



Lancaster Seminary's Dean to Direct National Project Exploring Future of Theological Education
Funded by \$275,000 Grant from The Henry Luce Foundation

LANCASTER, 14 December 2016 – Lancaster Theological Seminary's Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Rev. Dr. David M. Mellott, will direct a three-year national project, "Current and Future Directions in Theological Education," funded by a \$275,000 grant from The Henry Luce Foundation. Mellott is the grant director and co-facilitator of the project that will bring together innovative leaders and researchers in theological education for "sustained reflection and conversation on theological education at the field level."

Twice a year for three years, from June 2017 to June 2020, these experts and invited guests will meet for two-day consultations in major U.S. cities to share research findings, discuss teaching methods and program designs, and explore factors that shape future theological work, for example, globalism, multi-faith and inter-faith initiatives, and aspects of diversity including race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and economic status.

The project also funds a compilation of theological education innovations in schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, non-accredited schools and programs, and a review of how theological education programs engage diversities and oppressions.

"This project is a groundbreaking, collaborative approach that will give us a broad view of what's working and help us better understand how to adapt theological education to address the needs of a changing world," said Mellott. "We need sophisticated, mature religious leaders who can engage the social, political, economic, and spiritual needs of the world in the 21st century. It's clear that we can no longer sustain educational models from prior centuries."

Mellott continued, "This grant from The Henry Luce Foundation will bring together researchers funded by a variety of sources including the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations in a unique collaboration to understand the current state of theological education in the United States and inform its future directions."

Mellott's co-facilitator of the six consultation meetings will be Rev. Dr. Deborah Flemister Mullen, Columbia Theological Seminary vice president for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and associate professor of American Christianity and Black Church Studies. While she says that "there is no lack of responsiveness to the changing nature of theological education, what has been missing is a central place for those engaged in gathering and analyzing data to meet together and share their findings in order to better inform the future shape and form of theological education in North America." These consultations, she says, "will fill that void."

In addition to Lancaster Theological Seminary and The Henry Luce Foundation, core participants in the project represent Andover Newton at Yale, Association of Theological Schools, Asociación para La Educación Teológica Hispana, Auburn Seminary, Candler School of Theology, Chicago Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary. Representatives from other schools and programs will be invited to attend a session in their geographic region. Consultation meetings are planned for Atlanta, Boston, Berkeley, Calif., Chicago, New York, and Orlando, Fla.

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Lancaster Theological Seminary, a graduate school affiliated with the United Church of Christ, is known for academic excellence, celebration of differences across Christian traditions, and creative engagement on issues of importance to our world.