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intersections

Winter 2010



in this issue

Lutherans and Vocational Reflection

Purpose Statement

| This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-eight colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Vocation and Education 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.

From the Publisher

| I became a fan of the Lutheran doctrine of vocation decades ago. It happened while I was a first year student (we were still freshmen back then) at St. Olaf in conversations stemming from reading *An Open Letter to the German Nobility* in the old Dillenberger collection of Luther's treatises of 1520. In the intervening decades, educational leaders have deeply embraced the concept and rhetoric of vocation. For example, Parker Palmer has made his living for twenty years by traveling the lecture circuit, frequently addressing groups of educators on the theme of vocation. Private higher education has been an avid participant in the larger conversation about vocation. References to the theme appear repeatedly. A recent example is a reference in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 29, 2010, page B8) essay about the Mark C. Taylor, the highly regarded professor of religion at Columbia University, who has written (in *Field Notes from Elsewhere: Reflections on Dying and Living*) that he has struggled with coming to terms with "the meaning of vocation in his life and his career—what it means to receive something like a religious calling when you in fact 'don't believe in the one who calls.'"

Since the Lutheran church's theological tradition is a primary source for the current conversations in the USA about vocation, some leaders in Lutheran higher education (including myself) believe all ELCA-related colleges and universities should claim vocation as the defining mark of a school rooted in the Lutheran tradition. Embracing this doctrine provides an answer to the neuralgic question, "How can a college be Lutheran if it is no longer a college where all the Lutherans are?" Persons of good will from any background can join Lutherans and our institutions in education for vocation even if, like Mark Taylor, they cannot join with Lutherans (and other Christians) in believing that God in Jesus Christ is the one who calls us.

There is, however, no consensus about naming "education for vocation" as the defining mark of Lutheran higher education. The articles in this issue of *Intersections* reflect the widespread engagement with the theme of vocation by ELCA colleges and universities. The standing, annual "Vocation of a Lutheran College" conference further testifies to emphasis that the theme of vocation receives in our community, and a special conference this fall will explore the many programs (Lilly Endowment-supported and others) on education for vocation. Yet I fear that "vocation" remains for many merely the higher education program *du jour* instead of a permanent and enlivening hallmark of Lutheran higher education. All ELCA colleges and universities have received invitations to participate in the special fall conference, October 31-November 2 at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. I hope the event helps move us further along the way from *du jour* to hallmark!

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intersections

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Called for Life — Affirming Vocational Discernment

The Lilly Endowment has in recent years invested significantly in church-related colleges and universities in order to strengthen vocational discernment and church ministry throughout the country. Nine colleges affiliated with the Lutheran church received Lilly grants. Luther College, Decorah, IA, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN, and Augustana College, Rock Island, IL were three colleges of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) of the more than 80 colleges across the country who received Lilly Endowment support. Each college has developed its own distinctive programs and structures to help students discern and commit themselves to their vocational callings.

In June 2004, key leaders of all the ELCA colleges that received Lilly grants gathered at Luther Seminary, St. Paul to discuss the strategic significance of these grants for Lutheran higher education and to explore their wider relationships to the church. This meeting also focused on the feasibility of conducting a demonstration project to rigorously study the effectiveness of vocation programs in collaboration with Luther Seminary's *Centered Life* project and Wilder Research, St. Paul, MN. The *Centered Life* initiative is a multi-year project located at Luther Seminary's Center for Lifelong Learning that seeks to strengthen the capacity of churches to inspire, equip, and send church members into their work, family, and community life in a way that is centered in their faith and their values.

This 2004 meeting concluded with the decision to propose a three college project to the Lilly Endowment in which the assessment and skill-building tools developed as part of the *Centered Life* project would be adapted and expanded for use on college campuses to assess vocation program effectiveness. Luther College was selected to serve as the lead institution and project administrator. Wilder Research was selected as the collaborating partner for research design and implementation.

Specifically, the *Called for Life* project undertook a rigorous examination of the tools, resources, programs, and structures

at each of the three partnering colleges (Luther, Augsburg, Augustana) to answer the following questions:

- Have campuses increased students' exposure to and knowledge of calling and vocation?
- Has exposure to campus programs increased students' understanding of call and vocation?
- Are students who have been exposed to these programs more likely to report that they have identified vocations, callings, or plans for incorporating their faith and their values into their post college lives?
- What program elements appear to have the most promise of making a difference in students' discernment of callings and preparation for vocations?

In September 2005 the Lilly Endowment awarded a 3-year grant of \$278,437 for an impact assessment of vocational exploration programs and thus the *Called for Life* initiative was begun. Our collaboration on the *Called for Life* project has solidified our commitment to continuing vocational discernment on our campuses, strengthened our inter-institutional connections, and affirmed that cooperation and trust can be fostered in ways we never thought possible. We have also demonstrated the efficacy of using survey methods to evaluate and strengthen programs, but most importantly we have affirmed the value of the investment made by the Lilly Endowment to engage college students in the consideration of how their talents and gifts can be applied to respond to the needs of the world for the common good. The results of the *Called for Life* project are highlighted in the following pages.

RICHARD L. TORGERSON | President, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa

Called for Life

Key findings from the evaluation of college programs to support vocational discernment

Background and methods

Called for Life was a collaborative research project designed to examine the impact of Lilly Endowment funded vocational programs at three Lutheran colleges in the Midwest. Prior to participation in this study, each college had received a Lilly grant to develop on-campus resources to help students discern and commit themselves to a vocational calling.

This study was designed to go beyond the measures built into each college’s self-evaluation and to carry out a more rigorous and cross-institutional assessment of how and in what ways students have been affected by a college-wide focus on vocational discernment. In this article, based on the final research report, we seek to answer the following questions: ¹

- Do students who are exposed to vocation programming gain a broader and deeper understanding of the concept of vocation?
- Do students who are exposed to vocation programming describe being better able to discern their own vocation?
- What aspects of vocation programming are most effective?

Study methods

Findings of the study are based on surveys with three groups of students at the three colleges (see Figure 1). One group was surveyed as freshmen and again as juniors; a second group was surveyed as juniors and again in their first year after graduation, and a third group, who had attended before the Lilly-funded programs were developed, was surveyed during their fifth year

Figure 1 Summary of data collection from students and graduates

	Class of 2009	Class of 2007	Class of 2001
Spring 2006	Web survey N=800 freshmen	Web survey N=787 juniors	---
Spring 2007	---	---	Phone interview N=247 graduates ("pre-Lilly graduates")
Spring 2008	Web survey N=434 juniors	Phone interview N=384 graduates ("Lilly graduates")	---

after graduation.² Freshmen and juniors completed web-based surveys; graduates were contacted by telephone by Wilder Research interviewers.

We present two kinds of findings in this paper. First are comparisons of graduates from the class of 2007, whose four years at college all included exposure to Lilly-funded programming, and graduates from the class of 2001, who completed college before those programs were begun. For simplicity, we refer to these two groups as “Lilly graduates” and “pre-Lilly graduates.” Second we present comparisons showing progression from freshman year to junior year, and sometimes also from junior year to post-graduation, to illustrate how certain kinds of knowledge and behaviors developed over time. These comparisons are based on surveys of students in the classes of 2005 (juniors and graduates) and 2007 (freshmen and juniors).

Vocation program elements referenced in the evaluation

Each college developed a unique program suited to its own history, mission, and student population. However, from conversations with representatives of the three campuses, it became clear that there were common elements in all three of the programs. These common elements were used to understand the types of program activities that affected student outcomes. They are:

- **Academic and personal advising**, which includes conversation with or advice from an instructor, faculty advisor, career or personal advising office, or campus vocation center, that includes specific vocation-related content.
- **Vocation-infused courses**, which are those specifically adapted to include new material on vocation. They may be required or optional.
- **Academic and career activities**, including participation in academic or departmental organizations or clubs, faculty-directed research or independent study, or job shadowing. They are considered a vocational program activity only if the student’s survey response indicates that it included vocational content.
- **Volunteer, service-learning, and community-building** includes a variety of formal service-learning activities such as tutoring, components of certain courses, service-based travel and immersion programs, and service projects of student groups.
- **Vocationally-infused activities** include a variety of non-classroom activities with vocational content. This may include some of the service-learning activities mentioned above, as well as specific leadership development and internship programs, individual assessments given by a campus vocation center, and vocation-related convocation speakers and book discussion groups.
- **Off-campus community experiences** include international or off-campus study as well as some of the experiences that

are also included under service-learning (such as service-immersion trips).

- **Vocational centers/offices and web sites:** Not all of the campuses had formal vocational centers or offices, but all three had web sites related to the Lilly program and its activities.
- **Church and pre-ministry activities** include participation in a church, religious, spiritual, meditation, or prayer group, as well as other more specific pre-ministry seminars, discussion groups, or other activities developed under the vocation grants.

Our study also documented students’ participation in what this report calls “**general co-curricular activities**,” which do not appear to have included a specific vocational component.

Do students who are exposed to vocation programming gain a broader and deeper understanding of the concept of vocation?

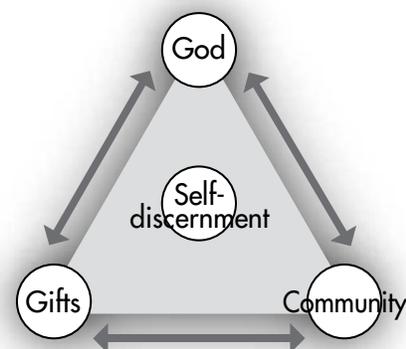
One of the fundamental goals of the Lilly-funded initiatives at each college was to develop new methods by which students could learn about and respond to the idea of a calling or vocation. This section of the report explores the range of ways in which students encountered these concepts, thought about their meaning, and considered how these ideas might fit within their own lives.

Key elements of the concept of vocation

In order to code and analyze growth in students’ thinking about the idea of vocation, researchers and college representatives developed a conceptual model. This allows us to examine open-ended responses to identify what elements students use to define or describe their understanding of the idea. Key elements, illustrated in Figure 2 below, are:

- **God:** Students describe vocation as including the alignment of one’s life with God or faith, serving or glorifying God, or listening to God’s guidance, or they refer to God as the source of calling, purpose or meaning, of gifts and talents.

Figure 2



- **Gifts:** Students indicate that vocation had something to do with identifying, developing, or using one’s own gifts or talents, or that it related to passions, interests or fulfillment, or involved the use of skills, knowledge, or experience.
- **Community:** Students identified vocation as involving service to or helping others (the community in general or specific groups), seeking the common good, or being part of relationships that involve responsibility or obligations.
- **Self-discernment:** Students indicated that vocation was related to the process of discovering a purpose or mission in life or the development of values and beliefs, or linked vocation with a process of reflection or self-examination, or to personal growth (beyond simply pursuing their education or training for a job or career).

We also looked for evidence that students perceived connections among the first three of these elements: for example, evidence that students saw gifts or talents as something endowed by God, or community service as a way of serving God or God’s purposes, or saw their own or others’ gifts and talents as a means for serving the community.

Differences for those who were and were not exposed to vocation programming

Figure 3 shows that among graduates offering a definition of vocation, the Lilly graduates were more than twice as likely to mention “calling” compared to the pre-Lilly graduates (50% vs. 23%). In contrast, the pre-Lilly graduates more than twice as often mentioned job or career as their main understanding of the term (65% vs 29% among the Lilly graduates). Furthermore, almost one-half (45%) of the pre-Lilly graduates described vocation *only* in connection with a job. This is more than ten times the rate (4%) among Lilly graduates.

Other common themes for the Lilly graduates include purpose or meaning, community or service, and the idea of searching or listening for a call (Figure 3).

It should also be noted that only 1 percent of the Lilly graduates indicated they “do not know” what the term vocation means. This compares to 9 percent in the pre-Lilly cohort.

One of the main components in having a deeper understanding of vocation is defining or understanding it as more than a job, employment, or a career. Based on analysis of responses to several different questions, we see that the Lilly graduates are

Figure 3 In their own words: Graduates define vocation

Graduate phone interview	Pre-Lilly Graduates (N=247)		Lilly Graduates (N=384)	
	N	%	N	%
CALLING: Vocation is the same as a calling or related to a calling from a higher power or within yourself	56	23%	192	50%
MEANING: Vocation is your purpose or where you derive meaning including your role or “how” you should live your life	27	11%	124	32%
JOB: Vocation is related to or may include your job, occupation, career, or field of expertise	160	65%	113	29%
COMMUNITY: Vocation relates to service, volunteering, community, or a person’s relationship to the society in general	28	11%	97	25%
SEARCHING: Vocation involves listening or searching for a calling including God’s calling or your purpose	4	2%	48	13%
GIFTS: Vocation involves determining, developing, or using a person’s gifts, skills, or talents	8	3%	45	12%
SELF: Vocation comes from within or includes a responsibility to one’s self	3	1%	41	11%
PASSION: Vocation includes a passion, striving, or determination to pursue something in life	7	3%	37	10%
ONLY JOB: Respondent only mentions job, occupation, career, or field of expertise in their definition of vocation	111	45%	17	4%
DON’T KNOW: Respondent reports not knowing what vocation means	22	9%	2	1%

Note: Coded open-ended responses from a web-based survey. Totals exceed 100% because answers could be coded in multiple categories

significantly more likely than the pre-Lilly cohort to report that vocation relates to more than just a job or career (Figure 4).

