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3. Listening and Learning to Teach in Theological Contexts: An Appreciative Inquiry Model

MARY E. HESS

A central dilemma facing theological education is the fundamental mismatch between the process by which most faculty earn a Ph.D. in theological fields and the skills required to be an effective teacher, especially given the diverse characteristics of today's students.

The Challenges We Face: Learning to Support Learning

For most faculty, achieving a Ph.D. is a process that entails long hours of individual study, intermittently broken by intense discussion in seminars or meetings with a dissertation advisor. Successfully navigating a dissertation, getting a paper accepted into a scholarly conference, or publishing in a journal are all tasks that demand the ability to be self-directed, focused, intent on critical inquiry, and an effective writer. These capacities are crucial in supporting learning more generally, but they are not enough, in and of themselves, for effectively teaching today's diverse student population.

Mary Boys has written, "Religious education is the making accessible of the traditions of the religious community and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between traditions and transformation" (1989, 193). This is an excellent definition for the narrower field of theological education, and it points directly at our challenge, because "making accessible" and "making manifest" are not processes much observed in doctoral education as currently construed.

In order to make something accessible—whether that is the tradition of biblical study in an original language, the practice of understanding

liturgical rubrics, or the method of historical study—faculty must be able to discern what students know about a topic and be able to design a variety of tasks that make access to the topic not only possible but inviting enough to engage students. In other words, faculty must be able to diagnose student needs and prescribe appropriate interventions to meet them.

Making something manifest goes a step further, particularly in Boy's use of the phrase through which she seeks to connect tradition to transformation. To make something manifest is to bring something to life in another's understanding. Indeed, in our context it is an invitation not only to participate in the tradition actively but to lead within it. Such an invitation inevitably transforms the teacher, as well as the student—and transforms the tradition under study.

Making the tradition accessible and manifest for today's students and today's environment, which is one of continual change, necessitates continual learning. It is no longer sufficient for faculty to master a field of study and have the requisite skills to pass such mastery onto students. Faculty must also learn how to learn and to do so in the midst of institutions that are facing some of the most stressful and difficult circumstances seminaries have had to face in decades.

Because the challenges are so great and because they strike at the heart of their chosen vocation, seminary professors need spaces of profound respect and trust in which to collaboratively seek answers to the question: "Is it possible I could prepare for all these years only to discover that what I have been prepared for is not what my job consists of?" The Lexington Seminar has created one such place in which faculty fears and dilemmas can be voiced within a surround that is supportive enough that doubts can emerge as interesting questions rather than ego-threatening challenges. It is not surprising that most of the schools that have participated in The Lexington Seminar have tried to find ways to duplicate its process in their home contexts. Many of these schools now recognize how important the gifts of time and space are, not only for faculty but for students as well.

Indeed, there are strong similarities between the questions seminary professors are asking and the questions their students are asking. The mismatch between faculty preparation and the actual tasks of seminary professors exists in part because seminary students do not look like, act like, think like, or even feel like the seminary students of fifty years ago.

If today's seminary students had been as deeply socialized into a specific community of faith, if they had come from the same educational background, the same moment in their life journey, and the same (or similar) class backgrounds as their professors, then seminary professors could take for granted basic catechetical preparation and delve immediately into the kinds of questions they, themselves, studied as graduate students. They could invite their students into complex discussions of abstract points, ask

them to enter the conversation at the same place, and invite them into theological research. Indeed, this is why doctoral-level education still tends to work as well as it does: most doctoral students share at least some of the key characteristics of their professors.

But seminary students do *not* come from similar backgrounds. They do *not* share the same formation, the same moment in their life journey, the same ability to maneuver among abstract conceptualizations. They are, for the most part, involved in a different conversation that has taught them to use different tools. They come to seminary interested in active leadership outside of the academy, and they arrive at seminary sometimes unprepared for the educational processes that await them there. Most, if not all, students find themselves in a crisis of identity early in their seminary time. They wonder, "Should I really be at seminary? Why am I here? What will sustain me in the coming years? How can I know that what the seminary offers to teach me is really what I need to know?"

Students who have had previous professional experiences are often able to live into this uncertainty with a particular kind of patience. They know they have endured such not-knowing in the past, and they believe they will come through it again. Whatever sustained them previously often becomes their coping mechanism now. Students who do *not* have such previous experience will look to each other and to their professors for help.

This represents a moment of profound opportunity, a moment in which the uncertainties and searching of professors trying to meet the diverse demands of their positions can come together with the questions and vocational needs of students and, together, mine the traditions (of the church, the academy, and the wider culture) for the resources necessary to move forward. Indeed, this is an opportunity to make accessible and make manifest in the ways Boys calls for. But the invitation to make accessible and make manifest is not primarily about scholarly study but about theological leadership in communities of faith (understood broadly to include the kinds of leadership our students will provide in social service agencies, in political contexts, and so on).

Consider our goals as seminary professors. We are preparing pastors who stand in continuity with those who have gone before them and will maintain the churches already begun; we are nourishing leaders for a missionary church in a global context; we are preparing scholars who will sustain critical research into pressing theological issues; and we are educating leaders who will bring theological insight to the wider culture. In order to teach well in such a context, we need to learn how to listen carefully and thoughtfully, profoundly and deeply. We need to reclaim all of the practices of discernment and attentiveness. There is much wisdom in our various traditions upon which to draw, including the traditions of academic research, if only we can listen well.

The concluding project of many schools participating in The Lexington Seminar has been to create time and space in which to listen. During a period in which great emphasis is being placed on strategic action and theological schools are under enormous pressure—from financial concerns, theological conflicts, technology divides, and so on—it might seem counterintuitive to ask for quiet, listening, and reflection, but these are precisely the gifts of theological communities that we are most in need of in the wider culture and thus precisely the resources we most need to cultivate as teachers of and for the church.

Many solutions to today's challenges grow out of learning to listen to the central claims of our traditions and communities and finding ways to bring the skills we have already gained as scholars to the task of teaching and supporting learning with our students. In the following sections, I note briefly discussions of listening in the wider literature and then turn to what we have learned about listening from the many Lexington Seminar projects. Finally, I propose a framework for encouraging deep listening in a range of theological contexts.

Learning from Listening

First, what exactly do I mean by listening in the context of this essay? Following on the work of Vella (1994) and Boys, and adding to them from the wider literature, listening refers most directly to a reflective, dialogical, engaged form of communicative interaction that is an essential element of transformative education. Scott Cormode (2006), who writes of “making spiritual sense,” demonstrates such listening in action. Other pertinent scholars who write about reflective practice include Brookfield (1995, 2006), Schön (1990), and Heifetz (1994). It is referred to in the work of the Common Fire project, which speaks of “responsible imagination” (Daloz et al. 1996) and can be traced in the patterns of appreciative inquiry (Branson 2004) and the analyses offered through narrative therapy (Freedman and Combs 1996).

Perhaps more urgently, for the contexts in which theological educators learn, listening—and discerning through listening—can be traced throughout the biblical narrative. Think about the haunting words of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:10): “Speak, for your servant is listening.” Think, too, of Mary's patient and faithful response to the astonishing visit of the angel in Luke. But their listening was not simple acquiescence, as can be seen even more vividly in the actions of many of the prophets—my favorite being Jonah, whose first response was to run away. The psalms themselves, particularly the more painful of the lament psalms, are urgent attempts to communicate to a God whom faithful people believe in but often cannot fathom.

