

BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

Methodist Theological School in Ohio Trinity Lutheran Seminary

RECOMMENDATION

Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) and Trinity Lutheran Seminary (TLS) meet the Chancellor's standards, and the staff recommend authorization of the Doctor of Ministry degree program. Authorization for MTSO will continue through December 31, 2020, and authorization for TLS will continue through December 31, 2012, to coincide with the institutions' respective accreditation reaffirmation reviews with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Authorization is contingent upon continuing accreditation from HLC, and contingent upon the Chancellor's written approval of progress reports that demonstrate satisfactory progress toward compliance with all standards. The Chancellor may withdraw authorization if, in the Chancellor's judgment, the progress reports do not demonstrate satisfactory progress in any area or if either institution is sanctioned by HLC. Progress reports are to be submitted by December 31, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Profile: Methodist Theological School in Ohio, located in Delaware, Ohio, is an independent institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Originally established in 1958, the institution today serves nearly 250 graduate students and aspires to "prepare and invigorate transformational leaders to engage the church and the world in leadership and service."

Trinity Lutheran Seminary, located in Columbus, Ohio, is an independent institution affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Originally established in 1830, the institution today serves nearly 150 graduate students and is "dedicated to preparing committed Christian leaders to serve in many and varied ministries in an increasingly diverse church and society."

Accreditation/Authorization: MTSO and TLS are both accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. The Chancellor has authorized MTSO since September 1974 and TLS since September 1979.

Program Information: The institutions are requesting authorization to deliver a Doctor of Ministry degree program jointly. Both schools, in partnership with Ashland Theological Seminary, previously offered the program from 1977-1990. MTSO received provisional authorization in 2006 to resume offering the program at its campus. The purpose of this review was to determine continued authorization of the program at MTSO and to approve the joint delivery with TLS.

The mission of the program is to "provide the church with transformative leaders equipped with advanced skills for critically and theologically engaging issues and their contexts in ways that contribute to vital faith communities and institutions." The thirty-one semester credit hour program includes specializations in Leadership for Transformational Change, Pastoral Theology and Care, and the Mission and Practice of Preaching, and culminates with a research project.

The program will be jointly administered by the institutions and the campuses will share faculty, student support services, and library resources to support the program. This collaboration allows the institutions to use their resources more effectively and provides opportunities to deliver the program to a wider constituency of students.

Review Results: The review team noted several strengths in the review, including: alignment of program and institutional missions; shared governance, administrative, and faculty collaboration between the institutions; faculty qualifications and scholarship expectations that are consistent with Doctor of Ministry programs; resources in place to support the program; and the efforts made by MTSO to improve the program and meet the recommendations from the original review performed in 2006.

The team also noted some areas of non-compliance with the Chancellor's standards and recommended that the institution: develop a formal agreement between the institutions to offer the program jointly; develop a uniform syllabus model; revise the program assessment plan; and submit an updated faculty matrix to identify which courses each faculty member will teach.

The institution responded appropriately to the recommendations of the consultants' report by demonstrating how the recommendations were accepted and integrated into the proposed program, or, in the case of recommendations that could only be complied with over time, by presenting a clear plan for the implementation of the recommendations and a timeline for such.

Recommendation to the Chancellor: Methodist Theological School in Ohio and Trinity Lutheran Seminary meet the Chancellor's standards, and the staff recommend authorization of the Doctor of Ministry degree program. Authorization for MTSO will continue through December 31, 2020, and authorization for TLS will continue through December 31, 2012, contingent upon continuing accreditation from HLC, and contingent upon the Chancellor's written approval of progress reports that demonstrate satisfactory progress toward compliance with all standards. The Chancellor shall withdraw authorization if, in the Chancellor's judgment, the progress reports do not demonstrate satisfactory progress in any area or if either institution is sanctioned by HLC. Progress reports are to be submitted by December 31, 2010, 2011, and 2012.