Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

General Synod exercises oversight of ministerial formation through its two seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA). Like the Reformed Church in America (RCA) seminaries, the MFCA possesses a deep commitment to developing faithful, educated, and 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 21 years ago, the MFCA has been tasked with and has 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 pursuing an approved alternate route.
- evaluating 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. This will be done by the Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care and the approved alternate route certification committees and staff.
- 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.
- 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), which 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. Enrollment statistics as of March 1, 2019, indicate the significant changes in just two decades, with not one full-time student at Fuller in Pasadena.

There are currently 83 candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (CFM) process; 22 (26.5 percent) of these are pursuing the Certificate of Fitness through the approved alternate route, which did not exist until MFCA was established in 1999.

Enrollment in the MFCA continues to cluster in the eastern half of the U.S. Eighty-eight percent of the candidates reside east of the Rocky Mountains. More than 57 percent (57.8
percent) are east of the Mississippi. Numbers have increased in the Heartland while slipping somewhat in the East.

Just over 20 percent (20.4 percent) of the candidates are female. This statistic has decreased significantly this past year (28 percent in early 2018).

Just over 36 percent (36.4 percent) of the approved alternate route candidates represent a racial-ethnic minority group. In excess of 30 percent (30.1 percent) of the total candidates represent racial-ethnic minorities. These numbers have decreased by approximately 5 percent this past year.

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 as necessary to embrace a multiracial future freed of racism.
- Arranging for instruction in Korean and Spanish to ensure that talented candidates of all backgrounds can pursue appropriate pastoral education.
- As appropriate, given our polity, working with classes and institutions to enhance educational opportunities for commissioned pastors and others and to encourage a seamless transition to study for the ministry of Word and sacrament where possible.

These initiatives are not new but 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 has operated under policy governance. In accordance with the tenets of policy governance, which is also used elsewhere in the RCA, the board has attempted to focus on visioning and policy development, setting clear goals for the agency, and delegating the means of achieving them to the executive director and his staff, subject only to explicit executive limitations. The board has stayed abreast of the MFCA program through the monitoring reports of the director.

With the creation and approval of the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board (PFOB), the role of visioning and policy development may no longer be a main responsibility of the MFCA board as most policy and direction will come from the PFOB. The introduction of the PFOB and the board’s actual experience have caused the board to revisit how it operates. The initial consensus regarding its role is that the main purpose is to award the CFM and oversee the program through its supervision of the director. The RCA’s chief financial officer is the CFO of the MFCA. The director creates the initial budget each year, and, once the CFO and the GSC approve it, the director manages the budget. There is little involvement in terms of budgets and finances on the part of the board.

With these changes, the board is considering one of two things. The first consideration is to review the policy governance document and modify it in order to reflect current changes. The second is to move away from policy governance totally and to revisit the bylaws and adjust them to include matters that might have been lost and yet are important to the operation of the MFCA.
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, the MFCA is not 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 CFM. The agency appeals to General Synod and churches to consider increased financial support of the agency.

The CFO of the denomination also serves in that capacity for the MFCA. Budgets, and particularly the reserves, are closely monitored by the CFO. The report to the MFCA board by the CFO at the March meeting indicated that the 2019 budget is on track with a projected deficit of $52,000, which will be drawn from reserves. This trend of drawing from reserves should be able to sustain the agency’s operations for another four or five years.

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 the churches by way of General Synod assessments. The agency would not exist if it was not for the theological education assessment income.

Collaborative Efforts

Pine Rest Christian Hospital

The MFCA has continued to participate in several cooperative efforts. One such effort is with Pine Rest Hospital and the DeVos Family Foundation. Along with Calvin Theological Seminary, NBTS, and WTS, 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 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; Southern California; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and the Hamilton, Ontario, cohort should be complete at the time of General Synod 2019.

The steering committee is planning to offer a North America-wide distance unit where the retreats will occur in a central location and the weekly sessions will occur online.

MFCA, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary Collaboration

The Pastoral Formation Oversight Board (PFOB) has encouraged and funded the annual collaborative meeting of the RCA seminary presidents, deans, and the MFCA executive director, the leadership of the RCA theological agents (MFCA, NBTS, WTS). The group met on February 28 and March 1, 2019, in Holland, Michigan. In attendance were Timothy Brown, Cornelis Kors, Micah McCready, Alvin Padilla, and Beth Tanner.
At the meeting, the participants agreed to work toward collaborative efforts in cross-registration for students between the institutions, mutual efforts in offering quality Spanish education, faculty/student exchanges, and a review of the CFM and how it is administered by each agent.

The group took note of data and matters that are influencing the operations of MFCA, NBTS, and WTS. Observations included: a) there are fewer General Synod professors, and presently only one at NBTS; b) the CFM is difficult to oversee and implement properly when there is minimal RCA representation, in particular General Synod professors; and c) there is confusion regarding the role of the agent versus the classis; who is responsible for what?

It was decided to take the next year to investigate options to address the observed phenomena, together with the PFOB and the General Synod professors. Considerations include the following:

- To rethink how we understand the role of the agents, acknowledging that the classis has distinctive responsibilities in the ordination process that are not the domain of the agents. Examples would include fitness and orthodoxy. The actual responsibility of the agents is to prepare candidates for classis examination.
- To replace the CFM with a “Declaration of Readiness for Examination.”
- To recognize the Standards for the Preparation of Ministry approved in 1998 as guidelines for both classis and agent, whereas the five criteria, established by the Board of Theological Education in the late 1980s, better describes the responsibility of the agents in their role.
- To utilize an edited version of the five criteria as the guideline for determining the Declaration of Readiness for Examination. The edited version of the five criteria would read as follows:

  **Academic preparation**—successful completion of the fields of study as required by the *Book of Church Order* (Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Sections 6 and 7 [2018 edition, pp. 45–46]), normally fulfilled through the attainment of a Master of Divinity degree at an accredited seminary, with exceptions as noted in the *BCO*.

  **Spiritual formation** as defined in the RCA Constitution—manifest progress in the candidate’s faith journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

  **Ministry development** as defined in the RCA Constitution—affirmation of gifts and calling, and development of competencies for ministry in such areas as preaching, teaching, congregational care, evangelism, administration, and equipping church members for ministry.

  **Personal wholeness** as defined in the RCA Constitution—pursuit of reasonable health in all significant aspects of life, including the physical, psychological, and social.

  **Denominational identity**—knowledge of the history, mission, worship, polity, and confessional statements of the RCA.
Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded 20 Certificates of Fitness for Ministry, 17 through the Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care process and three through the approved alternate route process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care

Vito F. Baldini  
Classis of City

John David Barry  
Classis of Cascades

John Stewart Benson III  
Classis of New Thing

Joel Hinga Boersma  
Classis of Holland

Ming-Jen Chiang  
Classis of Queens

Anthony Gene Cowans  
Classis of City

Elizabeth Colmant Estes  
Classis of New Brunswick

Jonathan David Flietstra  
Classis of City

Sara Allison Gregory  
Classis of Central Iowa

Jordan Cody Helming  
Classis of West Sioux

Milan J. Johnson  
Classis of East Sioux

Jui-Lin Ou Yang  
Classis of Queens

Andrew Thomas Moore  
Classis of Zeeland

Sally Steele  
Classis of City

Ronald Henry van der Bergh  
Classis of Rockland-Westchester

Jacob Robert Van Der Linden  
Classis of Minnesota

Susanah Elizabeth Wade  
Classis of New York

Approved Alternate Route

Richard Alejandro Caballero  
Classis of Southwest

Ming-Chen (Grace) Lo Rohrer  
Classis of East Sioux

Jeffrey Louis Slack  
Classis of California

Alternate Means and Petitions

1) Reduction in Twenty-four Month Requirement: The request of the Classis of Cascades, on behalf of John David Barry, to reduce the length of enrollment was approved by the MFCA board of trustees at its November 2018 meeting. The board was able to identify a sufficient period of supervised ministry experience to substitute for deficiencies, thus determining the candidate is qualified to earn the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [2018 edition, p. 45]).

