ten days of such request, the secretary must issue the call to meeting based on the trustees’ written request. Notice of special meetings, stating the nature of the business to be considered, must be given to all trustees not less than ten days prior to each such meeting. No other business is to be considered at such special meetings except by two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting.

Sec. 3  Notice of the annual or any special meeting stating the time and place of the meeting must be given to each trustee by one of the following methods:

a. by mailing a written notice to such address as the trustee designates from time to time or, in the absence of designation, to the last known address of the trustee;

b. by personally delivering a written notice to the trustee;
c. by orally notifying the trustee, either personally or by telephone; or
d. by electronic transmission to the trustee in a manner authorized by the trustee entitled to the notice;
except that, if the transmitted notice is returned as undeliverable, a different permitted method of notification must be used.

Sec. 4
A majority of all voting trustees of the Board constitutes a quorum. If there is less than a quorum present, the meeting will be adjourned. Motions may be passed by a majority of those present. Each trustee present in person at a Board meeting is entitled to one vote.

Sec. 5
The Trustees must receive the agenda at least ten days prior to the meeting of the Board.

Sec. 6
Every meeting of the Board must be opened and closed with prayer.

Sec. 7
The Board may meet in executive session for a portion of any business meeting at which time only voting trustees and the president of the Seminary are to be present. The Board may also ask to meet without the president during executive session.

Sec. 8
A trustee’s attendance at or participation in a meeting waives notice to the trustee of the meeting, unless the trustee at the beginning of the meeting, or when the trustee arrives, objects to the meeting or the transacting of business at the meeting and after objecting does not vote for or assent to any action taken at the meeting. A trustee may waive any right to notice before or at the meeting.

Sec. 9
Trustees’ meetings must generally follow accepted rules of parliamentary procedure. The presiding official has authority over matters of procedure and may adopt any other form of procedure suited to the business being conducted.

Sec. 10
Unless otherwise provided by the Articles or these Bylaws, any action permitted to be taken under authorization voted at a meeting of the Board or a committee of the Board may be taken without a meeting if, before or after the action, all members of the Board then in office or of the committee consent to the action in writing or by electronic transmission. The written consent must be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board or committee. The consent has the same effect as a vote of the Board or committee for all purposes.

Sec. 11
A trustee or a member of a committee may participate in a meeting by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. Such participation in a meeting constitutes presence in person at the meeting.
Sec. 12  A trustee who is present at a trustees’ meeting, or at a meeting of a committee of which the trustee is a member, at which action on a corporate matter is taken is presumed to have concurred in that action taken unless a dissent is entered in the minutes of the meeting or unless the trustee files a written dissent to such action with the person acting as the secretary of the meeting before or promptly after its adjournment. A trustee who is absent from a meeting of the Board or of a committee of which the trustee is a member at which any such action is taken is presumed to have concurred in the action unless the trustee files a written dissent with the secretary of the meeting within a reasonable time after obtaining knowledge of the action.

Article VII

Officers

Sec. 1  The elected officers of the Board must consist of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer, all of whom must be members of the Board.

Sec. 2  The president of the Seminary must serve as the chief executive officer of the Corporation.

Sec. 3  The Executive Committee must present a slate of officers for Board approval at its annual meeting.

Sec. 4  The term of each office begins July 1 and will be for one year or until successors are elected and properly qualified. A vacancy in any office must be filled at the next regular or special meeting of the Board.

Sec. 5  In the event of the death or disability of both the chairperson and the vice-chairperson, the Executive Committee must appoint a member of the Board to serve as chairperson until the next annual meeting of the Board.

Sec. 6  The president of the Seminary must be elected by the Board.

Article VIII

Duties of Officers

Sec. 1  The chairperson must call and preside at all regular and special meetings of the Board, will be an ex-officio member of all committees of the Board, and is authorized to perform such other duties and exercise such other powers as usually pertain to the office. The chairperson is entitled to vote on all matters coming before the Board for decision.

Sec. 2  The vice-chairperson must assist the chairperson in the performance of the duties of the office of chairperson, and in the absence of the chairperson, is to perform all the duties and exercise all powers of that office.
Sec. 3  The secretary must keep a true and accurate record of all proceedings of the Board, a separate minute book for all actions taken in executive session, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office.

Sec. 4  The treasurer or his/her agent will be the fiscal officer of the Corporation and is responsible for the proper custody of all corporate funds and securities. The treasurer is responsible for making certain that proper books of account setting forth all corporate receipts, disbursements, and assets are kept and is responsible for making certain that all corporate funds are deposited in such banks and other depositories as the Board designates. The treasurer must also perform such other duties as may be directed by the Board.

