***Lilly Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers | Pittsburgh, PA – April 6-8, 2014***

**Asbury Theological Seminary’s Six-Point Plan to**

**Reduce Student Indebtedness**

**Key Objectives**

The overall goal of this project is to reduce student debt and ensure sustainable institutional strength. Asbury Seminary has adopted a Six-Point Plan using a three-year, multi-campus initiative to address student indebtedness, to understand the financial issues impacting students and their ministries, to create institutional efficiencies resulting in cost reductions, to explore new partnerships with undergraduate institutions, to re-imagine old delivery models, and to prepare and educate students for ministry worldwide.

With that in mind, Asbury Seminary continues to focus on six key strategies to create long-term, sustainable institutional change. The Six-Point Plan seeks to answer four framing questions:

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| Four Framing Questions of the Six-Point Plan |
| Framing Question 1 | What is the current economic status of Asbury Seminary students and graduates, and how does it impact their ministry and family? |
| Framing Question 2 | Does Asbury Seminary have implicit and explicit policies, practices, structures, and expectations that increase student debt load? If so, what institutional changes must occur?  |
| Framing Question 3 | Can non-traditional delivery systems of graduate theological education reduce student debt and meet the academic and formational needs of students training for ministry? |
| Framing Question 4 | How does Asbury Seminary best live out its mission to “prepare and educate” students to live financially healthy lives and lead financially healthy ministries? |

**Program Updates: The Six-Point Plan**

***Strategy 1: Hire a Project Manager to implement the plan***

In July 2013, the role of Project Manager was filled. The responsibilities of this position are divided into two categories: daily oversight and special projects. Daily oversight of the program’s progress is managed by the Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Enrollment Management. When necessary, additional assistance is provided on special projects by the Campus Visitation Coordinator.

***Strategy 2: Analyze the financial impact of seminary education and student debt on the personal, familial, and ministerial well-being of students and alumni***

2.1: Contracted with Learning Road iLearning Services to conduct primary and secondary research addressing the four framing questions of the Six-Point Plan.

2.2: In September 2013, surveys addressing student indebtedness were disseminated to four distinct cohorts: new students (1-18 credit hours), current students (32-64 credit hours), non-matriculated students, and alumni.

2.3: Learning Road conducted two site-visits to gather data from current students, faculty, and staff; they visited the Wilmore Campus in February 2014 and the Florida Dunnam Campus in March 2014.

***Strategy 3: Examine best practices in higher education to strengthen our methodologies***

3.1: As a result of the initial research project, the Advisory Council developed and instituted four specialized Task Force groups based on Asbury’s Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) and 2023 Strategic Plan.

3.2: As the project has shifted slightly from the original proposal, each member of the Advisory Council is serving on one of the SEMP Task Force groups: Student Segment, Student Experience, Student Learning, and Economic Model.

***Strategy 4: Develop and analyze varying five-year tuition models***

4.1: After the second round of research is completed, Asbury’s SEMP Task Force groups will work to develop mathematical five-year tuition models to analyze the impact of block and locked tuition, and differential pricing.

***Strategy 5: Enhance and expand key delivery systems to increase access and reduce costs***

5.1: This year, the Asbury extension site program was launched in a new hybrid model to analyze the use and effectiveness of an innovative delivery system.

***Strategy 6: Develop a robust institutional financial literacy education program***

6.1: Upon completing the second round of research, Asbury Seminary will work to provide a comprehensive Student Financial Planning session during New Student Orientation.

6.2: Additionally, the institution will conduct a three-year financial literacy program for students and spouses.

**Program Reflections To-Date**

Overall, the program and set strategies are continuing to progress as designed. The research conducted so far demonstrates the extent to which Asbury Seminary’s alumni and current student body are affected by the problem of financial indebtedness. This information is shaping perspectives and discussions surrounding all aspects of Seminary life, especially including financial aid, curriculum design, and financial modeling.

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