Frank Rogers (1997, 114–116), writing of the process of discernment, says:

The history of the church is littered with the stories of people who have claimed guidance from the Spirit when the prejudices of self-deception reigned instead. From the earliest days of Judaism and Christianity, awareness of this danger has prompted faithful people to articulate criteria by which to judge the authenticity of claims regarding the Spirit. . . .

- fidelity to Scripture and the tradition
- fruit of the Spirit
- inner authority and peace
- communal harmony
- enhancement rather than extinction of life
- integrity in the process of discernment

It is this form of listening, a listening that takes seriously the community in which it seeks an answer, that is so crucial for teaching in theological education. Indeed, this form of listening requires a certain kind of suspension of judgment in order to be open to the presence of persons with whom we are joined in the activities of learning. Kegan and Lahey (2001, 141) describe a series of deconstructive propositions that are illustrative:

- There is probable merit to my perspective.
- My perspective may not be accurate.
- There is some coherence, if not merit, to the other person's perspective.
- There may be more than one legitimate interpretation.
- The other person's view of my viewpoint is important information to my assessing whether I am right or identifying what merit there is to my view.
- Our conflict may be the result of the separate commitments each of us hold, including commitments we are not always aware we hold.
- Both of us have something to learn from the conversation.
- We need to have two-way conversation to learn from each other.
- If contradictions can be a source of our learning, then we can come to engage not only internal contradictions as a source of learning but interpersonal contradictions (i.e., "conflict") as well.
- The goal of our conversation is for each of us to learn more about ourselves and the other as meaning makers.¹

This form of listening—discerning, nonjudgmental, open to learning—meets some very specific challenges that researchers have identified in the teaching/learning process. Cognitive neuroscientists, for instance, have described the ways in which learning something requires building upon previous experiences, previously laid-down neurological pathways (Zull 2002). In order to determine what elements of material to share and how best to share them, teachers must first understand where students are in relation to a particular subject and then carefully shape educational interventions that can build on what they know—or critique it if necessary—en route to new learning.

Such assessment must begin from a receptive place rather than from a need to establish immediate authority. As Kegan (1994) notes, the process must first confirm a student's meaning—in other words, teachers must first demonstrate that they can enter into the student's world and understand it on its own terms—before seeking to contradict the meaning that student is making. Ultimately, of course, even the contradictions must flow into a newly organized continuity, or the student's sense of meaning can become rigid and fragile.

Consider just some of the many challenges faculty teaching in theological schools face when addressing student preparation:

- Classrooms containing students who know nothing of the biblical canon alongside students who have memorized huge segments of it.
- Students with no experience of, or respect for, traditional religious expression alongside students for whom any questioning of the tradition elicits deep fear.
- Students with significant spiritual experiences in a limited array of worship contexts alongside students with few such experiences but a much wider set of worship contexts.

In each of these instances, the best approach for one student might be the opposite of that for another student. What is a teacher to do? In many cases, we simply ignore the differences and attempt to present the same content in the same manner for all students, trusting that students (who are, after all, graduate students) will come to a satisfactory interpretation on their own. Unfortunately, such a practice rarely leads to success, and indeed much of the current crisis in communities of faith has to be attributed, at least in part, to leaders who are not adept enough at adaptive responses to adequately engage their congregations. Much learning grows from the so-called implicit and null curricula: we learn from *how* we are taught and by what is *not* taught just as much as through any explicit content. Professors who cannot model for their students how to meet them where they are, respecting and challenging them into new growth, teach their students how to be leaders who are *not* adaptive. Here Cormode's work (2006) is particularly helpful, showing ways into adaptive and hermeneutical leadership formation.

So what might be the alternatives? How can we, as theological educators, listen carefully enough and wisely enough and then work clearly enough in response that we can reach more of our students in ways that are healthy and helpful? One of the key insights of educational literature more generally, particularly as relates to education reform, is that relational trust is a crucial component of successful change (Bryk and Schneider 2002;

Brookfield 1995, 2006; Brookfield and Preskill 1999; Palmer 1983, 1998). The challenge within theological education, then, at least in terms of creating more effective learning environments, is to build and sustain relational trust, and the first step in that process is learning to listen deeply and well.

Encouraging Faculty to Listen Deeply

Schools participating in The Lexington Seminar have built relational trust by listening in multiple ways. They have listened to their past, they have listened to each other, they have listened to their students, they have listened to the churches they serve, and they have listened for the signs of the time.

Listening to One's Past

Many theological schools have difficult conflicts in their history, and faculty tend to shy away from revisiting such conflicts for fear of opening old wounds or getting stuck in recurring quagmires. On the other hand, theological education has experienced enough turnover lately that many newer faculty members know little about the history or deep stories of their institutions. Therefore, several schools participating in The Lexington Seminar chose to revisit their history—while avoiding the risk of opening wounds—by asking questions about *generative stories in learning* from the institutions' pasts.

Thus, Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO), seeking to revise its grading practices, began to wonder more deeply why its curriculum had been shaped as it was and what its institutional identity really meant in relation to the curriculum. In seeking to answer such questions, the faculty delved into the original founding materials of the institution (which was born in 1958), spoke with trustees and students, and spent time in retreats. Many of MTSO's key founders were deeply involved in the field of religious education, and their original commitments to demonstrable learning outcomes gave the MTSO's faculty a new way to think about evaluating students. The faculty's conversation about assessment broadened and deepened and was enriched by listening to the stories of why and how the institution had been founded. By so listening the faculty retrieved and reclaimed an understanding of learning that drew them into a more extensive and ongoing evaluation of their own work, as well as that of students. As MTSO's final report notes (2003):

One important thing to happen through this project is that by talking about the ways we assess students, teachers were also engaging in assessment of their own practices. By gathering data on our individual and institutional GPAs, we began to move beyond anecdote and suspicion to genuine information. Sharing criteria

for grading in the context of talking about our institutional values has allowed us to assess whether we are in fact doing in our courses what needs to be done in order to achieve our institutional goals. One's classroom is no longer one's own private domain. By making public certain information, it is easier to see how we are engaged in a common enterprise, how each can individually make a contribution to that enterprise, and how self-correction may happen when necessary.

The faculty has now put in place a process of evaluating students that accumulates paragraphs of feedback which are annually reviewed by a faculty advisor and which, in turn, provide both early warning of problems and early evidence of gifts. In this way students entering a degree program at MTSO are provided with more transparency about what is expected, along with more opportunities to correct their course along the way, should that prove necessary.