2) Reduction in Twenty-four Month Requirement: The request of the Classis of the City, on behalf of Sally Steele, to reduce the length of enrollment was approved by the MFCA board of trustees at its November 2018 meeting. The board was able to identify a sufficient period of supervised ministry experience to substitute for deficiencies, thus determining the candidate is qualified to earn the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [2018 edition, p. 45]).

At the conclusion of the report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency the following motion was made and supported from the floor:
TE 19-5
That the General Synod bless God for the life and witness of Dr. Cor Kors and thank him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the candidates enrolled in the MFCA. (ADOPTED)
Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

Introduction

In a chapter titled “Following Jesus as Discernment,” author Jon Sobrino writes that Christian discernment assists the believer in not only understanding the will of God, but also in carrying out God’s will (Discernment of the Spirit and Spirits, Seabury Press). In the New Testament, discernment is characterized as allowing us to exercise wisdom aided by the leading, prompting, and direction of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, biblical discernment is commonly understood as the sound judgment which makes possible the distinguishing of good from evil and the recognition of God’s right ways for his people.

This is the challenge of an RCA theological agent in the east, New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS):

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and centered in its trust of God’s sovereignty and grace, NBTS is a Seminary with the mission to educate persons and strengthen communities for transformational, public ministries in church and society. We fulfill this mission through creative, contextual, and critical engagement with texts, traditions, and practices.

The apostle Paul stated in Romans 10:14 (KJV): “How shall they hear without a preacher?” By “preacher,” we at NBTS focus on the scholar/practitioner/teacher/servant who guides, develops, and mentors congregations, communities, mission partners, prison ministries, and chaplaincies. At NBTS, we envision this godly leader/preacher/pastor/theologian progressing through the process of pastoral formation and identity development. We seek to affirm and motivate our constituents to answer the questions of how, who, when, what, and where of ministry and to help them develop the spiritual, personal, educational, theological, and vocational vicissitudes and gifts to partner with the Holy Spirit in the work of the church.

According to B. Wheeler and colleagues, there are five core practices that a seminary can engage in to create a zeitgeist and an environment that fosters successful theological education. They are teambuilding, faculty relations, financial management, institutional advancement, and vision. We have worked diligently this year to create a seminary environment steeped in collegiality, cooperation, and competence. Our efforts also have been directed to establishing trust between the administration and the faculty. Additionally, we have imposed fiscal discipline and maintained a focus on the stewardship of resources and financial well-being and health of NBTS. As an institution, we have taken seriously the responsibility of promoting the seminary to those who can impact the welfare of the school and have focused on articulating the vision and mission of the seminary to the broader community. This report will articulate our signature efforts of engagement in four sections: 1) program highlights; 2) accomplishments and celebrations; 3) outstanding issues, special problems, and challenges; and 4) strategies and plans to overcome the outstanding issues, special problems, and challenges.

Section 1. Program Highlights

Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA), New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS), and Western Theological Seminary (WTS) Collaboration

On February 28 to March 1, 2019, the leadership of the three RCA theological agents (MFCA, NBTS, and WTS) met in Holland, Michigan, to discuss the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry, collaboration around educating Spanish populations, faculty/student exchange, combined programs and cohorts, and the RCA’s Vision 2020 Team. In attendance at the meeting were Timothy Brown (president of WTS), Cornelis Kors (executive director of the MFCA), Micah McCreary (president of NBTS), Alvin Padilla (vice president and academic dean of WTS), and Beth Tanner (vice president and academic dean of NBTS). The meeting was encouraged and funded by the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board (PFOB).

During our time together, we focused on our individual and collective operations. The observations included the following:

1. There are fewer General Synod professors, and presently only one at New Brunswick;
2. The Certificate of Fitness for Ministry is difficult to oversee and implement properly when there is minimal RCA representation, in particular General Synod professors; and
3. There is confusion regarding the role of the agent versus the classis; i.e., who is responsible for what? It was decided to take the next year to investigate, together with the PFOB and the General Synod professors, options to address the observed phenomena. Considerations include the following:
   • To rethink how we understand the role of theological agents, acknowledging that the classis has distinctive responsibilities in the ordination process that are not the domain of the agents.
   • To consider replacing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry with a “Declaration of Readiness for Examination.”
   • To recognize the eight Standards for the Preparation of Ministry as guidelines for both classis and agent. The General Synod of 2006 adopted the following standards:
     o #1 (Personal Faith and Evangelism)
       Demonstrate a mature personal faith in Jesus Christ and commitment and skill in nurturing others to embrace that faith.
     o #2 (Call)
       Demonstrate a life worthy of the gospel, a sense of call to the office of minister of Word and sacrament, an understanding of that office in the Reformed tradition, and a commitment to its responsibilities.
     o #3 (Scripture)
       Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Scripture (with sufficient Greek and Hebrew to understand nuances of the biblical text), commitment to its authority as the Word of God, and insight into its interpretation.
     o #4 (History and Theology)
       Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the history and teachings of the Christian church and insight into their interpretation.
o #5 (Reformed Tradition)
Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of and commitment to
Reformed doctrine, government, and worship.

o #6 (Leadership)
Demonstrate the skill and understanding required to lead the
people of God in faithfulness to their mission.

o #7 (Pastoral Care)
Demonstrate skill, understanding, and compassion in caring for
persons and congregations.

o #8 (Worship and Preaching)
Demonstrate skill and understanding to lead worship, preach the
gospel, and administer the sacraments.

• To explore the five formation functions, established by the Board of
Theological Education in the late 1980s, as a guideline for determining
the Declaration of Readiness for Examination and the focus of our
educational efforts for RCA ministers of Word and sacrament. The
five formation functions or criteria are:

  o Academic preparation—successful completion of the fields
    of study as required by the Book of Church Order (Chapter 1,
    Part II, Article 1, Sections 6 and 7 [2018 edition pp. 45–46]),
    normally fulfilled through the attainment of a Master of Divinity
    degree at an accredited seminary.

  o Spiritual formation—manifest progress in the candidate’s faith
    journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

  o Ministry development—affirmation of gifts and calling,
    development of competencies for ministry in such areas
    as preaching, teaching, congregational care, evangelism,
    administration, and equipping church members for ministry.

  o Personal wholeness—pursuit of reasonable health in all of the
    significant aspects of life, including the physical, psychological,
    and social.

  o Denominational identity—knowledge of the history, mission,
    worship, polity, and confessional statements of the RCA, as well
    as demonstrated loyalty to the denomination and its program.

These formation functions are integrated into the RCA’s Standards for the
Preparation of Ministry (listed above). The standards were created with the
goal of being used by both the RCA classes and the RCA theological agents
as markers in our assessment, evaluation, and development of ministers of
Word and sacrament, as well as for ministerial formation among all of our
constituents.