In addition, the Lilly graduates are significantly more likely to “strongly disagree” with the statement that vocation “does not apply until a person starts a career” (4.0% to 28%) and the statement that vocation “basically means a job” (18% to 4%).

Figure 4 Evidence that graduates define vocation as more than a job

Graduate phone interview	Pre-Lilly Graduates (N=247)		Lilly Graduates (N=384)	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagrees that vocation does not apply to a person until they start a career	68	28%	155	40%
Strongly disagrees that vocation basically means a job	10	4%	71	18%
Defined the term “vocation” only as job (open end)	111	45%	17	4%
Vocation is more than a job	53	21%	172	45%

Progression over time for those who were exposed

Student respondents strongly associate the term “vocation” with a calling, and this association is stronger for juniors than for freshmen. Thirty-six percent of freshman respondents and 43 percent of junior respondents describe vocation this way. This is the most common theme among all current student respondents.

From freshman to junior year there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of respondents who indicated they “don’t know” what the term vocation means, from 30 percent of freshmen to only 17 percent of juniors.

Other themes occurring with relatively high frequency among freshman and junior respondents are purpose or meaning, the idea of belonging to a community or service to the community, God, and a connection to finding, developing, or using gifts or talents (Figure 5).

Experiences related to development of conceptual understanding

More than three-fourths (78%) of Lilly graduates can think of a particular experience that shaped their definition of vocation, compared to 52 percent of pre-Lilly graduates.

Respondents who could think of an experience were asked to describe the experience that helped to shape their definition. Responses that included enough information were categorized according to the time frame during which the experience occurred: before college, during college, or after college. By a margin of almost two to one (58% to 32%), Lilly graduates were

Figure 5 In their own words: Students define vocation

Student web survey	Pre-Lilly Graduates (N=247)		Lilly Graduates (N=384)	
	N	%	N	%
CALLING: Vocation is the same as a calling or related to a calling from a higher power or within yourself	289	36%	521	43%
MEANING: Vocation is your purpose or where you derive meaning including your role or “how” you should live your life	140	18%	314	26%
JOB: Vocation is related to or may include your job, occupation, career, or field of expertise	190	24%	270	22%
DON'T KNOW: Respondent reports not knowing what vocation means	240	30%	212	17%
COMMUNITY: Vocation relates to service, volunteering, community, or a person's relationship to the society in general	80	10%	177	14%
GOD: Relates to God or another higher power	99	12%	152	12%
GIFTS: Vocation involves determining, developing, or using a person's gifts, skills, or talents	78	10%	148	12%
ONLY JOB: Respondent only mentions job, occupation, career, or field of expertise in their definition of vocation	50	6%	48	4%

Note: Coded open-ended responses from a web-based survey. Totals exceed 100% because answers could be coded in multiple categories.

significantly more likely than pre-Lilly graduates to report an experience that took place during college or as part of their overall college experience (Figure 6). In contrast, pre-Lilly graduates were significantly more likely to describe experiences that could be identified as occurring before or after college. These differences, especially in the after-college experiences, may be partly due to the fact that the pre-Lilly graduates were interviewed longer after graduation (five years out, compared to less than one year out).

Among the class of 2007 graduates who could think of a particular experience that shaped their definition of vocation, the most common themes related to college-based experiences include:

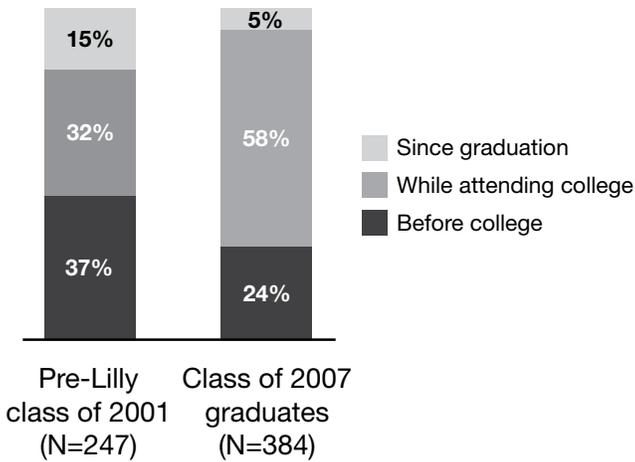
- **Overall college experience (27%).** This includes respondents mentioning “their time at” college, saying that the college stressed vocation, or mentioning other general activities that do not fit in another category. In the pre-Lilly cohort, 15 percent mention their overall college experience.
- **Coursework, classes, major, or study abroad (24%).** This includes respondents mentioning specific or general curriculum-based experiences. These can include their overall

major or department, specific coursework, or an off-campus study experience. In the pre-Lilly cohort, 9 percent mention curriculum-based experiences.

- **Professors, faculty, or administration (8%).** This mostly includes direct interactions with professors or faculty (in and out of classes) but also includes some recognition of hearing the message from the overall administration at the schools. In the pre-Lilly cohort, 3 percent mention professors, faculty, or administration.

A considerable number of the Lilly graduates specifically associate the shaping of their definition of vocation with Lilly programs on campus. This includes 10 percent who mention, without prompting, their school’s vocation program by name. This number was higher at Augustana (15%) and Luther (14%) than Augsburg (4%). However, this difference is reversed in the proportion of Augsburg respondents (14%) specifically mentioning religion classes compared to Luther (3%) and Augustana (2%). This may be due in part to Augsburg’s mandatory vocation-related religion courses which served as a key component of their vocation program.

Figure 6 Timing of experiences that shaped the definition of vocation



Do students who were exposed to vocation programming gain skills to better discern their own vocations?

Differences for those who were and were not exposed to vocation programming

The pre-Lilly graduates were interviewed in their fifth year after graduation, while the Lilly graduates were interviewed in their first year out. This difference must be borne in mind when considering the differences in how the two groups define the concept of vocation and how they describe their own vocation.

Figure 7 Evidence that graduates have, and know, a vocation (defined as more than just a job)

	Pre-Lilly Graduates (N=247)		Lilly Graduates (N=384)	
	N	%	N	%
Graduate phone interview				
Discernment outcome: has a vocation and defines vocation as more than a job or career	110	45%	333	87%
Discernment outcome: knows own vocation and describes it as more than a job, field, or career	58	23%	121	32%

The overall percentage of graduate respondents in the two groups who at least say they have a vocation (whether or not they know what it is) is comparable between the two (Figure 7). However, the Lilly graduates are significantly more likely (87%) than the pre-Lilly cohort (45%) to both indicate that they have a vocation *and* define vocation as more than a job. Additionally, the Lilly graduates (32%) are significantly more likely than the pre-Lilly cohort (23%) to report knowing what their vocation is, while also describing it in terms broader than just a job or profession.

Of graduate respondents who know their vocation—regardless of how they define the concept—almost twice the proportion of Lilly graduates (70% to 37%) report they mainly developed their sense of vocation while they were attending college (Figure 8). The longer post-college time accrued by the pre-Lilly graduates is reflected in the proportion of respondents who report their sense of vocation was mainly developed after college. These proportions are similar if we look only at respondents who define vocation as more than a job.

Figure 8 “Would you say that your sense of your own vocation was mainly developed...” (of those who know their vocation)

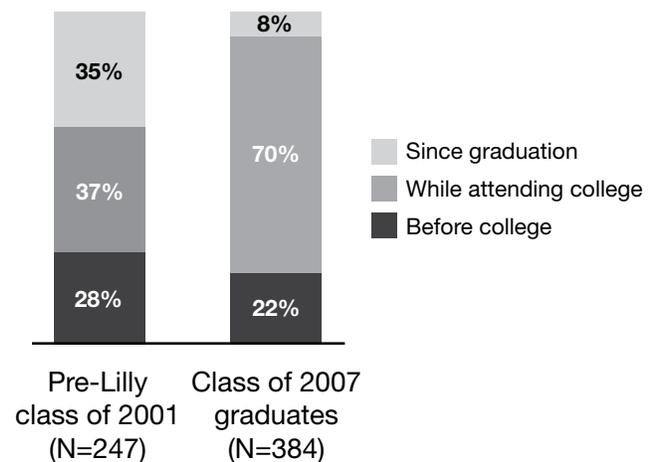
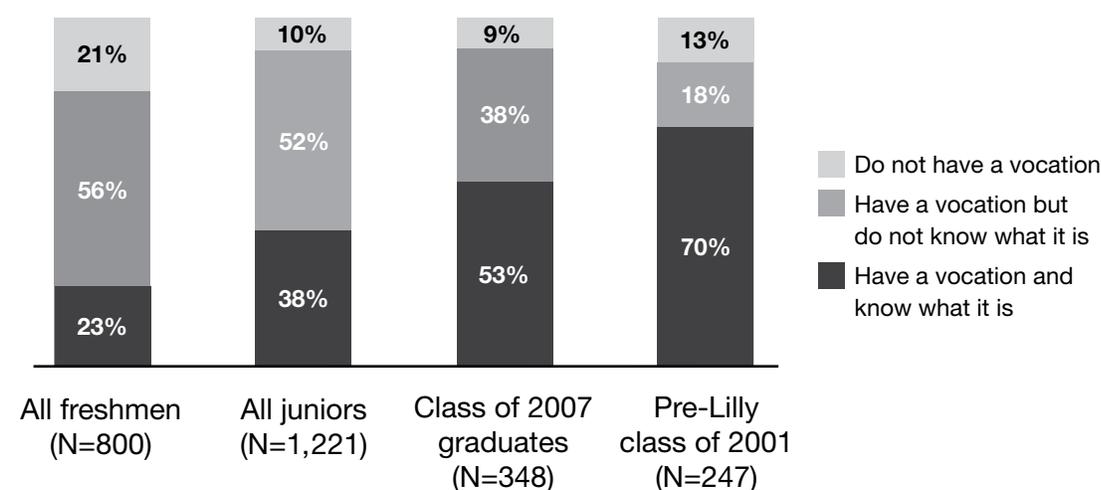


Figure 9 Students' and graduates' discernment of their own vocation



Progression over time for those who were exposed

Overall, the percent of respondents who report they have a vocation and know what it is steadily increases with their stage of education. Starting at freshman year, 23 percent of respondents say they know their vocation. This increases to 38 percent of all junior respondents and 53 percent of the Lilly graduates (Figure 9).

The pre-Lilly cohort has the highest proportion (70%) of respondents who report knowing their vocation. However, this may reflect the fact they were interviewed five years after graduation, compared to less than a year for the Lilly graduates. Furthermore, since the pre-Lilly cohort mainly associate vocation with a job, their “knowing” their vocation means something different than it does for the students and graduates who were exposed to the Lilly programs.

Respondents who report that they “know” their vocation were asked to describe it. Compared to the pre-Lilly cohort, the Lilly graduates are:

- **More likely to include service or community.** Forty-nine percent of the Lilly graduates who know their vocation describe it as including service or connection to the community. This compares to 18 percent of the pre-Lilly cohort.
- **Equally likely to include their job.** Eighty-six percent of the Lilly graduates who know their vocation describe it as including a job, field, or career. This compares to 84 percent of the pre-Lilly cohort.
- **Less likely to *only* describe their job.** Forty percent of the Lilly graduates who know their vocation describe it *only* in terms of a job, field, or career. This compares to 65 percent of the pre-Lilly cohort.

Experiences related to increased ability to discern own vocation

Juniors who had consulted their colleges' vocation program web sites or centers were significantly more likely to also report that

they had increased their skills for discerning their vocations.

Three other experiences reported by juniors were also found to predict better ability to discern a vocation:

- Observing someone else who is living out their vocation
- Spending time reflecting on their own vocation
- Voluntarily spending time talking with others about vocation

The *Called for Life* study found that students who reported any of these three experiences were also significantly more likely to have achieved several of the other outcomes of interest. In turn, a variety of specific program activities increased the likelihood that students would report having engaged in any of these exploration and discernment activities, and these are described in the full report.³ These varied from campus to campus, reflecting different student populations and different program strategies of the different colleges. However, across all the colleges, certain common characteristics of effective programming were described by students in their open-ended responses to the surveys. These are described in the next section.

What aspects of vocation programming are most effective?

The quantitative analyses show that the colleges have been successful in reaching students through a variety of program activities. In addition to a host of small, specialized opportunities such as reading groups or targeted service-learning programs, effective approaches also include more general kinds of volunteer and internship programs and off-campus study, formal and informal advising, and the vocation centers or overall program offices that serve as hubs for the effort and help students connect the pieces.

We went back to the students' own open-ended comments in order to better understand what it was about these experiences that

made them effective. Certain key themes stand out, and many of them appear repeatedly across the different kinds of activities.

Pervasive campus culture of vocational exploration

In many answers to specific questions, students told us that the most important influences on them were hard to name because they were not very specific. Rather, these students pointed to the cumulative effect of many separate, related, and mutually reinforcing influences. Both at Augsburg and Augustana, with their designated vocation centers, and at Luther, which did not designate a physical office for the work, the vocation programming clearly has become integrated into the overall campus culture. This is evident from the student comments that describe a variety of ways in which they are exposed to vocation at the colleges, and more importantly, from the ways in which they mention multiple forms of exposure in close conjunction with each other, describing how each reinforces the others.