Sec. 5  The duties of the president of the Seminary includes the position description as adopted by the Board and the provisions of the contract at the time of employment. The board must conduct an annual performance review of the president.

Article IX

Committees

Sec. 1  The Board has established the following standing committees: Executive, Student and Community Life, Academic, Advancement, and Finance and Audit. The Board may establish such ad hoc committees as it deems necessary to carry out the business of the Seminary.

Sec. 2  The Executive Committee is to consist of the officers of the Board and the chairs of the other standing committees. The Board may designate one or more individuals who are not trustees to receive notice of, attend, and be heard at a committee meeting, but such individuals cannot vote. The Executive Committee is empowered to conduct all the business of the Board between its stated meetings. The Executive Committee has no power to:

a. amend the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws;
b. change the mission of the Corporation;
c. adopt an agreement of merger or conversion;
d. recommend to the member the sale, lease, or exchange of all or substantially all of the Corporation’s property and assets;
e. fill vacancies in the Board;
f. fix compensation of the trustees for serving on the board or committee; or
g. terminate memberships.

All Executive Committee actions are to be reviewed and are subject to ratification by the Board at its next meeting. The Executive Committee is responsible for the annual performance review of the president of the Seminary with recommendation
to the full Board regarding compensation. When unexpected vacancies on the Executive Committee occur, the vacancy is to be filled by election by the remaining members of the Executive Committee. The elected member is to serve until the next annual meeting of the Board.

Sec. 3  The Executive Committee must review the vitality, effectiveness and appropriateness of the Board’s functioning and make recommendations for change; continuously develop a list of potential Board members; gather information regarding their qualifications and preparedness to serve if nominated; prepare nominations of Board members for consideration by the Board; arrange and oversee the orientation and training of members of the Board; arrange for the full involvement of members of the Board in the activities of the Board; give leadership in encouraging members to evaluate their own performance; and provide appropriate recognition for the service of members of the Board.

Sec. 4  All other standing committees must consist of trustees. All ad hoc committees established by the Board are to consist of such persons as are selected by the Board and may or may not consist of individuals who are trustees or officers. All other standing committees and ad hoc committees serve solely to assist in the conduct of the Corporation’s affairs and cannot exercise any of the Board’s powers or authority. The resolution that establishes the committee must state the purpose and functions of the committee, the terms and qualifications of the committee members, and the ways in which the members of the committee are selected and removed.

Article X

**Indemnification**

Sec. 1  The Corporation shall indemnify the Corporation’s trustees and officers against expenses (including but not limited to attorneys’ fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by them in connection with any actions or suits brought or threatened against them, including actions by or in the right of the Corporation, by reason of the fact that such person was serving as a trustee or officer, employee, non-trustee volunteer, or agent of the Corporation, to the fullest extent permitted by both the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act and Chapter 42 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Corporation may indemnify persons who are not trustees or officers to the extent authorized by resolution of the Board or by contractual agreement authorized by the Board. A change in the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act, the Articles, or these Bylaws that reduces the scope of indemnification does not apply to any action or omission that occurs before the change.
Sec. 2  The Corporation may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a trustee, officer, employee, non-trustee volunteer, or agent of this Corporation or is or was serving at the Corporation’s request in any other enterprise against any liability incurred in such capacity.

Article XI

General Provisions

Sec. 1  All Corporation checks or demands for money and notes must be signed by such persons as the Board designates.

Sec. 2  The Corporation’s fiscal year is as fixed by the Board.

Article XII

Dedication of Assets

Sec. 1  The Corporation’s funds and property must be used exclusively for the Corporation’s purposes set forth in the Articles. No part of the income or assets of the Corporation may inure to the benefit of any individual or trustee.

Sec. 2  The Corporation must hold and administer all of the Corporation’s assets and accumulated income to effectuate the Corporation’s tax-exempt purposes. No part of the income or assets of this Corporation will inure to the private benefit of any individual or trustee. If the Corporation’s purposes fail or if the Corporation ceases to be approved as a tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code, and any such defect is not cured by appropriate amendment, or if the Corporation voluntarily dissolves, then all of the Corporation’s assets and accumulated income must be distributed to the General Synod. The Corporation must be dissolved after all of the Corporation’s property has been so distributed.

Article XIII

Amendment of the Bylaws

Sec. 1  These Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the Board at any regular meeting after ten days’ notice to the trustees and the approval of the General Synod.