Reformed Church Center at NBTS

Directed by James Brumm, the Reformed Church Center held many relationship-building
programs at the seminary:

1. A conference examining the connection of how local congregations can use
doctrinal statements as a force for greater good, featuring four leaders who
are both scholars and practitioners (Presenters: Paul Janssen, Jes Kast, Holly
Phares, and Micah McCreary).

2. Ishmael and Isaac: Examining Interfaith Relationships (Presenters: Harold
“Hank” Lay, Norma Coleman-James, John Hubers, and Vicky Eastland)
3. Lectures by Al Janssen (a General Synod professor emeritus at NBTS) and informal conversations around four topics:

- We can be church together even when we don’t entirely agree—led by Abby Norton-Levering (Albany Synod ministries coordinator) and Thomas Song (pastor of Steinway Reformed Church in Queens, New York)
- We can be church no matter what happens denominationally—led by Rett Zabriskie (specialized transition minister) and Matthew van Maastricht (pastor of Altamont Reformed Church in Altamont, New York)
- We can be a non-anxious presence for our own congregations and the RCA—led by Linda Burlew Gold (pastor of First Reformed Church in College Point, New York) and Dwayne Jackson (pastor of Second Reformed Church in Hackensack, New Jersey)
- We can be ecumenical on our own ... and often are—led by Patricia Singletary (pastor of Elmendorf Reformed Church in New York, New York) and Amy Nyland (New York Synod executive minister)

4. “Send Them, Apostles”: NBTS as the Birthplace of RCA Missions (Presenters: John W. Coakley, John Hubers, Derrick Jones, and Eri Kitada [Rutgers University])

5. The Reformed Church Center Presents: Schism—and Reformed Theology? (Keynote Speaker: Dirk Smit; respondents: Jaeseung Cha, Janice McLean-Farrell, Jonathan Vanderbeck)

6. The Third Annual Women’s Stories Day (Keynote: Elizabeth Colmant Estes; respondents: Patricia Sealy, Karen Jackson, and Liz Testa)

7. Stories of trauma, resilience, and hope related to her work with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Italy, and why Christians should do more to care for those seeking refuge (Presenter: JJ TenClay, refugee ministries coordinator for RCA Global Mission).

8. Looking at the Great Lakes Catechism (Presenters: Tricia Sheffield, Matthew van Maastricht, Dwayne Jackson, Christopher Dorn, and Micah McCreary)

Section 2. Accomplishments and Celebrations

We have adopted the vision statement “NBTS—A Light in God’s Cities.” We have also developed an umbrella motto: “Think Critically, Act Justly, and Lead Faithfully.” This vision and motto are critical to knitting together our team and our local and global communities in all of the functions we must perform as a seminary.

To help effectively spread the message of our mission, vision, and ongoing progress to current students, current donors, and prospective students and donors, we have spent countless hours reimagining our website, and the process of updating the website and the catalog embedded there continues. We also have developed two dual degree programs—an M.Div./M.A. and an M.Div./M.T.S. These opportunities will be shared on the website this summer.

In addition, our faculty have been working on an ongoing assessment of our current and new programs. The effort has included the recommendation and approval of new program outcomes for all of the academic programs.

Notable NBTS Personnel Changes

The 2018–2019 school year has ushered in a new era at the Gardner A. Sage Library. New NBTS Sage Library hires this year have included:
• T. Patrick Milas, director of the Gardner A. Sage Library and assistant professor of theological bibliography and research
• Yaeli Flam, circulation services coordinator
• Laura Giacobbe, public services librarian
• Gerone Lockhart, collection services librarian

James Brumm continues as director of the Reformed Church Center, the Seminary Archives, and the Theological Writing Center.

Residential Faculty

• Beth Tanner, the Norman and Mary Kansfield Chair of Old Testament, has been named dean of academic affairs.
• Nathan Jérémie-Brink joined NBTS as the assistant professor of history of global Christianity and L. Russell Feakes memorial assistant professor of church history.
• Janice McLean-Farrell joined NBTS as the Dirk Romeyn assistant professor of metro-urban ministry.
• Andrew Wymer will serve as assistant dean of doctoral studies, in addition to his current positions as assistant professor of preaching and worship and director of Mast Chapel.

Programs

• NBTS hosted a successful Association of Theological School (ATS) focused visit.
• Middle States Accreditation: NBTS received the official letter of our candidacy in November 2018. As a result, an accreditation visit from Middle States Commission on Higher Education will occur in August 2019.
• We also received a Future Ministers Peer Learning Group Grant from ATS.
• On January 26, 2019, Janice McLean-Farrell gave the keynote address at the annual Warren Dennis Metro-Urban Lecture. This was followed by her installation into the Dick Romeyn Chair of Metro-Urban Ministries. Her address can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/320229945.
• New York Permission to Operate: NBTS received a renewed permission to operate in the State of New York for the Master of Divinity and the Master of Arts.
• Association of Theological Schools: NBTS received notification that the two petitions submitted to the January 2019 board were approved: (1) a new Master of Theological Studies will begin on the New Jersey campus in fall of 2019; (2) approval to offer up to 70 percent of courses in all programs in an enhanced hybrid (50 to 70 percent online) and online format. We do not plan to provide 70 percent of the degrees online in the near future. This gives us the ability for more flexibility in our current programming and an opportunity to offer more hybrid courses. Based on our plans and noted in the ATS letter, we are creating new course evaluation forms: face-to-face, hybrid, and online.
• Upcoming accreditation visits: We are entering a busy season of accreditation preparation. Our two major accreditation visits will take place in spring 2020 and fall 2021. This work requires about two to two-and-a-half years of preparation.
  o One-day review of Middle States Plan of Preparation for Accreditation: April 24, 2019
  o One-day focus visit from ATS (for strategic plan, assessment plan, and financial concerns): September 16, 2019
In addition to the meeting of the three RCA theological agents, NBTS president Micah McCreary focused on team building and collaborations with the following agencies, events, and activities:

- Association of Theological Schools (bi-annual)
- International Reformed Theological Institute’s International Summer School in Amsterdam
- Association for Reformed and Liturgical Worship conference at Princeton Theological Seminary
- An NBTS presidential blog
- Visits with the president and board member of the In-Trust Center

Within the “walls” of NBTS, we have sponsored, participated in, and facilitated numerous team-building programs and opportunities. We have participated in alumni ordinations, ordinations by RCA members in local classes, family celebrations, church membership (First Reformed Church in New Brunswick), a luncheon with NBTS Korean graduates, and motivational speech with future scholars.

Ecumenical, Diversity, and Gender Enrollment at NBTS

2018 enrollment:

1. Enrollment by denomination (top five): Baptist (40), RCA (15), Nondenominational (13), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (13), African Methodist Episcopal (12)
2. 78 percent black, 9 percent white, 6 percent Asian, 6 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent international
3. 56 percent female and 44 percent male

Faculty Statistics

1. 33 percent of faculty are assistant professors, 56 percent are associate professors, and 11 percent are full professors
2. 67 percent of full-time faculty are men and 33 percent of full-time faculty are women
3. 22 percent of full-time faculty are Asian, 33 percent of full-time faculty are black, and 44 percent of full-time faculty are white

Section 3. Outstanding Issues, Special Problems, and Challenges

Revenue

1. Year-to-date tuition and fee revenue is below budget because of lower than expected enrollment for both the spring and fall terms. We had used 80 full-time equivalents for the budget but ended both terms with only 57 after the two-week add and drop period. On a good note, the D.Min. programs did better than expected by $10,000.
2. Our revenue from private gifts and grants continues to be below budget even after receiving over $200,000 from an estate settlement.
3. Income from our donor-restricted funds contains our usual 5 percent drawdown
of our endowment account and is over budget because of an increase of revenue from our perpetual trusts accounts.