This infusion is effective in part because it ties together and adds value to separate elements of formal programming:

[While you were at [College], what activity or experience *most* influenced your thinking about your purpose or calling in life?] The classes I was taking. [What class?] All my classes, the ones that focused on my major. [Did one stand out more?] No, all the classes. [Please describe *how* that activity or experience influenced your thinking about your purpose or calling in life.] They showed me that this is what I wanted to do, and show me how I was supposed to do what I wanted. (Did one experience influence more?) Nope.

The evidence is even stronger for effectiveness arising from the combination of formal programming with informal opportunities to further develop questions and ideas and test potential answers in the context of informal activities and relationships, both with adults and also with other students:

[What activity or experience] I think my friendships at Luther College, my church, my classes and the class work had the most influence. [How that influenced] The classes gave me a framework for understanding the larger world, my friends affirmed the strengths that I was good at, and my church helped me see how everything fit together.

This integrated campus-wide ethos seems to be exactly what is captured in the three moderating factors that were found to play such an important role in influencing longer-term outcomes: the infusion of the idea of vocation throughout the campus promotes and supports students talking about vocation, reflecting on vocation, and observing vocation in others, on a regular basis, in their natural habitat.

Within this overall campus culture, four other key ingredients stand out:

- Relationships with adults (professors, advisors, or others) who take an interest in the students
- Opportunities for experiential, hands-on learning and/or service outside the classroom
- Classes that introduce and build on the concept of vocation and its application
- Relationships with other students

Relationships with adults who take an interest

Not surprisingly, the adults who influenced students the most took a sustained interest in them and listened without judging:

[What activity or experience] Professor [name]. Taking his classes. He was my teacher, mentor, tutor, and confidant. [How that influenced] I took almost every class that he taught. He was always there to listen to me with non-judging ears. He was always very helpful and always gave me helpful advices with my problems.

These trusted adults were able to help students understand the importance of vocational discernment, help students recognize as well as explore their gifts and talents, and ask questions that caused the students to look inside themselves more deeply:

[What activity or experience] Faculty and staff. [How that influenced] By their interests and the questions that they'd ask and the challenges that they'd make.

As students become more aware of gifts and talents, professors, advisors, or other adult mentors help them recognize opportunities for applying those gifts:

Talking with my music advisor. If it wasn't for her, I think my whole entire experience would have been different. She was amazing at helping you figure out how those interests could fit into your future career.

Other sources of influence come through the adult's position as a role model for the process of discernment, for the exercise of gifts in service to God and community, or for living a life that provides an example of well-balanced priorities:

A conversation I had with my first advisor about vocation in general and a number of conversations I had with my roommates about vocation. I realized that you do not have to be paid at the top pay bracket to have fulfillment. You can balance work and life to be happier overall.

Outside-of-classroom experiences with service and learning

One set of themes in students' descriptions of service learning, job shadowing, and off-campus study shows the value of these experiences in helping students to expand their horizons and see more broadly outside of their previous perspectives. Interactions with people from different backgrounds help them identify needs for help, how help might be provided, and the real difference that help can make:

[What activity or experience] An internship experience I had where I got to work with lawyers. [How that influenced] It got me to see what they do and how what they do makes an impact in their community. [Repeat: How that influenced] It showed me there's more to being a lawyer than just law. It showed me how the law affects people's lives.

The experience also allows students to find out what it is like to be in a new setting and do a new kind of work, and find out if it feels right:

I provided child care services for a year for the battered women's center and through that experiences and I worked with the children on their level and working with the children I felt I could be a role model for the older ones, and the younger ones I felt I could guide them. It made me realize I could step into a difficult situation and change it. It encouraged me to do difficult things and gave me courage and tools to do it.

A second and also common theme about experiential learning is its value in helping students look more deeply *inside* of themselves. The experiences help them identify and test their own interests, gifts, and abilities. They provide opportunities to become aware of things they might not have been aware of before, and explore and assess their own values. This includes helping students experience the rewards of volunteering, to see that there is more to life than a job, and that a vocation can be lived through non-career experiences:

My volunteer work. I volunteered at a hospital in quite a few different areas (pharmacy, infusion center, and others). It helped me to narrow down what I wanted to do, as far as experience. It also showed me that there is more to life than just a career. You have a job, but you can do things outside of your job. You can volunteer in areas not related to what you do for a job.

Classes that introduce and build on the concept of vocation

When students mentioned particular courses as influential in their development of vocation, they cited several common characteristics regardless of what field the course was in. These

included a variety of ways in which they helped students learn about themselves as well as about the subject matter. One common example was seen in courses that offered opportunities to develop "real life" skills, and to see how those skills can be used in the real world:

The landscape research internship helped me take the knowledge I learned in the classroom and apply it to something real life. [It gave me] something to do with all the knowledge I had.

[What activity or experience] Just hanging out with friends and discussing larger issues. [For instance, what issues?] Politics and religion. [How that influenced] I think, those discussions, made me explore and learn about different views, and so, that experience helped shape my own points of view.

Another channel of influence is through changing what or how students think about the world or opening their eyes to how big the world is:

Taking the courses offered really opened my opinions about life and helped me form my world views. [How that influenced] The classes that I took really helped me to define my values and figure out what career would be the best fit for me. The values that I learned at Augustana are something that I want to implement into my life as well as continue to develop those values.

More concretely, students frequently cited how courses helped them understand how the academic content could be applied in a variety of real world applications. Often, they cited applications that were not only career-focused, but also more personal, and mentioned ways in which a professor had communicated the importance of defining "success" in the field to include service to others in addition to personal or career success. This theme was especially evident in students describing "capstone" courses taken near the end of their major:

My keystone course. [How that influenced] I think because it took business and vocation and tied it together for me, and it got me to think about while I'm in the business world how vocation would apply to my life. I think it made me think more of how I could help myself and help others through business. I have always thought of my life as being self serving, and that class helped me open my mind to think about what I'm passionate about and how to help others.

Interactions with other students

The final component of effective campus-wide vocation programs is a rich mix of student-to-student interactions.

[What activity or experience] I think just based on communicating with peers and seeing their ideas and values helps me understand myself. By understanding others, [that] helps me to understand myself better.

One common theme shows the value of interactions with peers who have different backgrounds, values, insights, and experiences:

[What activity or experience] My relationships with other students. Meeting people from different religions and faith beliefs. I had great relationships with them and learn a lot about different people from all walk's of life. [How that influenced] It made me open up more. I came from a small Catholic town where everybody was the same. This experience really made me stronger and wiser and made me think of others.

Another common theme points to the contributions that are strongest when friends are more similar. This makes it more likely that they can give feedback on how well certain values or ways of living them would or would not be a good fit:

[What activity or experience] It was my interaction with my friends and it was their beliefs and values reflecting on to me. [How that influenced] I think they are a lot like me and they encouraged me in what I wanted to do.

Students also commented on how valuable they find it to share their exploration with peers who are also struggling and seeking. It is helpful to know they are not the only one who is uncertain, and the ability to share the uncertainty makes it less threatening to open up and explore new ideas:

[What activity or experience] My interaction with my close friends. [How that influenced] I feel like we were all seeking what our calling was and we helped each other understand what our weaknesses and strengths were and encouraged each other.

One of the risks of having vocation embedded in every aspect of campus life is that the messages about it may not always be consistent. Friends are also helpful in helping to interpret or re-define the concept of vocation if it is not clear:

[What activity or experience] I was talking to my roommate who I lived with for 4 years and we were talking about vocation. I asked him what he was meant to do and he said he was put on this earth to be an English teacher. He is doing that now and enjoying it. That clarified for me what vocation is about; what you're meant to do and what you have the talent for.

What the study shows

- Vocation programs can significantly increase students' understanding of the concept of vocation and can significantly increase students' skills for discerning their vocations.

Several lessons from this study merit further discussion. First, students do not have to come from a religious background or espouse a conventional belief in God to engage in meaningful conversations and reflections related to vocation. The open-ended comments of survey respondents show that self-discernment is often at work, where students examine talents and abilities, consider opportunities for action, become aware of needs in the wider world and weigh these things in the context of values and beliefs. While these values and beliefs are often informed by religious upbringing, spiritual training, or other religious experiences, they may also be embedded in moral commitments and basic values that are not associated with religion but learned throughout childhood and young adulthood as part of basic socialization and the observation of others. Practically, this means that colleges can effectively engage young people in the consideration of how their talents can be applied to the needs of the world without reference to God or any specific religious belief system. This is generally very good news for those involved in helping young people to consider their future because it means that the circle can be large enough for everyone to be included.

Second, multiple communication strategies are necessary to effectively reach a diverse student body. Our results indicate that virtually all strategies have some potential for hitting the mark when multiple strategies are in place, and that these strategies can include advising, classroom instruction, co-curricular activities, off-campus experiences, opportunities for experiential learning, service projects, job shadowing, retreats, religious instruction and a variety of other potential connection points.

- A variety of different program activities and resources contribute to these outcomes. There is no single most effective approach. However, a combination of varied elements appears to be most promising, and certain characteristics stand out as common elements in college experiences that students describe as most effective. These are:
 - Relationships with adults (professors, advisors, or others) who take an interest in the students
 - Opportunities for experiential, hands-on learning and/or service outside the classroom
 - Classes that introduce and build on the concept of vocation and its application
 - Relationships with other students

- Survey tools can be effectively used to identify the vocational activities with which students engaged during their college careers, as well as a number of different kinds of vocational outcomes.

Endnotes

1. The full *Called for Life* report and summary are available on the Wilder Research web site (www.wilderresearch.org).

2. **Class of 2009:** The 800 students completing a web survey as freshmen represents a response rate of 53 percent (47% at Augsburg, 46% at Augustana, and 65% at Luther). 663 of the 800 respondents were still enrolled two years later. Thus the 434 completing the follow-up survey represents a response rate of 54 percent of the original panel of 800, 65 percent of those eligible for follow-up, and 29% of the original class of freshmen.

Class of 2007: The 787 students completing the baseline junior web survey represents 54 percent of the total class at the three schools (53% at Augsburg, 49% at Augustana, and 62% at Luther). 384 graduates completed a follow-up telephone interview for a response rate of 48 percent of the baseline sample, 58 percent of those eligible for follow-up, and 27% of the original class of juniors.

Class of 2001: We randomly selected 619 pre-Lilly graduates for the telephone interviews, of whom 247 completed the interview, for a 40% response rate. The response rate was affected by an inability to obtain up-to-date and accurate contact information for 192 graduates in the sample.

Note: Incentives for participation included a modest gift card (\leq \$5) to campus food service for the student web surveys and a (\$10-15) gift card to amazon.com for the telephone interviews with graduates.

3. Available on the Wilder Research web site (see note 1).

MARK D. TRANVIK

A College with a Calling: Vocation at Augsburg

For more than a decade Augsburg College has been thinking deeply about what it means to have a vocation. It began in 1997 with a visioning process initiated by President William Frame. As a result of those discussions it became clear that Augsburg saw itself as a college with a calling. This was followed in 2002 with the receipt of a two million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment Fund to investigate the theological understanding of vocation on campus. As will be noted below, in the midst of this grant the college enlisted the aid of the Wilder Foundation (the *Called for Life* study) to help it ascertain whether students, faculty and staff were getting the message. And now Augsburg is poised to move into the next phase of its engagement with the idea of vocation. At the conclusion of the Lilly Endowment grant in 2010 the school has made provision for the establishment of the *Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning* (ACFL). This Center will carry on much of the work of the Lilly Endowment grant and lay the foundation for new and creative ways to engage a theological understanding of vocation at the college.

This essay will highlight how Augsburg has integrated the idea of vocation into the life of the college in the past ten years. However, we will begin with the Reformation, as this crucial period of the church has provided the theological framework for thinking about vocation at the school. We will then see how some of these ideas were “institutionalized” during the Lilly grant. Finally we will sketch some possibilities for the future, using our work with Wilder and the ACFL as a guide.

Our Lutheran Heritage

It would be a mistake to think that this focus on vocation is something new at Augsburg. If vocation be understood as the

attempt to articulate what it means to be loved by God in the daily life of service to the neighbor, then this college has been about the business of vocation from the very beginning. In fact, the school saw itself as part of a rich Christian tradition stretching back to the Bible itself. Time and space prevent us from exploring the manifold resources on vocation that can be found in the Scriptures and the early Christian period. Instead we will pick up the story in the sixteenth century with Martin Luther’s appropriation of this tradition.

Luther’s theology of vocation must be located in the cultural context of the sixteenth century church. At that time there were essentially two classes of Christians—those who supposedly committed themselves to a “holy” life such as that lived by a monk, nun or priest and the vast majority people who continued to live in the “world” and experience its temptations. The former had vocations or “callings.” It was believed they performed a higher duty or service and thus were able to gain merit for themselves and for those left behind in the world. The latter—such as the midwife, farmer or blacksmith—served humanity by sustaining earthly life with their labors but possessed occupations which lacked the inherent sanctity of the clerical or monastic realm. (Tranvik, “Vocation” 4-6)

A theological foundation based on merit made it possible to construct this two-tiered view of the world. The schemes of salvation in the late middle ages varied but all insisted that humans must do something to make themselves right with God. Note that this did not mean that good works alone were sufficient. Grace was also underlined as necessary and important. But the idea was to combine grace and human effort in order to be saved.

