

## New School: Six Common Questions (recognizing there are many more!)

### Reference Document 2

1. Can you expand on the reasons for stating that creating a new school is a more compelling vision than “merger,” and how they are different?

*We hear many in the church, including recent alumni/ae, stating that while they highly value seminary education/formation, it needs to change—radically rather than incrementally. A merger blends together two entities out of the past. Folks tend to immediately think in terms of “who wins and loses.” A new school calls all to lean into God’s call for the future and invites a creative reimagining of theological education.*

2. What are the implications for current students? Might we risk some students transferring to other seminaries to avoid a complicated transition and time of uncertainty?

*All current students will experience overarching continuity in earning their degrees. The experience from our two ELCA embedded schools suggests the likelihood of retaining students and even attracting adventuresome prospects eager to be part of something new.*

3. Given the degree of disruption that is likely, how confident are you that the loyalty and support of alumni/ae, donors, synods and other key constituents can be held or even expanded?

*We hope to count on lots of support from alumni and alumnae. That hope is based on experience from our two sister schools that have “embedded” in universities which suggests continuing loyalty. Maintaining both campuses is important not merely because of the historic ties to place, but because of their rich context for supporting the mission of education. And many will say, “This is long overdue!” We hope to gain new donors captivated by a compelling vision. Early responses already appear to demonstrate wide support for this decision.*

4. How will we care for faculty and staff who are not employed by the new school? With the degree of uncertainty, won’t we risk losing key employees whose continuity is crucial for both existing schools and a smooth transition to the new?

*One of the key work groups will address this as a priority matter. We will make every effort to offer compassionate transitional support. We can trust our colleagues to continue fulfilling their vocational callings for the sake of the gospel and our mission.*

5. Who will lead the new school? How will a board be elected?

*ELCA constitutional parameters for synodical and churchwide elections to seminary boards will be followed, although there may be new patterns proposed as well. Current presidents and deans are all committed to guarantee the new school an open future in selecting its new leadership, which will be elected by the new governing board. In the meantime, they will work to sustain strong momentum and provide continuity during the transition period.*

6. What is next? What task forces/work groups would be appointed and by whom? How would the costs of the process be covered?

*The board chairs, presidents and deans would appoint members in equal numbers from both schools. Given experience elsewhere (as summarized by In Trust materials on various types of consolidations), the following is a likely list of working groups that will seek to address all relevant matters and present reports at spring 2016 board meetings:*

- i. Governance and Administration*
- ii. Student Support, Enrollment & Accreditation*
- iii. Educational Design and Faculty Selection*
- iv. Advancement (Resource Development) and Communication*
- v. Economic Vitality & Employee Transition Support*
- vi. Real Estate and Subsidiary Entities*

*The implementing resolution includes an authorization of expending up to \$50,000 per school in the exploratory phase; as noted above. Requests have been made to ELCA churchwide offices and requests will be made to other entities to support this project with grants.*