4. Other sources of income are a little behind budget because of a slow period during the winter months. The spring season income will more than likely increase as a result of an increase in rental bookings.

Expenses

1. Most of our expenses have been in line with our fiscal year budget. There has been only an approximate one percent deviation between our operating budget and actual expenses. We have been trying to keep it that way.

2. The plant operations and maintenance expense line is above budget because of rising utility costs from our electric service supplier. This expense will be greatly reduced as we anticipate our solar project will be installed this summer or fall.

Section 4. Strategies and Plans to Overcome Outstanding Issues, Special Problems, and Challenges

1. Increase tuition: We will increase our tuition by a modest 5 percent (from $620 to $651).

2. Increase giving: We have re-hired Cathy Proctor to spearhead our seminary advancement efforts.

3. Increased retention efforts: Career counseling efforts and involvement of pastors and churches in the mentoring of students.

4. Create new degree programs and new revenue streams
   - Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree
   - Center for Clergy Care
   - Center for Social Justice
   - Counseling Center

5. Explore alternative marketing opportunities

6. Explore viable cost-cutting measures
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 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.

Seminary News

New President

Dr. Felix Theonugraha was named Western’s 12th president in February 2019. He will assume his duties on July 1, 2019. He currently serves as vice president for student life and university services at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. He is an ordained RCA pastor and attended the University of California, Berkeley (B.A.), and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.Div., Ph.D.). Search committee co-chairs Kris DePree and Carol VanAndel said, “His faithful commitment to the RCA and his penchant for leading with a servant’s heart make him uniquely qualified to extend our beloved school’s rich legacy and propel us all into a new and dynamic era.” At Trinity, Felix led the enrollment team, athletics department, alumni office, and student life division. He also co-chaired the university’s Gender Equity Task Force, served on the Racial Reconciliation Task Force, taught in the school’s Master of Arts in Leadership program, and helped introduce intercultural elements to Trinity’s chapel services. He lived in both Indonesia and Taiwan before moving to the United States as a teenager.

Our New Day

In the summer of 2016, WTS formally launched the Our New Day capital campaign to raise funds for a building project and to strengthen the seminary’s endowment. The campaign has now been successfully completed, and we are happy to announce that we have surpassed both original goals of $14.9 million in building giving and $10 million in endowment giving. On December 6, 2018, we gathered students, faculty, staff, alumni, supporters, builders, contractors, and community members for a dedication day to celebrate the opening of our new spaces, including two new additions: the Dick and Ethie Haworth Leadership Center and the Jack and Mary DeWitt Learning Center, which houses the new Cook Library. We bless the Lord for these new resources and what they mean for our bright future.
Financial Support

WTS enjoyed another strong year of giving in 2017–2018. Overall giving to the seminary reached over $6.2 million with close to $4 million in gifts to the building project of the Our New Day campaign. This represents the second highest year of giving in the history of WTS.

Enrollment

WTS experienced a slight decrease in overall headcount during the first semester of the 2018–2019 academic year, even as there was an increase in another important unit of measure—full-time equivalency. There was a downturn in Master of Divinity (M.Div.) applications in 2018–2019, while applications for the Master of Arts (M.A.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.), and certificate programs showed growth. This is consistent with industry patterns across the Association of Theological Schools. A total of 310 students were enrolled during the first semester, including 152 M.Div. candidates: 73 in-residence and 79 distance-learning students, including 109 RCA candidates in all M.Div. programs. The M.A. continues to grow with an enrollment of 43 students; there were 56 students in the D.Min. program compared to 28 in 2017–2018. The remainder of Western’s students were enrolled in either a certificate program or the Th.M. degree, or they were non-degree-seeking. Headcount by the second semester increased significantly to 338 students.

Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry

WTS introduced three new concentrations for the 24-credit Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry (GCPM). RCA candidates receive a 25 percent tuition discount in these programs.

- Church planting and multiplication—done in collaboration with the Harbor Churches, courses include missional preaching and church multiplication as well as RCA Standards and Polity. This is an excellent tool for classes to train RCA commissioned pastor candidates.
- Church leadership—courses are provided in Spanish and English and are specifically aimed at preparing and empowering Hispanic men and women for church leadership.
- Soul Care—done in collaboration with the Potter’s Inn Soul Care Institute, courses focus on spiritual formation, development, and renewal.

Rev. Dr. Ira John Hesselink Jr. (1928–2018)

Our former president and beloved professor Dr. I. John Hesselink passed away on October 28, 2018. After graduating from WTS in 1953, John became a missionary, evangelist, and professor of theology in Japan for 20 years. While in Japan, he befriended the renowned theologian Emil Brunner, and then was able to pursue his Ph.D. in Basel, Switzerland, under the tutelage of Karl Barth. In the early 1960s, he was instrumental in reuniting Barth and Brunner, two twentieth-century theological giants who had become estranged. Hesselink returned to WTS 20 years after his graduation and led the school as president from 1973–1985. He then returned to the faculty and taught theology for six years before retiring, yet in “retirement” continued to lecture and teach around the world. He faithfully attended chapel and various WTS events until just a few weeks before his death, and his gentle presence and sweet spirit is missed.
Gathering First Fruits Summit

In January 2019, six representatives of WTS attended Gathering First Fruits: National Summit on the Economics of Ministry, an initiative sponsored by Lilly Endowment Inc. The event brought together 67 seminaries and 120 denominations and organizations who have received grants from Lilly to support and strengthen pastoral leadership by addressing complex financial challenges faced by pastors and their families. Since receiving its grant in 2013, WTS has decreased the educational debt graduates carry into ministry, as well as teaching personal and institutional financial literacy.

Seminary Events

Stoutemire Lecture, September 23–24, 2018

Our guest for the eighth annual Stoutemire Lecture in Multicultural Ministry was Randy Woodley, distinguished professor of faith and culture and director of intercultural and indigenous studies at George Fox University and Portland Seminary. His public lecture was entitled “Indigenous Theology as Original Instructions.” The Stoutemire lectures seek to equip seminarians and Christian leaders with resources for increased intercultural competence for greater effectiveness in ministry.

Bast Preaching Festival

The Bast Preaching Festival in November featured Timothy Brown, president of Western Theological Seminary and Henry Bast professor of preaching. Co-leaders were Denise Kingdom Grier of Maple Avenue Ministries, Jonathon Brown of Pillar Church, Jessica Shults of Standale Reformed Church, and Trygve Johnson, dean of the chapel at Hope College.

Tom Boogaart’s “Final Performance”

In lieu of a last lecture for his retirement, Tom Boogaart elected instead to give a performance of the Book of Jonah with his Hebrew students on December 13, 2018. The event was held in The Commons at the seminary and was standing room only.

Featured Seminary at Symposium on Worship

In January, WTS was the featured seminary for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s annual Symposium on Worship. More than 30 WTS faculty, students, staff, and alumni participated in leading worship and presenting workshops. The annual symposium was attended by 1,200 participants from more than 30 countries.

