

2017

From the Publisher

Mark Wilhelm

ELCA Colleges and Universities

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Wilhelm, Mark (2017) "From the Publisher," *Intersections*: Vol. 2017 : No. 45 , Article 3.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2017/iss45/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Intersections by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

From the Publisher



Since the founding of the ELCA in the late 1980s, the colleges and universities related to this church have changed their self-definition of Lutheran higher education. ELCA colleges and universities have shifted the definition of Lutheran higher education away from adherence to

institutional markers, such as the percentage of Lutherans on the faculty or in the student body, to an alignment with educational values derived from the Lutheran intellectual tradition. *Intersections* has recorded the development of this re-definition, as well as the arguments for it and the debates about it, since the journal's beginning.

The re-definition of Lutheran higher education began before the 1980s, and a full embrace of the new definition does not yet exist. The institutional-marker definition of Lutheran higher education remains dominant in the ELCA and among many non-Lutherans involved in ELCA higher education. Nonetheless, ELCA college and university leaders have widely accepted the new definition. Recent discussions among college and university presidents have focused on deepening their understanding the new definition and the public articulation of it.

The new collegiate association for ELCA higher education, the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU), is working to assist the presidents with these tasks. NECU convened religion and theology faculty from eight ELCA schools, inviting them to prepare recommendations for

summarizing Lutheran higher education defined by values drawn from the Lutheran intellectual tradition. Their suggestions will be presented to the presidents who will gather in Chicago for a conference on Lutheran identity in June 2017.

The breadth of research into the Lutheran roots of higher education has unearthed a wealth of insights. Faculty specialists in religion and theology can navigate the historical, theological, ethical, and pedagogical complexities of the research. (You can find their discussions in back issues of *Intersections* at <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections>.) They can readily describe the values for higher education rediscovered by this research, how these values do and should continue to drive ELCA higher education, and how an alignment with these educational values strengthens the Lutheran identity and mission of ELCA colleges and universities far more than a focus on numbers of students, faculty, and administrators who are personally Lutheran. Furthermore, they can articulate how alignment with these values has allowed ELCA colleges and universities to embrace diverse constituencies while continuing to enroll and educate leaders for the Lutheran community.

This work, however, is daunting for non-specialists in religion and theology, including most ELCA college and university presidents. The June conference is designed to fill the gap. My hope is that the presidents will find the faculty working group's recommendations a wise, shared framework for articulating our common Lutheran identity—both within our schools and to all our external constituencies.

Mark Wilhelm is the Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.