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As Luther steeped himself in the world of the Bible during his time in the monastery he became convinced that this way of conceiving of one's relationship to God was false. Relying heavily on the Apostle Paul, he began to believe that one is justified not by works or a combination of faith and works but by faith alone. Luther found great comfort in the God revealed on the cross of Jesus Christ. This was a God who entered deeply into the human condition, even to the point of becoming "sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) and knowing the desolation and darkness of rejection and death. But these hostile forces did not have the final word; the resurrection signaled God's triumph over the powers of evil. Men and women in a relationship of faith were now liberated to serve their neighbors and care for creation. For Luther, the God revealed on the cross freed humanity from its anxious quest for meaning, purpose and salvation. This God calls people into a relationship of faith and then provides them with callings in the world where they will be instruments of this bold love.

It is a serious misunderstanding of Luther to think that his views on grace and faith were simply abstract matters of theology with little relevance for earthly life. Luther's rediscovery of a gracious God was not merely an intellectual enterprise. Its reverberations would be felt in homes, villages and cities across Europe. If Luther is right in saying we are saved by grace through faith and not works, then life in the world is experienced in an entirely different way. It is no longer the place where we attempt to placate a demanding God. Or, in a more modern idiom, the world is no longer the realm where we find our core identity in what we do or achieve. Moreover, mindful of the interpretation of the late medieval church, "vocations" are not limited to a special class of Christians who by the supposed holiness of their lives have placed themselves closer to their Creator. Instead, all Christians are called by God and empowered by his undeserved love to serve their neighbors. This point deserves emphasis: all Christians have callings or vocations. (Tranvik, "Vocation," 6)

It might be useful at this point to provide a brief summary of Luther's teaching on vocation. It will be evident from the material that follows that these themes inform the programs of Augsburg's Lilly Endowment grant (*Exploring Our Gifts*) as well as the proposals for the *Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning*.

Vocation includes the whole life of a person and is not simply his or her occupation. Because of the conviction that God operates in every sphere of life (and not just in church or work), Christians understand that their callings encompass every area of life (whether one is an employee, student, neighbor, parent, friend, etc.). Vocation involves all of life's relationships.

The purpose of vocation is to live for the sake of others—for their spiritual, physical, moral and cultural well-being. God

upholds his creation and keeps order in human society by means of vocation. Luther describes this activity of God as "masks" which God uses to keep creation in good order. The overall focus of every calling is the need of the neighbor. Luther reportedly once noted that God doesn't want a cobbler who puts crosses on shoes. Rather, God wants a cobbler who makes good, reliable footwear.

All true vocations rank the same with God. As already noted, there are no "higher" or "lower" callings. In the human realm distinctions will be made and the value of work measured by "human" norms. But in God's eyes the manager and the maid are both needed to keep human society functioning at an optimal level.

Vocation cannot be boiled down to ethics. This is a tempting but false interpretation of Luther's insights. Crucial to preserving a healthy understanding of vocation is the knowledge that one's identity and future are in the hands of a God who is trustworthy. If this essential link with God is obscured or ignored, then the result is an overwhelming temptation to be defined by one's calling in life. Soon the self is no longer looking beyond its boundaries for ways to be of service but is instead trying to secure its own identity by its activity in the world.

Vocation distinguishes but does not separate the roles of faith and politics in public life. Luther's teaching on vocation (the complicated legacy of his two kingdoms doctrine hovers over this discussion) makes clear that faith cannot be quiet in matters political. The political sphere is simply another arena where the neighbor is served. But the Lutheran tradition on vocation underlines that there is no specific Christian agenda for the world. It walks a fine line that advocates a passionate engagement in political activity while avoiding the zealotry often linked with positions that claim God for a particular position or point of view.

Exploring Our Gifts: The Lilly Endowment Grant

Augsburg is proud to see itself within a long and deep tradition of reflection on vocation. It is an heir to the teaching of the Reformation. Figures who have been fundamental in shaping the college, such as Georg Sverdrup and Bernhard Christensen, intuitively saw their work and lives through the lens of vocation. (Sverdrup 92) Given this legacy, it is not surprising that Augsburg would apply for a Lilly Endowment grant in 2001.

The immediate background for the request to Lilly was a series of commissions that were established by President William Frame as part of a strategic planning process in 1997. The product of those meetings was a document known as *Augsburg 2004, Extending the Vision*. At the heart of *Augsburg 2004* was the

theme of vocation and a determination by the college to equip all students with the ability to live out their lives and careers as *callings*. Given this sensibility, it was not surprising that a team of Augsburg faculty and staff jumped at the chance to submit an application for one of the Lilly Endowment's generous grants. Their efforts were rewarded in 2002 when the college was awarded two million dollars for its proposal "Exploring Our Gifts: Connecting Faith, Work and Vocation."

A unique feature of the proposal was the way it was built from the ground up. Reflecting the college's historical resistance to hierarchical thinking (the legacy of the Lutheran Free Church), the committee that organized the grant solicited over thirty proposals from all sectors of the Augsburg community. Eventually fifteen different projects were chosen. They were organized under four themes: Vocation as a Life Approach, Vocation as a Curricular Focus, Vocation as Education For Service, and Developing Vocational Awareness in Faculty, Staff and Students. Happily, the college also received a sustainability grant (\$500,000) from the Lilly Endowment in 2007, which allowed it to extend *Exploring Our Gifts* through the 2009-10 academic year. While it would not be useful to detail all the programs in the college's initiative, some of the more successful features of *Exploring Our Gifts* are highlighted below.

Vocation as a Life Approach includes monthly chapel services where speakers are invited to talk about their sense of calling. Also under this theme is a retreat where a small group of undergrads leave campus and spend two days reflecting on their gifts, strengths, and interests. Another part of "Life Approach" emphasis is the use of vocational assessments by the college's Center for Service, Work and Learning to help students reflect on life's purpose and meaning.

Vocation as a Curricular Focus makes extensive use of Augsburg's well known Center for Global Education. Travel, study and service abroad afford excellent opportunities for vocational reflection. Travel seminars to all corners of the globe have a theological understanding of vocation as a central component. Another program in this area is the Lilly Scholars, where ten students who have a desire to explore ministry in the church meet on a monthly basis to discuss how their sense of calling intersects with some of the great theological thinkers in the Christian tradition.

Vocation as Education for Service emphasizes putting a sense of calling into practice. Under this theme, students are given stipends for work in church camps as well as provided internship opportunities at non-profits in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. Also included is the sponsorship of an alternative spring

break (service trips to the hurricane-devastated areas around New Orleans) and a Youth Theology Institute where high school youth from around the country come to Augsburg for a week of intensive study around a theological theme.

Developing Vocational Awareness in Faculty, Staff and Students provides a wide variety of opportunities. These include book groups, forums with off-campus speakers, and the sponsorship of *Till and Keep*, an annual journal that includes essays and art work by the members of the Augsburg community. Given the college's location in the heart of the city, an annual forum on inter-religious dialogue gives the community a chance to discuss issues of faith and calling with non-Christians, particularly Muslims and Jews. Another successful program in this overall category is the "Lilly Lunch" where a faculty or staff member talks about his or her sense of calling. These events often draw close to one hundred attendees. Finally, a seminar for new faculty orientation means that professors recently hired by Augsburg will meet regularly over a two-year period to discuss the history and mission of the school and be invited to consider their own lives and teaching within the framework of vocation.

One other development in the area of vocation also needs to be mentioned. A theological understanding of vocation brackets the entire Augsburg curriculum. The religion department has played a key leadership role in cultivating a sense of calling at the school. In response to the momentum created by *Exploring Our Gifts*, it has reorganized its own course offerings to reflect an emphasis on vocation. Students at Augsburg are required to take two classes in religion. The religion department has developed two new entry-level courses entitled "Christian Vocation and the Search for Meaning I" and "Christian Vocation and the Search for Meaning II." These are novel and creative attempts to re-think how religion is taught at a college of the church. Using the lens of vocation, the biblical and Christian tradition is now transmitted to students with an eye toward nurturing a sense of calling. Academic rigor and critical thinking remain a key part of the process. But now the goal is to have students listen to the tradition in a way that encourages them to reflect on their own sense of meaning and purpose. Moreover, students are challenged to think about what it might mean to take this sense of vocation into their homes, communities and the wider world.

Furthermore, all students at Augsburg are required to take a senior seminar or "Keystone" course in their major. This class includes significant work in their field of study. But it also entails revisiting the whole idea of vocation. Before they leave Augsburg, students are invited once again to think about their lives within the framework of vocation. Moreover, they are encouraged to think about their future in terms of a calling.

This includes not only their work life but also the lives they lead in their homes and communities. Overall, in addition to the programs of *Exploring our Gifts*, this emphasis in the curriculum means that a meaningful encounter with vocation is unavoidable on the Augsburg campus.

In summary, these programs and classes have allowed Augsburg to claim an essential component of its Lutheran heritage and invest it with a vitality that is appropriate for the twenty-first century. The attempt has been to create a “culture of call” where education is no longer seen simply as a means to self-advancement but is rather grounded in a Christian vision where the ultimate goal is love and service in the world. Augsburg’s current president, Paul Pribbenow, has made this the central theme of the school by emphasizing that “we believe we are called to serve our neighbor.” (Pribbenow)

Called for Life: The Wilder Foundation Study

Happily, in the midst of its work with the Lilly Endowment grant, Augsburg received an opportunity to assess how well it was transmitting the concept of vocation to its students. In 2004 a series of discussions took place between Richard Torgerson (president of Luther College), Jack Fortin (director of Luther Seminary’s Centered Life project), and David Tiede (president of Luther Seminary). The result of these conversations was a successful application to the Lilly Endowment asking for funds to support an assessment of vocational discernment in undergraduate schools and college. Augustana College (Rock Island), Luther College and Augsburg College were selected as sites for the assessment. All had received Lilly Endowment grants and had indicated an eagerness to find out how vocation was being integrated into the lives of students. The well-regarded Wilder Foundation of St. Paul, MN, was selected to develop and administer the assessment, which became known as the *Called For Life* study.

Called For Life came at about the midpoint of *Exploring Our Gifts*. Augsburg had long been planning to “institutionalize” a sense of calling amongst students, faculty and staff. Among the vehicles to accomplish this was the establishment of the *Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning*. It was envisioned that the ACFL would assume many of the responsibilities of *Exploring Our Gifts*. But there was also the recognition that because of budget realities not everything would be retained. Decisions needed to be made about which programs would be funded and what priorities would be emphasized. *Called For Life* helped Augsburg figure out where its resources would be mostly wisely spent.

Two things from *Called For Life* deserve special attention. First, the survey makes clear that the Lilly Endowment grants at

Augsburg, Augustana and Luther College have been extremely effective in helping students view their lives through the lens of vocation. For example, ninety-one percent of the class of 2007 reported that their understanding of vocation deepened while at college. Moreover, it is also clear that the grants have been effective in helping students think about vocation in relation to service to their community. This is particularly important given the rampant individualism that pervades American culture and higher education. It is also significant since many popular presentations of vocation focus solely on the individual and the importance of finding one’s “bliss.” Finally, when compared with pre-Lilly alumni, *Called For Life* reports that graduates were twice as likely to develop a sense of vocation while attending college. (Wilder Foundation)

Secondly, the success of the programs helps to validate how Augsburg has sought to integrate vocation into the life of the campus. As stated above, particularly important at Augsburg has been the use of vocation in the curriculum. *Called For Life* underlines the usefulness of this approach. As Augsburg develops the programs and initiatives of the ACFL, it is clear that the integration of vocation into the curriculum will remain a high priority. However, this does not mean that co-curricular efforts will be ignored at the college. The ACFL recognizes the need to cast a wide net and this will include programs that are not connected to courses per se. But the college now knows that faculty and staff development related to vocation must be a central concern. The values and commitments of an institution are reflected in the classes offered and the people who teach them. Augsburg will continue to seek new and creative ways to cultivate a sense of calling in the instructor, and most importantly, in the learner.

The Next Step: The Augsburg Center For Faith and Learning

In 2008 the college made a large investment in vocation by officially establishing the ACFL and naming Dr. Tom Morgan as its executive director. By the summer of 2010, Augsburg will be in a good position to make the transition from *Exploring Our Gifts* to the ACFL. In addition to the ACFL itself, Augsburg has been fortunate to have Dr. David Tiede as its first Bernhard Christensen Chair in Religion and Vocation (Christensen was president of Augsburg from 1938-63). Shaped by the example of Dr. Tiede, the person in the role of the chair is to be a “thought leader” at the college on vocation and work closely with the ACFL in order to guide its programs and development.

The ACFL is not modest about its goals. It seeks to establish Augsburg as a leader in the theological exploration of vocation.

