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From the Editor

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From the Editor

Last July, I was included in a working group of administrators, chairs, chaplains, and faculty members from our 26 ELCA colleges and universities called, “People of Wondrous Ability: Introducing Faculty and Staff to Lutheran Higher Education.” Under the direction of Samuel Torvend of Pacific Lutheran University, we shared creative ways of introducing colleagues to what Marty Stortz calls the distinctive charisms of our tradition. Here are some ideas tried out on our campuses:

- Host off-campus faculty retreats where participants discuss the theological roots of Lutheran higher education, the specific history of the school, and the vocation of a teacher-scholar. Some schools have traveled as far as Italy and Germany.
- Invite alumni working in diverse fields to reflect on the intersection of faith, work, family, and service in their daily lives at a faculty seminar.
- Survey faculty, administration, and staff about their religious affiliations (or not) as well as their impressions and understandings of the church-relatedness of the college.
- Identify experienced faculty “allies” who can lead conversations and share personal stories about their calling to and within a Lutheran college.
- Offer faculty seminars about Lutheran institutional identity, with readings spanning from history and theology to contemporary analyses of higher education.
- Publish a “Lutheran Reader,” with essays about the college’s church-relatedness written by administrators and faculty from ecumenical, interfaith, and no-faith perspectives.

I returned to Augustana excited about so many of these ideas that I essentially rolled the last three into

one. With funding from the President’s office and the Center for Vocational Reflection, we initiated “Augustana as Lutheran Education” (ALE). Throughout the year the group of ten discussed Andrew Delbanco’s *College*, Ernie Simmons’s *Lutheran Higher Education*, and a handful of essays over good food and German beer. We plan to repeat ALE for the next few years before publically presenting written reflections in conjunction with the 500 year commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. The initiative brings together “allies” of Lutheran education (many of whom may tend to “cheerlead” for it, in Torvend’s terms) beside those who too easily ignore or discard it, asking each—and the many in between—to think critically about the nature of Lutheran education.

The present issue of *Intersections* tries to do the same. It is comprised of reflective reviews of eight well-known books on higher education, written from the perspectives of faculty teaching at our Lutheran colleges and universities. Like ALE, these essays move from national trends—many alarmist and foreboding—to homegrown conversations, negotiations, and initiatives. Readers will learn about the religious roots of liberal arts education together with what Lutheran liberal arts might mean; about integrative and transformational education together with initiatives that ask faculty to practice what we teach; about the opportunity to make college into a prophetic counterculture beside the ongoing proclivities to conform to careerism and the marketplace.

The authors here report on the state of the college without either cheerleading or disparaging. Certainly, the state of Lutheran higher education is strong. But you will find here more weighted reflections about a raging national debate about college from an institutional tradition called “Lutheran.” May it inspire you to discuss books such as these with others rooted in that tradition.

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