Time to Choose, Time to Change:

A REPORT ON THE 2013 FTE CONSULTATION ON DOCTORAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the site hosts of our consultation gathering—Christian Theological Seminary President Matthew Myer Boulton, Vice President and Academic Dean Edwin Aponte, and a dedicated seminary staff—for their generous hospitality.

We also want to acknowledge the good work and dedication of consultation participants. Their candor, wisdom and commitment generated the material from which this report was drafted.

The authors also thank FTE President Stephen Lewis, Matthew Wesley Williams, FTE Director of Strategic Partnerships, and the FTE staff for their leadership in convening the consultation and for their support in the production of this report.
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TIME TO CHOOSE, TIME TO CHANGE

The shared challenge we face in doctoral theological education is chronic and increasingly complex. It demands our attention and our timely action.

Racial and ethnic diversity in North American theological education has never been more necessary. We now face this chronic challenge in the context of an unprecedented shift in the higher education landscape:

• The majority of employed academics are in contingent positions that offer few prospects for a sustainable livelihood.

• The cost of higher education has never been higher.

• The population of North America is more diverse than ever—and will continue to be. Yet in North American theological schools, 83% of faculty are white, even as the students in their classrooms are increasingly people of color.

We rely on partner schools and organizations to establish institutional priorities, policies and practices that honor racial and ethnic diversity.

These factors cause students and scholars to question some of the basic assumptions about the value and purpose of the academy and the vocation of teaching. Their sense of betrayal echoes widespread sentiments voiced during the traumatic bursting of the housing bubble in 2008. This national calamity upset fundamental public trusts related to home ownership, financial fairness and the “American Dream.”

Meanwhile, most doctoral programs in theological schools have continued to operate as though these events and their repercussions—which are felt disproportionately by students and scholars of color—are of no consequence. Not much has changed in the way we do what we do.

The problem of the underrepresentation of scholars of color in doctoral theological education is not new. Historically, FTE has persistently addressed this diversity deficit. We identify and support students of color who enter the pipeline of future faculty and compete for teaching positions within a pool of talented junior scholars. In so doing, we rely on partner schools and organizations to establish institutional priorities, policies and practices that honor racial and ethnic diversity as a core aspect of excellent theological education in the 21st century.

The aim of these programs is not to simply help scholars of color achieve positions in theological schools that narrowly value only the culturally specific offerings of white Western traditions. On the contrary, this collaborative effort seeks to broaden and enrich theological education by institutionalizing approaches to scholarship and teaching that are responsive to the realities of the growing communities of faith and origin from which scholars of color emerge.
How then, in light of current conditions, does FTE work with partner institutions and organizations to create a new reality in theological education? What in our thinking and action needs to change in order to close the gap between the challenges of our time and the ability of our institutions to effectively address them? How might we reimagine the relationship of theological institutions to one another and to the leaders we help to shape and send to serve communities of faith and learning?

During the 2013 FTE Consultation on Doctoral Theological Education, we convened diverse representatives of the field to address these questions. Our purpose was to start a frank and bold dialogue among institutional leaders—one that begins to unearth the unseen elements of the field that give rise to the trends and conditions we seek to address: racism, economic models, epistemologies, class bias, power, institutional identities, cultures, and values.

On the third day of the gathering, one director of a graduate department of religion remarked, “It occurs to me that everyone who can do something about this problem is in the room.” While that realization may seem obvious, this director named a fundamental fact that is often missed in conversations about systemic change. We can do something about this. The current conditions and their root causes are not permanent fixtures of the field—at least they do not have to be. The systems we have inherited were designed and reinforced over time by people in the roles we now occupy, to produce the outcomes that we now want to change.

Yesterday’s solutions have become today’s problems. Institutional leaders in theological education now have a choice: will we leave to our heirs in the church, academy and broader society a system that we passively inherited and did nothing to transform, or will we leave a system that we actively construct out of values that meet the needs of our time and correct the legacies of injustice left to us by our forebears?

Which path will you choose? Which path will your institution choose?

An African proverb reminds us, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” FTE invites you to join with us and with participants in our 2013 Consultation on Doctoral Theological Education as partners in sustained dialogue and collective action. The health and future of theological education—in service to the common good—will surely hold us accountable.

Matthew Wesley Williams
Director of Strategic Partnerships
The Fund for Theological Education (FTE)
October 2013
THE AUTHORS

ANNE JOH is the Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Dr. Joh was a participant in the United Methodist Women of Color Doctoral Scholars Program while completing her doctoral work at Drew University, and since 2008 she has served as a mentor in the program. Anne has provided leadership to the Status of Women in the Profession for the American Academy of Religion, and to the Pacific Asian/Asian North American Women in Theology and Ministry as a Board member and faculty mentor. Her service in academia has focused on mentoring doctoral students.

DORI BAKER is Research Fellow at The Fund for Theological Education (FTE). Dr. Baker completed a doctorate in Religious Studies with an emphasis on feminist and liberation theologies at Northwestern University. She is an ordained United Methodist elder. For the past five years, Dori has worked to help FTE create resources, develop programs, and innovate pedagogical practices that contribute to the flourishing of young people whose vocations lie in leadership for the church-that-is-becoming.
This report is an account of the proceedings of the 2013 FTE Consultation on Doctoral Education at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, IN, held April 18-20. It lifts up key themes that emerged from the consultation, and places them in conversation with available literature and statistical data. When concepts call for deeper interrogation, they appear alongside the narrative, which names priorities for research and program development, suggestions for institutional approaches to cultivating scholars of color, and unresolved tensions that call for further dialogue.

The primary audience for this document is executive leaders in the academic institutions that identify, recruit, cultivate, and employ theological and religious scholars. It also speaks to leaders of organizations that support graduate theological education. These include philanthropic organizations, mentoring communities, accrediting bodies, and professional scholarly organizations, as well as denominational bodies who hold an interest in doctoral theological education and in doctoral students of color.
so i began to teach in a doctoral degree-granting institution because i wanted to be a part of the
formation of scholars

as i began to do so, i realized that a key piece of the foundation for this—after developing a
rigorous pedagogy, excellent colleagues, intellectual resources that help stretch their talents, and
student funding

is that we must do so with eyes, minds, and hearts finely tuned to building a more inclusive future

the cultivation of any scholar must be done in an atmosphere of learning and collegiality

this is more pressing for scholars of color who may be the only one or one of a few who look like
them, have similar sets of shared experiences, share similar cultural codings, and may be question-
ing the absence of theological thought that reflects the religious worlds in which they were raised
and may continue to provide them the sustenance to undertake doctoral education

now let me hasten to add that it is important to learn the traditional, if not accepted canon of
one’s discipline—because you cannot innovate what you do not know

but doctoral education must not be shackled by intellectual hubris that disdains or mocks new
modes of inquiry or new methodological musings or different resources

the fact of the matter is that some of the now “acceptable” modes of religious thought in our disci-
plines were once held suspect or faddish when they first appeared on the scene

are we the latest representatives of a trenchant unwillingness to engage the new?

so yes, we must insist that our students master the standard texts and ideas of the various religious
and theological disciplines

but i also believe that cultivating scholars of color means we encourage them, and ourselves, to
step out on the rim bones of nothingness

and bring new worlds into being while holding fast to those old worlds that have been left out of
the common understanding of “the intellectual” or “the academic”
FTE designed this gathering with careful consideration of both “the who” and “the how.” We wanted in the room people who are positioned both to raise challenging questions and to enact interventions. Similarly, we hoped to create a space that was intentionally participatory, open to the wisdom of all present, and mindfully welcoming of innovation.

**THE WHO:** Invitees ranged in diversity, including race/ethnicity, ecclesial family, theological perspective, age, and level of seniority. Three current doctoral students sat among seminary presidents and deans, and alongside funders and professors. In addition, we heeded institutional diversity—including both those with fully funded doctoral programs and those with tuition-driven programs.

FTE mined its networks, seeking representation from institutions that have a long history of cultivating FTE Fellows, those with a good track record of graduating Ph.D. students of color, and those that employ scholars of color at higher proportions. We also invited representatives of third-party institutions and funders—such as the Association of Theological Schools, the Society of Biblical Literature, The Louisville Institute, the Hispanic Theological Initiative, Lilly Endowment, and The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Participants described their institutional contexts to one another in writing in advance. Everyone received a copy of “The Cultivation of Scholars of Color Within Theological Education,” a report prepared for FTE by Sybrina Y. Atwaters—a doctoral candidate at Georgia Institute of Technology and an FTE Fellow—as well as several pertinent articles.

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1 In an attempt to get a representative array of diversities in the room, FTE consulted with the Association of Theological Schools, The Louisville Institute, and the Hispanic Theological Initiative.

2 For a complete list of institutions, see Appendix B.
THE HOW: Day One began with FTE’s Director of Strategic Partnerships, Matthew Wesley Williams, inviting us to an opening session framed theologically as “the time between Resurrection Sunday and Pentecost.” He called to mind this time—characterized by new life in the face of the forces of death—as one into which God expresses God’s self in multiple tongues. FTE President Stephen Lewis lifted up the shared institutional responsibility of participants—not just for “producing” doctoral students of color—but for caring about their well-being, their commitments to their communities, and their desire to do scholarship that matters for the sake of the church’s work in the world.

Participants committed to a set of conversational practices, a covenant that would allow them to show up with one another as fully present, embodied human beings, and, hopefully, allow creative outcomes to emerge.

Around small bistro tables, participants answered the question, “What is at stake for you in these conversations?” A dinner keynote address by Emilie M. Townes was to follow, but her presence was prohibited by travel delays due to a storm. So, dinner conversation flowed into after-dinner talk, and Dr. Townes’ remarks came in written form the next morning.

Over the course of the next day-and-a-half, participants travelled in large and small groups, through conversations over meals, and into spaces designed to surface the breadth and depth of issues as seen from the multiple perspectives present.

Day Two began with news that the city of Boston was shut down, as police pursued a suspect in the Boston Marathon bombing. We began in prayer, with the events of the previous few days keeping the conversation tethered to real-world concerns around violence and responses to it. A panel discussion followed.
Panel Discussion: What Does 2040 Mean for Doctoral Theological Education?

JUAN MARTINEZ of Fuller Theological Seminary moderated a morning panel entitled, “What Does 2040 Mean for Doctoral Theological Education?” Dr. Martinez set the stage by reminding us of a landscape in which consensus about how the church shapes public life is fractured, churches are marginalized, and denominationalism is dying. Furthermore, in the midst of crumbling endowments, the diminished importance of professional credentialing for clergy, and the rise of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) he wondered, “Will we even be around in 2040? Who are we preparing? Who will they serve? How do they link to the changing face of the church?”

