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## From the Editor

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## From the Editor

Lutheran conversations—that’s the theme for this issue. The most obvious connection to the contents is centered on the enlightening conversation between Robert Benne and Tom Christenson that is included in this issue. This exchange, and the preceding comments of Mark Wilhelm, are part of a larger Lutheran conversation that is happening at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa this year as they again ask themselves the question “what does it mean to be a ‘college of the church’?” This question is particularly important as they search for new leadership, but it is important to all of us as we go about our work as Lutheran colleges. What does that mean in real life? Benne and Christenson add their voices to the conversation. Those who might have expected sparks to fly between these two strong voices might well be surprised at the large area of commonality which they share. These commonalities are surely part of what defines a Lutheran college or university, as does the fact that we have strong opinions about such issues.

Mark Wilhelm also spoke at Wartburg College. He aids our conversation by placing what we are about in a broader historical and social context. Again, this is (or should be) a characteristic of good Lutheran conversation. Lutherans believe that we are called into conversation with the world, not simply to some otherworldly experience. Wilhelm points out the tension that exists between the rampant individualism of today’s society and the fact that we live in communities, not the least of which is the common life formed by our colleges and universities. He also raises the question of how our colleges will move beyond the sometimes insular places they were in the past into a world

of religious options. For some this world may be a fearful place. As Lake Lambert reminds us in his sermon *Saving Minds*, Lutherans know that this need not be the case. We can be confident of this world and our place in it.

A great place to engage in these ongoing Lutheran conversations is at the annual Lutheran Academy of Scholars seminar that is held at Harvard University in the summer. This is unique time to engage deeply in conversations about what it means to be Lutheran in this world, along side others who are asking the same questions. I urge you to take a look at the notice of this year’s gathering on p 23, and to consider your own participation. This seminar is supported by your college and by the ELCA. There is a stipend and the promise of a fruitful and engaging time.

It should be also noted that Mark Wilhelm has taken over the role of Associate Executive Director for Educational Partnerships and Institutions and Director for Colleges and Universities Vocation and Education, ELCA. Part of this position is to support such things as the Lutheran Academy of Scholars, and also to act as publisher of this journal. You can read his “inaugural” comments on page two of this issue. Mark Wilhelm’s “boss,” bishop Mark Hanson, also contributes his thoughts on the nature of Lutheran colleges in a short piece reprinted from *THE LUTHERAN*.

ROBERT D. HAAK | The Augustana Center for Vocational Reflection, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

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### LUTHERAN ACADEMY OF SCHOLARS

Harvard University, Cambridge • July 12–25, 2009

### VOCATION OF A LUTHERAN COLLEGE CONFERENCE

Augsburg College, Minneapolis • July 30–August 1, 2009