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From the Publisher

Mark Wilhelm

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Purpose Statement

| This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-six colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the ELCA. The publication has its home at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, which has generously offered leadership and physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators that have addressed the church-college/university partnership. The ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College Conference. The primary purpose of *Intersections* is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- Lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning, and teaching
- Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives, and learning priorities
- Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

2013 Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference

July 22–24 • Augsburg College • Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Vocation: A Challenge to the Commodification of Education

From the Publisher

| It is commonplace today to note that higher education faces a complex set of problems. So we should all be accustomed to this milieu by now, right? Even if we remain troubled by an apparent absence of solutions to our problems, we should no longer be surprised by their complexity and seeming intractability, right? Not me. It seems that each day I am surprised again by the complexity of the problems we face within our own community of ELCA higher education.

The rhetoric has surprised me most recently. It is not the harshness of the words sometimes used by partisans. It is that nearly all voices use the same rhetoric to frame the basic questions facing ELCA higher education, namely: Will our colleges and universities be secular or religious? Where do they sit on that continuum?

Some of us in higher education leadership know that this rhetoric is hokum. There is a third way of doing higher education from a Christian perspective that is religious in motivation (and in practices) but on the ground looks secular. Our rhetoric must accommodate this third way. Nonetheless, the everyday reliance on the standard rhetorical model of religious versus secular by everyday ELCA members, many within the Lutheran higher education community, the media, and so forth, adds to the complex texture of the issues we face.

A well-known principle for acting in the face of a complex situation is the admonition to *do something*. After more than half a century of debates about the aims and purposes of Lutheran higher education, it is indeed time that we *do something*. During 2013, I will encourage the presidents of ELCA colleges and universities to do exactly this, despite the complexities we face. We need to *do something* to move forward—for the sake of our common mission and our shared vocation.

MARK WILHELM | Program Director for Schools, Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, ELCA