BARBARA WHEELER, an independent researcher working with the Association of Theological Schools, explained the demographic significance of 2040 for theological education, which she described as “ill-equipped” to deal with the dramatic changes on the horizon. Because the recent research on the “nones” (people with no religious affiliation) was largely based on white young adults, it does not reflect young people of color, who are more likely to remain religiously affiliated. According to Dr. Wheeler, young people of color are the ones who will primarily be populating theological schools. For theological education, 2040—the year when the white majority is predicted to become the minority in light of growing African-American and Hispanic populations—is approaching faster than for the general population.

“WHITES ARE DISAFFILIATING FROM ORGANIZED RELIGION, BUT OTHER GROUPS ARE NOT, SO THE PART OF THE POPULATION THAT IS RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVANT AND ADHERENT IS DIVERSIFYING FASTER. IN RELIGIOUS AMERICA, 2040 WILL OCCUR WELL BEFORE 2040.”

BARBARA WHEELER
INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER
PETER CHA of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School shared data about a growing interest among young seminary graduates in serving multicultural or racial/ethnic churches. This calls for a heightened level of intercultural awareness among the faculty who will teach them. He asked, “How do we equip pastors who know how to step into multicultural congregations and know how to lead? How do we teach people to cross boundaries with ease, because that is their sense of calling from God?”

CAROL NEWSOM of Candler School of Theology at Emory University called attention to the informal processes of mentoring scholars of color that lead to a “leaky pipeline,” one in which students are recruited but are not retained to completion. Recruitment, she said, needs to move from the informal to the systematic in ways that would help promising Master of Divinity students explore the culture of doctoral work. She advocated for introducing potential scholars to professional formation, habits of intellectual life, and skills for applying to graduate school. Additional support might include funding for travel to academic conferences and intentional connection with other scholars who might mentor them into the world of academia, especially if they come from communities in which academia was not a preferred choice. These strategies, she added, have a better chance of succeeding in institutions that have successfully recruited and retained scholars of color. “Nothing attracts other scholars of color like having racial/ethnic minority scholars to come work with,” she said.

TERRY LEBLANC, founder of The North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies, described ways in which students of Native American heritage have been excluded from theological education. “Our worldview was absent from theological education,” he said. “Everything continues to be framed in the academy in either/or categories, rather than both/and. We (Native Americans) are holistic. Because the academy creates this framework, it doesn’t help us.” Describing the approach of GRE (Graduate Record Examinations) as counter to his community’s way of thinking, he said, “There are norms in the population that don’t include us. Things need to change if we’re going to invite people from our community, and, I suspect, from other communities as well.”
Following the panel, we engaged in a World Café process of facilitated dialogue, moving among tables to talk to one another around these questions: 1) What are the implications of the 2040 reality for cultivating scholars of color in your institutional contexts?, and 2) What might you need to do differently to effectively cultivate scholars of color for this emerging reality?

The large group harvested that conversation in open reflection, sifting through it to hear the themes that were emerging.

The afternoon brought small group conversations centered around critical issues identified by the group in a pre-conference survey. This time also made room for emerging questions of import. Consultation participants dialogued in small groups around six critical issues facing doctoral theological education:

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3 In World Café is a process of facilitated dialogue designed to engage people in conversations that matter. This approach to dialogue draws from seven interdependent design principles that inform a simple, yet specific method. This "social technology" operates within a constellation of human-centered approaches to group process.

For an introduction to World Café process and theory see: Brown, Juanita. The World Café Book: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005)
• Funding doctoral education,
• Solving the problem of Ph.D. proliferation,
• Effective advocacy for students of color in predominantly white institutions,
• Developing mentoring models that work,
• Questions about what we are preparing Ph.D.s to do, and for whom, and,
• Interrupting institutional racism.

Participants engaged these important issues with a few prompts in mind:

- Talk about the shape of the issue as you understand it.
- How has it shown up in your experience? How does it show up in your context?
- What, if any, strategy is your institution/organization using to address the issue?
- What desired future(s) do you hope to see around this issue?
- What will it take to close the gap between the current reality and the desired future(s)?

Note takers from each small group shared their findings with consultation report authors Anne Joh and Dori Baker, and, again, the large group harvested these conversations at the end of the day.

On **Day Three**, Anne Joh and Dori Baker shared the emerging themes they were hearing. The final panel discussion, “Reflections from the Future of the Field,” was comprised of current doctoral students. These students reflected on what they were hearing through the lens of their experiences (see student stories, page 23).

We closed the day, and the consultation, by asking participants to provide written priorities and recommendations that:

- Identify the most important areas for FTE and its partner institutions to address,
- Name the commitments people might make within their own institutions to implement interventions around key priorities, and, finally,
- Make concrete recommendations related to FTE’s doctoral programs for students of color.

These writings provide the basis for the **Recommendations and Call to Action** portion of this report (pg. 37).
Theological education is in a time of profound challenge. Now more than ever, theological education requires a diverse professoriate. The scholars who form future pastors also shape longstanding institutions, serve as gatekeepers of new knowledge production, and create theology that helps communities of faith make meaning of contemporary events.

Without voices that represent all of humanity, theological education woefully fails in its mandate to support the flourishing of communities and individuals who reflect God’s shalom for the world.

Do we have strategies in place to recruit and train scholars who can help people of faith interpret biblical and theological traditions for an emerging era?

This era, already underway, will result from the web of current global forces—mass migrations, climate change, religious pluralism and the twin dynamics of global capitalism, which concentrates wealth among the few and fosters a growing underclass of people who go without access to basic needs. This interpretive task requires scholars from across the entire span of life experiences, traditions, and communal histories, but our academic institutions remain places that are typically best poised to ensure the success of white students.
For nearly 60 years, The Fund for Theological Education (FTE) has been a primary force helping scholars of color obtain doctorates and take their places as academics across all theological disciplines. Through fellowships, mentoring, recruitment and other forms of support, FTE has steadily worked to increase the number of scholars of color within the academy.

Over the next few decades, that work becomes even more urgent. Given trends in American and global Christianity, it is critical that scholars of color not only increase in number, but also increasingly achieve positions of leadership. As leaders, scholars of color can contribute to a necessary shift in academic culture that values radical inclusiveness of different ways of knowing alongside the standard European norms that have shaped the academy.

In April of 2013, FTE hosted a three-day consultation on the campus of Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. This meeting was, in part, a strategic conversation through which FTE hoped to gain insight that would inform the new design of its programs, which support students of color pursuing Ph.D.s and Th.D.s in religion, bible, and theology.

Engaging key institutional partners in this strategic conversation, FTE also hoped to create space for the field to address the diversity deficit in doctoral theological education amidst the adaptive challenges that face the church and theological schools as a whole. In advance of the consultation, FTE commissioned Sybrina Atwaters, an FTE Fellow and doctoral candidate at Georgia Institute of Technology, to prepare a review of the literature, data, and resources related to the cultivation of scholars of color in theological education.

With this review in hand, 36 key leaders from across academic and other institutions involved in doctoral theological education in the United States came together at the consultation. The purposes of the gathering were to: 1) See with greater

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4 See Sybrina Atwater’s report at http://www.fteleaders.org/litreview

5 See list of attendees in Appendix B

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Clarity multiple perspectives of the changing landscape of the academy and church as it relates to people of color; 2) Imagine ways to partner more effectively across institutions to decrease the diversity deficit that persists in graduate theological education; and 3) Suggest next steps for actionable goals, continuing conversations, and further research needs.

The consultation brought into plain view the many challenges, even as it unveiled a momentous opportunity to shape a future narrative in which diverse, theologically trained scholars help an educated democracy fashion a world bent toward justice.

Consensus emerged in what we have named below as six key themes calling for immediate action and further investigation. Around the edges of this consensus lay multiple unresolved tensions. In order to not abridge or omit those tensions, they are given specific attention later in this report (see page 41).

“IN MY VIEW, IN ORDER TO NURTURE AND RAISE THE KIND OF TEACHING FACULTY NEEDED FOR TOMORROW’S CHURCH—A CHURCH THAT IS ALREADY HERE—WILL TAKE NOTHING SHORT OF A RE THINKING OF OUR ACADEMIC CULTURE. IT SOCIALIZES OUR FUTURE TEACHERS. IT SHAPES HOW THEY THINK AND HOW THEY FEEL AND HOW THEY SHAPE CERTAIN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT SHOULD TAKE PLACE AT THE SEMINARY.”

PETER CHA
TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL
Institutional racism embedded in the very structures of academia mitigates against the kind of scholarly voices most needed to create new structures of meaning and move toward a more just world. (See related article below, “The Life of Racism.”)

Mentoring for scholars of color remains, by and large, informal and scarce; promise lies in mobilizing institutions to collaborate across networks for shared labor and benefits.

Severe scarcity of funding makes it increasingly difficult for scholars of color to finance their educations and for resource-strapped institutions to provide adequate support for students of color amid vying institutional priorities.

The recruiting, mentoring, hiring and promoting into leadership of Ph.D.s of color requires a change of institutional will and habit that will best result from a concentrated effort of allies, joining together for a common purpose.

Articulating alternative measures of academic success gains import in a shifting job market. New scholars are entering the profession at a time when tenure track positions are fewer in number and contingent faculty labor accounts for the majority of the academic workforce.

The globalization of theological education requires that scholars of color begin to forge alliances and engage in collaborative learning across diverse cultures and frames of knowledge, both in the U.S. and around the world.
Why We Gathered

A shared sense of urgency brought together this consultation and its particular participants. That urgency lies, for us, in interpreting the present time as institutional leaders—globally and within the U.S., and even more specifically, in the landscape of North American theological institutions. Two distinct but not unrelated elements generate this sense of urgency.

The first dramatic change—already anticipated and well underway—is a demographic transition that will actualize with the majority white population becoming the new minority approximately by 2040. The second critical dimension is the depth of embedded social and institutional racism, which renders theological schools unable to respond productively to the changing landscape. A few words at the start, then, will help frame our conversations in light of these two intertwined historical realities, both of which call for careful attention and wise action from theological educators and institutions committed to the vision of a just world.

What is 2040?

According to the 2008 Pew Report, by 2050 the nation’s racial and ethnic mix will look quite different than it does now. Non-Hispanic whites were 67% of the population in 2005, but by 2050 they will be 47% of the population. A recent update on this projection brings it closer to 2042.