MTSO has found that its faculty can bring the skills they had learned in academic research to the task of inquiry and listening to their students and larger constituencies and in so doing bridge some of the challenges the face:

It is likely that many other theological schools feel the same tension that we do between accountability to the church and to the academy. While our work on identity questions is not yet complete, we are learning some ways that this tension can be productive. Mooring in the academy requires us to evaluate students according to its accepted standards, and mooring in the church reminds us that within the educational world we have a specific role to play. Theological schools mark a unique intersection between religious life and the larger culture, and this peculiar situation allows for conversation and integration that is increasingly important for a pluralistic world. Fruitful conversation and integration cannot take place if our two constituencies are played off against each other or if one is relegated to a place of diminished importance. In order for theological schools to fulfill our potential, we need to embrace the dual identity that we have. (Methodist Theological School in Ohio 2003)

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary is another example of a school deliberately seeking insight from its past into dilemmas in its present. Struggling to figure out a way to better approach integration and spiritual formation issues, the faculty undertook the very intentional process of a spiritual heritage retreat, which invited them into the history of their institution and gave them room to tie that history to the current story that faculty and students are writing together, as they learn collaboratively about spiritual formation and learning. This process not only gave faculty a clearer understanding of the roots of the current institution, but it gave them a plethora of stories to share with their students, inviting them to feel a part of the movement that founded Gordon-Conwell.

This retreat spanned two days and one night and included a New England excursion of evangelical history. Guided by church historian Garth Rosell, sites were visited throughout Northeast Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley that are part of the history of such notable figures in American religious history as Whitefield, Edwards, Bradstreet and Moody. Through these discussions, faculty were given occasions to connect their individual and shared stories through four intentional components of the retreat. First, during the rides between sites on the chartered coaches, certain faculty members were assigned ten-minute spots to share their personal journeys of faith. Many of these “testimonials” opened the lives of faculty members to their colleagues in ways that typically do not occur in the seminary routine. Comments in retrospect were that these were some of the more serendipitous moments of the retreat. Second, mini-lectures were given by the faculty on evangelical history in New England at most of the historical landmarks.... Third, a former faculty member, Robert Dvorak, was invited to join the retreat and lead several Hymn Sings. In this capacity, he connected the faculty to the revivalistic and evangelical shared tradition as well as demonstrating the importance of such hymnody to American religious history. Finally, each meal was a time for lectures and presentations to be suspended and for faculty to interact with each other and their spouses.... (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary 2002)

Both MTSO and Gordon-Conwell stepped back and engaged the past by asking questions intentionally aimed at eliciting *generative* stories, which in turn led to creative space opening up in which faculty could try out practices that were new to them but deeply resonant within the institution. Listening led to reclaiming which led to openness to creating anew.

Listening to Each Other

The idea of listening to each other might seem too obvious to note. Clearly, a community of learning needs to learn *with* each other, and that requires deep listening. But the press of daily tasks can often become so difficult that faculties forget to listen to one another.

The narrative written by the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) vividly illustrates the overwhelming pressure seminary faculty face dealing with multiple tasks on a daily basis. Further, as CDSP's final report notes, “We realized that a factor contributing to our situation in a fundamental way was that we tend to *assume* a great deal about every aspect of our lives as teachers and administrators, and that the unspokenness of our assumptions elevates everyone's level of anxiety” (2001). One clear solution to such assumptions is to create spaces and time in which rather than assuming shared knowledge, faculty actually build together a culture in which expectations are clear and competing commitments are acknowledged—and that is precisely what CDSP did. After a series of faculty retreats, the school's report notes, “As we mulled over the case we had

presented, where a *professor* was being pulled in a number of directions, we began to observe that in many ways, the lives of our *students* looked similar. A consensus emerged that our new curriculum needed to emphasize integration—a focus that would necessitate explicit cooperation between the teachers of the various courses” (2001).

Indeed, in order to teach effectively in environments with diverse students and multiple, often competing, commitments, faculties must learn the art of collaboration. Yet collaboration is hardly a strategy emphasized in doctoral studies, although it is increasingly present in professional research. The strategy that CDSP chose to implement was neither obvious nor simple, but in deliberately choosing to spend time building a culture together, the faculty gained renewed energy and creative passion for their central task of teaching. This is not a solution drawn from mere sensitivity exercises but rather from the rigorous engagement of trained scholars focusing on building together a collaborative culture of learning.

In a similar vein, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities joined The Lexington Seminar with the clear intention of focusing on the challenge of helping students integrate their learning, which the school perceived as an integral element of formation. In the process, the United faculty discovered that they needed to make their own assumptions about integration and formation clearer, which meant spending whatever time was necessary working through conflicting ideas about integration. Eventually the faculty chose to institute a series of noontime luncheons in which individual members shared stories of their personal faith journeys in a context in which students and faculty were both present. These lunches came to be a key turning point for the school, creating a climate of energy and interest around the diverse ways in which people walk in faith. It also gave students a plethora of options to consider for their own journeying.

In each of these cases, the pressing need to find a solution to a specific challenge was set aside in favor of creating space for deeper listening to each other. And in each of these cases, that decision led to a climate of trust and respect, which in turn led to more effective solutions, once the original presenting problem was engaged.

Listening to Students

I noted early in this paper that listening to one's students is a key commitment but one that is not often reinforced by traditional academic socialization. Much scholarship on how to attend to student learning is emerging from within more general education contexts. Several schools participating in The Lexington Seminar chose to use such scholarship to shape their projects.

Palmer Theological Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) has been working hard to build a learning-centered curriculum. In part that effort arose from faculty and administrators listening to their students, trustees, and church constituencies and discovering that few of them understood what the curriculum was trying to accomplish and how it fit together. Rather than assuming that its students and other constituencies were deficient in some way or that their teachers were not effective, Palmer decided that the whole curriculum, the whole process of learning, required more transparency. All of the constituencies involved in theological education need to understand what is expected of them and how a specific curriculum will help them achieve their goals.

Thus the faculty developed a clear description of the learning competencies they want their students to achieve based on what they heard from the communities their students will serve and then used that description as a focus for the rest of their curriculum development. Ultimately, they also used that description as an essential element for evaluating students. The many documents they created in the process (including several kinds of writing rubrics, a course template, a course grid, and so on) are wonderful examples of transparency in practice and will likely be useful resources for many other schools.

The process of getting to this place, however, has not been easy. As their final report notes:

For each of us, the cost of changing long-ingrained habits of teaching and learning is different. Differences between us must be both visible and accepted if we are to move into new habits of teaching and learning. We need to know what we're dealing with not simply in our students, but with each other. . . .

As a faculty, the cost of radical changes in the way we teach and learn isn't worth it if our goal is to find a quick fix to the way we do our educational business, or to make a big splash in the small pond of Western theological education. We must do this work from our hearts, or not engage it at all. It takes time, energy, willingness to live with ambiguity, and some uncertainty about how we will accomplish our long-range goals. (Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary 2000)

The process of listening to students, to outside constituents, to each other—and the resultant action undertaken in response—is neither easy nor without pain. But deep listening also makes clear that resources are present that a community may draw upon in its work together.

Bethel Theological Seminary also chose to make major changes in its curriculum after listening to students with a keen ear for their development. The seminary was in the middle of a major restructuring during its participation in The Lexington Seminar. Among other processes, it was creating a Center for Spiritual and Personal Formation. Students in Bethel's programs are now required to participate in courses through that

center, and an intentional process is in place for assessing how students are progressing through the curriculum goals in formation. One element of that process involves the faculty—at every faculty meeting—being invited to attend to how students are learning. Where a challenge or deeper dilemma emerges for a specific student, a process is now in place for creating a developmental plan that a student can follow to address the identified challenge. Presenting the process in a positive light has been a key element in its success. Students see it not as punitive but as a step forward in their continuing learning. As Bethel's final report (2001) notes:

Systemically, the faculty response to this vision seems to have energized students as well. Students seem to be more convinced of the importance of formation and integration and therefore more willing to open themselves to the process. They have volunteered more stories, with more gratitude for their experience, than ever before.