Article XIV

Adoption of the Bylaws

Sec. 1  These Bylaws, when adopted by the Board and the General Synod, will supersede all previous Bylaws controlling the affairs of the Corporation.
RESTATED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

The following Restated Articles of Incorporation supersede the Articles of Incorporation as amended and shall be the Articles of Incorporation for the corporation:

ARTICLE I
Name

The name of the corporation is The Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America.

ARTICLE II
Purposes

The purpose or purposes of this corporation are:

(a) To maintain and operate a theological seminary (the “Seminary”) for the purpose of providing courses of study in theology, religion, church history, and other subjects suitable for the training of men and women for the Gospel ministry, and for the teaching of religion according to the doctrines and standards of The Reformed Church in America, as based on the Holy Scriptures.

(b) To acquire by purchase, gift, or otherwise, property of every description, real and personal, for the use and benefit of the Seminary, and to exchange, sell, or dispose of such property.

(c) To do each and everything necessary, suitable, or proper for the accomplishment of the above purposes or which at any time appear convenient for or conducive to the accomplishment of such purposes.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles, the corporation shall not carry on any activity or have any purpose that is not permitted for (i) an organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (the “Code”) and other related legislation and regulations as they now exist or may hereafter be amended or (ii) an organization contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code and related legislation and regulations as they now exist or may hereafter be amended. No substantial part of the corporation’s direct or indirect activities shall consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE III
Form of Organization and Financing

The corporation is formed on a nonstock basis.

The general plan under which the corporation is to be financed is as follows:
(a) By income derived from endowment funds previously acquired by the corporation and/or by the trustees of the corporation, by gift, bequest, or devise and by such other endowment funds as may be acquired in the future by gift, bequest, devise, or otherwise.

(b) By contributions and appropriations from the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (the “General Synod”), from the particular synods, classes and churches of The Reformed Church in America, and from individuals interested in promoting the advancement of The Reformed Church in America and/or religious and social education and welfare.

The corporation is formed on a membership basis.

ARTICLE IV
Registered Office and Resident Agent

The street address (which is the mailing address) of the corporation’s registered office is 101 East 13th Street, Holland, Michigan 49423.

The name of the resident agent at the registered office is Dr. Timothy L. Brown.

ARTICLE V
Duration

The term of the corporate existence is perpetual.

ARTICLE VI
Member

The sole member of the corporation is the General Synod.

ARTICLE VII
Seminary

The Seminary shall be under the control and support of the General Synod, subject to the remaining provisions of the Articles.

ARTICLE VIII
Degrees

Upon the recommendation of the faculty of the Seminary, the trustees of the corporation are authorized to grant the degrees of Bachelor of Divinity or Master of Divinity (M.Div.), whichever is by custom and usage recognized as the terminal award for the first professional degree program, and the degrees Master of Theology (Th.M.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and Master of Arts (M.A.), as well as certificate programs.

ARTICLE IX
Trustees

The affairs of the corporation will be conducted by a board of trustees. The board of trustees has the power to provide for the organization of the board,
the conduct of the affairs of the board, the performance of the function of the corporation, and in general to have all of the powers legally vesting in such boards by virtue of the law of the State of Michigan. Without limiting the above, the board is to hold in trust such property, either real, personal or mixed, as may be granted, conveyed, given, or in any other manner acquired by the corporation and to hold, invest, sell, transfer, or dispose of the such property for the purposes of the corporation.

The number, qualifications, classifications, terms of office, and manner of election or removal of the trustees of the corporation are as prescribed in the corporation’s bylaws. Any bylaw for those purposes may be made or altered only by the General Synod.

ARTICLE X
Limitation of Trustee’s and Volunteer Officer’s Liability

A trustee or volunteer officer shall not be personally liable to the corporation for money damages for any action taken or any failure to take any action as a trustee or volunteer officer, except liability for any of the following:

1. the amount of a financial benefit received by a trustee or volunteer officer to which he or she is not entitled;
2. intentional infliction of harm on the corporation or its member;
3. a violation of Section 551 of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act (which relates to the making of unauthorized distributions or loans);
4. an intentional criminal act; or
5. a liability imposed under Section 497(a) of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act (which upon termination of a derivative proceeding permits a court to order the plaintiff to pay defendant’s expenses incurred in defending the proceeding).

Provisions of this article added by amendment shall apply only to acts or omissions and to breaches of duty occurring after the date the amended article was adopted.