Dramatic demographic shift does not necessarily correlate with improved quality of life, increased opportunity, or a shift in power for communities of color. On the contrary, scholar Vijay Prashad predicts a dire chain of events, extrapolated from stubborn socioeconomic trends in recent years. By 2042, he argues, the ‘disposable working class’ will have grown even more; there will be over one trillion dollars in student debt; mass incarceration of people of color will continue to escalate; and the divide between the world’s wealthiest and the rest of the population will only continue to intensify. By 2034, he predicts the rate of inequality in the U.S. will equal that of what currently exists in Mexico. Of the 91 million Americans who did not vote in the last election, most were poor. This, too, will worsen as poverty continues to grow and expand, though it will still be disproportionately felt by communities of color.

If Prashad’s predictions come true, not only will 2040 bring a dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic makeup of this nation, it may also be accompanied by an increasingly tense national climate, one that is saturated by even greater efforts to maintain the power and privilege accorded through the structures of racism.

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Prashad’s predictions are neither desirable nor inevitable. A new future requires theological institutions to confront with fierce intentionality their own conscious and tacit compliance with systemic forces that generate injustice and inequity. Theological institutions have a critical part to play in creating an equitable and just future that involves not only the collection of diverse bodies reflected in the make up of trustees, administrators, faculty and students, but also the establishment of just, intentional and corrective institutional practices such as hiring, promotion, retention and curriculum changes.8

The Life of Racism and 2040

The life of white racism does not get dismantled automatically, even as demographics change. Authentic efforts toward diversity will require deep change in institutional culture and action. While use of the word “diversity” can signal real change, this language can also be assimilated by institutions to such an extent that it loses its critical edge associated with terms like “justice” and “equality.” Commitment to “institutional diversity” can easily slide to the use of “diversity” solely as a form of institutional public relations.

In general, diversity discourse in theological education in the U.S. does not combat racism. Rather, through what can be provisionally named as the ruse of “diversity,” the weight of negotiating, understanding, surviving and even dismantling white racism is often relegated to individual responsibility. It is not seen as part of institutional and collective ethical response-ability.

Diversity is rendered a ruse when it is unmoored from the historical legacy of injustices rooted in a global idea of racial supremacy. Moreover, diversity becomes a ruse when it is delinked from struggles for justice and is motivated by a colonial posture of benevolence rather than by a core commitment to human dignity and flourishing for all. At its best, theological education is rooted in embodied practices of inclusivity, justice, and commitment to honoring difference.

Theological education is about engaged and embodied teaching and learning. This critical recognition threads the overall narrative of this report. Embodied educators and students bring embodied, lived experiences and bodies that are sites of collective memories and historical traumas, as well as collective resistances that continue to persist and endure.

Historical realities weigh in on particularity of experience but also at the same time are over-determinative. However, the real danger to honoring diversity occurs when we fail to recognize that what we most often consider to be the norm is also contextual and particular. All knowledge, including theological knowledge, is embedded in particular contexts. It is paramount that institutions unlearn many existing practices and learn new practices that are much more aligned with the kind of diversity that is our present reality.

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Doctoral students from communities of color inhabit institutions and epistemologies that often invalidate and/or are hostile to their particular way of being in this world. In other words, students from these communities inhabit institutional structures that are deeply marked by the histories of racial conception and formation that are woven into the fabric of broader social arrangements. What must be addressed in the diversity conversation is the “unquestioned prevailing assumption of institutional and structural homogeneity, and the accompanying codification of existing racial powers and frames of reference.” 9 We do not need a reactive frame of recognition and accommodation, but rather a radical shift in how we practice heterogeneity that would generate co-constitutive theological institutional formation that makes radical responsibility to each other a real possibility.

As institutions become compelled and/or pressured to invest in the public discourse of diversity, it certainly begs the question, “With diversity so fashionable and so in public view, what might be receding from our view?”

As 2040 approaches and we, the well-intentioned leaders, seek to “include those who have been excluded,” it is more urgent than ever to honestly ask how racism is reproduced through its erasure from view. Growing signs of inclusion through public relations types of diversity work has generated sentiments that we are ‘over’ race or that we have ‘moved beyond’ race. On the contrary, we need to examine how those who have been historically excluded are becoming included, and to what extent they are included.

It serves us well to remember that old habits are neither easy to break nor do they change overnight. To this extent, a commitment to diversity must include institutional benchmarks in hiring, promotion, and in job placement for doctoral students of color. Institutional examination of data on past practices will assist in putting together ways to measure the success of institutional goals.

Successful, authentic diversification begins with a commitment by institutional leaders that becomes distributed and shared by others. Commitment must begin from leadership and spread through forms of influence, promotion, drive and goals for the enhancement of the entire institutional life, and not just for those “minority students.” Every institution has a particular ethos, which also suggests it has institutional habits as well as institutional will. An institutional will is needed to break old habits and to generate new habits. Over time, this form of institutional will must convert into new institutional habits or ways of being that are intuitively embodied.

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This principle is reflected in the ATS Folio on Diversity:

“Starting at the top with an inclusive board that seeks to integrate cultural sensitivity and competence into the larger framework of the institution is a must. There must also be creative mobilization of human resources throughout the administration that intentionally hires and effectively supports a diversified staff. It goes without saying that faculty searches and student recruitment must be open to concerns about diversity but there also must be honesty about how this new sensitivity will change practices and policies.”  

Theological institutions have mission statements that are similar to what we interpret as the institutional will for its future. A mission statement indicates what it hopes to accomplish and embody. It hopes and wills a vision into a reality along with new habits. The future of theological education must learn ways to divest itself of possessive investment in institutional structures of racism. It must also find ways instead to invest in the work of how to live among, with and in the midst of differences.

Diversity in theological education—and, in particular, institutional diversity—need not simply be a ruse offered as cosmetic changes while keeping structures unchanged. Diversity without measurable institutional goals for overall structural change is diversity with neither long-term power nor hope.

Diversity is a present reality that is changing our world. Diversity enhances everyone’s learning and enriches how we know ourselves in relation to each other. Diversity is not only about those who have historically suffered from structural exclusion and dispossession, but ultimately is about who we are together.

This report seeks to account for institutional racism, particularly in doctoral theological education, because to do so means to offer a different account of the world.

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DIVERSITY WITHOUT MEASURABLE INSTITUTIONAL GOALS FOR OVERALL STRUCTURAL CHANGE IS DIVERSITY WITH NEITHER LONG-TERM POWER NOR HOPE.

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A pproaching the year 2040, two current trends that effect the supply and demand of doctoral students will intersect: 1) Seminary enrollments will see a dramatic decline, while other markets for Ph.D.s, such as college humanities departments, will similarly shrink; 2) The population of students remaining in the classrooms where doctoral graduates teach will be very racially and ethnically diverse as a result of current trends of decreasing white enrollments, coupled with increasing enrollment among Hispanics, African Americans and Asians. Barbara G. Wheeler shared these observations, gleaned from a recent research project, in her opening address. 11

Wheeler’s analysis points out a pressing paradox: amidst a shrinking employment market where full-time tenure track jobs will be scarce or perhaps non-existent, the need for Ph.D.s of color (or, at the very least, those with heightened levels of cultural competency) will be more urgent than ever. Wheeler ended her remarks by saying, “Hiring institutions, eager to attract the demographic groups that are a growing part in the wider population, will look for faculty who can mold their teaching to the experiences and aspirations of those groups. If I were running a doctoral program, I would be aggressively recruiting prospective students from these growing groups.”

A combination of conditions, Wheeler said, makes it increasingly challenging to create a “teaching force fitted to the needs of students of the future.” And recruitment alone, without a host of other strategies aimed at retention and completion, falls short, as we learned through the following first-person narratives of three current doctoral students of color.

**Three Student Stories**

These three students were invited to be present as participant-observers among institutional leaders. This moment was an opportunity for them to speak back to the field about the implications of the conversation for their vocational and career trajectories. When they began to speak, the air in the room shifted. People leaned in, listening avidly. Abstract concepts took on flesh and blood as Robert Rivera, Elonda Clay, and Justine Smith shared their stories through the lens of their experience as doctoral students from communities of color.

**ELONDA CLAY,**
**THE LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

Elonda Clay is an African-American woman whose academic work at The Lutheran School of Theology focuses on religion and science.

She recounted a portion of her life journey as the child of a teen mother and a father suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

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11 Barbara Wheeler’s address to the consultation is included in Appendix C. For further explanation of the dynamics that accompany the arrival of 2040 in seminary classrooms, see related sidebar, “The Life of Racism” pg.19.
Moving 12 times over several years and surviving other serious traumas, she came to higher education late and without a stellar GPA (grade-point average). Borrowing from her independent research in other disciplines, she recounted that religion and theology fall far short of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines in diversification strategies. She suggested that, without a multi-year strategy and a mandated implementation plan to advance diversity, diversification happens haphazardly, if at all.

“Add to this mix the new faculty majority of contingents and adjuncts, in addition to the vulnerability of scholars of color at almost every point in the talent pipeline,” Clay said, “and what I see happening in the future will be more and more Ph.D.s of color getting stuck in the revolving door of contingent faculty.”

Clay’s concrete suggestions included: 1) Designating a diversity advocate on search committees; 2) Creating realistic and measurable goals for faculty diversity; 3) Partnering with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) for recruitment at the master’s degree level; 4) Supporting faculty research on diversity issues; 5) The creation of multi-track Ph.D.s; and, 5) Shifting expectations of educational outcomes so that alternative career paths receive higher consideration as traditional academic positions dwindle. Clay closed by asking participants the following questions:

When you envision diversity, what picture comes to mind?

What ideological or emotional investments inform the version of diversity in theological education you are advocating?

Is this version of diversity and organizational change sustainable?

Where have you seen flourishing diverse student bodies and faculties?

What are the strategies, best practices and models for organizational and institutional diversity that can be drawn upon as resources?

What are you willing to give up and how far are you willing to stretch yourself to make diversity and inclusive campus climates in theological education a reality?
JUSTINE SMITH, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Justine Smith recounted her experiences as a Native American teaching students from her community—students who often come to higher education with unmet needs that result from their historical and contemporary trauma.

She named these additional burdens as including the need to take time away from studies to care for elderly or ill family members, children, and navigate issues related to hunger, homelessness, and poverty.