Cancer Stories and The Christian Story

On February 15, 2019, Deanna Thompson, author of several books, including Glimpsing Resurrection: Cancer, Trauma, and Ministry, visited campus and led several events on the ways serious illness and trauma affect faith.

Doxophilia 2019

During March 5–8, 2019, WTS welcomed popular musician Sandra McCracken to lead this year’s Doxophilia—a week-long exploration of worship and worship renewal. Sandra led chapel each day, directed a workshop, and gave a concert at Hope College.
Osterhaven Lectures

John Swinton, professor in practical theology and pastoral care at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, presented the Osterhaven Lectures on Theology on April 15–16, 2019. Swinton is a major figure in the field of disability and theology.

143rd Commencement

On May 13, 2019, Western celebrated its 143rd commencement. Seventy candidates earned M.Div., M.A., Th.M., and D.Min. degrees. In addition, nine students earned the Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry. Popular author Lisa Sharon Harper gave the commencement address. May 13 was also Alumni/ae Day, in which we celebrated the reunions of the Classes of 1959, 1969, 1979, and 1999. Brian Vriesman ’79 and Tom Boogaart ’75 were honored as the distinguished alumni at the annual alumni dinner.

Celebration of Retiring President Timothy Brown

On May 14, 2019, friends, former students, and colleagues gathered to celebrate the presidency of Timothy Brown, who is retiring from the presidency at the end of June. After a one-semester sabbatical, Brown will return to the seminary at the start of 2020 to resume his position as Henry Bast professor of preaching.

Human Resources Updates

• Kristen Johnson was promoted to professor of theology and Christian formation, effective July 1, 2018.
• Ron Rienstra was promoted to professor of preaching and worship arts, effective July 1, 2018.
• Kyle Small was promoted to professor of church leadership, effective July 1, 2018.
• Sarah Barton was appointed Nouwen Fellow for two years, effective July 1, 2018.
• Carlos Thompson was appointed Nouwen Fellow for two years, effective July 1, 2018.
• Shari Oosting was hired as associate director of formation for ministry in July 2018.
• Margie Wade was hired as resources management librarian in July 2018.
• Keith Reynolds was hired as associate director of admissions in August 2018.
• Rick Capotosto was hired as associate director of development in October 2018, succeeding Rob Housman, who resigned to become the campus pastor for South Harbor Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
• Tom Boogaart, professor of Old Testament, retired in December 2018 after 32 years of service.
• Daniel Flores was appointed director of Cook Library in March 2019, succeeding interim director Ann Nieuwkoop, who retired in March after 30 years of service to WTS.
• Annie Valkema was hired as associate director of development in March 2019.

Celebrating Faculty Accomplishments

and worship arts, titled *Church at Church: Jean-Jacques von Allmen’s Liturgical Ecclesiology* in March. In addition, Rienstra has a handful of entries that will be published in the September 2019 volume of the new Lectionary Commentary collection *Connections*.

Ben Conner, professor of practical theology and director of the Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry team up with a former WTS Th.M. student, Rode Molle, to write an article last fall in the *Journal of Youth Ministry*, titled “Beyond the Limitations of Applying Western Youth Ministry Thought to an Ethiopian Context: A Case Study.” Another journal article titled “Disabled Adolescents, Enabling Youth Ministry” was published in the *Journal of Religion and Disability* in 2018. Conner’s most recent book, *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness: Exploring Missiology Through the Lens of Disability Studies* (IVP, Missiological Engagement Series) was released in 2018.

Chuck DeGroat, professor of pastoral care and Christian spirituality, received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Dordt College and helped facilitate a partnership with the Soul Care Institute in Colorado. His book *When Narcissism Comes to Church* will be released by InterVarsity Press in 2020, and he also released a video series on practicing contemplative prayer.

David Stubbs, professor of ethics and theology, is the author of the forthcoming book *Temple and Table: The Jewish Roots of the Christian Eucharist* (Eerdmans) and published the article “Sloth and Despair: The Central Rebellion of God’s People” in *Bible Study Magazine* (May/June 2018). Stubbs is also codirector of the Hope-Western Prison Initiative. WTS and Hope College are piloting a program through the Michigan Department of Corrections that could eventually offer a bachelor’s degree in Christian ministry and leadership to the incarcerated population of the Muskegon Correctional Facility.


Jeff Munroe, executive vice president and adjunct faculty member, published poems in *U.S. Catholic* magazine and is the author of the forthcoming book *Reading Buechner: Exploring the Work of a Master Memoirist, Novelist, Theologian and Preacher* (InterVarsity Press).

**Trustee Appointments**

Five new members joined Western’s board of trustees, effective July 1, 2018:

- Matthew Haworth is chairman of Haworth Inc. and a member of Christ Memorial Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.
- Alden Highstreet is a dairy farmer and member of Tulare Community Church in California.
- Timothy Hillegonds is an attorney with Warner, Norcross, and Judd, LLP, and member of Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Stephen Spoelhof is a consultant, entrepreneur, and volunteer, and member of Pillar Church in Holland, Michigan.
- Evan Vermeer is a feedlot consultant and member of First Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa.
Trustees Abram Blaak, Karen Barker, and Newton Fairweather completed their terms of service on June 30, 2018.

Resolutions

Declaring Tom Boogaart General Synod Professor Emeritus

Tom Boogaart completed his teaching at Western Theological Seminary in December 2018. As a result, he is no longer eligible to be a General Synod professor. President Brown and Dean Padilla therefore recommended to the WTS board of trustees that he be declared retired and that a resolution be brought to the 2019 General Synod to declare him a General Synod professor emeritus.

TE 19-1

WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Tom Boogaart, who was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America in 1982 and served in a variety of ways throughout his years of ministry; and

WHEREAS he has served the Reformed Church in America as a General Synod professor since 1990 and

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

WHEREAS Dr. Boogaart has contributed in very significant ways to the life of Western Theological Seminary, ushering in a dramatically new way of teaching Hebrew utilizing orality and performance, in addition to carrying a full teaching load over many years; and

WHEREAS Dr. Boogaart has also helped the seminary to develop a number of other programs that have been extremely important in the life of the school, including the Community Kitchen and the Bridge;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 213th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting on the campus of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, from June 6–11, 2019, expresses its deepest gratitude to Dr. Boogaart for his years of service, and offers its prayers for a fulfilling retirement along with his wife, Judy;

AND BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Rev. Dr. Tom Boogaart be declared a General Synod professor emeritus as of June 11, 2019. (ADOPTED)

Leadership Transition

In recognition of the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Brown as president of Western Theological Seminary, the WTS board offers the following resolution to General Synod 2019:
WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Timothy Brown has served as president of Western Theological Seminary from 2008 to 2019; and

WHEREAS during his tenure 565 people have embarked into gospel ministry after earning degrees at Western, and the seminary has added a Master of Arts degree and a Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry while revamping the Doctor of Ministry and Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Ministry programs; and

WHEREAS under his leadership the seminary’s enrollment has steadily increased while the majority of North American seminaries are in enrollment decline, and the seminary faculty has been strengthened during his presidency by the addition of several outstanding pastor-theologians; and

WHEREAS the seminary’s campus has been beautifully transformed, first by the stunning renovation of Mulder Chapel and more recently by the construction of the Richard and Ethie Haworth Leadership Center and Jack and Mary DeWitt Learning Center; and

WHEREAS the completion of the recent Our New Day Capital Campaign exceeded its funding goals and the construction costs of the new additions have all been covered; and

WHEREAS the seminary has become a much more diverse institution under Tim’s leadership through several key personnel hires and the establishment of the Hispanic Ministry Program; and

WHEREAS Tim and his wife, Nancy, have graciously hosted endless numbers of students, faculty, staff, trustees, and donors in their home during the eleven years of his presidency; and

WHEREAS Tim has been a tireless preacher and pastor, traversing the country repeatedly for the sake of the seminary and the Reformed Church in America, a relentless encourager and teacher of preaching to thousands of students, and a wonderful exemplar of the power of interiorizing scripture and letting a text work on the preacher before the preacher works on the text;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 213th regular session of the General Synod, meeting June 6–11, 2019, in Holland, Michigan, sincerely and wholeheartedly offers its thanks to God for the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Brown as president of Western Theological Seminary and prays that
God will richly and abundantly bless his continuing ministry as he returns to teaching at Western Theological Seminary. (ADOPTED)

Additional Resolutions

The following additional resolutions were presented and adopted at General Synod during the report of Western Theological Seminary.