If the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act is amended to further eliminate or limit the liability of a trustee or volunteer officer, then a trustee or volunteer officer (in addition to the circumstances in which a trustee or officer is not personally liable as set forth in the preceding paragraph) shall, to the fullest extent permitted by the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act as so amended, not be liable to the corporation. No amendment to or alteration, modification or repeal of this Article shall increase the liability or alleged liability of any trustee or volunteer officer of the corporation for or concerning any act or omission of such trustee or officer occurring before such amendment, alteration, modification or repeal.
ARTICLE XI
Assumption of Liability for Acts of Volunteers

The corporation shall assume the liability for all acts or omissions of a volunteer trustee, volunteer officer or other volunteer, if all of the following conditions are met:

1. the volunteer was acting or reasonably believed he or she was acting within the scope of his or her authority;
2. the volunteer was acting in good faith;
3. the volunteer’s conduct did not amount to gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct;
4. the volunteer’s conduct was not an intentional tort; and
5. the volunteer’s conduct was not a tort arising out of the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle for which tort liability may be imposed as provided by Section 3135 of the Michigan Insurance Code of 1956.

No amendment to or alteration, modification or repeal of this article shall reduce the scope of the corporation’s assumption of liability under this article for or concerning any volunteer’s acts or omissions that occur before such amendment, alteration, modification or repeal. Provisions of this article added by amendment shall apply only to acts or omissions and to breaches of duty occurring after the date the amended article was adopted.

The above assumption of liability will not apply to the extent it is inconsistent with the status of the corporation as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

ARTICLE XII
Dedication of Assets

The corporation shall hold and administer all its assets and accumulated income to effectuate its tax-exempt purposes. No part of the income or assets of this corporation shall inure to the private benefit of any individual or trustee. If the corporation’s purposes fail or if the corporation ceases to be approved as a tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code, and any such defect is not cured by appropriate amendment, or if the corporation voluntarily dissolves, then all of the corporation’s assets and accumulated income shall be distributed to the General Synod. The corporation shall be dissolved after all its property has been so distributed.
ARTICLE XIII
Amendments

The Synod may amend or repeal any provision contained in these Articles and add additional articles in the manner prescribed by statute.

TE 18-4
To approve the restated bylaws and articles of incorporation of Western Theological Seminary as presented in this report.
(ADOPTED)
Central College, founded in 1853, is a private, residential four-year liberal arts college in Pella, Iowa. Central is known for its academic rigor and strength in global experiential learning, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) courses, sustainability education, athletics success and tradition, and leadership and service.

For more than 100 years, Central has valued its covenantal relationship with the Reformed Church in America. Central’s connection with the RCA proves invaluable for students as they learn to live out their faith through service, missions, and internship opportunities. RCA members play an important role for Central as members of the board of trustees, and Reformed churches support students through the Journey Scholarship Fund. RCA students can also receive the Heritage Award. Central graduates go on to serve as leaders in RCA congregations around the world.

Part of Central College’s mission is to integrate career preparation with the development of values essential to responsible citizenship. Central empowers graduates for effective service in local, national, and international communities. A Central education prepares students for civic responsibility, to “learn to do good; seek justice” (Isaiah 1:17). Through activities, courses, service opportunities, and Central’s relationship with the RCA, students learn to take their place in the world as people who seek justice.

Reformation Conference

Central hosted a conference dedicated to discussing the relationship of reason and faith on October 13–14, 2017. “Reason and Faith on the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation” was organized by professor of religion Terence Kleven and assistant professor of philosophy Mark Thomas. The conference marked the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The Lilly Fellows Program sponsored the conference with a grant awarded to Thomas and Kleven. The Lilly Fellows Program in the Humanities and the Arts seeks to strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning. Central is part of the program’s national network of church-related colleges and universities.

Campus Ministries

Campus Ministries students plan and lead a variety of activities and events on campus. The Calm, a weekly worship service, carries an average participation of 100 students throughout the year. Students stay very involved with local churches, including assisting with Sunday worship services, helping with youth and children’s ministries, and participating in music groups and Bible studies. In addition, community members and college staff serve with Campus Ministries through its discipleship program.

Students involved with Campus Ministries hold several fundraisers throughout the year to raise money for organizations like World Vision, Water to Thrive, Pella’s Freedom House, and Many Hands for Haiti.

Mission Trips

Mission trips are a way Campus Ministries participants serve others while also growing in their own faith. The group takes several trips throughout the year, with varying numbers of students.
Senior Caitlyn Conway has gone on several mission trips with Central. “You learn how to trust God with every fiber of your body,” she said. “You learn that when everything is silent, he speaks volumes. The impact that missions have had on my life is how I have changed from being a micromanager and trying to control all of my life to allowing God to move and allow my life to be in his hands completely. I would also say that meeting a six-year-old boy living in Tanzania, Africa, who raises his four-year-old brother with nothing but a big toothless smile and Jesus impacts your life because he only has Jesus to depend on.”