In each of these instances, the process of listening was deliberately shaped not to invite shame or criticism but to elicit genuine curiosity about what and how students were learning and in what ways faculty might shape and strengthen their learning. What was heard was then acted upon with creative and generative effort.

Listening to Churches and Congregations

It is clear that teaching during times of intense change also requires listening in contexts larger than one's immediate context. As other essays in this book are focusing on institutional issues (see, in particular, Dr. Bessler's essay), I will not spend much time on such listening. Still, it is worth noting briefly that two schools have made specific efforts to move their faculty outside of their walls in attempts to help them reconsider how their teaching ought to be focused. In the case of Palmer Seminary, systematic outreach to the school's many constituencies was the fuel that ignited a shift to learning-centered pedagogies. The Harvard Divinity School has also chosen to use its Lexington Seminar grant to take its faculty members out to visit several of their students' field education sites. The project has just begun, but interim reports suggest that the faculty at Harvard are finding the visits powerful invitations to genuine curiosity about the contexts in which their students will serve and to new innovations in the ways in which they teach specific content.

Listening to the Signs of the Times

Perhaps the most difficult listening is that of listening to the signs of the times. It is difficult precisely because the pace of change today is so rapid,

the elements of such change so multiple, and the immensity of the task so overwhelming. Most scholars manage their inquiries by focusing on a limited area of study and carefully specifying its parameters. Such limits and parameters evolve over time amid the careful demands of academic disciplines. The signs of the times, on the other hand, have no easy limits and few appropriate parameters. Yet precisely because the *evangelion* continues to breathe among and through us, the challenge persists. Many of the schools participating in The Lexington Seminar have tried various ways of listening to their context.

Most of them, even ranging far afield, come back to their central resources—their students and the communities from which their students come and to which they will be sent. Listening carefully to students not only makes teaching more effective, it encourages faculty to look with fresh eyes at the ways in which faith is being practiced, the gospel is being heard, and the *missio dei* is emerging among us. Ultimately, such listening can only strengthen our vocation as theological educators.

Deepening Vocation to Support Learning

When I began this essay, I noted the sharp mismatch between the ways in which seminary professors have been prepared through doctoral study and the preparation that today's students bring to the classroom. Many of my colleagues bemoan such preparation, believing it to be less than helpful and, in some instances, actually harmful to theological study. It is certainly true that few of today's students come with deep and lifelong immersion in vibrant communities of faith, and even fewer come with extensive backgrounds in philosophy and ancient language study. They do, however, come with vivid relational abilities, active engagement in much of media culture, and a passionate faith in Jesus Christ. That they have such faith suggests that they have had experiences from which we can learn and which they ought to be prepared to share. It also suggests that opportunities might exist for faculty to walk alongside students and invite them into the questions we study, the resources we have to share. Indeed, there are opportunities in students' passion to give them access to the tradition and make manifest for them the ways in which the tradition is ever transforming, including the very ways in which the students themselves will transform it.

This concern over preparation and necessary skills in turn leads back to the essay's larger question: how do we help professors develop beyond their academic training into teachers who are appropriately present in seminary settings? The answer is to come to a new understanding of what it means to profess—indeed, to come to a new recognition of what it means to confess—faith in the context of graduate theological education.

Far too many of us prepared for our current vocation by studying in university contexts in which confessing our faith was not central to academic study, and we have also learned from previous destructive history—in which confessing faith was not an invitation to learning and transformation but rather a premature closure of such exploration and study—that confessing faith and conducting academic research do not easily mix. We are quite understandably reluctant to cross these boundaries and step outside of what remains scholarly discourse in the guilds. Yet the primary reason that many of us are teaching in the seminary context is that we *do* have a faith we confess, and our academic studies have nurtured that faith in ways we want to share. Faith is a powerful resource—and should be used as such—as we struggle with the teaching challenges we face. We need to learn to traverse the boundaries between faith and academic rigor with our eyes open and our hearts afire, without letting go of the critical lenses we have acquired along the way.

Faculty in seminaries are struggling to help our students prepare to become leaders in a world sorely in need of Christ's saving grace and the justice that emerges from it. As such we must unlearn much of what we were socialized into in the midst of academic contexts and open ourselves up to the transformation that grows out of learning *with* our students. Rather than avoiding conflict or managing it through rigid dances in tightly structured guild contexts, we must learn how to navigate through the difficult currents of ordinary, everyday conflict and find ways to nourish our own vocations as scholars and teachers in the midst of such conflict.

Here the skills we have learned as scholars are very useful, if we can approach our own embodied, emotional selves with a friendly degree of distance and reflection. Stephen Brookfield is particularly noted for his ability to communicate within his work the very tangled emotions that arise while teaching and, further, to suggest constructive ways in which to use them as additional insight. Parker Palmer has also worked this ground, his writing on the inner landscape of a teacher being especially pertinent. In both of these cases, talented master teachers lead their readers through the daily, ordinary tensions of the classroom and find in such tensions generative insight for effective teaching.

Brookfield's use of the critical incident inquiry demonstrates, unfortunately, how often we misunderstand our students and how such misunderstanding can lead to problematic learning (Brookfield and Preskill 1999). That insight, in turn, leads to a clearer recognition of how important it is to *listen well* to our students, and ultimately, to the communities from which they come and to which they are being called.

Still, even this listening is not enough. As theological educators, we must attend yet another form of listening, and it is that form—nourished by biblical narratives, supported by life in community, broken open and

shared in table fellowship—that finally brings us to the still point in this process. So much of academic guild practice ignores or even trivializes the life of the Spirit that it can be easy to think that teaching in a seminary is simply another academic practice, albeit in a context in which one uses religious vocabulary. Seminaries are *not* research universities, although they share some characteristics with them. It is precisely this element of shared seminary life—the life of the Spirit lived in community—that is most often ignored within academic research and guild settings.

Nourishing and sustaining our vocation as teachers in seminaries has to begin in a clear recognition of this distinctive element of seminary life. Putting this recognition front and center in our shared endeavor can vivify and challenge all of our teaching practices and lead more thoroughly to learning-centered work.

Appreciative Inquiry: A Model of Listening for Teaching in the Life of the Spirit

The key shift this essay proposes to help schools implement is a cultural one. We need to help seminaries build places for reflective conversation, places that support engagement with learning practices that grow organically throughout a learning institution. An essential element of such conversation is respectful listening, in a variety of places and with a variety of conversation partners. Such conversation takes time—which is often a rare and valuable resource in contemporary seminaries—and so it must be built into the daily fabric of the place, not as a special or episodic kind of inquiry.

An important element of the cultural shift being sought here is to create a deeper vocational connection between faculty members' academic training and the part of their current role that requires them to teach, which demands of them that they support learning with their students. Given that very little of most professors' academic training allows for such a connection, let alone seeks to deepen and expand upon it, this is tricky ground, often prone to inciting all sorts of vulnerabilities. For that reason, most of the schools of The Lexington Seminar have sought to use what social scientists would label an "appreciative inquiry" methodology in their projects. So, too, do the ideas presented here.