Institutional strategies that recruit students of color without equal efforts to retain them further exploit already vulnerable populations, Smith said. As an example, she drew a parallel between advocating for student loans in a precarious economy and the exploitation now recognized to occur in payday loans.

“These are extraordinary students who come with an extraordinary set of lived experiences and who will have extraordinary needs,” she noted. “Can institutions pay the cost required to put things in place structurally to help students succeed? These students bring innovative approaches but it comes at a huge cost.”

Smith observed that mentoring as an intervention—before Ph.D. and master’s-level work—is necessary to nurture students into a doctoral program. This kind of mentoring is traditionally informal and unrecognized. “Perhaps we need to put in incentives and rewards for mentoring,” she added.

“WHY THE STRUGGLE? WHY SO MANY INJUSTICES? WHY FAITH? HOW IS THERE HOPE? THESE QUESTIONS AROSE OUT OF MY EXPERIENCE IN THIS COMMUNITY. I’VE PURSUED THESE QUESTIONS THROUGH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE HOPE THAT, AS I WRITE TO MAKE MEANING OUT OF THEM WITH THIS COMMUNITY IN MIND, I CAN BRING THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES TO BEAR ON MY COMMUNITY AS I ACCOMPANY THEM IN THEIR EVERYDAY REALITIES.”

ROBERT RIVERA, BOSTON COLLEGE

At Boston College, I am writing a dissertation focusing on the Christologies of Edward Schillebeeckx and Jon Sobrino. I ask, “How are their Christologies resources for addressing the negative impacts brought about by globalization?” I argue that, drawing on their contributions, a Christology of liberation is a critical resource that enables excluded peoples to resist, redeem and re-imagine globalization.

My interest in theology and the pursuit of formal theological education emerged out of my experience of worship with the undocumented community that nurtured me in the faith, and my witness to their everyday realities of struggle for survival here in the U.S.

Why the struggle? Why so many injustices? Why faith? How is there hope? These questions arose out of my experience in this community. I’ve pursued these questions through theological education in the hope that, as I write to make meaning out of them with this community in mind, I can bring theological resources to bear on my community as I accompany them in their everyday realities.

So, I understand my work as the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of justice. I also understand my work as preparation for a career in the academy, one that will provide me with the tools necessary to get a seat at the academic table, and make contributions to that table. But I also want to use these tools to help provide for the table of my primary community of accountability, that is, my family.”
Response to Students

Consultation participants expressed heartfelt appreciation to the students for the risk-taking involved in sharing the stories of their personal journeys.

The result of this session emerged directly in the written suggestions that conclude this report. A particularly strong awareness arose from these student stories: the need for student support services that parallel those in place for M.Div. students in seminary.

“Development of programs in student services will allow underrepresented doctoral students to be able to be more fully participatory in doctoral education and so have more of an impact, even as students, on transforming the academic culture,” wrote Gail O’Day of Wake Forest Divinity School.

From these firsthand student accounts, combined with the collected wisdom of earlier conversations, a clearer vision emerged of the multiple challenges facing individuals and the multiple challenges facing institutions in developing the right programs and faculty for the needs in theological education as we approach 2040.

Individuals face financial burdens, admissions criteria that devalues non-traditional markers of excellence; difficulty finding mentors with cultural competency and/or mentors who are willing to engage in research whose topic may not mirror that of faculty members; looming despair about job prospects after graduation; and the symptoms of a culture which produces declining emotional, mental and physical health for both students and faculty of color.
In addition, students of color often bear collective burdens, such as care for the elderly, children or other relatives who may need support; the heavy weight of student loans; and the stresses of having to prove one's intellectual capacity repeatedly which, over time, undermines their confidence. All of this is compounded by a tendency for these students to come to vocational aspirations for academic scholarship later in life, to often delay completions, leave the academic program altogether, and/or never begin such a program. Their road to the doctoral program and degree looks very different than that of traditional white students.

Institutions hoping to nurture doctoral students of color face challenges that include creating structures for the recruitment and retention of students of color; supplying culturally competent mentors; shifting from one-on-one mentoring to collaborative mentoring models, which have been shown to better serve students of color; providing vocational formation for scholars who will be asked to do the same for future students; increasing the visibility of scholarly entrepreneurs who spread their vocational commitments across multiple professional expressions; and improving job placement assistance for graduates. All of these issues are compounded by the increasing marginalization of religious perspectives in secular and campus cultures, and increased competition for funding within academic institutions.

With these challenges in mind, we turn with more depth to the six Key Themes for Action and Investigation identified during the consultation.

1. Institutional Racism

In her pre-consultation literature review, Sybrina Atwaters succinctly summarized racial dynamics and practices within institutional cultures. Atwaters notes:

“Race continues to play a significant role in the supervising, mentoring and scholarship of persons of color within higher education. Since each of these are crucial elements for doctoral education, their impact is exacerbated at the higher degree levels ... Race is still at the forefront of everyday experiences for persons of color, and thus it impacts self-efficacy, self-censorship, and adoption or rejection of norms and rules of meritocracy and “acceptable” scholarship, particularly for Latino and Black doctoral students (Gildersleeve et al, 2011) Marginalization, isolation, and micro-aggression are the forms of racism prevalent within the new millennial academy, which create hostile campus climates for persons of color. (Gay, 2004; Hall and Burns, 2009; Yusso et al, 2009) … Consequently, institutional support and structures are necessary that acknowledge racial experiences and respond through changing of ideology, cultural norms, and creation of space/networks where racially charged experiences can be diffused and deconstructed. (See Gildersleves et al, 2001; Bernal et al, 2009.)

Participants in the consultation gathering echoed these findings through their own experiences, both as students and as scholars of color. In addition to the increased burden on scholars of color to mentor the next generation and to contribute to the production of knowledge within one's own discipline, there is a tendency to hold in lower regard academic work related to communities of color. This is just one example of what one participant called “a narrow funnel” of what is considered acceptable within academic norms, which functions to separate scholars of color from the communities that called them and to which they are accountable. This dynamic does not cease once a student completes the doctoral program but rather continues into one's professional development and role on the faculty.

12 The entire document, entitled “Review of Literature & Resources Relevant to the Cultivation of Persons of Color Within Theological Education,” is available online at http://www.fteleaders.org/litreview. In addition to a narrative review and statistical data, it includes a comprehensive annotated listing of resources available to doctoral students of color and an annotated bibliography of articles related to the topic across disciplines.
A study by Fernando Cascante reports that, “Discrimination based on race and ethnicity, increased when gender and age are factored in, is very much part of the past and present experience for the majority of racial/ethnic minority faculty members teaching at predominantly white theological institutions in North America.” 13

Scholars in Cascante’s study reported the following ongoing effects of discrimination: lack of mentoring; being perceived as a token; lack of recognition for teaching and mentoring; discrediting for research and teaching that address racial/ethnic issues; unequal payment; being expected to be knowledgeable and/or in charge of minority issues; the questioning of academic credentials by both faculty colleagues and students; isolation caused by having few or no racial/ethnic minorities on campus with whom to relate; multicultural insensitivity from people outside and inside the institution; being expected to work harder in order to prove oneself; denial of tenure or promotion due to racial/ethnic bias; and feeling disrespected by high-ranking officials at the institution.

Participants named constructive practices that hold promise for dismantling institutionalized racism or contributing to one’s flourishing in spite of it:

• Coalition-building among cross-racial colleagues who see a different vision for the academy and are willing to support one another in its creation,

• Training for cultural competency as part of the skill set of all executive leaders, faculty and doctoral students, and,

• Finding ways to inspire and support doctoral work that remains connected to communities and social justice commitments.

2. Mentoring Models with Promise

Mentoring is the collective, ongoing work of a community that desires to birth the next generation of competent and compassionate leaders for the world. In most institutions that form doctoral students, mentoring happens capriciously, accidentally, selectively, informally and sporadically, and is unmoored from the very life of the institution.

At this consultation, we heard a strong desire for new models of mentoring that call forth institutional resources and build cross-institutional collaborations based on successful models already underway.

**Mutual Mentoring**

Some of best practices of mentoring experienced by persons of color are communal and collective, but most institutions still follow the norm of one-on-one, mentor-protégé relationships. Over-reliance on traditional models of mentoring is problematic for numerous reasons.

Traditionally, “mentoring” calls to mind top-down relationships in which an experienced faculty member is assumed to hold expertise qualifying her or him to guide the professional development and scholarly identity formation of a student. Emerging and more successful models focus on “mutual mentoring,” which encourages the creation of broad, flexible networks of support. This approach mirrors the diversity of real-life mentoring; no single person is required to possess the expertise of many—nor is any student subjected to the idiosyncrasies of one mentor.

Mutual mentoring relies on robust networks of partners who function in non-hierarchical, collaborative ways. Together, partners address specific areas of knowledge and experience, such as research, teaching and work-life balance. Both the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development (CTFD) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Compact for Faculty Diversity—a partnership of regional, federal and foundation programs—function to facilitate the development of such mentoring networks in other disciplines. Learning from these programs would complement a strategy of increased structural support for collaboration between organizations within our own disciplines—putting proven models to broader use and impact.

Groups with proven track records in mutual mentoring include the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) and the Women of Color (WOC) Doctoral Scholars Program for the United Methodist Church. Both demonstrate the effectiveness of mentoring circles.

Each of these programs bring students of color together in spaces where they can share their experiences of encountering and overcoming obstacles to their success. In this process, practical wisdom emerges from both peers and seasoned scholars—wisdom that newer scholars can borrow and adapt, while also forming networks that can sustain them throughout their careers.

Similarly, FTE has provided a mentoring community for African American doctoral students within theological education. In addition, the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS), Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM), and the Asian Theological Summer Institute (ATSI) also have decades of experience in effectively mentoring students from their own racial and ethnic backgrounds.
We heard consultation participants express deep appreciation for the kind of inner-group mentoring these distinct programs provide; it is still necessary and should remain in place.

However, participants imagined the possibility of bringing these groups together to foster a new collective of scholars from interdisciplinary fields who meet to affirm different, culturally specific contributions. Within these distinct mentoring networks, a direct challenge to the predominant notion of scholarship as knowledge acquisition alone is already emerging. Rather than bifurcating scholarship, ministry, and activism, these mentoring sites could collaboratively sustain and nurture ways for students to embrace the multiple aspects of their sense of call.

Collaborative mentoring models have received support, but they deserve greater investment in light of their past success, their value to the vocational and professional development of scholars of color, and their potential to build support for adaptive changes that might best address the challenges facing theological education.