During fall break in October 2017, Campus Ministries sponsored a trip to Springfield, Missouri, where two students worked on flood recovery efforts.

The annual winter break trip often finds Central students in Texas. This year, 25 students spent time in Mission, Texas. Projects included building two houses and coordinating outreach carnivals for families in poor neighborhoods, serving meals, and handing out food. Central alumni participated onsite on this trip. Campus Ministries focuses on including Central alumni on its mission trips because they can provide valuable support, make connections, and offer special expertise.

During spring break 2018, students participated in three trips. Three students completed anti-human trafficking efforts in the red-light district of Chiang Mai, Thailand. Ten students worked on Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts in Corpus Christi, Texas. Eight students partnered with Hope of the Nations in Kigoma, Tanzania, to lead vacation Bible school, construct a Bible college, and implement other projects. Kurt Ritema, a Central graduate, works for Hope of the Nations and traveled with the group.

Service

Service plays a major role on Central’s campus. The idea of service is expressed through student organizations, classes with service-learning components, and independent projects taken on by students, faculty, and staff. Each year more than 400 students participate in service learning. In 2017, 33 courses at Central included a service component.

Students and faculty individually pursue a number of service commitments, too. Students often initiate their own service or social justice-oriented groups. For example, students recently started the group Students Against Human Trafficking. Staff and faculty members give their time to serve on committees and boards. Last summer, Iowa governor Kim Reynolds appointed Cheri Doane, director of community-based learning at Central, to the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. This group helps organizations mobilize and leverage volunteers for the benefit of all Iowans.

Community service weaves closely with the notion of civic engagement. By engaging with the community, students live out their lives treating others with the care and respect they would wish to receive.

Service and Civic Engagement

Red Rock Rocks: Held during Welcome Week after students arrive in August, this event exposes incoming first-year students to Central’s service ethos. This past fall, about 55 student participants joined faculty, staff, and park rangers to remove invasive brush and timber at Lake Red Rock.

School Visits: Central’s community-based learning program collaborates with the
admission department to offer college visits to students served by Central’s community partners. This strengthens the college’s goal of increasing college access to students with diverse socioeconomic and cultural perspectives. School visits included a July 2017 visit by 30 high school and middle school children from the Children and Family Urban Movement, part of Des Moines’ Wyld Girls and Backyard Boyz programs. Students enjoyed a college visit, participated in educational/fun sessions, and took a trip to Lake Red Rock. In November 2017, about 70 third grade students from Findley Elementary in Des Moines visited the campus. The Findley students enjoyed ten activity modules facilitated by faculty, staff, and college students.

**Hunger and Homelessness Awareness:** In November 2017, the college collaborated with community partners to host Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Activities included the Oxfam Hunger Banquet, an interactive meal designed to draw attention to food inequality by distributing food quantity and quality through the luck of the draw. The week also included an online poverty simulation where students made choices on how to spend their low-income wage. In addition, Kate Gatzke, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, worked with the Central Activities Board to create two artistic displays of homeless camps on campus to demonstrate the pervasiveness of poverty and homelessness.

**Food Security Projects:** Students from several courses engaged in work to feed those in need. Projects included an individual student’s effort to collect fresh produce from college employees and the college garden to donate to area food pantries. Another student created food information cards for the Pella Food Shelf to promote healthy choices and educate clients about meal preparation.

**All Campus Service Day:** Central’s 2018 Service Day took place April 10. Each year on service day, classes are canceled so that students, faculty, and staff can collaborate on projects that address a community need. Many of the organizations that propose service projects are faith-based.

**Civic Responsibility**

Living a servant-hearted life means understanding one’s responsibility to others and the pursuit of justice for all. Central remains committed to fostering a spirit of civic responsibility through multiple activities.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day:** This year’s MLK Day observance focused on the theme of economic justice. Students, faculty, and staff participated in a film viewing and a World Café conversation-focused event. They also participated in a service project that created blankets for children with disabilities.

**Democracy Rocks!** This series was designed to help students engage with society’s significant concerns and become part of a more just world. Topics included race and class inequality, how to engage in respectful political conversation, and how best to learn about people unlike oneself.

**Financial Aid**

Central recognizes and encourages incoming students’ service commitments every year with community service scholarships. Currently, 193 students are receiving a total of $253,900 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 Education Award is matched for incoming students, and current students can earn an education award as part of the AmeriCorps State program—the Iowa College AmeriCorps program.