Perhaps a brief explanation of this methodology would be helpful by way of introduction. Most academics are familiar with problem-based research methodologies, which, when applied to pressing challenges, seek to identify specific problems, diagnose the conditions or dynamics that lead to such problems, and then strategize appropriate responses. In theological contexts, this process is often envisioned as a circle that includes the steps

of naming the current condition or situation, critically reflecting on that situation, putting that situation into relationship with the Christian story, and then visioning renewed engagement with the situation through Christian life, before once again naming a problem. Such a process can be extraordinarily fruitful, and has given birth to myriad differing theological insights. The process described in this essay, however, comes at a particular situation from a different angle.

First, rather than beginning by naming a problem—a process that in many cases can lead to ever more painful recognition and “stuck-ness” in the problem for a time, rather than engagement with the ground beneath, around, and above it—appreciative inquiry seeks to initiate, inquire, and imagine into the generative dynamics already present in a situation. Examples of the kinds of inquiry that are sought in appreciative methodologies include the following:

- What made the situation *generative* for you?
- What is the *best* example you can think of?
- If a complaint is coming to mind, what would be the *positive* goal not yet achieved.

Tim Tennent has quoted in this volume Craig Dykstra’s series of questions to seminaries (1999). The first among them is, “What is God doing in the world?” This is followed by, “What does the church need to be like in order to align itself with what God is doing in the world?” Appreciative inquiry is congruent with such questions, because the first step in any such process is *inquiring* into those dynamics of a given situation that lead to gratitude, that shape the organization’s hope and thankfulness.

There is pressing need within theological schools to ask what God is up to in ways that delight in the answers and that seek to make the process of listening both central and tenable. Mark Lau Branson has written at length about such processes in church settings. His work is foundational in theological contexts, and his book-length treatment of the topic—*Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*—is an appropriate place for a leadership team to begin. Branson argues, for instance,

The church in Thessalonica was under two kinds of external threats: religious persecution and social pressure. . . . Paul’s pastoral admonitions indicate that these environmental forces were dangerous because they tempted the church to capitulate to fear . . . and seduction. . . . But Paul’s letter does not begin with the problems and his pastoral solutions. Rather, he begins with thanksgiving (1 Thess. 1:2–10; 2 Thess. 1:3–4; 2:13). . . . Paul wants his readers to begin with this frame of gratefulness, this opening prayer of thanksgiving, so that his pastoral

initiatives can be properly understood. The life-giving resources that they need are not just external, they are available in their own practices, and through their own narratives. (2004, 44–45)

By contextualizing the process of inquiry within the biblical narratives that shape a seminary's life—indeed, in the very process of offering thanksgiving to God—the process is situated at the heart of what seminaries are engaged in.

Second, the goal of the process is in many ways the process itself. That is to say, the journey is the reward. Appreciative inquiry is most effective in situations in which the very warp and weft of a culture needs to shift, and where the processes used to make such a shift are intended themselves to become a constituent part of what is sought. Done well, the methodology builds positive conversational buzz of a sort that further highlights and reinforces whatever is discovered within the process itself. Indeed, as Branson notes,

the thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that an organization, such as a church, can be re-created by its conversations. And if that new creation is to feature the most life-giving forces and forms possible, then the conversations must be shaped by appreciative questions. A church's leaders make decisions about what to talk about, what questions to ask, what metaphors to use—and every such initiative shapes the present and the future. (2004, xiii)

Branson writes within theological contexts, about religious organizations, but a similar insight is at the heart of the work of Robert Kegan, whose books—*How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* (2001, with Lahey) and *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools* (2006, with Wagner and Lahey)—have had such a transformative impact within educational institutions more generally and whose ideas about “deconstructive propositions” I quoted earlier.²

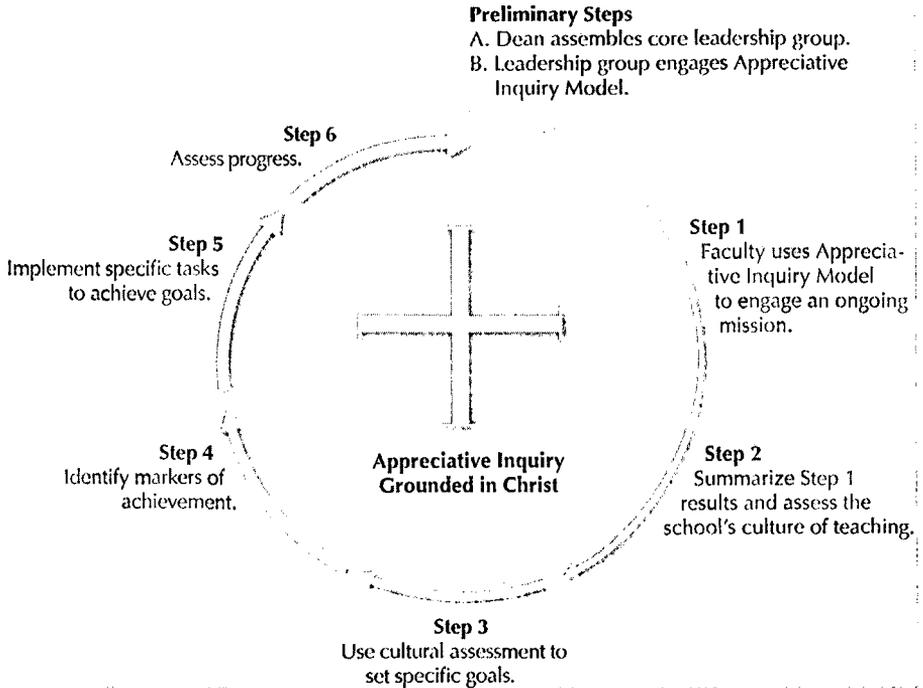
Given the purpose of this essay and the intent to create room for faculty to practice listening in deep and reflective ways, appreciative inquiry provides a set of basic assumptions and practical steps for shaping such listening in ways that can contribute constructively to a seminary's future.

Overview of the Model

The basic model proposed here has six major parts to it and embeds appreciative inquiry within a sequenced outline based largely on the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005), who write about “understanding by design.” (See Figure 3.1.) First, a general process of appreciative inquiry regarding the connections between teaching and the specific metaphors

Figure 3.1: The Appreciative Inquiry Model.

Goal: Help faculty build places for reflective conversation about teaching that support learning practices throughout a learning institution.



found in the mission of the school is undertaken. Second, data from that process are studied to assess the current culture around teaching in the school. Third, an overall goal for this instance of the cultural intervention is chosen. Fourth, adequate demonstrations of such a goal—markers of achievement—are identified. Fifth, specific learning tasks are undertaken to achieve the overall goal. Finally, assessment of the overall effect is identified. Following that, the cycle can be repeated.

Preliminary Steps: Or, Begin at the Beginning!

To begin, the person in the school who is most closely tasked with supporting faculty development around teaching should work with the president and board of directors to ensure that they recognize that stimulating the kind of cultural change proposed here takes time and must be understood to be an ongoing process of formation. In most schools this person is the academic dean. Even if the academic dean decides to delegate most of the work of

this model to a trusted partner, the dean must take the lead in ensuring that the president and board understand and support the long-term process, for there is no quicker way to kill the process than to demand that it bear fruit immediately. Expected outcomes and long-term goals need to be identified in ways that are manageable and flexible, allowing for ongoing evaluation of progress without setting up unrealistic expectations. Reading the Branson book (2004) might prove to be a fruitful shared task at this juncture.