To this end it envisions programs that develop faculty and staff leadership (which is a key component as outlined above), enliven student engagement, and promote public awareness of the rich heritage (particularly in the Lutheran church) connected with vocation. At the center of this project will be the rich legacy of Dr. Christensen. (Tranvik, “Sinning Boldly”) His teaching has been helpfully distilled by Dr. Phil Quanbeck I and Dr. Phil Quanbeck II, who in consecutive terms have served the college almost sixty years in the religion department. As interpreted by the Quanbecks, the following themes will be at the heart of Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning:

1. The Christian faith liberates hearts and minds
2. Diversity is a community calling
3. Inter-faith friendships enrich learning
4. The love of Christ draws us to God
5. Our vocations move us into God’s world

In conclusion, we return briefly to the sixteenth century. As we have seen, Martin Luther boldly declared that we are saved by grace through faith alone. It was also his conviction that this radical love from God in Christ freed us from preoccupation with ourselves and turned us outwards in service to the neighbor and the world. The revolution started by Luther invigorated the life of laypeople. It underlined for them that their lives mattered as much as those of the monk, nun or priest. Moreover, it invested their daily activity with a sense of meaning and purpose

that it previously lacked. In other words, Luther’s teaching enabled them to enter the rich world of vocation. Augsburg College is proud to be an heir to this tradition. Since its founding in the middle of the nineteenth century it has sought to be a place where a sense of calling comes into central focus. The Lilly Endowment grant provided new energy for this tradition. The establishment of the *Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning* means that this school is serious about not just keeping this tradition alive, but also making it the center of what it means to a college of the Lutheran church in the twenty-first century.

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Cody Warren

I love tax season. Maybe most people dread that time of year when they add up their wages and other income, subtract deductions and personal exemptions, take advantage of tax credits, and—well—the list goes on. Maybe most people

find taxes burdensome, confusing, and just plain annoying. But, I LOVE THEM. So while others are rejoicing that April 15 has finally come and gone, I am mourning.

I remember with great fondness the first time I filed my 1040-EZ. I telefiled—no longer an option. As soon as I received all the required documents, I sharpened my pencil, completed the forms, pulled my chair up to the phone, entered the numbers, and like magic, the computerized voice confirmed my initial calculations—I would be receiving a refund. What joy! I was getting money from the government! Today, I am much wiser and understand more of the intricacies of the IRC (or Internal Revenue Code, for non-tax-junkies), but the power of a refund is still magical for those who live in poverty.

My fascination with the tax code deepened when I volunteered with AccountAbility Minnesota, a non-profit organization that prepares tax returns for low-income individuals at no cost. I was amazed at the impact a simple tax return could have on a family. Many of the people I assisted received a refund of almost a third of their annual income. They desperately needed this money to pay for housing, health care, and food. It was like manna from heaven—by way of the Earned Income Tax Credit. This experience made me want to learn more so that I could continue to assist others.

But, at the same time, this new interest plunged me into personal crisis. You see, I am an eternal planner. I make to-do lists. I construct timetables. I develop hypothetical budgets (fully researching ALL the variables, of course). I always seem to find myself with one foot in the future. During my first semester at Augsburg I encountered the v-word—vocation. As you can imagine, this concept only intensified my planning efforts. Not only was I planning my academic program and my social life, I was planning my VOCATION, too. But I was sure that would be no problem because when I started college, I was 110% sure that I knew my call—to be a pastor.

So, fast forward to AccountAbility Minnesota and enter panic mode for Cody Warren. Could it be? Could my vocation

actually change? Was I really called to be a pastor? Or maybe a tax accountant? I was lost, confused, and disheartened. Luckily, I discovered the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and now I am saved. I am exaggerating a little.

For the past year I have been reading, analyzing, and practically breathing Bonhoeffer. Through my research I have come to appreciate the broader, more dynamic understanding of vocation that Bonhoeffer speaks about in his manuscripts. He sees vocation as one's place of responsibility in the world. As Christians, we have a responsibility to serve our earthly roles, such as career and family. But we also have an ethical responsibility to serve our neighbor and take up the cross of Christ. When, liberated by grace, we bring these responsibilities together, we find our vocation. In other words, Bonhoeffer sees God as relational **and** this-worldly. The transcendent is found not in some other world, but in **this** world. Not only do we find the neighbor in vocation, but we also find God. Our vocations may be dynamic, forever changing, and continually shaped by the call of Christ to serve because nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is Jesus Christ.

For me, these insights were life-changing. Not only would I be able to fulfill my purpose if I were a tax accountant, but my vocation could change many more times in my life. My original understanding of vocation was too limited—it did not take into account the dynamic nature of faith or vocation. Maybe one day I will be a pastor, or a professor, or even a dad. Vocation is not about creating Excel spreadsheets, it is about faith.

This deeper search for meaning that led me to study Bonhoeffer began when I participated in the Lilly Scholar seminar, a project of Augsburg's Lilly grant program that is facilitated by Professor Mark Tranvik of the Religion Department. Each year, a group of ten students who have an interest in exploring ministry attend monthly meetings to discuss current affairs, theology, and vocation. Little did I know that these gatherings would often be the highlight my month. I looked forward to the rigorous debate on various theological ideas and thinkers—from Bonhoeffer to Luther, Augustine to Aquinas, Barth to Day, and more. We read their original works as well as critiques by others, and we reflected deeply on the practical implications in our lives and the broader societal implications.

To be honest, I am not sure I would have dived into Bonhoeffer if it had not been for the Lilly Scholars program and the prompting of my professors. It was their encouragement

and the safe environment of the group of Scholars that allowed me to contemplate ideas and engage in dialogue with others. It became more and more clear to me that theology cannot exist in a vacuum. Instead, theology must be explored in the public sphere through conversations between people with different backgrounds and unique viewpoints. And the same is true for vocation. My discussions with my fellow Scholars made me realize that they struggled as much as I did to understand their life purpose. As I changed and developed as a college student, my understanding of my calling also expanded and developed with me. If the world around us is constantly changing, we must have faith that our vocations may also change, take different directions, and impact others and us in ways that we may have never

imagined. As a Lilly Scholar I realized that vocation is an act of faith and that I should hold fast to my faith.

As I acknowledge my love of tax and wave my nerd flag, I also throw myself completely into the arms of God, knowing that through faith, my vocation is in the here and now, not two steps into the future and not solely expressed in one form. So, with great joy, I proclaim: Here I am, Lord.

—Cody Warren graduated from Augsburg College in May 2009 with a double major in religion and public accounting and a minor in business administration. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in business taxation at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management.

CALL FOR PAPERS

75th Annual Meeting of The Association of Lutheran College Faculties

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Please submit your proposal by July 1, 2010.

RUTH R. KATH

Sense of Vocation

The *Sense of Vocation* program at Luther College, made possible by the generosity of Lilly Endowment, has enriched significantly campus life since its beginning in January 2002. The vocation grant has strengthened campus conversations on vocational discernment and has deepened our corporate vocation as a liberal arts college of the church.

The word “calling” has a strong presence in Luther’s mission statement, which affirms that we “challenge one another to learn in community, to discern our callings, and to serve with distinction for the common good.” Our *Sense of Vocation* program is structured on the theory that vocational discernment occurs at many moments in a student’s undergraduate career.

More than anything else, such a process is based on conversation and dialogue—students literally must “try out” different versions of their vocational call through interactions with their peers, faculty mentors, advisors, coaches, and their work-study supervisors. As a result, we organized the overall program with three distinct areas of focus: **General Program Initiatives** for the entire campus, the **Church Ministry Program** for students considering seminary or church service, and the **All-Student Vocation Program** to enrich the discernment conversations of all Luther students.

The title *A Sense of Vocation* came from Luther’s “Goals for Student Academic Achievement,” in which we promise that students will develop “a commitment to a life of work that will provide success and fulfillment, guided by a sense of vocation.” The program flows from our mission and reflects our campus culture as a community of faith and learning:

- It supports the ways we seek to embed the dialogue of faith and learning into all our activities, with an intentional focus on the concept of vocation.
- It is deeply interwoven with the academic program, the institution’s heart and soul, yet connects many facets of a student’s life by building on Luther’s strength as a residential college.
- It creates many opportunities for members of nearly every college constituency to ponder vocation as it relates to their lives.

Luther’s *Sense of Vocation* program is proving to be an effective mix of activities and initiatives. Specifically, our program is advancing the three aims identified in Lilly’s *Theological Exploration of Vocation* grants initiatives: 1) helping students examine the relationship between their faith and vocational choices, 2) providing opportunities for young people to explore Christian ministry as their life’s work, and 3) enhancing the capacity of Luther’s faculty to teach and mentor students effectively in this arena.

We have successfully found ways for conversations about vocation and the discernment process to occur in many corners of the campus. More than 1,500 students, faculty, staff, alumni, prospective students, church leaders, and Vocation Visitors have directly participated in the program, and that does not count the number of students who have attended classes, lectures, or workshops devoted to the theme of vocation. In reviewing the most significant features of the current program, we remind readers of the institutional structure intentionally designed to create a sustained and persistent presence of vocation themes throughout the campus. Below we discuss key initiatives within each of the

RUTH R. KATH is the director of the *Sense of Vocation* program and Professor of German at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

three major components: General Program Initiatives, Church Ministry Program, and All-Student Vocation Program.

I. GENERAL PROGRAM INITIATIVES

A. Vocation Visitors

Vocation Visitors has been one of our most visible and exciting initiatives, and in terms of sheer numbers of students and faculty affected, has had the largest impact. These program visitors connect current students with alumni, church leaders, and other professionals who have identifiable expertise, who have given special thought to vocation and service, and who can show undergraduates the life and work of practitioners who model vocational living in their respective fields. Their visits to campus are punctuated by any number of activities, and their residencies can last a day, a week, or even three weeks, with most residencies lasting two to three days.

Vocation Visitors act as guest lecturers in courses, mentor students in small group conversations, lead Bible study or daily chapel, or serve as facilitators in reading groups of faculty, staff, and students. Since the spring of 2002, Luther has hosted thirty-nine of these visitors in fields such as church music, journalism, education, religion, environmental activism, feminism, political science, and biology. Notable visitors include Parker Palmer; Reverend Heidi Neumark (author of *Breathing Space*); and Paul Heltne, President Emeritus of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. In each case, we ask the visitor to address, either in a public lecture or a classroom session, the path of vocational discernment and choices that helped him or her achieve a sense of identity and purpose within the framework of work or service.

Our intention is not so much to offer the stories from Vocation Visitors as a template for students to follow, but rather to illustrate to students a fundamental assumption about vocation. The path toward following Frederick Buechner's advice about matching "the world's deep need" to their own "deep gladness" is rarely linear or straightforward; in fact, it takes great patience and wisdom, and students are far more apt to feel strengthened in that journey if they recognize the value of continually reflecting on their work in relationship to their values and life-long goals. We have had the greatest success when Vocation Visitors come for at least three days, ensuring ample time to interact with students and share wisdom about their often circuitous vocational journeys.

B. Faculty Development—Faith and Learning Workshop

As new faculty begin their second year at the college, their understanding of the Luther mission is enhanced by the Vocation Workshop on "Luther College as a Community of Faith and Learning." Led by three senior faculty members from

various disciplines, the Faith and Learning Workshop builds faculty collegiality in a non-threatening, non-doctrinaire environment, establishing arguments for the compatibility of academic excellence and church identification, and clarifying Luther College's particular identity and mission. Since the beginning of the grant period, forty-eight new Luther teachers have shared in this valuable conversation about personal and institutional vocations. Evaluations regularly tell us that the two-day encounter has a long-term and very positive impact on interactions with their colleagues, and on the development of their roles as teachers and advisors of our students. The Faith and Learning Workshop has become a visible and important component of faculty development at Luther College, and it helps young faculty more fully connect with Luther's mission.

C. Self-Directed Reading Grants

Because many faculty and staff learn best in independent settings, we designed the self-directed reading program to provide opportunities, particularly during summers and sabbaticals, for those individuals or small focus groups who wish to explore a reading list specifically tailored to their disciplines. For example, thirteen faculty and staff women organized a reading group that "dissected readings, shared experiences and related how these reflective moments of our lives had come together to formulate our work and personal lives." They also considered how Luther's women students at various stages of development would benefit from programs and discussions of their own. To date, thirty-five Luther faculty and staff have taken advantage of the opportunity to explore vocation through self-directed reading programs.

D. Publications

Early in the life of the grant, a six-page Vocation Newsletter was bound into the center of the *Luther Alumni Magazine* and sent all over the world to 35,000 alumni, friends, and benefactors of the college. This attractive piece represented our first general communication to all college constituencies and had a positive impact. We have assembled additional newsletters for distribution in subsequent years. During the grant, we also saw publication of the work, "Called to Ecumenism: A Sense of Vocation at Luther College," by Vocation Director Ruth R. Kath. The book includes reflections by many different voices on the campus, including a member of the Board of Regents, an international Vocation Visitor, the college's former Chaplain for Catholic Students, a number of faculty members, and two bishops. We also published a second book called "Vocation Voices," which included special photos and vocational reflections by some forty members of the Luther community. The work is made available to incoming students, new faculty and staff, and visitors to the campus as a means to both support vocational reflection in the



Alyssa Cheadle

Some Luther students come to campus with a major in mind and never veer from that course. Others take much more of a smorgasbord approach, sampling classes in a variety of departments before eventually arriving at their major decision.

For Alyssa Cheadle ... the process boiled down to a moment that was nothing short of an epiphany.

Arriving on campus as a biology major, Cheadle abruptly switched gears her sophomore year after devouring the introduction to the textbook for the “Psychology of Health and Illness” course taught by psychology faculty member Loren Toussaint.