Conclusion

Central takes seriously its mission of preparing students to become future leaders. Part of this preparation is the understanding of what it means to serve and how students can make an impact on the world for the greater good. This necessitates learning about both service and civic responsibility, both of which are integral to the life of a Christian. The college’s relationship with the RCA is central to this mission. Central values the support through gifts, guidance, and prayer that the RCA offers in provision of this vital undertaking.
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. Affiliated with the Reformed Church in America since its founding in 1866, we are known for our invitational, ecumenical Christian atmosphere, friendly campus community, and outstanding academic and co-curricular offerings. We are intentional about our mission, and our commitment to academic excellence is evident and broadly shared by our faculty and staff.

Hope is a recognized leader in undergraduate research, scholarship, and preparation for graduate school and the workplace. Nearly 360 faculty members offer an academically rigorous, coeducational, and residential education to 3,150 undergraduate students from more than 40 states and 45 countries. Our teachers and talented researchers engage students in small classes and one-to-one collaborative research opportunities for an 11-to-one student to faculty ratio. Hope offers more than 1,800 internships and 300 study abroad opportunities in more than 60 countries to provide a global perspective and experience that equips our graduates to excel in a global society. Ninety-three percent of our graduates join the workforce or enroll in graduate school within six months of graduation. The college’s eighty-plus student groups are marked by tradition, service, and enthusiasm, through which students are encouraged to explore their interests, build their leadership skills, and give back to the community.

Our 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.

Presidential Transition

Hope College is in the midst of a presidential transition. In July 2017, John Knapp concluded his tenure as Hope’s thirteenth president to become president of Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania. The Hope College Board of Trustees appointed Dennis Voskuil to serve as our interim president during a national presidential search. Prior to his appointment as Hope’s president, Voskuil was a member of our religion faculty from 1977 to 1994 and had been the director of our A.C. VanRaalte Institute since 2015. He also served as president of Western Theological Seminary from 1994 to 2008 and continued to teach as the Marvin and Jerene DeWitt Professor of Church History until 2014, when he became a senior research fellow with the VanRaalte Institute.

The college has created a website to share information about the search process, as well as to serve as a resource for candidates and individuals interested in making a nomination: www.hope.edu/offices/president/presidential-search. We encourage you to visit the website, we ask for your prayers, and we seek your nominations of individuals you believe would be excellent presidential candidates.

Faculty Achievements and Academic Excellence

Hope’s academic community offers students a rigorous intellectual experience. Our professors expect excellence, both from their students and from themselves. They are active teacher-scholars, as committed to their students as they are to their research. Under their mentorship, Hope students participate in our longstanding tradition of collaborative faculty-student research, gaining what has been called a “graduate-level undergraduate experience.”
For many Hope students, this engagement leads to the life-changing discovery of an academic passion or a professional calling. With such a strong legacy of faculty impact, Hope is blessed to celebrate, year after year, accomplishments and accolades that distinguish our academic programs, and 2017 was no exception. To highlight the year, we launched our Mellon Grand Challenges Initiative, earned the Campus-Wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments from the Council on Undergraduate Research, and received a record eighth Beckman Scholars Program award from the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation.

In February of this year, we published the inaugural issue of Spera, a magazine spotlighting the research, scholarship, and creative performance of our faculty. Spera features 13 books and 27 scholarly articles, and can be viewed in its entirety online at spera.hope.edu.

**Student Excellence in Research, Creative Performance, and Athletics**

Our students excel in scholarship, research, artistic performance, and athletics. One annual opportunity for Hope students to showcase their work to the community is our Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creative Performance. First presented in 2001, the celebration is designed to spotlight the quality and importance of student-faculty collaborative research, a teaching model used at the college for several decades. Students throughout the college conduct original research and creative projects in collaboration with faculty mentors during both the academic year and the summer. More than 350 Hope students from more than 25 departments and programs present their research to nearly a thousand visitors, reflecting the extent and significance of such scholarly activity at the college.

Hope’s students also receive distinction in creative performance. This past December, the Hope College Department of Theatre performed the original production “The Line Between” at the Region III Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) in Indianapolis. Hope’s production was one of only seven that were invited to be performed during the festival. Our students received three top awards, including the prestigious Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Audition Award.

At Hope College, we believe that intercollegiate sport is a powerful vehicle for education as well as for personal development. Our athletics program is part of our Kinesiology Department and is guided by a community of coaches, scholars, and leaders who prioritize excellence and the student-athlete experience. The members of our athletics program are committed to the utmost integrity in competition, are engaged in Christian faith formation, and are dedicated to excelling in sports, academics, and life. In addition to sponsoring intercollegiate play in 20 sports for men and women, Hope College offers several opportunities for students to participate in club sports which are student-run and organized with the support of the college.