The next step is to identify—again, in collaboration with the leadership of the school—one key meaning-making process currently taking place. Perhaps the school is working on revising its mission statement or perhaps it is time for a curriculum review. Every ten years or so a school must do a self-study for the ATS; perhaps that process is ongoing. Or perhaps the school has had a major change of leadership and is currently getting to know its new leader. Whatever the case, the dean needs to identify a process that contains the following key elements:

- It is a process in which the whole school is already engaged.
- It is a process that takes seriously the stated mission of the school.
- It is a process that looks toward the future.
- It is a process that is not explicitly tasked with improving teaching.

The meaning-making process must be something that lies at the heart of the school's mission but not something that is so narrowly focused as to be only about teaching.

After identifying the process, the dean and others should strategize ways to implement an appreciative inquiry component into the process that will elicit stories about teaching. For most schools, such strategizing is likely to occur in one small group session within a larger faculty retreat weekend or perhaps a series of small group sessions that form part of a larger strategic planning mode, but the groups should include all members of the faculty. For example, a faculty of forty can be divided into five groups of eight. (More specific examples of such strategies can be found in the school narratives and reports available at <http://www.lexingtonseminar.org/archive/index.php> on The Lexington Seminar's Web site.)

To lead the small group discussions, the dean should recruit one faculty colleague to help facilitate conversation in each group. In recruiting facilitators, the dean should look for people who meet the following criteria:

- They enjoy talking about teaching in positive ways.
- They have small group facilitation skills.
- They are not notably embedded in any divisive current debates at the school and are thus perceived by colleagues to be open and fair.
- They come from a range of positions and ranks, such as pre-tenured, tenured, and administrative.

The first goal of these facilitators, who in many instances will form the dean's leadership group for the model, should be to familiarize themselves with the appreciative inquiry (AI) process and practice using it together to reflect on their own teaching practices and vocation within theological education, thus building their own skills and cohesion as a group. If the budget allows, the school should ask this group to meet regularly and pay for snacks at the meetings as well as reading resources or other tools. (Reading the Branson book together would be a good initial assignment for this group too).

Begin the Whole-Faculty Process

Once the small leadership group is comfortable with the AI process (which will likely take at least a term if not an entire academic year), the group will be ready to undertake the larger task with the whole faculty, taking each step one at a time.

Step One: Appreciative Inquiry Linked to Mission

Using the appreciative inquiry script (see Appendix at the end of this essay), the leadership group will invite the faculty to participate in the AI process in tandem with whatever larger, ongoing process has been previously identified. (If, for example, the school is in the midst of a self-study, the leadership group can use the AI process to generate stories of teaching as one element in that process.) If the academic dean is *not* leading a small group process, it should nonetheless be clear that the dean and the school administration generally are authorizing and supporting this intervention.

The primary goal of this first step is to create a favorable buzz regarding this kind of inquiry. Faculty should enjoy the process of learning something from each other in ways that are neither competitive nor fraught with fear. The first step should also reinforce the central theme or concept (such as self-study, strategic planning, or curriculum review) that is being explored but do so through a discussion of teaching. Luther Seminary, for example, chose to use the two terms "mission" and "confession" in their AI process as a way of contributing to strategic planning. They used the AI process to explore some of the ways in which "mission" and "confession" were generative within teaching and then folded that information back into strategic planning.

Using the AI process to explore a central metaphor from the school's mission lays the groundwork for more direct engagement with faculty vocation on teaching, but in this initial stage the focus on teaching is secondary

to the primary work being engaged by the faculty. There are, however, several outcomes being sought in this process that are specific to improving teaching:

- Giving faculty practice in talking appreciatively about teaching in a nonthreatening environment.
- Generating data for a basic assessment of the culture surrounding teaching in the school, particularly the way in which “talk about teaching” occurs in the school.
- Generating data about the connection (or lack thereof) between the primary mission of the school and faculty perceptions of their vocation as teachers.

Step Two: Cultural Assessment

After the conclusion of the larger effort (such as a faculty retreat) in which the AI process has occurred, two important tasks must be completed. First, a general summary of what was learned needs to be returned to the faculty, preferably in a setting in which it can be further discussed; second, the leadership group needs to plan their next steps. There are multiple examples within Lexington Seminar project schools of ways to communicate what has been learned in this initial kind of process, such as voluntary brown-bag luncheons and faculty workshop discussions. The key is to find a context that is invitational rather than mandatory. At this point in the process, it is helpful to have the summary communicated by the dean, thereby demonstrating that that person is listening well to what faculty are saying. It is also helpful to create a resource list in some place accessible to faculty, describing the various constructive practices that were identified during the AI process and helping faculty to connect with each other to learn from them. In this way faculty can see a visible, helpful outcome before the entire process is even well under way.

The second task, which grows directly out of the summary, requires the leadership group to develop for itself a clear sense of what was learned about the culture of teaching in the school. Using what was learned in the AI process as well as what is known already about structures at the school, what can the leadership group say about the current culture of reflection (or lack thereof) on teaching at the school? The leadership group should use the following questions to help assess the school’s cultural context:

- What kinds of “talk about teaching” currently take place in your institution?
- What is the “tone” of the talk? Negative? Fearful? Gossipy? Constructive? Helpful?
- Where does the talk occur? How is it begun?
- Who seems genuinely engaged by the process of supporting student learning?

- Who has formal responsibility for faculty development around teaching? To what extent is that person involved in informal conversation about teaching?
- Whom do new teachers go to for help as they begin their teaching?
- To what extent are senior faculty able and willing to talk about their own teaching practices?
- What seem to be repeating themes in generative stories about teaching?

Step Three: Setting Specific Goals

The next step is to draw on the cultural assessment to create specific goals for the school. Figure 3.2 (Reflective Practice Matrix) can be especially useful in helping determine how the school behaves within the matrix and how the group would like to see the school change. Keep in mind that it is rare, if not impossible, for behavior to jump from the extreme left of the matrix to the extreme right without demonstrating some or all of the intervening behaviors. The goal, therefore, should be to progress one step at a time. It is also crucial to use this chart as an invitation for growth, not as a tool for shaming. It might be appropriate to use this rubric only within the small leadership group, or if it is shared with the larger faculty group, then it should be accompanied by appropriate preparation and with an emphasis on recognizing what the faculty has already achieved, rather than how much more it can grow. The leadership group should endeavor to keep the focus appreciative.

Some possible goals to consider include the following:

- Moving away from complaint to thoughtful sharing
- Building informal spaces for constructive talk about teaching
- Moving from constructive to deconstructive criticism
- Building structures for ongoing reflection
- Inviting students, staff, and congregations into the process of reflecting on teaching

At this point in the process, it is *not yet* time to plan concrete events. The focus should remain on choosing a specific goal to be achieved, given the current context. To be realistic, it is best to focus on one or two areas in which to work on growth. The overarching goal is to shift one category to the right in at least one row of the matrix.