**Peer Mentoring**

The literature regarding best practices of mentoring also points toward peer mentoring as a resource that would benefit from institutional support, both internally and across institutions. Internally, programs usually admit students on an individual basis, paying little or no attention to cohorts of students. Admitting cohorts—with thought to the capacity of a peer group to challenge, nurture and support its members’ vocational pathways—might provide more benefit by keeping doctoral students of color in the program until completion. It might also form networks that mirror those that have functioned invisibly for generations to help scholars navigate the job market, the interview process, and ongoing professional development.

Beyond what is happening at individual institutions, peer mentoring exists in organizations such as HTI, NAIITS, PANAAWTM, FTE and WOC.
Improved institutional support might consist of new structures that bring scholars together across these programs for mutually beneficial peer-to-peer exposure. While peer mentoring alone is insufficient, it is important. Experimenting with new ways to structurally support it could contribute to the overall flourishing of students of color.

**Access to a Broad Range of Mentors**

Mentoring and advising are two distinct ways of nurturing doctoral students. While an advisor is usually someone within the student’s home institution, the ideal mentoring relationships might occur outside of the student’s home institution. A culturally competent advisor can best serve the needs of students in navigating the particular institutional culture and negotiating the specific requirements of a program. Mentoring offers more generalized supports, critical feedback and, significantly, makes a contribution to the student’s scholarly formation and self-identity.

Wide access to a broad range of mentors would greatly contribute to a student’s evolving self-understanding as a critical scholar who will offer contributions to transform both the professional field in which one is located and the communities to which one is accountable. Some students are savvy enough to build those kinds of networks on their own, but for others, this scenario would never occur. For these reasons, institutions should create opportunities for mentoring to occur across boundaries in mutually beneficial partnerships.

Good mentoring is about guiding and assisting the birth of a unique scholar who can find his or her own sense of professional identity. This occurs across disciplines and ethnicities. Faculty of color are not, by virtue of their race and ethnicity alone, necessarily culturally competent mentors, especially across different categories of people of color. Students of color can be mentored by white faculty who are not racially marginalized, just as a white student can be mentored by a faculty member of color. Likewise, the task of recruiting and nurturing students of color belongs to the entire institution and its faculty, not just to faculty of color.

Good mentoring—both in traditional and emerging models—also requires enormous amounts of energy and time. Institutions need to see and acknowledge the “invisible” labor that faculty offer through mentoring.
Ways to recognize and reward faculty who are engaged in serious mentoring include course reduction, consideration of mentoring as a valid and valued part of the tenure and promotion portfolio, and the inclusion of mentoring as part of a faculty member’s administrative responsibilities. This kind of recognition for the labor of mentoring may also encourage other faculty to become more engaged in mentoring. It would contribute to an overall effort to increase awareness and to motivate all faculty to take mentoring more seriously.

Significantly, mentoring students whose work challenges institutionalized norms or who bring to their studies the aftermath of personal or communal trauma carries both a mental and emotional burden. Students from historically underrepresented communities would benefit from institutional structures that value and reward such efforts, while simultaneously creating multiple pathways for imagining new forms of group, peer, and extra-institutional mentoring.

3. Financial Support

Funding for all doctoral students is becoming increasingly difficult to secure. This is even more true for students from underrepresented communities whose resources are often at even greater risk.

At the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year, FTE had become the only national and independent source of significant living stipend support that targets underrepresented doctoral students in theological education. Since that time, the Hispanic Theological Initiative has reinstated funding for Latino and Latina students who are writing their dissertations. Stipends for living expenses have been proven to shorten time to degree by “purchasing” the time for doctoral students to focus on fulfilling the requirements of their programs. At the same time, stipends help students avoid crippling debt, which often limits their vocational possibilities beyond the degree.

Since 2008, fewer and fewer schools have been able to offer full tuition awards and competitive living stipends to their doctoral students, particularly during the dissertation writing stage, when students are most vulnerable and isolated.

Of the 24 Ph.D.-granting institutions in the 2010 Auburn Center report by Wheeler and Blier, 13 are funded programs, and 11 are tuition-driven.

The funded programs, especially those of top-tiered and well-endowed institutions, usually provide full tuition and often a
substantial stipend to help with living expenses. These are highly competitive programs that accept roughly ten percent of applicants.

Tuition-driven programs often give a limited number of full tuition awards and some partial tuition grants to their top-tier students. Living stipends are rarely available.

In addition, denominations that once supported doctoral students are experiencing severe financial crises that have already, or will in the future, diminish their support to doctoral students within their connectional systems.

4. Institutional Commitment

Diverse student demographic changes mean that institutions must become equipped to educate, mentor, and nurture these students. This will allow students to develop rigorous and relevant scholarship, engage in critical pedagogies, and give birth to intellectual bodies of knowledge that can meet the demands a of a fast-changing world—a world whose views challenge some of the very foundations of knowledge as “given.”

As Barbara Wheeler notes, “Programs say that they want students who will be good academic citizens and excellent teachers. They say that they value ‘inter-disciplinarity’ and racial and gender diversity. But most programs, lacking full-time administrative staff and funding for program operations, do no recruitment.”

But recruitment alone is not the solution. In fact, without change in the institutional will to support retention, completion and employment, recruitment is, at best, misinformed benevolence. At worst, it is another form of exclusion.

Given the economic downturn affecting many institutions, faculty of color are often hired into non-tenured and contingent positions and, most critically, into adjunct positions. Adjunct faculty of color can add powerful new voices to an institution; but they can also function merely as diversity “window dressing,” without the freedom to contribute to fundamental changes in doctoral education or to the climate of an institution.

Recruitment Pathways

At our consultation, shared observations arose around questions of who, where and how recruitment occurs. Institutions need to foster flexibility in different strategies and criteria for admissions.

Traditional recruitment efforts designed to identify and attract students at particular points along an assumed educational path may completely bypass promising students from communities of color, who do not follow the assumed trajectory of moving in a straight line from undergraduate education to graduate and doctoral programs.

Alternative pathways to graduate school—such as the pastorate or non-profit leadership—may diminish the importance of widely accepted admissions criteria such as GRE scores and undergraduate GPAs. Already some institutions are changing
their admissions criteria by making GRE scores optional. Contrary to fears that changing criteria brings down the caliber of admitted candidates, such measures have resulted in a more enhanced and dynamic pool of doctoral students.

Because many potential students are not familiar with the culture, ethos, and processes of entering graduate programs, recruitment strategies need to include identifying potential students earlier and providing opportunities for them to explore educational trajectories that include graduate programs.

Wabash Center workshops successfully nurture junior scholars of color through intense mentoring by more established scholars of color. They also create a cohort of scholars who forge lasting relationships. These relationships often sustain junior scholars through their pre-tenure and mid-career journeys. Consultation participants thought it would be beneficial if Wabash could expand this work, offering opportunities for institutional leadership teams to learn about divesting from institutional whiteness.

We heard individual leaders express a desire for their institutions to learn such practices; however, forging new will to change is as much a matter of individual and institutional drive as it is the work of committed networks that can empower one another.

It is vital that leaders and institutions actively build coalitions that empower the fundamental tenets of authentic diversity work. Without implementation of best practices and policies that enhance and enrich recruitment, education, retention, and career planning for students from diverse backgrounds—students who have different and differentially experienced needs—

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14 Wabash Workshops are offered through the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Wabash supports educators teaching theology and religious studies in seminaries and universities through workshops on teaching, pedagogies and best practices, as well as professional development and mentoring. Cf., http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/home/default.aspx
we are following a recipe for replication, not change. This replication will not meet the shifting supply and demand posed by demographic changes already well underway, nor does it align with the basic tenets of an ethic of justice and care.

Potential may lie in leveraging FTE's investment, knowledge and deep experience so that institutions with FTE Fellows are required to put into place structures that will transform practices of hiring and retaining faculty of color. This could firmly and formally establish the now ad hoc institutional support for students of color. Currently, and increasingly in the future, doctoral students of color offer extraordinary contributions to theological education and to the ongoing financial viability of the institutions they serve. They also come with historical and communal challenges that cannot be relegated to the realm of individual needs with which they are left to cope alone.

5. Alternative Measures of Success and Changing Institutional Cultures

In crafting their scholarship, doctoral students of color often feel they have to choose between their communities of accountability and the academy, which seems to disregard the relevance of integrating their lived knowledge.

Given the pressures to choose certain paths of scholarship, it is urgent that a commitment to embodied learning and teaching becomes more recognized and valued in theological education. Not making this commitment creates a culture of alienation, disassociation, and isolation from both the academy and one’s community, leading to a keen sense of dislocation and dissonance.

As one scholar articulated during our conference:

“We need to support, understand and allow to be nurtured the tie between doctoral students and their communities. Not belittle it or erode it. How do you create systems of learning that not only acknowledge that tie, but bring it into the

“VARIABLES PROGRAMS AIM TO SHAPE ACADEMICS WHO ARE SKILLED TEACHERS, GOOD FACULTY CITIZENS, GENEROUS COLLEAGUES, CREATIVE THEOLOGIANS FOR THE CHURCH, AND ELOQUENT COMMUNICATORS TO OTHER DISCIPLINES AND THE WIDER PUBLIC … VERY FEW, HOWEVER, ATTEMPT TO CREATE A COHORT OF ENTERING STUDENTS THAT IS LIKELY TO BE CONGENIAL AND ABLE TO BRING COMPLEMENTARY GIFTS AND INTERESTS.”

HELEN BLIER AND BARBARA WHEELER
THE AUBURN CENTER (2010)

References for further reading:

process? Not only do you need those links, you bring something. Your community’s answers may need to be challenged and strengthened, but they may also challenge other commonly accepted answers.”

For many scholars of color who value contributions to their communities of faith and origin, success is not measured solely by achieving tenure at an elite theological school or research institution.

For some scholars, that is not even the goal.

Goals such as the freedom to explore research of interest, flexibility in structuring one’s time, access to global experiences which expand one’s creativity, and contribution to church and community all create multiple pathways for marking success that could be better articulated to younger scholars.

This is part of a cultural shift from traditional academic hierarchies and hegemonies. At local levels, some institutions are creating half-time professoriates so that academic scholarship can work hand-in-hand with practical commitments to congregations, communities, and/or social entrepreneurship. All of these moves toward hybridity and away from current models will succeed better where mentoring networks exist to support junior scholars as they imagine negotiating contracts and scholarly identities differently. This amounts to shifts of institutional culture that will not happen until people in positions of power at institutions understand the urgency and necessity for structural and cultural changes.