**Serving Christ and the Community**

Service is an important part of Hope College life and faith, and our students have a heart for others. Through volunteer opportunities like our annual Time to Serve, spring break immersion trips, our Children’s After School Achievement (CASA) tutoring program, and so much more, our students make a difference locally, nationally, and globally.

- Time to Serve is our annual new-student day of service. Each year, more than 300 new students volunteer at more than 30 nonprofit sites throughout the Holland and Zeeland communities.
At Hope, we believe our students can be change agents in the world. Spring break immersion trips are opportunities for students to challenge their ideas about injustice, deepen their faith, stretch their relationships, and change the way they see the world. This year students traveled to 11 national and four international locations to cross-culturally encounter God, share the good news, disciple, and serve others.

Our Children’s After School Achievement (CASA) program is a community-wide program to assist at-risk, school-age children by providing free after-school tutoring. The program also provides individualized summer school and other educational and cultural enrichment programs. Over the past 30 years, thousands of Holland-area children have been tutored and mentored by hundreds of Hope College students.

**Campus Master Plan**

In the fall of 2017, Hope College completed a campus-wide master planning process to envision how the campus environment can support our mission and strategic priorities over the next 20 years. The process was a multi-phase initiative that took a holistic approach to understanding our unique role in the city of Holland, the evolution of the campus since the completion of the last master plan in 1985, current conditions that impact experience, and the aspirations of the college community.

A key goal of the master planning process was to connect with a wide cross-section of groups on campus, including our administration, academic leadership, students, alumni, parents, and a variety of external stakeholders from Holland. These campus and community connections took the form of one-on-one conversations, campus open houses, small group meetings, and a constituent survey. These engagement exercises and supportive data collection uncovered a wide range of priorities from programmatic space needs, sustainability and technology aspirations, and the image and identity goals of a twenty-first century learning landscape.

The campus master planning process identified the needs of the campus community that were not previously met and areas where policy or aspirations could be more effectively addressed through the physical environment. These needs, observations, and themes were synthesized into flexible frameworks for change and system improvements that will serve as tools for campus change over the coming years.

**Conclusion**

Hope College offers a liberal arts curriculum, graduate-school-style research, hands-on opportunities, and challenging collaborations. We are committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive campus community that allows each of us to grow in our cultural understanding, engagement, and proficiency. Ours is an environment of the highest standards where students can explore and become all that God intends them to be.
Report of Northwestern College

In honor of his tenth anniversary at Northwestern, President Christy shared the following letter with key college constituents in January of 2018.

Friends,

As we begin a new year, I would like to share a “State of the College” from my vantage point as your president the past decade. Many things have changed in higher education since I began in January 2008. However, when it comes to our foundational values as an institution, we are more resolute and committed to our mission than ever.

What remains unchanged since 2008?

Living out Our Mission

Everything we do at Northwestern begins and ends with our mission, which states that “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.” A clear and compelling mission is only as strong as the faculty, staff, students, and alumni living it out. At Northwestern, I meet with every candidate who interviews for employment. I ask who Jesus Christ is to them and how their understanding of Christ and calling will impact their work and ability to live out our mission. Our employee handbooks say, “Appointees shall be in fundamental agreement with the purposes of the College … and shall express an active Christian commitment.” Northwestern attentively evaluates and encourages faculty members’ ability to make meaningful connections between their academic disciplines and the claims of Scripture and the Christian faith.

Commitment to the Authority of Scripture

Northwestern College stands with the historic Christian faith and confessions of the Reformed tradition in its belief that Holy Scripture occupies a privileged position as the final authority for the faith and practice of the people of God. While the prevailing winds of culture may pressure all Christian institutions to waver in their commitments, Northwestern continues to hold firm to the biblical exhortation of Paul in Romans 12:1-2: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

While there are many cultural issues that threaten to distort God’s vision for human flourishing, issues related to human sexuality are at the forefront. Pornography, premarital sex, adultery, sexual assault, the objectification of women, and same-sex activity all exemplify the brokenness of sexual desire and expression. Like all good gifts from God, the gift of human sexuality is to be honored, cherished, and expressed in ways that bring glory to God. It is within this context that sexual promiscuity of any sort is always wrong, and it’s the reason we call all members of our community to chastity—to celibacy outside of marriage and faithfulness within marriage. I hope you take comfort in the fact that our board has affirmed in our faculty, staff, and student handbooks, “the college lifts up the Christian ideal of marriage between a man and a woman, and contends that all sexual intimacy shall be within the bounds of such marriage.” While this vision of marriage is being challenged both inside and outside the church, we believe it reflects the call of
Scripture and God’s best for us as human beings. At Northwestern, we strive to live out this vision by holding to the truth while loving each other with the grace God bestows upon every one of us.