Step Four: Identify Markers of Achievement

Once a discrete, well-defined goal has been identified, it is time for a second round of inquiry to establish clear markers that would demonstrate

whether the goal is being achieved. The following are examples of suitable markers:

- A generally positive buzz about teaching
- Faculty who can collaborate together across the curriculum
- Faculty who regularly attend meetings on teaching enhancement
- Students who rave about their learning experiences
- Faculty who participate in professional conferences on teaching
- Faculty who write about teaching as part of their scholarly research
- Faculty peer-group course enhancement teams

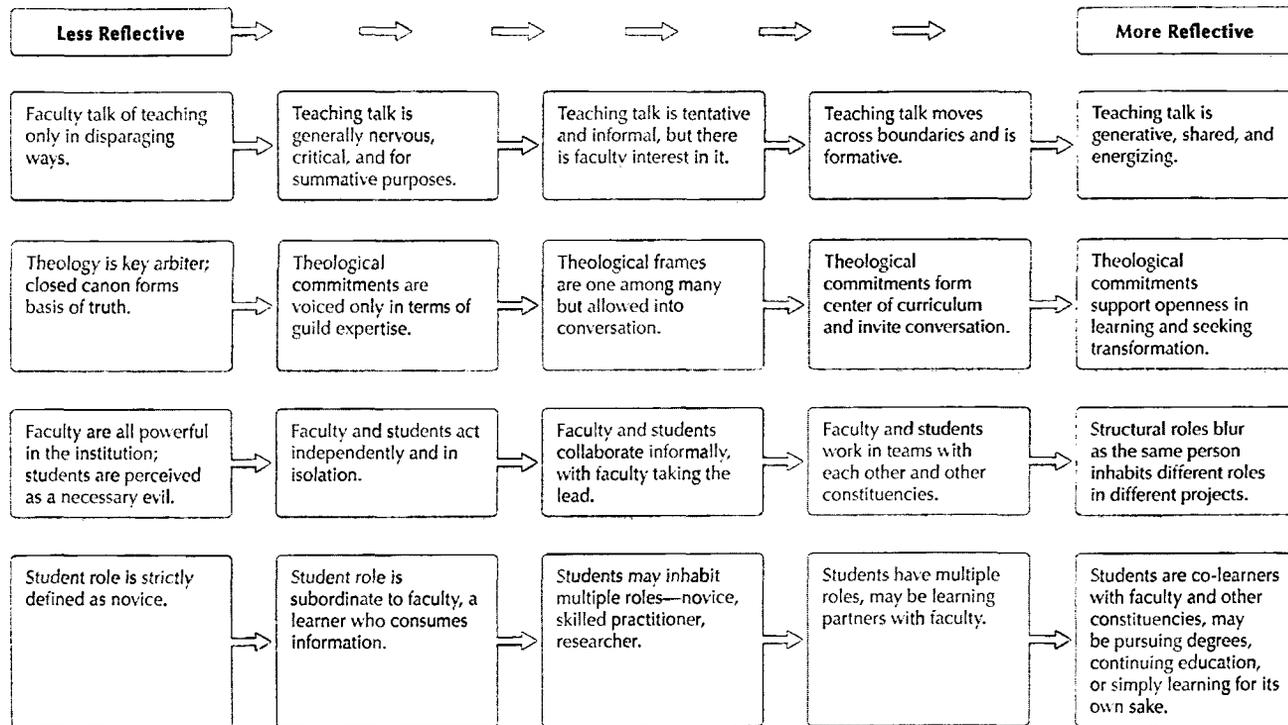
Here again invitational brown-bag luncheons, options during faculty retreats, and so on are very appropriate formats for such an inquiry. At this time the task is to name concrete ways that the community can demonstrate that the goal is being met. This is the point in the process at which the dean and the process's leadership group should check in with the leadership of the school (specifically, the president and the board of directors) to assure that the identified goals are appropriate and that the markers of achievement are clearly agreed to and understood in advance of their being pursued.

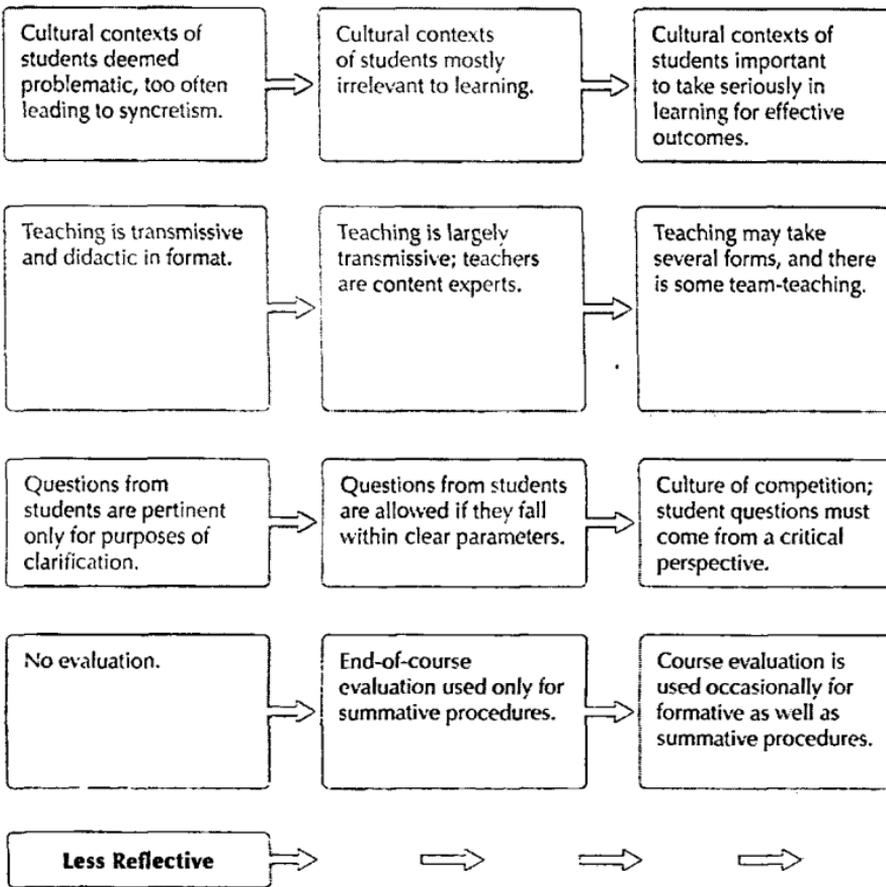
Step Five: Implement Specific Tasks

At this point, the dean and the leadership group can begin to implement specific learning events that will help the faculty move toward the desired goal. The Lexington Seminar archives (<http://www.lexingtonseminar.org/archive/index.php>), as well as the books published out of The Lexington Seminar and the Keystone Conference (Klimoski 2005; Warford 2004), are full of narratives and other reports that can offer ideas for how to do this.

Here the task becomes one of identifying learning processes—events, workshops, moments in the daily life of the community—that will help faculty develop the necessary ideas, motivation, and skills to achieve the stated goal. One example might be moving from a process of evaluation of teaching that is only a postmortem once a class has concluded to deliberately inviting evaluation along the way. What would it take to help the faculty do this? At Luther Seminary, for instance, a small group of colleagues who were already familiar with each other and interested in talking about teaching began to meet regularly over lunch to talk about evaluation during a class as well as at the end of it. They eventually shared ideas about using critical incident (CI) inquiry reports, one-minute papers, and so on, leading to a much larger experimentation with ongoing evaluation throughout the faculty. The creation and sustenance of this small peer-group learning-enhancement team was the specific strategy put in place to achieve the larger goal.