TE 19-3
WHEREAS on this day, Saturday, June 8, 2019, we, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, bless the living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—for the life and witness of Ira John Hesselink, a sheep of God’s fold, a lamb of God’s flock, and a sinner of his redeeming; and

WHEREAS we bless God for I. John Hesselink’s many years of service to the God’s mission in the great nation of Japan and the many judicatories and schools he served there; and

WHEREAS we bless the Lord for I. John Hesselink’s multiple contributions as a theologian for the church and the academy and his unparalleled service to Western Theological Seminary as her president from 1973 to 1985 and as a member of the theological faculty of the school from 1985 to his retirement as the Albertus C. VanRaalte Professor of Systematic Theology; and

WHEREAS we bless the Lord for I. John Hesselink as a thoughtful teacher, a gracious colleague, and an unwavering supporter of the mission of Western Theological Seminary, namely to equip men and women called by God to lead the Church in mission;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in view of all that I. John Hesselink was, by nature and by grace, that the General Synod of 2019 instructs the general secretary to draft a letter pledging our love, support, and prayers to his wife and co-laborer in the mission of God, Etta Terlouw Hesselink, and expressing the sympathy of the General Synod and our deep admiration to them both; and further,

That the General Synod of 2019, meeting at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, pauses for a moment of silence and to offer prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord for the life and witness of I. John Hesselink. (ADOPTED)

TE 19-4
WHEREAS on this day, Saturday, June 8, 2019, we, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, bless the living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—for the life and witness of Marvin Hoff, a sheep of God’s fold, a lamb of...
God’s flock, and a sinner of his redeeming; and

WHEREAS we bless God for Marvin Hoff’s many years of service to the God’s mission in the life and witness of the Reformed Church in America, particularly applying his considerable administrative gifts to create structures like the General Synod Council to help further the work and witness of the gospel; and

WHEREAS we bless the Lord for Marvin Hoff’s multiple contributions as the president of Western Theological Seminary from 1985 to 1994, where he was instrumental in creating administrative structures to facilitate the witness and work of the school that remain operative today; and

WHEREAS we bless the Lord for Marvin Hoff’s deep passion for the work of theological education worldwide, evidenced by the crucial role that he played in creating the Fund for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, which has blessed many schools with theological libraries to assist their work;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in view of all that Marvin Hoff was, by nature and by grace, that the General Synod of 2019 instructs the general secretary to draft a letter pledging our love, support, and prayers to his wife and co-laborer in the mission of God, Joan Hoff, expressing the sympathy of the General Synod and our deep admiration to them both; and further,

That the General Synod of 2019, meeting at Hope College, in Holland, Michigan, pauses for a moment of silence and that prayers of thanksgiving be offered to the Lord for the life and witness of Marvin Hoff. (ADOPTED)

Following the adoption of TE 19-3 and TE 19-4, Timothy Brown led the General Synod in a prayer of thanksgiving for the lives and witnesses of I. John Hesselink and Marvin Hoff.
Report of Central College

Central College of Pella, Iowa, is a private, four-year liberal arts college. Central is known for its academic rigor, leadership and character development, global experiential learning, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and sustainability education, athletics, and service.

For more than 100 years, Central has valued its covenant with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Central’s connection with the RCA is invaluable to students learning to live out their faith through service to God and humanity. RCA members serve on Central’s board of trustees, and RCA churches support students through Central’s Journey Scholarship Fund. RCA students can also receive the Heritage Award. Many Central graduates go on to serve as leaders in RCA congregations worldwide.

Central’s mission integrates career preparation with developing values essential to responsible citizenship. Central empowers its graduates to serve in local, national, and international communities. A Central education prepares students for civic responsibility, to “learn to do right; seek justice” (Isaiah 1:17, NIV). Through activities, courses, service opportunities, and Central’s relationship with the RCA, students learn to take their place in the world as justice seekers.

Campus Ministries

Campus Ministries students plan and lead a variety of activities and events on campus.

A Month of Gratitude

In November, Campus Ministries partnered with other departments on campus to observe A Month of Gratitude in Action. Students participated in service projects such as a coat drive, a wellness fair, a film screening, making sleeping mats for the homeless in Des Moines, and celebrating a day of giving.

Angel Tree Children

Each semester, Campus Ministries’ local service team plans events for Angel Tree children—children in the Des Moines area who have a parent in prison. Meredith Drive Reformed Church in Des Moines allows the college to use space for this event.

The Calm

About 100 students throughout the year participate in The Calm, a weekly worship service.

Fundraisers

Campus Ministries holds several annual fundraisers for organizations, including World Vision, Water to Thrive, Freedom House, and Many Hands for Haiti.

Mission Trips

Mission trips allow Campus Ministries participants to serve others while growing their faith. The group takes several trips throughout the year, with varying numbers of students. During spring break 2019, Campus Ministries completed a mission trip to Refugio County in Texas to help with continued hurricane recovery efforts. It also offered a spiritual retreat for students.
Services and Discipleship

Many students also are involved with local churches, including assisting with worship services and with youth and children’s ministries and participating in music groups and Bible studies. Many community members and college staff also serve as Campus Ministries disciples.

Community Service

Service plays a major role on Central’s campus. It is expressed through student organizations, classes with service-learning components, and independent projects by students, faculty, and staff. Each year more than 400 students participate in service learning, much of it facilitated by the college’s Center for Community Based Learning, which manages reciprocal partnerships with more than 140 nonprofit organizations and agencies in the Pella region.

Community service teaches civic engagement. By engaging with the community, students practice treating others with care and respect. Living a servant-hearted life means understanding one’s responsibility to others and the pursuit of justice for all. Central is committed to teaching civic responsibility through multiple activities.

All Campus Service Day

Central’s 2018 Service Day took place on October 31. 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 who propose service projects are faith-based.

Coursework

Many courses at Central include a service component. In a 2018 assessment of the outcomes of courses that incorporate service learning at Central, more than 80 percent of students involved said the experience helped them to “strengthen my ethic of social and civic responsibility” and “develop a greater sense of personal responsibility”; about 75 percent said the experience helped them to “learn how to work more collaboratively on real-world problems” and “relate knowledgeably and sensitively to a person of different cultural perspectives.”

Food Security Projects

The college annually participates in a Crop Hunger Walk, an initiative of Church World Service that raises funds to end hunger in the U.S. and around the world. This year, Central’s Crop Walk raised $7,301.63 in contributions. The college also raised $2,433.87 in contributions to the Pella Food Shelf.