“I remember thinking, ‘This is awesome—health psychology is exactly what I want to do..., I had found this great thing, this avenue to studying the health of the whole person—everything from behavior to spirituality.’ ”

So energized was Cheadle that she called both parents that very night to tell them she had discovered what she wanted to study at Luther. It didn’t take her much longer to share the news with Toussaint. “We talked for an hour-and-a-half and realized our interests matched up.”

By the end of that meeting, Cheadle had signed on to conduct research with Toussaint on health psychology—specifically, “the relationships between health and dimensions of religiosity and spirituality, including forgiveness and empathy.”

Her work with Toussaint ultimately inspired Cheadle to declare an interdisciplinary major that combined the fields of psychology, biology, health, and religion. Their collaboration—which continued throughout her time at Luther—also yielded four paper presentations at conferences hosted by the APA Psychology of Research Division, three poster presentations at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Psychological Association, and a highly competitive Davis Projects for Peace grant that took Cheadle, Toussaint, and Anthony Sellu ’10 to Sierra Leone, Africa, in August 2007.

With \$10,000 in funding from the Davis program, the trio worked with Nancy Peddle of the LemonAid Fund and Fred Luskin of the Stanford Forgiveness Project to develop a forgiveness curriculum to introduce to war-affected students at the Dele Peddle Preparatory School in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Though they had to negotiate some unexpected obstacles—including an eruption of violence at the school that forced them to leave without their data—the project inspired some “powerful, stimulating, and often surprising” discussions about forgiveness and, more importantly, appears to have had a positive influence on the school’s students.

“It took a while for us to see it as a good experience because leaving early was extremely stressful,” she says. “But when we finally got our data, we saw that statistically we had made an impact—we saw an increase in their willingness to forgive and a decrease in anger and depression, among other measures of negative affect.”

Cheadle departed for Sierra Leone within weeks of wrapping up a summer research project at Oklahoma State University funded by the NSF-REU. She calls the project “a bit of a dud” in terms of results, but the experience was nonetheless key in her decision to put off graduate study in psychology. “The faculty at OSU stressed having a more specific area of research, and I realized that my research interests in psychology weren’t yet mature enough to apply to graduate school.” With encouragement from Loyal Rue, professor of religion and philosophy, Cheadle instead decided to apply to graduate school in theological studies, an area she longed to explore further. Rue also persuaded her to take a long, hard look at Harvard University when filling out her applications. “I didn’t think that I could get into Harvard, but he really pushed for that.” To no one’s surprise but perhaps her own, Cheadle was offered a full-tuition scholarship to attend the prestigious university, where she began a two-year master’s program in theological studies in September. Her long-term goal is to earn a doctorate in religion and psychology, though she has yet to decide which of the two disciplines to emphasize in her doctoral studies.

Whichever direction she heads, Cheadle seems destined to impress.

“No matter what set of superlatives I use to describe Alyssa, it won’t be sufficient,” says Toussaint. “She has the kind of personality, commitment, direction, stamina, and well-rounded social skills to be a charismatic scholar who is committed to improving the world and who will encourage and inspire others to do so as well.”

—original article by Sara Friedl-Putnam, published in the Fall 2008 issue of the Luther Alumni Magazine

community and ensure the continued telling of the Luther story to our new members as they join us.

E. Faculty/Staff/Student Travel

The Faculty/Staff/Student Travel funds supported travel to conferences or events with a specific focus on the theological exploration of vocation. To date, we have funded such travel for some one hundred individuals, including attendance by two religion faculty and a college pastor at a 2002 “Sharing Stories of Vocation” conference at Pepperdine University. Students have especially benefited from these funds, including two who recently traveled to Washington, DC, to participate in a special conference focused on service, civic engagement, and the connections between Christian faith and environmental activism. The Faculty/Staff/Student Travel funds have been among the most appreciated offerings of the *Sense of Vocation* program. They have allowed members of the Luther community to benefit from many outstanding opportunities, which in turn enrich campus conversations about vocation.

II. CHURCH MINISTRY PROGRAM

A. Vocation Fellowships

Among the wide circle of current students who are considering either ordination or spending a significant portion of their lives as lay church leaders, the Vocation Fellowships have been an enormous incentive. Annual summer Fellowships of \$1,000-\$1,500 to current students who work in parish internships or church-related camps have been very popular with Luther students. Since the grant began, we have established mandatory pre- and post-fellowship retreats to assist students with their reflections about vocation and their planned summer employment. Included in each retreat are worship opportunities, group conversation, and time for personal writing. To date, these awards have assisted over two hundred Luther students.

This program has heightened the visibility of ordained and lay ministry vocations, and we have seen significant growth in students’ ability to reflect on their identities and their gifts as they discern their callings. The Vocation Fellowships provide an excellent tool with which to talk about vocational discernment to a whole group of students we had not reached before.

B. Discernment/Seminary Visits

A primary focus of the Lilly-funded initiatives is to enhance the frequency and quality of contact with students who are discerning a call to ordained ministry, either during their college career or in the years just after their graduation. Current Luther students who have expressed an interest in the ministry

gather biweekly for group conversation with one of the campus pastors and with an array of visiting alumni and others who share the stories of their vocational paths to ordained ministry. While the *DIAKONOS* group existed before the grant, it has been revitalized with the assistance of Lilly funds and now enjoys markedly improved effectiveness and visibility. An average of sixty Luther students participate each year, and thirty-nine visitors have met with these students to date. The Discernment Conversations take place not only in the group, but also in one-on-one conversations with each of the three campus pastors.

To supplement these on-campus conversations, we have funded fifty student visits to seminaries of the students’ choice. As a result of such support, student travel to seminaries outside the usual circle of the Midwest has yielded excellent results, including a full scholarship at Vanderbilt Divinity School for one of our graduating senior women this year. She wrote recently: “The grant has enabled me to visit seminaries that I would have otherwise not been able to visit. Because I was able to travel at practically no expense to myself, I discovered a school that I really enjoyed and am now going to attend that school next fall.” Since the beginning of the Lilly grant, over thirty Luther students have gone on to seminary.

C. Alumni Vocational Discernment Retreats

Each summer, the college hosts a discernment retreat on campus for a group of young alumni who have been discerning a call to either ordained or lay ministry. Over the course of several days, we help them talk about their Luther experiences (both encouraging and challenging), the journey to where they find themselves now, and their questions about the future. Our goal is to reacquaint them with the college, the *Sense of Vocation* program, and each other as sources of ongoing support as they continue their vocational discernment and enter the world of work in the next years. The reflections of these highly engaged recent alumni give the college valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the vocation program and the institution as a whole. To date, some one hundred alumni have participated in these retreats.

D. Church Leader Retreats/Workshops

Church Leader Retreats are designed to support lay and ordained church leaders who are already in the field and in need of renewal. During the grant period, we have offered such workshops as *Wellness: Who Nurtures the Nurturer?*; *Unexpected Outcomes of Pregnancy: Vocation of a Caregiver*; and *The Book of Ruth*. While beneficial connections being forged among members of the various church leader groups may follow naturally, we have been gratified to note the ways

in which our own contact with the participants in these groups has broadened our understanding of vocational formation and understanding. The Church Leader Retreats and Workshops also have provided several new opportunities for parish internships for our undergraduates, as connections were made, either with us or with the students directly, during the on-campus time together. To date, forty-eight church leaders have participated in campus retreats. These participants have helped us understand their need for a structure of continuing education credits from the courses and events. One pastor commented on the value of the retreat opportunity:

Last year was my first experience with the Church Leader Retreat, and I thoroughly enjoyed the chance to gather with colleagues who shared a similar vocational path. Ministry is a demanding call, made more so by the era in which we live. The chance to interact with peers has shaped my ministry and given new life to the ways in which I carry out my call.

E. Renewal Opportunities

The Renewal Opportunities for rostered ELCA clergy evolved as a natural extension of our Church Ministry Program. For the past two years, the college has offered the short-term use of our campus facilities (usually three days) to rest, reflect, read, and write. Although not envisioned in our original grant proposal, the program, suggested by Luther's president, has been appreciated by the ten clergy who have taken advantage of our relatively low cost and effective offer of support.

F. WIYLDE Initiative (Wholly Iowa Youth Leadership Discipling Event)

The WIYLDE initiative reaches out to prospective students during a week of spiritual formation and leadership development designed to help high school youth deepen their fundamental church connection. WIYLDE creates a link with participants' home congregations and involves youth and leaders from the three ELCA synods of Iowa. While the other initiatives planned to appeal to prospective students in secondary school have not fulfilled their potential, WIYLDE has experienced a strong surge in numbers of participants and promises to continue its remarkable growth. To date, over one-hundred-fifty young people have participated in these events, and several former WIYLDE participants now attend Luther as full-time students. Even with the heavy competition for the relatively small pool of young people in Iowa, WIYLDE seems to be an attractive and effective vehicle for reaching and retaining interest in both home churches and this college of the church.

III. ALL-STUDENT VOCATION PROGRAM

A. New Student Orientation

The *Sense of Vocation* program has added an important component to our traditional three-day New Student Orientation by providing funds for greater involvement from the entire campus and a heightened emphasis on students' awareness of their new "calling" as college students. In the past, students had read a book as an introduction to the required Paideia I course, an interdisciplinary prologue to the liberal arts with an intense curriculum in writing. Now the focus rests more on finding a book that will cultivate a reflection on issues regarding education, faith, and citizenship. Recent titles include Ernest Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying* and Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith*. Inviting all members of the campus community—from Resident Assistants to Financial Aid staff—to read the book along with incoming students has resulted in a graceful note of hospitality, as well as some lively conversations among people who might think they have nothing in common.

In addition, the orientation now includes a two-hour class meeting facilitated by students' Paideia I instructors, teamed with a faculty member from another discipline. Our goal in these conversations is to introduce students to a *new* understanding of vocation—a serious process whereby what they do throughout the next four years will determine their values, core beliefs, and talents that will eventually take root in the wider world. We have also arranged a meeting, *sans* instructors, among Peer Mentors and students, as an opportunity for students to talk with more experienced peers regarding their initial expectations, anxieties, and hopes for college.

B. Peer Mentors

Luther's *Sense of Vocation* program is structured on the theory that vocational discernment occurs at many moments of a student's undergraduate career, and we recognize fully that students themselves play a vital role in helping their peers discern their goals both in and beyond Luther College. We created the Peer Mentor program to help formalize the ways in which older students can mentor new students, particularly in showing them how to successfully integrate their academic work with the freedom and demands of college life as a whole. In addition, the program was designed to provide a significant educational experience for the mentor, by connecting an upper-level student with a faculty member who discusses in detail the pedagogical assumptions and implications regarding a course that the student has already completed. Thus, the mentoring relationship extends both from faculty to student, as well as from student to student. The program has had its most significant impact on Paideia I, with strong numbers of sections using Peer Mentors.

They have also worked in courses within the biology, modern languages, and religion/philosophy departments.

The impact of these encounters has been very impressive. The mentoring students often report that the work has helped them discover an interest or desire to pursue fields in teaching or public service. For the younger students who encounter these older role models, the impact is equally strong, particularly in helping first-semester college students understand their immediate vocation as an engaged student. First-year students become aware, by this informal but sustained encounter, that it is possible to balance the workload of college, and frequently the conversations take a turn toward how the mentor is preparing for the next step in his or her life.

In other words, providing the opportunity for a first-year student to listen as a junior or senior explains how he or she followed the path of a particular major and is now currently weighing vocational questions about teaching, graduate study, or work in volunteer programs is invaluable for the students who are just getting started. As one mentor described it:

For me, conversations have been the most important part of this program because I can talk with students about their worries, successes, and plans for the future and help them out as they try to navigate their first year of college.

C. Curriculum Development Grants

One of the most exciting and successful initiatives of the Lilly grant has been the Vocation Curriculum Development program, which has provided supplemental funds for Paideia Capstone courses and mini-grants for the development of courses with vocational content.

Paideia Capstone Courses. The curriculum development grants have had their strongest impact upon the Paideia Capstone course, an interdisciplinary course that engages students in a critical examination of values, value systems, the process of ethical decision-making, the Christian tradition, and personal service and vocation. We have extended curriculum grants to twelve teaching teams of three faculty members each to strengthen the curricular focus on vocation in these courses. The funds have helped faculty in these important courses clarify how “vocation” can be seen as a defining theological concept in a Luther education. Examples of new Capstone courses include *Stewardship and Sustained Development*, *Making Decisions for U.S. Schools*, *Health Care Ethics*, and *Reconciliation in South Africa*.

Many Paideia Capstone courses offered in recent years have taken advantage of an award to allow the instructors to shape a special student-centered event that will enhance their understanding of vocation within the context of that particular course. In one

recent year, for example, two study abroad Capstone instructors used London’s British Museum as an appropriate setting for conversations with upper-level students on vocational discernment, followed by selected visits to those parts of the museum where the emblems of history and culture would most directly speak to each student’s future plans.

New Course Development. While course development activity in the early days of the *Sense of Vocation* program was limited, the establishment of a competitive summer grant to three faculty members annually to support the development of a new course with some aspect of vocation has been highly successful. Some of Luther’s best faculty from across the campus have applied to teach an abbreviated version of the new course during our week-long summer alumni program, then fine tune it for offering within the regular undergraduate curriculum during the next academic year. Courses emerging from this innovative program include *Martin Luther’s Call for Citizenship: A Theology of Vocation*; *Vocation and War: Making Judgments*; *The Path to Wholeness: Finding One’s Vocation in Forgiveness*; and *Vestiges of Religious Traditions*. The inclusion of the summer alumni program in the course development has had the added advantage of drawing a wide range of Luther alumni into the vocation conversation as well.