**6. Globalization of Theological Education**

The dramatic demographic change predicted for 2040 is an indicator of rapid and intense migration and population movement worldwide. One impact of globalization is the production of what is now known as ‘glocal’ phenomenon. We are now required to think not only locally but also globally.

These two seemingly disparate and distant realms are now intimately interwoven in today’s world, including theological worlds.

Scholars of color in the U.S. must begin to forge alliances and collaborative learning across diverse, global cultures and frames of knowledge. Tuition-driven institutions are more and more dependent upon the financial resources brought through the influx of admission of students who are non-resident aliens/visa students in theological education.

While this remains true—and, in fact, is fast becoming a new ‘market’ for theological institutions—we have yet to see institutions take up the challenge of transforming themselves to meet the compelling demands of these significant changes. Atwater’s report confirms this reality, in that non-resident student enrollment in advanced research levels surpasses “all traditionally underrepresented groups and U.S. populations of persons of color.” (p. 171)

In addition to the need for institutions to be more aware of global issues, doctoral students will find themselves more relevant and marketable in their disciplines if their academic work reflects global perspectives on a changing world landscape.
These suggestions—emerging from the consultation—will be most effective when deployed strategically to help generate collective, shared practices and policies that can begin to form a collective will among leaders in multiple settings.

FTE serves as a think tank to surface and examine these ideas—bringing together leaders and students to continue to imagine and design constructive interventions. Institutions create partnered and individual initiatives that implement new strategies. In the overlap exists a feedback loop in which we must harvest valuable insights. We must also continue to question underlying assumptions and incorporate new data from within and outside of our patterned perspectives.

Consultation Recommendations to FTE:
Funding, Mentoring, and Mobilizing Institutional Collaboration

**Funding:**

- **Continue to fund doctoral fellowships** at the highest level possible.
- **Seed and/or encourage named, funded fellowships** that highlight scholars who have contributed significantly beyond their disciplines to engage wider public discourse. Do this in particular among programs with a track record for supporting students of color that may not fully fund doctoral students and yet have successfully formed luminary scholars or scholars-to-watch.

*Robert Rivera and Edwin Aponte*
• **Offer mini-grants** framed in terms of a concrete goal, similar to the Women of Color Doctoral Scholar’s goal of “one woman of color graduates into every United Methodist Church seminary.” Consider other such concrete goals that might emerge among peer groups of theological institutions.

• **Provide micro-grants** to cover travel expenses for cohort meetings among mentoring partners, the creation of writing groups, peer review engagements, and tenure preparation teams. Focus these occasions on ways to sustain scholars-of-color in their identity formation as academicians who remain tethered to their communities of accountability and track learnings for research and publication purposes.

• **Fund research** on the retention and persistence of doctoral students of color, similar to the studies that have occurred with STEM disciplines.

**Mentoring:**

• **Curate and disseminate stories** of scholars of color whose academic rigor, creativity, and societal contribution is deepened precisely because of continued relationship with communities of accountability.

• **Cultivate and curate mentoring practices** that engage multiple sites and persons as an alternative to the norm of one-on-one mentoring. At the same time, better articulate mentoring as a form of scholarship, thus helping to redefine the contours of what is considered as scholarship.

• **Deepen partnerships** with already existing mentoring programs with a long history of success and fine-tuned pedagogies: HTI, PANAAWTM, Louisville Institute, Wabash Center, ATSI, WOC and others.

• **Publicize good mentoring.** Consider offering an annual, funded mentoring award that can become a central focus of the AAR/SBL FTE gathering, with a two-minute video of a scholar testifying to the value of the mentor or mentoring circle he/she nominated.

• **Create opportunities** for various local mentoring programs to gather together for intercultural learning, mentoring and collaboration. This will tend to the need to maximize the benefits of funding in ways that create “cohorts, consortiums, strategic partnerships, and collaborative research opportunities,” as these proved to be the most beneficial for persons of color.  

17 Atwaters, 151.
• **Tend to the epistemological ruptures** experienced by doctoral students. Do this by continuing to provide gatherings that support a widening pool of scholars of color as they challenge existing frameworks that are entrenched in higher education and find ways to name the paradigm shift in both content and form of knowledge production.

• **Provide programs and opportunities** for junior scholars of color to continue to nurture peer mentoring and ongoing mentoring by senior scholars.

• **Seek partnership** with and intentional learning of best practices from organizations outside of theological education—such as the Compact for Faculty Development.

• **Seek ways to replicate** within theological education models that have resulted in the successful diversification of faculty in other disciplines, particularly STEM efforts.

• **Open FTE fellowships** to a slightly wider range of students so as not to exclude those who are best equipped to pursue multiple career paths, such as social entrepreneurs whose work overlaps with for-profit ventures.

• **Invite the creation** of an ongoing network of Ph.D.s of color as a locus for peer mentoring among junior scholars, recruitment of future generations of scholars, and continued support of decentering scholarship.

• **Promote global alliances** and globally relevant research among scholars of color.

• **Heighten awareness of these issues** among FTE Fellows, so that they develop self-identity as advocates and mentors of scholars of color—even during their scholarly formation.

**Mobilizing Institutional Collaborations:**

• **Continue to host** similar consultations on an annual basis to widening networks. Many participants shared that this was only a first step toward naming the work to be done.

• **Host smaller action groups** of leaders within theological education who have a sense of urgency and are able to experiment with innovative practices to form new institutional will and habits.

• **Find new partners** who care about this work and can engage in actions. This could include creating mentoring networks among HBCUs, the non-profit world of social entrepreneurship, racial/ethnic community organizations, churches, and denominations and others outside of theological education from whom we can learn.

• **Work with partners to create an annual audit** of top programs that attract, cultivate and retain scholars of color. Highlight actions that heighten the success of doctoral students of color (to include job placement stats, mentoring innovations and best practices).

• **Find ways to hold institutions** attended by FTE Fellows to higher standards of accountability related to the recruitment, retention and hiring of scholars of color.

• **Work with partners** to expand the literature and research on teaching in theological education, with particular attention to the ways the needs of students are changing, given demographic trends.

• **Learn from what has worked** in microcosms. Locate existing local mentoring groups and help them share their learning with new populations and programs.

• **Provide and/or require training** in cultural competencies as part of the skill sets of all current leadership, faculty and doctoral students, beginning with the leaders of institutions. Organizations like the Wabash Center, the Luce Foundation and the Louisville Institute might provide opportunities for training and can also build tenure-to-promotion reviews that value cross-cultural competency.
• **Revise clusters of institutional practices** so that admissions, mentoring, advising, job placement and promotion are seen as a long-term trajectory with multiple points of intervention for support and funding of diversity measures.

**Recommendations for Institutions:**

• **Recognize the persistent presence** of institutional whiteness as hindering the reality of students of color in the academy.

• **Commit to learning** more about ways to dismantle institutional whiteness.

• **Steer institutional commitment** to empowerment diversity, beginning with the leadership, so that the strategic plans of institutions reflect the mission inclusivity of the wider church.

• **Recognize** that all doctoral students do not come equally to the doctoral program and implement support structures committed to their success.

• **Hire diversity advocates** who review past admissions statistics and determine where the admissions process is succeeding with students of color.

• **Set a concrete goal** of positioning underrepresented racial/ethnic faculty in positions of power and decision-making at the rank of tenured and above, where curriculum reviews and hiring are done.

• **Promote and innovate models of scholarship** at the intersection of the academy and communities of accountability. This includes multi-track Ph.D.s that allow for doctoral students of color to embrace multiple sites of belonging that value traditional disciplines, while not confining themselves to teaching only for the academy, specialty or single discipline.

• **Integrate policies that provide incentives for faculty mentoring** so that the weight of mentoring does not default on the already over-burdened faculty of color.

• **Commit to work** with FTE and other organizations by supporting white faculty involvement in these discussions.
• **Revise curriculum and degree requirements** to intentionally inform and prepare students for a broader range of employment opportunities.

• **Support the work of deans and presidents** who create non-traditional appointments such as half-time tenure positions for scholars of color who also serve as pastors.

• **Set a priority on these issues** by providing and making faculty and student memberships available to groups such as The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), which is dedicated to helping underrepresented faculty make a successful transition from graduate student to professor and also provides ongoing networks, virtual access to resources, mentoring matching programs and workshops for individuals and institutions.

• **Prioritize the types of doctoral work** that remain connected to communities and their commitments.

• **Offer workshops** on the academic job market and alternative employment paths.

**Next Steps and Unresolved Tensions**

In reporting on a consultation such as this—where many voices spoke out of different experiences, lenses, philosophies, and traditions—it is important to be attentive to the unresolved tensions that call us into next steps with a continued sense of urgency.

This involves capturing many of the weighty paradoxes that will require ongoing dialogue and a collective commitment to address them.

Here are a few of the unresolved tensions and paradoxes that the consultation raised:

**Can institutions change quickly?**

Conventional wisdom insists that institutional change is slow. Given the rapidity of shifts in our environment, we must insist on responding quickly to these urgencies. Given the trends already underway, rapid-fire prototyping of innovative models—such as those suggested above—might best supplant traditional modes of institutional change.

**Who should have the opportunity to offer doctoral education?**

Some consultation participants argued that only schools that can afford to fully fund students should offer doctoral-level theological education. This argument rests on the ethical and economic grounds that students deserve to graduate debt free; those graduating from tuition-driven schools will be in greater debt with fewer viable professional prospects. A counter-argument claims that tuition-driven schools are typically more connected to the realities of the churches and communities from which students of color often come. The cultural commute for students of color tends to be shorter in institutions that are less well funded but more accountable and better-connected to communities of faith in communities of color.

**The agents of change are in the room**

On the third day of the consultation, one of the directors of graduate programs looked around the room and said, “It just occurred to me that the people who can do something about this are in the room!” For most of the consultation, we typically talked about the issues as though the issues were at a distance, removed from the realm of our personal agency. This “aha” moment was an important byproduct of the gathering. There are real actions that executive leaders can take to effect
change. For example, Frank Yamada went home with the idea of tying mentoring to the reward system of tenure review. As Stephen Lewis, president of FTE, said in his closing remarks, “If we, in this room, can’t change the state of things, who can?”

**Is this work part of our institution’s philanthropy or central to our DNA?**

In lean economic times, institutions will jettison resources for diversifying faculty and targeted support for students of color if the school sees that work as a marginal, philanthropic, “do-gooder” program that is not core to its mission, identity, and institutional vocation.