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness

In November 2018, the college collaborated with community partners to host Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Activities included the Oxfam Hunger Banquet. The banquet is 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 a screening of the film Storied Streets by Crisis Intervention Services.
Individual Service Commitments

Students and faculty individually pursue a number of service commitments. Students often initiate their own service or social justice-oriented groups.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

This year’s observance focused on the theme of Beloved Community. There was a display of photography related to Martin Luther King in the Maytag Student Center, student conversations around the theme of Beloved Community, and a Martin Luther King Day service activity making tie blankets for the Care Bags Foundation. The events kicked off an observance of Black History Month that included movie screenings of *The Help*, *Selma*, and *A Force More Powerful*, along with other events.

Red Rock Rocks

Held during Welcome Week after students arrive in August, this event exposes incoming first-year students to Central’s service ethos. About 25 student participants picked up litter 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. The college partners annually with the Children and Family Urban Movement, Des Moines’ Findley Elementary School and Harding Middle School, the Des Moines Public School’s Dream to Teach initiative, and Des Moines’ Oakridge Neighborhood Services to provide outreach and educational programming and college visits for underserved youth.

According to a 2018 survey of representatives of three of these organizations, all three strongly agreed that their visits were well organized, well executed, included activities the youth enjoyed, included activities the organization’s staff and chaperones considered appropriate, met goals and expectations, and resulted in an interest in further visits.

One organization representative wrote, “After our kids visit Central, they compare it to other colleges and universities and they all say they want to go to Central when they graduate from high school. … When students get to actively engage in learning with professors and college-aged students, there is a lasting impact that our students never forget.” Another added, “It’s the most meaningful campus visit our college partners offer.”

Writing Workshop at Ottumwa High School

The Center for Community Based Learning sent students to Ottumwa, Iowa, to help high school students write college application essays.

Financial Aid

Central recognizes and encourages incoming students’ service commitments every year with community service scholarships. In the 2018–2019 academic year, 188 students are receiving a total of $238,135 in Community Service Awards. These scholarships are based on prospective students’ past community engagement and their future plans for
engagement in and after college. Central also welcomes students with national service experience. The Segal Education Award is matched for students, and students can also 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 lead. Part of this preparation is learning what it means to serve and how to change the world for the better. Both lessons are integral to the life of a Christian and central to the college’s mission. The college’s relationship with the RCA is central to this mission. Central values its relationship with the RCA and the support—through gifts, guidance, and prayer—that the RCA offers 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 the college’s founding in 1866, we are known for our invitational and 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. Hope faculty members offer an academically rigorous, co-educational, and residential education to approximately 3,000 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 1 student: 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-four percent of our graduates join the workforce or enroll in graduate school within six months of graduation. The college’s 80-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 people 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 Leadership

On December 7, 2018, our board of trustees elected Matthew A. Scogin (’02) to serve as the college’s 14th president, succeeding Dennis N. Voskuil, who served as interim president for two years.

Matthew Scogin currently serves as chief administrative officer at the global financial advisory firm Perella Weinberg Partners in New York City and has also held senior positions with both the New York Stock Exchange and U.S. Treasury Department. He will assume the Hope presidency on July 1, 2019. Matt and his wife, Sarah, also a 2002 graduate of Hope, have three children: Sophie, Lucy, and Oliver.

The college is grateful for Dennis Voskuil’s leadership during the search and transition. Prior to his appointment as interim president, Dennis was a member of the college’s religion faculty for 17 years and had been the director of our VanRaalte Institute since 2015. He also served as president of Western Theological Seminary from 1994 to 2008.

Academic Excellence, Collaborative Research, Creative Performance, and Athletics

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, committed to their students as well as to their research.

For many Hope students, engagement with faculty leads to the life-changing discovery of an academic passion or a professional calling. In the college’s most recent graduate
survey, 91 percent of respondents from Hope’s class of 2017 said they planned their futures with mentoring from faculty. For those who know Hope College, this level of engagement is not surprising. For decades, our students have benefited from Hope’s “graduate-level undergraduate experience.” This experience is transformational, giving students the opportunity to create work and conduct research with professors, then publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals (sometimes as primary author), present their work at conferences, and perform in front of audiences around the world.

Hope College was the first private, liberal arts college to hold national accreditation in art, dance, music, and theatre, and our students share center stage with nationally known writers, musicians, performers, and artists.

In addition to excelling in scholarship, research, and artistic performance, our students also excel in athletics. 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 and engagement in Christian faith formation, and are dedicated to excelling in sports, academics, and life.

**Calling and Career**

Last fall, the college opened the Boerigter Center for Calling and Career, a college-wide initiative that seeks to inspire students to engage in lifelong practices of career development by emphasizing discernment, preparation, and pursuit. Programming for the Boerigter Center is designed to enable all Hope students, beginning in their first semester, to understand their strengths, engage in experiences that directly connect to career preparation, discern vocational and life goals, and ascertain clear next steps toward their future. Integrated into the academic program of the college, it includes and expands on the work of our Career Development Center in combination with staff from our Academic Advising and Alumni and Family Engagement programs.

**Faith Formation**

Commitment to educating students in the context of the historic Christian faith has been a central part of the Hope identity since the college’s founding more than 150 years ago. At the same time, Hope makes a point of being invitational rather than prescriptive when it comes to sharing that faith with the students in the college’s care.

In May 2018, the board of trustees adopted a statement affirming our Christian aspirations:

> Hope College is a Christian community that invites its members into a holistic and robust engagement with the historic Christian faith and a personal encounter with the living Christ through the Holy Spirit. Our Christian identity is described by the following three aspirations: Hope aspires to be faithful; Hope aspires to be welcoming; and Hope aspires to be transformational. More information regarding these aspirations can be found at the following link: https://hope.edu/about/christian.html.

A new Campus Ministries house is under construction in the center of campus and will open in the fall of 2019. The house is one of the components of our Faith Formation Initiative supporting the college’s strategic plan, Hope for the World: 2025, which emphasizes helping students engage with the Christian faith and understand how it can
inform them as they study, pursue vocation, and live in community with others in a diverse and interconnected world.

**Culture and Inclusion**

Hope College has an institutional vision for inclusive excellence. Our strategic plan calls for Hope to be “… a community unified by its inspiring mission, strengthened by its diversity, and committed to the flourishing of every individual as one created and loved by God.” This is expressed as a strategic plan goal and is embedded throughout the plan in different ways that address and promote a culture of inclusion and belonging. To further advance this priority, last year, the president created a new position, chief officer for diversity and inclusion, that is part of the president’s office staff. This individual will provide institutional leadership to our diversity, culture, and inclusion efforts, championing a campus culture in which each person can thrive through the promotion of inclusive excellence, access and opportunity, community engagement, and intercultural proficiency.

**Conclusion**

Hope College offers a liberal arts curriculum, graduate school-style research, hands-on opportunities, and challenging collaborations. 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

Measures of Excellence

Northwestern College’s academic programs continue to be recognized as among the best nationally and even globally (some examples below). A full list is at nwciowa.edu/measures-of-excellence.