D. Vocation Advising Workshop

The Vocation Advising Workshop gathers together faculty members from all departments for an annual conversation about the vital task of helping students identify their gifts and talents within the context of their academic program and intellectual growth. The workshop connects relatively inexperienced advisors with seasoned ones, and has become a valuable connector among colleagues and an important component of vocational education and faculty development. One faculty member noted:

I have incorporated the word and idea of “vocation” into my work with students. I find my conversations with students about their career and life plans are often couched in a “bigger picture” with greater meaning. This culture of vocational discernment has encouraged me to inquire and sometimes challenge students about their life plans, getting them to think about their life’s purpose if they aren’t.

Though the inaugural Vocation Advising Workshop did not take place until mid-way through the grant, some one-hundred-fifty faculty members have participated to date. Our goal is to reach all remaining faculty member at Luther over the next three years.

E. Advising Handbook

A *Vocation Advising Handbook* was prepared in Spring 2004 and revised in 2009, with assistance from major departments

across the college. It outlines requirements for every major and centralizes other pertinent advising information. The handbook was completed in time for use in spring registration, and many faculty said they found it to be most helpful in meeting with and advising students. By its nature, the Advising Handbook is a work in progress, requiring regular updating and revision. The Advising Handbook will be on-line soon.

The Advising Team of English Professor Nancy K. Barry and Dean of Student Life Ann Highum has been highly effective. Barry was co-author of the original Lilly grant application and has long been an active member of the Vocation Steering Committee. Highum has co-lead the mandatory preparatory workshops for Vocation Fellowship applicants, as well as co-taught one of the most effective and popular courses under our Vocation Curriculum Development program. This creative and energetic team helps to bring the All-Student Vocation Program to its full implementation.

Program Leadership

The leadership of the *Sense of Vocation* program consists of Program Director Ruth R. Kath, Ph.D., Professor of German since 1979, who also holds an M.A. in Theology (1998), and Nancy K. Barry,

Ph.D., Professor of English and Assistant to the Dean for Advising and Writing. The program Administrative Assistant is Constance Barclay. *The Sense of Vocation* Steering Committee consisting of members from the faculty and administrative staff, including: Michael Blair, Campus Pastor; Jayme Nelson, Assistant Professor of Nursing; Bradley Chamberlain, Associate Professor of Chemistry; Ann Highum, Vice President and Dean for Student Life; Tanya Gertz, Director of Campus Programming; Kath, and Barry.

Long-Term Goals

The long-term plan of Luther's *Sense of Vocation* program is to embed vocation program strategies into existing curricular and co-curricular programs where there is consistency with Luther's mission and where specific vocation initiatives are effective in helping students discover their gifts and discern their call. The college is firmly committed to permanently sustain those aspects of the *Sense of Vocation* program which are demonstrated to add value to the experience of our students, faculty, and/or staff. Ongoing evaluation—of both the programs and their impact—will help us assess our progress in achieving the goals of this long-term plan.

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Tyler Wiese

Tyler Wiese doesn't shy away from tough questions.

Wiese was drawn to his majors—political science and philosophy—because they explore ideas that have been challenging thinkers for centuries.

“The aspects of political science that intrigued me most were the philosophical issues that dealt with questions such as the basis of government and rule,” he explains. “In philosophy, I was drawn toward a similarly humanistic and societal focus—what exactly is the good life, and in what ways can a good society help, and a bad society hinder, the possibility of a meaningful existence.”

These are no simple questions for anyone to consider, but Wiese embraced the challenge. “Tyler was simply electrified by his courses and threw himself into his studies with an unbridled enthusiasm that was infectious,” praises Lissa Skitolsky, assistant professor of philosophy. “He exhibits both a strong intellectual curiosity and a kind sensitivity to others.”

That curiosity extended well beyond Luther's classrooms. In the summer of 2007, Wiese—a magna cum laude graduate and Phi Beta Kappa member—did research with John Moeller, professor of political science, studying the nature of the heated debate in Decorah over preserving East Side Elementary School. Under his guidance, Wiese constructed a detailed timeline of events and wrote a commentary about the factors that determined the East Side case.

“I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Tyler,” says Moeller. “He's a really good guy with an exemplary character and commitment to excellence in all he does.”

His quest for excellence served Wiese well in other activities at Luther. He was captain of the mock-trial team for four

years, practicing three to four times per week from September to March and attending four to five regional tournaments each year. He also sang in Undeclared, a student-run male a cappella group that arranges all of its own music.

Wiese talks with enthusiasm about being part of Undeclared. “It was honestly an amazing experience to create great music with up to 10 other guys and then be able to perform that music and have people go wild over it,” he says.

Wiese, who chose Luther after realizing “it was a friendly and open place filled with professors and students who care about both academics and each other,” loved his time on campus. He talks enthusiastically of professors Moeller and Skitolsky, saying that Moeller has “an almost innate gift for teaching” and that Skitolsky, also a first-rate teacher, “truly changed the way I view the world around me.”

He praises his liberal arts experience as well. “Luther changed the questions I ask, the way in which I ask them, and the answers that make sense,” he says.

This fall—after a summer of working, seeing family and friends, and scoping out the Twin Cities apartment scene—Wiese began law school at the University of Minnesota. He likes the fact that being an attorney will offer an opportunity to help others while providing for intellectual challenges but says he doesn't anticipate practicing law forever.

“I hope to be able at some point in my life to teach at either a liberal arts college like Luther or at a law school, with a focus on issues such as the interaction between the individual and the law at the philosophical and normative level,” he says.

The vocation suits the curious and thoughtful Wiese. It seems there will be lots of difficult questions in his future—and, hopefully, some meaningful answers.

—original article by Marguerite Moeller, published in the Fall 2008 issue of the Luther Alumni Magazine

ROBERT D. HAAK

Called to Serve

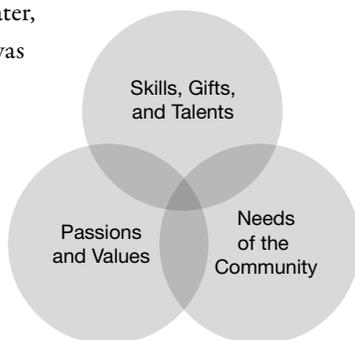
In 2004, Augustana College in Rock Island joined with the other recipients of Lilly Endowment grants, including nine Lutheran institutions, to explore the question of what difference the concepts and language of “vocation” could make in the lives of our students and the self-understanding of our campuses. The other two schools featured in this issue, Luther College in Decorah and Augsburg College in Minneapolis, and Augustana also received sustaining grants that allowed us to follow up the work of the initial grant period. The three schools have come together with the help of the Wilder Institute to study what we have done well (and not so well) and to make available to others what we have learned in our journey. Each of the programs is different, and each successful. We offer the descriptions and “learnings” in this issue to others who might want to follow our path.

What have we done?

At Augustana, the decision was made to establish a center with a physical location for this effort, the Center for Vocational Reflection. This CVR was staffed with a director, a program associate, and a program coordinator who handled the secretarial aspects of our work. Later, a second program associate was added to the staff.

The focus of the work of the CVR is illustrated by this diagram:

We asked, over and over again, three sets of questions: What are your skills,



gifts and talents? What are your passions and values? What are the needs of your community? Our belief and experience is that when and where these questions are addressed and where the answers overlap, that convergence becomes for that student their “definition” of vocation.

Mark Tranvik, in his article in this issue, has outlined the particular nuance and history of the concept of vocation that informs a Lutheran understanding. This same understanding has shaped our use of the term. We have also been conscious that many of our students do not identify themselves closely with the Lutheran, or any other, religious tradition. We worked to find language and concepts that would allow and invite specifically religious conversation with students for whom this was part of their self-understanding, but also was helpful and inviting to those who saw themselves as “spiritual, but not religious” or even those who did not consider themselves religious in any sense. What we found, along with the other “Lilly schools,” is that the language and concepts of vocation are productive in a very wide range of settings. As Lutherans, this doesn’t surprise us. We expect that our understanding of principles is relevant even beyond those who call themselves Lutherans!

The center of our work has been conversations in a wide range of settings with students (and truth be told, with a lot of faculty, staff and members of the community also). Much of the programming that we have done is designed to create contacts and settings that allow and encourage conversations around the questions raised above.

This is particularly true with programs designed to reach out to students who are considering these issues directly and explicitly. Sometimes this involves students who are trying to discern a calling

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to work in the church professionally. We have met on a regular basis with such students in a group called *Working with Faith*. While conversations in the group often surround aspects of the ordained ministry, it also recognizes that there are a wide range of professionals serving the church today. We have had programs on camp ministries and youth ministry and music ministry—any area that members of the group would like to explore as they try to find their path. A significant element of this discernment has been the CVR's support of visits to seminaries for those who believe this might be their way. We have taken trips twice a year to a range of seminaries, from east to west coast and many places in between. These usually entail visits to Lutheran seminaries, but are not exclusive to them. We work with all students of all denominations (or no denomination) to help them find the "right fit" for their work and study. We have helped students to move from Augustana to study at most of the Lutheran seminaries but also such places as North Park Seminary in Chicago, Trinity Seminary in Deerfield, Ashland Seminary in Kentucky, Yale Divinity School and others.

We have also been supportive of those students and employees who are seeking spiritual discernment in their lives while at the college. We fund one-on-one meetings with certified spiritual directors. We also have invited together a successful group called *Spiritual Companionship* that meets to share with each other their spiritual journey. With the help of a faculty member trained in spiritual reflection, this small group meets on a regular basis over lunch to discuss where they are and to practice their spirituality.

While meetings with the staff of the CVR are a very important part of the work we do at Augustana, we also know that we will not be able to have conversations with every member of our community if we limit our contact to those who seek out the CVR.

Work with internships illustrates this point. The CVR at Augustana offers a number of internships. Probably the most important program that we run is the *Servant Leader Internships*. This program uses Lilly Endowment funds supplemented by funds from the local Amy Helpenstell Foundation to allow students to "try out" the careers to which they feel they are being led. These funds allow students to work in religious and not-for-profit settings that often are not able to pay stipends for this work. The funds allow students to participate during the school year or during the summer, time when they might otherwise need to hold jobs to earn money for their education. Many of these internships are with local agencies, from the Girl Scouts, to art museums, to the botanical center and many others. We also have been able to provide an intern that works with Luther Place in Washington, DC and other placements throughout the country. Interns have worked all

across the globe, from Switzerland to Africa to Latin America. In all cases, the goal of the internships is to help the students come to understand their own vocation in the context of their studies, their lives and the lives of their community. Each student reflects on these questions while in the internship and also on their return to campus. While these internships are easy to define as "successful" if a student finds just the right fit between their calling and the career they are trying out, we also consider it a successful internship if a student finds through the experience that the career they thought was a fit was not. A young woman who believed working with troubled teens was her life-work found out that it wasn't...and also found a better fit in another aspect of the mental health system. This was surely a success for us... and her!

We have also worked very closely with the Office of Internship Services and the internship director for business internships. They have seen the value of these conversations with their interns also. Now, all interns in any program at the college are asked to write a reflective paper on their internship in order to successfully complete that experience. Very often these reflections are discussed at "reflection dinners" that bring together interns (and sometimes donors and supervisors) to share their experiences upon their return to campus. Reflection on vocation is simply part of the way we do internships, whether directly connected to the CVR or not.

The importance of reflection during and after student's experience of international travel is well documented. With the establishment of an Office of International and Off-Campus Programs at Augustana has come the ability to ensure that international experiences of all types are followed with programs to encourage the students to process these experiences when they return to campus. This usually entails essays and dinners in which the questions of vocation and needs of the community are central. We have begun to document the effects of these programs through the administration of the *Global Perspectives Inventory* [<https://gpi.central.edu/>]. This instrument is able to determine the level of awareness and engagement with cultures outside the student's normal experience. Again, this reflection has become simply part of the way we now do international travel at Augustana.

Probably the most significant internalization of vocational reflection into the Augustana culture has come in conjunction with a major curriculum revision, *Senior Inquiry*. This program expects all students to engage in a capstone research experience as part of their major. The centerpiece of this capstone project, no matter which department, is the expectation of reflection on that experience.



Erin Blecha

You rarely realize the effect something will have on your life. In hindsight, it is much easier to recognize how a seemingly trivial moment transformed your life path. Walking into a small office in the corner of the Augustana College

library, and meeting the Center for Vocational Reflection, in its “skills, gifts, and passions” touting glory, was my moment.

The skills, abilities, and direction I found working closely with the CVR have given me a sense of what I am about, what I am meant to be about. I’ve realized that life is about the process of living, and while you can’t ignore the realities of the working world, you can make the most of it by finding joy through vocation. I entered college to become a physical therapist, but struggled miserably with the curriculum, all the time wondering, why do something I hate just to end up as something I’m not sure I want to be? When I first went to the CVR, they first asked me what got me excited? What motivated me? What was I good at? I had two answers: sports and planning events.