What has changed since 2008?

Campus

Visitors compliment our beautiful, modern campus, which is thanks to expansions and improvements like these:

- 2011: Completed summer renovation of the four-court area of the Rowenhorst Student Center (RSC)
- 2011: Opened North Suites, a 68-bed men’s suite-style residence
- 2012: Completed renovation of the cafeteria and Vermeer Dining Room
- 2013: Completed DeWitt Learning Commons and new campus entrance
- 2013: Upgraded RSC mini-gym with a new fitness facility, racquetball courts, and game zone
- 2014: Completely refurbished and converted Ramaker to our Student Life Center
- 2015: Opened Juffer Athletic Fieldhouse for golf, baseball, softball, and weight training for all athletes
- 2016: Converted former Korver Weight Room to the Paul Bartlett Wrestling Facility
- 2018: Will open new science center for biology, chemistry, and nursing

Curriculum

This fall we established a new academic leadership structure with four divisional deans reporting to Mark Husbands, vice president for academic affairs. During my tenure, we have launched new undergraduate programs in biochemistry, criminal justice, genetics, sport management, translation and interpretation, and worship arts, and existing programs in ag-business and computer science are being strengthened. Our new Master of Education program has four tracks: early childhood, special education, master teacher, and teacher leadership. We plan to offer Master of Science in Athletic Training degrees in 2018–19 and launch a master’s program in physician assistant studies in 2019–20.

Enrollment

It has become harder to recruit undergraduate, residential students. There are fewer students graduating from high schools in the Midwest, and more of them are choosing two-year colleges and public universities due to three primary factors: the 2008 market collapse, the housing bubble burst, and the perception of cost. Compared with 10 years ago, families are more concerned with price; they want measurable, concrete results as a return on their investment. Fortunately, we proactively diversified by adding programs for graduate students and adult learners, a growing market in our region. We are cautiously optimistic about undergraduate enrollment for the fall of 2018, and we continue to be pleased with steady growth in our graduate programs.

Giving

When an institution is blessed with a clear and compelling Christian mission, it not only
leads to an increased number of students but also strong growth in financial support. During 2016–17 we received more than $9.1 million in donations, shattering the previous record of $6.5 million in 2013–14! This is thanks to the diligent work of our advancement team, as well as a new culture of volunteer leadership exemplified by the chairs of our last two campaigns, Dave Bomgaars ('77) and Bryan Den Hartog ('81).

*Best Christian Workplaces Institute (BCWI)*

For the past four years we have contracted with BCWI to survey our employees about their satisfaction with NWC. On the most recent survey, our employees ranked us at 3.86 (out of 5) for overall satisfaction, our highest score yet. We are especially pleased with the feedback we received regarding our supervisors. Acclaimed author Marcus Buckingham says, “[E]mployees don’t leave organizations; they leave because of their supervisors.” The highest ranking we received from employees was a 4.45, with this statement: “My supervisor cares about me as a person.” What a great affirmation of the effective and compassionate people NWC is blessed with.

*Students*

Everything we do is aimed at providing transformational experiences for students academically, spiritually, socially, and personally, and our students and alumni consistently provide evidence of this. Our most recent accounting graduates had the fifth-highest U.S. scores on the CPA exam. Pre-med students who took the MCAT in 2017 finished in the 77th percentile, putting them in the top quarter among test-takers worldwide. We have added more than 60 new paid internship opportunities since 2014; one of them, at Ernst & Young, led to a job offer for Chris Sietstra ('17), who wrote:

Positions at [Big Four accounting firms] are highly sought after. I was competing with candidates from some of the biggest state and private schools in the country, and at times wondered how I would stack up. During the interview process, I realized how impressive my Northwestern College education is. Nearly everyone I interviewed with asked, “What college do you go to?” I’d answer, “Northwestern College in Iowa,” and they’d say, “If you’re an example of the quality of education there, I’m sending my kids!”

Chris’s story is remarkable but certainly not unique. Northwestern College grads are highly sought after. That’s why 96 percent of our graduates, on average, are employed or in grad school within six months of graduation.

In addition to landing good jobs and being accepted into the nation’s most prestigious graduate programs, our students are also being prepared for meaningful lives and kingdom purposes. Having traveled the U.S. for a decade, I have found Northwestern College graduates to be courageous and faithful followers of Christ who are leaders in their homes, churches, professions, and communities. I am inspired by them and deeply grateful for your partnership through your friendship, advocacy, financial support, and especially your prayers. May God bless you richly in 2018 and beyond.

Blessings,
Greg Christy, president