- Northwestern College (NWC) accounting students have the second-best CPA pass rate in the nation (89.3 percent, among 797 institutions with 10+ candidates; for context, Notre Dame is 11th and Duke is 23rd).
- Northwestern’s pre-med students’ MCAT scores are in the top 25 percent worldwide. In addition, 80 percent of NWC med school applicants are accepted the first time they apply. (Compare that to the 45 percent national acceptance rate for all applicants.)
- Northwestern is one of just two institutions in Iowa selected for participation in SEA-PHAGES and one of just 36 baccalaureate colleges worldwide. The program involves biology students in a global effort to discover phages (viruses that infect bacteria), sequence their DNA, and annotate the findings.

Students Give High Ratings to Christian Formation Program

This year, NWC’s campus ministry staff surveyed students about their Christian formation experiences on campus. More than 50 percent of students responded to the survey, and overall results are very encouraging. Our students are thriving spiritually, enjoying our Christian formation programs and offerings, and engaging the local church’s ministry regularly.

- 85 percent of students are satisfied or extremely satisfied with NWC’s Christian formation offerings.
- 85 percent of students said they encountered the living God in chapel.
- 86 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that chapel is Christ-centered.
- 76 percent of students were satisfied or extremely satisfied with chapel music.
- 84 percent of students are attending a local church more than three times a month, and 66 percent of students are attending a local church four or more times a month.
- Nearly 50 percent of our residence hall students regularly attend a discipleship group (d-group) and 90 percent of those students say the d-group increases their knowledge and appreciation of the Bible. 85 percent of students report that d-groups equip them to live out their Christian faith.

Dedication of the Jack and Mary DeWitt Family Science Center

More than 400 guests gathered for the dedication of the new Jack and Mary DeWitt Family Science Center on Friday, September 28. Built for a total of $24.5 million, the building is devoted exclusively to the health and natural sciences. Classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices for the departments of biology, chemistry, and nursing occupy the three floors of the 61,000-square-foot facility.

The DeWitt Family Science Center is named in honor of Jack and Mary DeWitt of Holland, Michigan, who contributed the $6 million lead gift for the building—the largest single gift in Northwestern’s history. Jack DeWitt died on June 22, 2018, at the age of 75, after a battle with brain cancer. Speaking at the dedication, Mary DeWitt said:
I know God resides on our campus because I’ve seen it and I’ve felt it. If Jack were here, I know he would say, “Wow, this is beautiful!” Our family’s desire is to honor God in all we do, and we know God will be honored through the science center. My prayer is that what students learn in this building will be used to glorify God in their careers.

In addition to Mary sharing at the dedication, students shared, via video, their reflections on our science programs and the new facility. Their reflections were unscripted and impressive. Biology teaching major Jessi Carver said:

The space and facility are definitely exciting, but the biggest thing for me is knowing there are hundreds of people out there who believed in our mission enough to donate. I think that is so encouraging, knowing that people want to support the next generation of scientific professionals who have a faith in Jesus Christ.

Our students are not only exceptional scholars, they are also wonderful people and committed Christians. To see the video, visit www.nwciowa.edu/science-center-student-reflections.

**New Gene Sequencer at the DeWitt Family Science Center**

Northwestern College has joined the University of Iowa and Iowa State as the only higher education institutions in the state with a gene sequencer. An anonymous donor funded the purchase of the $100,000 MiSeq model made by Illumina. The sequencer is a scientific instrument that is capable of determining the precise order of the nucleotides—abbreviated as A, G, C, and T—within a strand of DNA.

“We want to use this both for research and for teaching,” says Sara Sybesma Tolsma, professor of biology. “It’s a very sensitive piece of equipment, and it’s expensive to run, but we’re going to involve students as much as we can and still be good stewards of the costs associated with the sequencer.”

Tolsma anticipates a variety of ways NWC will use its gene sequencer. The college is part of the national SEA-PHAGES program, which is designed to interest undergraduates in scientific research by making them part of a global effort to discover phages. All of the students in microbiology want to have the phages they discovered sequenced, but that process costs $250 per phage when done by another institution. By having its own sequencer, NWC will be better able to meet that demand.

Tolsma and colleague Laurie Furlong will also use the sequencer to research the gene expression of mayflies in different environments. NWC’s chemistry professors, meanwhile, are interested in confirming gene mutations made in site-directed mutagenesis.

**New Graduate Program: Master of Science Degree in Physician Assistant Studies**

Northwestern is starting a Master of Science degree in physician assistant studies and expects to enroll the first cohort of up to 30 students in May 2020. This new graduate program will come online at the same time as a new Master of Science degree in the athletic training program.

NWC is currently approved as an applicant program by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). Certified physician
assistant Christina Hanson joined the Northwestern faculty in the fall of 2018 and is shepherding the new program through the ARC-PA’s intensive provisional accreditation process, which is the status granted to all new programs. The program will be eligible for continuing accreditation after the first class graduates.

Hanson has been a physician assistant since 2008, providing care at family practice, orthopedic, urology, and urgent care clinics in four Midwestern communities. Before coming to Northwestern, Hanson was a physician assistant professor at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota, helping launch that program and participating in a successful accreditation process.

Hanson earned a doctorate in higher education from Bethel University and a master’s degree in physician assistant studies from Des Moines University College of Health Sciences. She also holds a bachelor’s degree in biology with a psychology minor from Bethel University.

**Graduate Education Adds Computer Science Endorsement**

Northwestern’s graduate school has a 2019 spring-semester record of 285 students pursuing Master of Education degrees. To that success, graduate education has added a computer science endorsement to its list of online education endorsement and M.Ed. degrees. The program was developed in response to an anticipated federal government requirement that will mandate the teaching of computer science in all classes. NWC is now one of just two Iowa colleges to offer the computer science endorsement—and the only one to offer it entirely online.

The 15-credit program includes classes aimed at preparing licensed school teachers in grades K-8 and/or 5-12 to support students in the development of computer skills.

The computer science endorsement is one of six graduate-level endorsements offered by NWC’s graduate school. Teachers can also pursue endorsements in the areas of administration, coaching, early childhood, and special education. The graduate school also offers seven M.Ed. tracks in the areas of early childhood, educational administration, master teacher, special education, and teacher leadership.

**New Undergraduate Statistics Major**

Northwestern is adding a statistics major to its undergraduate programs beginning in the fall of 2019. “This new major will prepare students for careers in any industry or organization that is collecting data and trying to make decisions based on that data,” says Kim Jongerius, chair of the department of mathematics and physics.

According to Jongerius, while many companies don’t need an actuary to do statistical analysis, they do need someone who knows how to organize, interpret, and use data effectively and appropriately. They also need employees who will think about and work with data in an ethical way.

The new major will also prepare students for graduate school in programs such as statistics, mathematics, predictive modeling, and predictive or business analytics.

**Club Sports: Bowling and E-Sports**

Northwestern College added competitive clubs in bowling and e-sports this year and plans
to field varsity-level programs in those sports in 2020–2021. Prospective students will be eligible for activity awards for their participation beginning next fall.

Todd Tracy, professor of biology, leads the co-ed bowling club. NWC hopes to have men’s and women’s programs competing at the club level next year. The Red Raiders will compete as part of the U.S. Bowling Congress (USBC) collegiate governing body in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Bowling currently has invitational status in the NAIA.

Co-ed esports are led by Ben Karnish and Dan Swier, who also serve as the head women’s and men’s soccer coaches, respectively. A practice arena has been established on campus. Northwestern’s e-sports club will participate in competitive gaming that promotes team communication and cooperation to be successful, with sensitivity toward violence, negative portrayal of female characters, and concerns for addictive behaviors. Northwestern will compete as part of the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE), which has a close relationship with the NAIA.