Being a part of the CVR was the most natural thing to me. It wasn’t a job, it was a constant growth experience. I was able to travel to leadership conferences around the country, work with non-profits to set up volunteer programs, speak to incoming freshman and my peers on vocational reflection, and challenge myself to find my true skills, gifts and passions along the way.

Within my first few months at the CVR, they gave me the greatest gift possible. They told me to come up with an idea to get students involved in vocational reflection, and that together we would make it happen. I ran with this opportunity, focused on creating an athlete service program. My dream job was to work in the NFL doing community relations, and I saw this as a step in that direction. I based the program on the idea that athletes listen to their peers and would participate under the team mentality. Student-athletes would become involved and at the same time would get to see their teammates in a non-competitive, service setting. I worked closely with SAAC, the athletic administration, and the CVR to create a formal program proposal, initiate the process with athletes, and implement the program. I worked closely with community organizations to determine what they needed, and how young, enthusiastic student-athletes could help meet those needs. The first semester we were able to get over 100 athletes from eight teams involved

in our four projects: a town clean-up day, a trip to the children’s miracle network, a buddy day with three community youth groups, and a field day with over 100 kids from the area.

The CVR helped us realize pretty quickly that the impact of volunteering would be lost if the athletes didn’t have the opportunity to reflect on the events. We created a reflection form asking the participants to assess the event. Walking away from the events, student-athletes talked about what they did. Soon enough, you heard talk of the program in the weight room, around campus, and in the classroom as athletes brought those experiences into their daily lives. The following year we expanded due to the demand of teams interested in getting involved. In that year 300 student-athletes volunteered 1,100+ hours through 29 service projects. Athletes Giving Back (AGB) had arrived.

Like most programs, the greatest challenge was in sustaining the energy that came with the first year’s success. I had no doubts. The program had been rooted in SAAC from the beginning, and two officer positions had been created to be in charge of organizing and running AGB. We used the second year as a transition to enable the program to be fully functional and sustainable through the athletic department. Now, in its fifth year, with the last batch of “original” AGB participants on the way out, the program is still thriving. In a few short years, the founding group of AGB will be completely forgotten, replaced by new student-athlete leaders, with new ideas. My hope is that AGB continues, but I believe that if for some unforeseen reason other students do not continue its passion, in the future a new wave of students will come to Augustana, and one spunky, determined student will connect with the CVR and have their pivotal life moment, just like I did; then, who knows what type of program will come of it!

I now work in marketing and community affairs for a collegiate athletics program, directing in-game promotions, organizing community events for athletics, and developing programs for the students; but I’m on the other side now. I’m the one giving support, encouragement, and opportunity to my interns, my student-athletes, and my group leaders. Not a day goes by when I don’t ask them to reflect on things, consider how their skills, gifts, and passions come into play, and challenge them to try new things. I find myself using those tools as second nature. My students have come to expect questions, challenges, and support to try new things. I still haven’t stopped being surprised as each day a new, brilliant idea comes forward. I have learned that empowering students to discover their vocation yields rewards far greater than I ever imagined.

“The expectation for student *Senior Inquiry* projects is that they will meet the following outcomes:

- Substantial in meaning and impact
- Communicative of the discoveries made through the project
- Reflective of one or more of the following:
 - the nature of knowledge and inquiry
 - self-awareness and connection with others
 - the relationship of individuals to a community”

Nearly all Augustana students participate in this program. This brings vocational reflection into the very heart of what we do at Augustana. The effect of *Senior Inquiry* has been particularly important. Faculty soon realized that we could not expect students to engage well in such reflection if they were not asked to similarly reflect earlier in their program. Nearly all majors now ask students to begin asking and answering these questions when they enter the major and throughout their program. We now see these same questions becoming the focus of our first-year general education program and in other general education courses.

This description indicates that vocational reflection has become part of the educational enterprise at Augustana. The CVR supports it in the ways we have discussed and many others. One counted the CVR-related programs at over twenty. Not all of these programs are directly curricular. We have supported campus-wide conversations over two years on *The Values of Augustana*. We have hosted a large number of speakers who model to students that the path to successful vocation is rarely in a straight (or obvious) line. We have led countless small group discussions of Parker Palmer’s *Let Your Life Speak*. We have celebrated a move to new quarters with a “CVR-nival” that introduced us to many new students during the beginning of the school year. And we have worked with individual students who come to us saying “Can you help me figure it out?”

A major part of our outreach to the students and community are programs of students associated with and supported by the CVR. Each year we bring together five to seven students who come to us with ideas that they believe will be effective in bringing the vocational conversation to their peers. We meet with these students regularly. We provide them with the support (financial, intellectual and spiritual) that they feel they need in order to implement their ideas. Often these programs have turned out to be the most successful programs that we have run. An example of one of these is *Athletes Giving Back*, initiated and brought to maturity by a student, Erin Blecha. Erin’s story is included in this issue. Other programs have established afternoon mentoring programs for grade school

age youth at a Lutheran congregation near campus. Another has brought together Augustana students with local high school students in their setting. Another has worked with alumni and fraternities to create mentoring pairs to talk about vocation and life after Augustana.

What have we learned?

There can be no doubt that the funding available because of the Lilly Endowment grant has been extremely helpful in establishing the culture of vocational reflection at Augustana. As important, however, is the energy of faculty, administration and students surrounding these ideas. Many of these programs are associated with work we are already doing at our institutions. It is not a matter of “adding vocation” to the work we are doing but rather recognizing the vocational aspects of much of the work we are already doing, and have been doing for many years even before the impetus of the Lilly funding.

In the end, it is the power of the ideas that will make the biggest difference on the campus. The Lutheran concept of vocation is a powerful idea. That each student’s life and work is important not only to them but to the communities to which they belong is a message that is as relevant and important today as it was in Luther’s time and before. What the Lilly funding did was allow us to focus on these concepts in new ways and to try out for our institutions new ways of entering these conversations. Our experience at Augustana and among the “Lilly schools” is that paying attention to these questions is the necessary crucial first step. This step is more important than any individual program that we have developed to carry this process forward. No one program, no one structure, no one “silver bullet” will lead to success. In fact, one of the most important “learnings” of the experience we have had is that the effect of these ideas on students comes from multiple encounters with the concepts over the full time at our institutions. One time programs, standing alone, will likely not be effective. Multiple exposures, in multiple places (curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular) are what it takes for these ideas to become part of who our students are and become.

An important “learning” at Augustana has been that *this language works for all students*, not just those who are predisposed toward religious language. Many of our students do recognize the importance of religion in their lives. With them we are more than happy (and able) to use the full range of religious language to talk to them about these deeply important issues. Other students are less comfortable or even hostile to religious language.¹ Even these students are able and willing to talk about their own skills, gifts, and talents, about their

own values and passions, and about how they will respond to the needs of the community. This language is rich enough that it provides entrée into the conversation from many angles. For us, language that is inviting and multivalent has proven to be important and useful.

Another (surprising?) thing that we learned was that our *most successful programs where often the ones suggested by students and faculty*. Even times when the idea seemed unlikely to succeed, the success rate of ideas generated outside the CVR was great. We came to learn that the power of the idea of vocation was such that we could trust the idea, and those who became committed to it.

As at the other Lilly schools, a key ingredient in the success of the program is the *support of key constituents*. Probably this list will vary from campus to campus. At Augustana we had strong and early buy-in from all levels, from the president and dean of the faculty to faculty and staff. This was particularly important as the elements of vocational reflection worked their way into the curriculum of the college.

An element of the programming at Augustana (that is also reflected in materials from the other schools) grows out of a recognition that it is not only individuals who have vocations. Institutions also have (or should have) responses to the central questions we are asking. The CVR has become one of the instigators of identity questions on campus. This happens in a variety of forums. We sponsor a weekly gathering called *Coffee and Conversation* that brings together faculty, staff and administration to a unscripted coffee-hour. Conversations range from the silly to the sublime, but always work to build community across divisions that form in any institution. The CVR also has sponsored conversations between the faculty and the president, especially in the time of the recent economic disruptions. We also sponsored a two year series on *The Values of Augustana*. The purpose of this series was to give members of the community a chance to state their understanding of our institutional values, and have these remarks be the launching pad for conversations among all present of what are and should be institutional values and identity. These talks were published in a form that is used to continue the conversation with those coming into the community—faculty, staff, or administration.

What do we hope?

Where do we go from here? In just the same way that no one of us could have predicted at the beginning of this journey that we would end up where we are, no one can say precisely where we are headed. One thing is certain: as long as the programs of vocational reflection are alive and well on our campuses, they will continue to evolve along with the students and the institutions. We do not expect that five years from now, we will look the same.

We hope that some of the things that we have learned might be helpful to others who share these values. We think that this is particularly relevant to those colleges and universities that look to the Lutheran tradition for their own vocation. We hope that the results of the study of the Wilder Foundation described in this issue will encourage others to try to implement these ideas on their campuses. And we all offer our support and experience to extend these programs.

At Augustana, the CVR will be changing once again to a new conception. Next fall the CVR will become part of a new entity—The Community Engagement Center. This will bring us into closer connection to offices on campus with which we have already worked closely—those interested in career development, internships, off-campus programs, entrepreneurial development, volunteers and service-learning. This new configuration will enable us to move even more easily beyond the campus to the communities in which we find ourselves—both local and global. When we were just starting a tiny program on campus, Kristen Glass (who now directs the Young Adult Ministry program for the ELCA) declared with exuberance, “Vocation cannot be contained!” These words continue to be prophetic!

Endnotes

1. The complexity of student’s relationship with religion and spirituality is explored in Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*.

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Pat Fish

In high school, everyone always asked what I was going to do with my life. Growing up I loved being around people and helping others, yet I did not know what profession or job that would translate into. My parents, teachers, and peers always told me I

would be a great doctor or psychologist. Thus, when I arrived at Augustana I was debating whether to be a pre-med or psychology major. During my freshman year I got more and more involved with an organization on campus called the Center for Vocational Reflection (CVR). The staff and student workers began asking me different questions and got me thinking of life more broadly. The CVR helped me realize there is more to life than a career or profession. Thanks to the CVR, I began exploring not what I wanted to do, but instead I began searching who I was.

The CVR emphasizes a person's vocation, which was a term that Martin Luther used and stressed during his lifetime. This was a word that I had not been familiar with. Thanks to CVR staff I realized college is more than just finding a career to fit into. Today, colleges and universities stress preparing students for the real world and giving them the skills to succeed in their future jobs. But life is more than a 9-5 job. A job is an essential part of an individual's life; however, a vocation applies to more aspects of life than a job. I realized a vocation is being a good son, brother, student, religious person, and friend. Although I have solidified what I'd like to do when I leave Augustana, the CVR helped guide me to find just exactly who I was and match that with something the community needed. Vocation is about taking your passions, skills and talents and applying them to the needs in the community. Thanks to the CVR I have come to this understanding and am confident in taking the next step in my life journey.

The CVR has provided me with ample opportunities through volunteer opportunities, one-on-one talks, and internship experiences. My freshman year at Augustana I joined a program called Rockastana and helping run an after-school program at Rock Island high school. Additionally, I also volunteered a few times at Broadway school tutoring and doing activities with some of the youth in the Quad City community. The CVR provides all Augie students the chance to get out of the Augie bubble and go out into the community to make a difference. The CVR provides several service opportunities that otherwise would not be available to students.

In addition to all the different volunteer opportunities I have had the chance to experience, I also had the chance to sit down a few times to just talk about my future and goals. It was a great feeling to be able to map out my likes, dislikes, passions, and talents. I realized that although I loved helping others, I did not have the patience to work with small children. This realization was crucial because I was able to narrow down what I wanted to do with my life. All these conversations allowed me to reflect on who I was and to really listen to what God's calling for me entailed.

Lastly, thanks to the CVR I was able to have three incredible and life-changing summer internships. Without the CVR, I would not have been able to afford such an experience. My freshman summer I traveled to Biloxi, MS, and worked in a free medical clinic. This was the summer I realized that medicine was not my calling, because I found myself constantly frustrated with the lack of communication between the patient and doctor. Doctors often have no time to chat with patients and are just trying to diagnosis the major problems. Yet, people often come in to the hospital with more than just a disease or illness and need someone to listen to their problems. Doctors just do not have the luxury to listen to patient's stories because they are overloaded with other patients who need to be seen. This was a great insight and thanks to the grant money provided by the CVR, I was able to figure out that becoming a doctor did not fit who I was as a person.

My sophomore year, I received an internship through the CVR to work at Trinity West Hospital in the pastoral care department. I shadowed the hospital chaplains, ran a bible study, and visited with patients on a daily basis. I learned through that experience that I hated hospitals, yet I loved incorporating faith into my healing. I loved the conversations I had with individuals and it really made me into a stronger, mature young adult.

This past summer I worked as an intern for United Way of the QCA. Again this was due to the help and funding of the CVR. While at United Way, I helped coordinate several events and programs and even started a partner student group on campus that is called Student United Way (SUW). SUW works alongside United Way and the CVR to provide students more service opportunities and try to create unity amongst all the groups on campus.

All these wonderful experiences that CVR has sponsored have made me into who I am today. Additionally, my internship experience and conversations have made me realize who I have been called to be in this world. Thanks to the CVR, I am ready for my next step after Augustana and to bring my knowledge and skills into the real world.

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