Figure 3.2: Reflective Matrix: Spectrum of Reflective Practice in Seminary Teaching.





Cultural contextualization a key element of learning and teaching.

Cultural contextualization embedded in theological processes.

Teaching is often interdisciplinary and done in teams; teachers are the designers of learning environments in addition to being content experts.

Teaching is aimed at student discovery; teachers take on the role of expert guides; much coursework is based on collaborative projects.

Questions originate in shared attempts to negotiate meaning and clarify truth.

Truth emerges from shared, energized, engaged questions.

Students involved in assessment; primary emphasis is formative.

Continual assessment by all participants; portfolio development for lifelong learning.

More Reflective

Examples of other specific tasks include the following:

- Create small incentives for peer collaboration on teaching.
- Institute a teaching-learning brown-bag luncheon series.
- Provide a structured opportunity during a faculty retreat to talk about teaching.
- Extend the reach of conversation about teaching and learning to include students and congregations.
- Provide regular information about outside opportunities for enhancing teaching.
- Sponsor small grants for research into classroom practices.
- Take the opportunities that present themselves to highlight good teaching practices.

Step Six: Assessment

It is difficult to specify a timeline on this kind of cultural intervention, because each process will be situated in the unique context of a specific school. Whatever the timeline, however, it is important to have moments identified for evaluating the manner in which the process is unfolding and determining the extent to which specific steps might need to be modified. Assessment at this point grows pressing, because the leadership group will need to begin thinking about the next round of inquiry and goal development.

At a minimum, the academic dean ought to invite another conversation with the president and the relevant board members, before repeating the cycle of inquiry and planning. The next time the cycle begins, the appreciative inquiry process need not be situated within another process, for the school may have moved along enough to explicitly engage a process of reflection on teaching.

To reflect on the entire process just completed, keep in mind the following important points:

- The faculty cannot move from the far left side of the Reflective Practice Matrix to the far right side without moving through intervening steps. The process is developmental and must be taken from one step to the next.
- The method is appreciative inquiry, so it is crucial to support faculty in this process, which can be one of much vulnerability.
- Emphasize the positive elements of reflective practice. Do not deny the negative but turn the complaint into a statement of commitment to something positive. For example, turn “I hate it when small groups are just students sharing ignorance” into “I yearn for small group discussions in which students engage deeply with the texts in front of them.”

- Work from the underlying, shared commitment and use language (such as theological language) that is appropriate to the context.
- Kegan's work is very useful here, because it highlights a way of engaging the language (1994, 2001). Parker Palmer's trust circles offer one useful model (1998, 2005) Brookfield's critical incident inquiry reports offer yet another (1995, 1999, 2006).

Conclusion

The goal of this model is to invite faculty into sustained—and sustaining—reflection upon their vocation as teachers within the context of theological education. The appreciative inquiry guidelines provide a process for doing so, and the larger model outline provides a structure and sequence, but the primary goal is one of listening. As I noted at the beginning of this essay, that listening must eventually be shaped by attending to the history of the institution, to the seminary's students, to the churches and congregations that send students and to which students are called, and to the "signs of the times." Giving faculty experience with the practice of listening—first with each other—invites them ever more deeply into the practice, and from there it is virtually inevitable, as the narratives and reports of The Lexington Seminar schools document, for these other kinds of listening to occur.

Appendix

Appreciative Inquiry Process: Script for Small Group Leaders

Introduction

Leadership can take place as we create environments for surfacing our questions and as a community forms responses and stories that are generative of energy and renewed commitment in relation to those questions.

Many concepts and ideas wind their way through our work at [name of school], but one that seems to have been at the center of much of our recent discussion is [name a central metaphor, mission statement, etc.].

Clearly this [concept or metaphor] is not static, or easily defined, and how it is woven into teaching can differ from one person or one context to the next.

In this process we're exploring how we work with the dynamic tension of [concept or metaphor] in the teaching and learning processes at [school]. We're interested in knowing how you work with this dynamic (if you do) and what this concept means for you when it's generating positive energy in

your teaching. In other words, while there are times to discuss how things go wrong, this process is about the *best* positive examples and narratives regarding your teaching.

During our small group time we'll ask each group to think from an overview frame first, then move to elicit specific ideas about discrete value. Next, we'll ask you to choose from what you've shared something that you would identify (at least at this moment, in this conversation) as most important. Finally, we'll invite you to generate some wishes or dreams that point toward where [school] could go in preparing to teach in ways that support [concept or metaphor].

Overview

In all the ways that you've experienced the dynamic of [concept or metaphor] at [school], tell me about a *positive* experience that highlights your engagement with the dynamic. What can you say about ways in which [concept or metaphor] has been generative for you here at [school]?

[Note: If the small group does not find this concept creatively dynamic or cannot think of a single positive experience with it, then ask for a positive story about the school more generally. This is an overview question, so the stories do not need to be about teaching but more generally about engaging the concept or metaphor in question.]

What makes that generativity possible? What had to happen to make it work? What was the context? Who was involved?

Value

Next we'll move to ask more specifically about [this concept or metaphor] in the context of teaching at [school].

In your experience, what is the best example of [this concept or metaphor] as it arises in the midst of a teaching process, such as a class, a text you have read with students, or something students have done?

What can you tell me about the example? What made the engagement with [concept or metaphor] work so well? What had to happen to make it work? Who was involved? What about the context made it possible? Why do you think it was generative?

Can you think of some other good examples?

[Note: Ask for additional good examples; seek more detail.]

Most important

Next, think about these elements you've just identified—the pieces that made that story, that example of [concept or metaphor] work so well in a

teaching context. Of all the things you've just identified in relation to that story, what would you say is the single most important factor in the generativity of engagement with [concept or metaphor] in your teaching? What do you think made it work?

Would you like to add anything about that single most important element?

Wishes

Keeping your ideas positive, imagine three wishes that, if fulfilled, would help [school] best achieve its mission. [Read the school's mission statement.]

What would your three wishes be?

[Note: The key here is to invite the small group into imaginative engagement with a positive future. If the group goes instead to complaint, make them tell you what the future would look like if the complaint were reversed, that is, if there were a rich abundance of the thing the complaint identifies as lacking. If participants complain even about the desire to stay on the positive in this part of the process, point out that our sacred texts have embedded complaint in gratefulness and that at this moment you are seeking stories of gratefulness, even if, and perhaps especially if, they are clearly dreams or yet-to-be-fulfilled wishes.]

Notes

1. A similar set of principles can be found in the "Principles of Dialogue" from the Catholic Common Ground Initiative (<http://www.nplc.org/commonground/dialogue.htm>) and in the ELCA's document "Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues" (brief excerpt available online at <http://www.elca.org/youth/resource/riskydiscussions.html>).
2. There is an abundant and rich literature on the use of appreciative inquiry. Mark Lau Branson's book, noted earlier, is an excellent introduction. Within the broader literature on organizational development, see also Bushe (1995) and Ludema (2001).

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