If, however, institutions understand diversity as a core aspect of their ability to deliver excellent education and to effectively serve their constituents, they will find ways and resources to support initiatives that cultivate scholars of color. This point arose during a small group discussion of mentoring models, but seemed to have overarching import.

**Conclusion: Gather Allies, Evaluate Strategies, Take Action**

In the midst of these complex challenges, it is urgent to continue gathering allies who recognize the importance of weighing multiple strategic innovations and who begin to implement concrete actions within their spheres of influence.

We invite the partners who gathered for this consultation to continue widening our pool of allies by sharing these concerns with colleagues at their institutions, within their academic guilds, in the communities of faith to which they belong, and through communications platforms that reach their stakeholders and constituents.
i was raised in a world of ideas and words

the love of learning was one of my playmates as i was growing up

and i don't think it was because both my parents were college professors

i was surrounded by educators and sages and the foolish

and the textures of my days meant living and breathing in a fascinating and constantly shifting community of learning

it was made up of folks like mr. johnny henry butler across the street who taught science and math at merrick moore school and also taught us how to fish

or at least theoretically how to fish since i don't recall any of us kids catching much of anything on those saturday mornings

but looking back on it now, he also taught us a lot about patience and listening, and being in nature as a participant and not just to trample through it

it was made up of connie allen down alton street who gave piano lessons in her home

true, i only progressed to “yo-yo” and “indian hunters of the plain” for my one and only piano recital

but looking back on it now, she also taught us about loving music, feeling its emotions, letting it into you rather than wash over you or dashing past it to try to find a dance beat
it was mrs. edna wynne who ran what now would be considered an illegal day care center out of her home

but to kids like me who had two working parents, she provided a safe place to come home to and kids to play with

she taught us about the ways of some white folks as we were all dutifully parked in front of the tv set to watch the afternoon soaps when the southern heat of the day kept us inside

i learned that beautiful lives do not beget beautiful people

powerful white men must be treated with circumspection and care—do not fear them but know how to deal with them

even the most evil of people could be brought low by circumstance

and that there was something wrong in a town that had no children

no wonder, i thought, no wonder these folks live lives of drama and angst—they don't have any children to play with them

it was also mrs. m.o. sneed lee who taught generations of first graders how to read, write, do our plus ones and times tables and how not to kill ourselves on the jungle gym and how to play nicely in the sand box together

learning is what we did in my community and in the midst of this we also learned how to teach others and ourselves

my playmates taught me about loyalty, and keeping secrets, and forging friendships

how to gossip, how to talk smack, how to put my hands on my hips just so, how to move my neck, how to do counting games and jump rope and shoot a basketball, throw baseballs and softballs, catch a football, master jack rocks, host elegant tea parties with invisible tea and crumpets (we had no idea what crumpets were), and most important of all, how to survive dodge ball

and i was expected to pass this knowledge on to the little kids

i grew up in a world where black folk were smart, dumb, wise, foolish, holy, profane, healthy, sickly, old, young, storytellers, joksters, punsters, and willing to be a good audience for those who practiced the fine art of communicating an idea or bending a sentence

i learned early that education, black education, was more precious than money and more lasting than physical property
getting an education—and a good one—was the key to that thing we were taught was called “the future”

yes, in that little predominately black, transclass neighborhood of tobacco factory workers, nurses, policemen, grade school teachers, secretaries, college professors, day laborers, insurance executives, lawyers, doctors, and even the house of ill-repute (that the women in it called home)

it was that neighborhood that bred organic inquisitiveness

where i had the first inklings of what learning and then later scholarship can and must do when it is made available to a wider and wider pool of folks

rather than remain cosseted in the hands of those who see education as a possession rather than as a gift and birth right in an ambling democracy such as ours

this is one stream of accountability that sustains and guides me in theological education as a teacher and now as a teacher who is also an administrator

as one who now tries to hold the big and bigger picture in mind so that i am no longer concerned only with my research and teaching

but committed to creating, sustaining, and growing a teaching and learning environment where my colleagues and our students can do their best work

another stream of accountability that i cannot ignore or employ the “wishing and hoping” model to deal with it is money and funding

you see, to talk about doctoral education today cannot be done well if we do not also note the financial stresses that most of our schools and our students are experiencing

our school budgets must be realistic and enhance our financial assets

we should have a 1 to 3 year operations plan supporting our strategic plans

and ideally have a 3 to 5% surplus

for students, 60% of the students who enter masters programs in theological education enter with no debt

however, 46% of students accrue debt while they are in a masters program and it is this pool of folks that that help form the entering class in doctoral programs

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2 Ibid.
when i look back on my notes on students who applied to the FTE expanding horizons program, these stats come alive when i looked again at the amount of debt most began their doctoral programs with (or proposed to)

very, very few applicants who applied were entering a program with no debt

and most carried a significant amount—for instance, in 2011

the majority of students who applied carried debt in the $30k to $60K range with six who ranged from $85K to $189K

dealing with the financial challenges are an important part of our conversations about doctoral education these next two days

and how we can provide for the education of scholars of color

however, for our time together tonight, i want to put this challenge in conversation with the cultivation of scholars of color in doctoral education

and ask us to think about what we are doing in doctoral education in general

and the peculiar effects this has for scholars of color

i do so after more than a decade of working with the expanding horizons program of FTE where i saw two generations of black scholars begin and complete their doctoral programs and most are now teaching or putting their degrees to other uses via agency work or as educational entrepreneurs

i believe that training our students to become the teachers of future generations is not a luxury or just an expensive proposition for schools with doctoral programs

it is a necessity

because we must have good teachers and researchers—good scholars—to help combat what i see as a creeping anti-intellectualism about the nature of education

somehow, we are moving toward a stance that a poorly educated public can sustain a vibrant democracy

nothing can be further from the truth

a vibrant democracy is built on the foundation of an informed and educated public

part of that education must involve the nature of things religious and how they effect our daily lives
the more capacious our understanding of religious worldviews, the better we understand the ways in which folks domestically and globally are responding to the world around them

their values

their cultures

and this is an important entry point for the cultivation of scholars of color in religious doctoral education

these scholars can and often do disrupt the traditional canons of theological thought
to do so, they must first master those canons with precision and nuance

the scholarship they bring as interlocutors and as folk who often approach their discipline with a different pair of lenses that prompt different questions and use different resources that may be from conscious social locations such as class or cultures or gender or race or sexualities

this has helped nudge the academic study of religion into the 21st century while holding the tradition in its grasp, but without allowing tradition to beget intellectual inertia

for all of our students, today’s world does not need doctoral education that is a threshing floor for arrogant or aloof scholarship

that treats scholars of color as supporting players or as providing “interesting” side chapters in the debates with disciplines

the gift and genius of students of color is that they can bring new conversation partners into the enterprise

and they give students a different view of who a teacher and mentor can be and what they can look like

we cannot underestimate the value of these things in a globalizing society like the US

where we have tended to be uneducated about other peoples and cultures

and we have not done as good a job as we should internally as we are often mere stereotypes to each other as citizens of this republic

so i began to teach in a doctoral degree-granting institution because i wanted to be a part of the formation of scholars
as i began to do so, i realized that a key piece of the foundation for this—after
developing a rigorous pedagogy, excellent colleagues, intellectual resources that
help stretch their talents, and student funding

is that we must do so with an eyes, minds, and hearts finely tuned to building a
more inclusive future

the cultivation of any scholar must be done in an atmosphere of learning and collegiality

this is more pressing for scholars of color who may be the only one or one of a few
who look like them, have similar sets of shared experiences, share similar cultural
codings, and may be questioning the absence of theological thought that reflects
the religious worlds in which they were raised and may continue to provide them
the sustenance to undertake doctoral education

now let me hasten to add that it is important to learn the traditional, if not accepted
canon of one's discipline—because you cannot innovate what you do not know

but doctoral education must not be shackled by intellectual hubris that disdains or
mocks new modes of inquiry or new methodological musings or different
resources

the fact of the matter is that some of the now “acceptable” modes of religious thought in
our disciplines were once held suspect or faddish when they first appeared on the scene

are we the latest representatives of a trenchant unwillingness to engage the new?

so yes, we must insist that our students master the standard texts and ideas of the various
religious and theological disciplines

but i also believe that cultivating scholars of color means we encourage them, and
ourselves, to step out on the rim bones of nothingness

and bring new worlds into being while holding fast to those old worlds that have
been left out of the common understanding of “the intellectual” or “the academic”

i am concerned that we too often settle into a style of doctoral education that treats
learning as a possession rather than a gift

and i firmly believe that the cultivation of scholars of color means that we craft an
intellectual atmosphere that puts the spunk and spark back into learning and
scholarship by reminding us that learning comes from a variety of sources

and for every time the academy fails to pay attention to this or devalues this or
considers this trite or inconsequential
the academy loses more of its credibility and ability to speak meaningfully in the lives of others and to have anything more to contribute to creation than foolishness all gussied up with big words and incomprehensible concepts

in other words, the scholarship we do is not a free floating solitary intellectual quest nor is it restricted to troublesome categories like class, gender, or race

and though it is profoundly tethered to people’s lives—the fullness and the incompleteness of them

it should never be circumscribed by the traditions and cultures we explore or not

rather we consciously

and perhaps at times unconsciously respond to the drama of history lived in creation

and we cannot or we should not proceed as if we are engaged in ideas as if people are not related to them

or that there are other earth creatures that must dodge our arrogance or compassion for them

we cannot allow limited notions of religion, the religious, and/or religious thought to continue an inept masquerade of being universal when it really is unexamined particularities

the cultivation of scholars of color in doctoral education demands their nurture

which is another way to say mentoring

not only for those who are in programs

but teaching our graduates how to mentor their students and the generations of scholars coming after them

mentoring is a form of scholarship

and scholarship as mentoring is not content to pursue some kind of disinterested research tact that really is nothing more than a form of intellectual selfishness

sharing what we’ve learned, how we’ve learned it
offering strategies for learning, survival, and thriving

teaching the politics of the academic life and beyond

these lean hard into intellectual honesty for all scholars

although my focus tonight is scholars of color, i believe that i am also arguing for doctoral education in general

this stuff matters because it builds toward a more just future and a more rigorous and adept body of scholarship that is forged in excellence and not protecting ones scholarly turf

theological worlds are vast and contain multitudes:

and we must open the doors of programs so that a widening variety of interlocutors and resources have their say

