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From the Publisher

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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

Some of you may know that I am retiring this summer. For months people have been asking me to look back on my work and give assessments. I tell them that my primary task has been to be a spokesperson to the church for the colleges related to the ELCA, and to be a spokesperson for the church to the colleges and universities. I also tell them that the links between the colleges and the church have grown stronger in the last ten years.

That surprises many, since they have heard and read about the slippery slope away from their church bodies on which many American colleges and universities were seen as sliding away, and they know that there have been many lamentations about how the Lutheran colleges are not like they used to be. I will not now go into the evidence that supports my claim, but instead discuss why most Lutheran colleges and universities still embrace their church connection.

One reason is that Lutheran church leaders see the link as important. Rev. Dr. Mark Hanson, the presiding bishop of the ELCA, is a strong supporter of the Lutheran colleges. He recognizes how crucial they are to the future of the church, and he says it often, and to all groups. College leaders like being appreciated. Another reason is the activities and programs that the church sponsors, like the annual conference on “The Vocation of a Lutheran College,” and the annual conferences for groups of college administrators. They help create networks of likeminded people, and help faculty and administrators feel that the connection is valuable, that they learn from it and benefit from it. There is also some financial support for the colleges in the church budget. Even if it is much less than it used to be, the colleges welcome the contribution.

But I want to stress that the Lutheran theology of higher education is a strong basis on which to operate colleges and universities in the twenty-first century. Martin Luther stressed the need to question authority, and challenge practices based only on historical precedent. He stressed the need to go back to the original sources and reinterpret them. He invited previously excluded groups into full participation, and he used language that all members of society, not only the educated few could understand. He set us free from the anxiety and despair of not measuring up to ideal standards, and told us we would be saved by God’s grace. He told us that we should respond to this grace by serving our neighbor in any relationship and position in which we found ourselves, but that we had to strive toward excellence.

It should not be surprising that many colleges and universities find these to be excellent principles by which to operate, and that both Lutheran and non-Lutheran faculty members, students and administrators embrace them.

Living in God’s Amazing Grace,

ARNE SELBYG | Director for ELCA Colleges and Universities