we may decide they are relevant or not, but to foreclose the conversation is bad pedagogy and suspect scholarship

and it signals to all students that intellectual inquiry is not truly free, but that there are scholarly blinders that are employed to when seeking admittance into the guild

we should not encourage doctoral students to become talking myna birds of nonsense

  to become like those who think being anti-multilingual is a sign of patriotism and pride rather than jingoism and spit

  those folks, like scholars who can only talk to each other, live lives in arrogant disdain and in dismal ignorance

  and they are dangerous because they champion the notion that being magnificently ignorant of other cultures and worlds and worldviews is actually being smart or well-read

so we must nurture passion and precision in our doctoral programs and realize that we should not train students to be the dip sticks for intellectual hubris

  or the plumb line for narcissistic theological dread

we must cultivate scholars of any color who refuse to perform a classist, heteronormative, racist, sexist drag show
and resist accepting minstrelsy as rigorous scholarship

the cultivation i am advocating is built on an integrative move that represents the complexity of our is-ness, ought-ness, and could be-ness in a complex sociocultural and political creation

many of us in this room

and throughout the whole of the academy

have been told to live in split, if not fractured bodies and minds

to deny what interests us

to treat our ideas as suspect or folklorish or both if not worse

and sometimes we have been told this is rigorous intellectual exchange

we must combat encouraging the formation of scholars who believe this kind of self annihilation and demonic shake dance are markers of excellence

just because folks who think darker skinned people are a sea of wanton colored pathologies in suits and ties and dresses with pumps and pearls

are threatening not to sit next to us in a scholarly pew that is little more than a postmodern auction block

this should never prevent us from continuing to look for spaces—faithfully, methodologically and theologically—to understand that there is no hiding place for exploring the worlds of the religious

i believe we must cultivate scholars of color who are clear that whatever else they may be doing in their work, they are a body of fierce signification who realize that it is a good thing to be among those folk who do not seem to fit into the idealized and pristine visions of scholarship of the status quo

they must be building a new, fresh, and healthy academy that values crafting a community of scholars and teachers and learners

who get excited when we translate our work from library to classroom to study to community to home to religious bodies and back and beyond

we are doing the work our souls and intellects must have to stop a fantastic hegemonic imagination that circumscribes learning into a narrow and constricting casing
placed within an evil matrix of racism, sexism, classism, militarism, ageism, and more

and then has the nerve to say this is orthodox when it really a robust fear of change and the new in the ways we think and how we ask questions and offer answers

excellent doctoral education should not produce scholarship of death and destruction that is so terrified of the complexity of existence that it shapes answers before even hearing the questions

it crafts reading lists that look like the high side of misery

it sanctions curricula that believe it’s a good thing to segregate the mind, body, and spirit

it rolls over and plays dead when faced with disasters—natural and human-made

it tries to respond to life and living but spends too much time primping in front of funhouse mirrors of theorems and dicta

we do not need more scholars and scholarship that behaves as it the world is a huge object lesson and a playground for us to test our ideas as if we are like protozoa—with very low level reactions to the world around us, no recognizable brain, reacting only to light and temperature changes, endlessly splitting to reproduce

as the old black women who raised me used to say about such things: ummmph...ummmph...ummmph

the astute cultivation of scholars of color in doctoral education allows minds, scholarship, our isness to shimmer with ferocious intellectual smartness

it helps students who are becoming scholars to be able to welcome new conversation partners and be new conversation partners as we integrate body and soul, soul and intellect, intellect and spirit with a rigorous and thoughtful embodiment that takes seriously what we learn from the power of signification and the particular ways we explore it in the work we do and will do

not to control or dominate

but to allow the richness of insights and experiences beyond what we know and don’t know
to fill our scholarship with deeper meaning
to beget more piercing analysis
to offer more trenchant critique

to be more relevant

excellent doctoral education believes in the power of giving folks the chance to stretch into their intellect and therefore into our futures

and then insist that we become a community of scholars and teachers and learners and administrators who are moving into a more vibrant

more life bringing and giving

more welcoming

more humane

more alive with possibilities that engage others and ourselves future
APPENDIX B: LIST OF CONSULTATION ATTENDEES

Participants

Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director
The Association of Theological Schools

Dale P. Andrews, Distinguished Professor of Homiletics, Social Justice and Practical Theology
Vanderbilt University

Edwin Aponte, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty
Christian Theological Seminary

Adam Bond, Associate Professor of Historical Studies
Virginia Union University Proctor School of Theology

Peter Cha, Associate Professor
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Elonda Clay, Student Director
American Academy of Religion
Doctoral Student
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Chris Coble, Vice President, Religion
Lilly Endowment Inc.

Teresa Delgado, Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Iona College

Janice Edwards-Armstrong, Director, Leadership Education
The Association of Theological Schools

Arthur Holder, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Graduate Theological Union

Dwight Hopkins, Professor of Theology
University of Chicago Divinity School

Anne Joh, Associate Professor of Theology
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

James Kay, Dean of Academic Affairs
Princeton Theological Seminary

Jeffrey Kuan, Dean
Drew Theological School

John Kutsko, Executive Director
Society of Biblical Literature

Terry LeBlanc, Program Chair and Director
North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies

Juan Martinez, Associate Provost for Diversity and International Programs and Professor of Hispanic Studies and Pastoral Leadership
Fuller Theological Seminary

Mark Morozowich, Dean
The Catholic University of America–School of Theology and Religious Studies

Terry Muck, Interim Executive Director
Louisville Institute

Carol Newsom, Director, Graduate Division of Religion
Emory University

Gail O’Day, Dean and Professor of New Testament and Preaching
Wake Forest University School of Religion
Nadine Pence, Executive Director
Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion

Alton B. Pollard, III, Dean
Howard University School of Divinity

Paul Rajashekar, Professor
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Robert Rivera, Doctoral Candidate
Boston College
(now Assistant Professor of Theology, St. John’s University)

Joanne Rodriguez, Director
Hispanic Theological Initiative

Rosetta Ross, Professor of Religion
Spelman College

Justine Smith, Instructor
North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies

Emilie Townes, Dean
Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Barbara G. Wheeler, Researcher
Independent Consultant

John Wimmer, Program Director, Religion
Lilly Endowment Inc.

Frank Yamada, President
McCormick Theological Seminary

FTE Staff

Elsie Barnhart
Laura Mariko Cheifetz
Fran Davis-Harris
Jim Ellison
Darlene Hutto
Stephen Lewis
Matthew Wesley Williams
I will forego an opening joke or story because I have a short time to make two points that are relevant to the purposes of this consultation. The points are these: one, higher education is changing dramatically, in ways that make the work of the Fund for Theological Education in doctoral education more important than ever; and two, doctoral programs are generally ill-equipped to deal with those changes.

Two developments will dominate higher education in the next period. Enrollments, which grew explosively over the past two decades, increasing almost 50% between 1996 and 2010, will stagnate and in some sectors decline. In theological education, which is at least half the market for doctoral graduates in theology and religion, the downward trend is already well underway. Seminary enrollments have been declining at the rate of 1% a year since 2005. This year, for the first time since 1996, college enrollments were also down. They declined overall, in public education, in for-profit education and in all segments of two-year institutions, which will affect four-year enrollments in the future. Over the longer term, the picture is bleak. College enrollments will grow very slowly in the next period—earlier estimates suggested a rate of just over 1% a year, and the recent downturn raises questions about the likelihood of that.

Against this backdrop of enrollment stagnation and decline, several groups present a strikingly different picture. The enrollment of groups other than whites has been growing fast and will continue to increase at high rates, because those are the groups that are growing in the population as a whole. The religious segment of the population is changing even faster in its make-up. Whites are disaffiliating from organized religion, but other groups are doing so much more slowly, so the part of the population that is religiously observant and adherent is diversifying faster. In religious America, 2040—the year that there is predicted to be no racial or ethnic majority in the United States—will occur well before 2040.

In theological education, the difference between whites and others is sharply evident over the past decade. White enrollments are now declining steeply. Meanwhile, enrollments of other groups have increased continuously over the last ten years, and the different trajectories of these groups are especially evident since 2005, when white enrollments peaked. (The same pattern appears in recent college data and is predicted to continue, with Hispanics leading the way in growth, followed by African Americans and Asians.)

What are the implications of these trends for doctoral education?

First, the academic job market will not be much better than it is now. Seminary enrollments are declining; college enrollments are not growing, humanities departments are shrinking in almost all colleges, and the religion major is the smallest humanities major. If I were running a doctoral program, I would strongly consider limits on the numbers of students enrolled.

Second, the population those doctoral graduates will be teaching will be diverse, racially and ethnically. Hiring institutions, eager to attract the demographic groups that are growing part in the wider population, will look for new faculty who can mold their teaching to the experience and aspirations of those groups. If I were running a doctoral program, I would be aggressively recruiting prospective students from those growing groups.
It would be easier said than done. A recent study that Helen Blier of ATS and I conducted of twenty-four leading programs found that few doctoral programs have the means and often the will to align their practices with their goals. Programs say that they want students who will be good academic citizens and excellent teachers. They say that they value “interdisciplinarity” and racial and gender diversity. But most programs, lacking full-time administrative staff and funding for program operations, do no recruitment; they do not interview prospective students to get an idea of what kind of people they are. All too often, admissions is an intensely political process, each doctoral adviser getting to final say in the choice of one or two students who become their very “own” advisees. Very, very few programs factor into admissions decisions considerations about what kind of cohort their newly admitted students will form. These conditions are a recipe for replication, not change. Very few programs have the means and will to create a class or a whole doctoral student body that has gender balance, is racially diverse, and includes students with diverse backgrounds and complementary personality types. And after admissions, programs offer few co-curricular resources to doctoral students, such as help in clarifying vocational goals, training in teaching, interdisciplinary exposure, or placement assistance.

Add to this the likelihood that every profession and specialty will be competing for those able college graduates from the growing population groups. Under this combination of conditions, it will not be easy to create a teaching force fitted to the needs of students of the future.

We have an unprecedented opportunity. For decades, those who want to see more diversity in theological education and the study of religion have been stymied by the lack of supply—too few college graduates. Now that is changing. There will be more college graduates of color, and their numbers will continue to increase, but it will take an unprecedented intentionality on the part of doctoral programs, along with the best efforts of The Fund for Theological Education and other organizations, as well as supporting foundations. We should all be grateful to The Fund for Theological Education for calling us together to think hard about the steps the future will require.

Barbara G. Wheeler
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April 18, 2013