Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

**Project Name: "Improving the Economic Well-being of Future Servants of Jesus Christ"**

**Program Summary – March 7, 2014**

Key Objectives:

The objective of this project is summed up nicely by its title, “Improving the Economic Well-being of Future Servants of Jesus Christ.” The goal is to discover ways that Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) can improve the future well-being of our graduates who go out into the world to serve Jesus Christ and His Church. The focus of the project is to study the financial well-being of our students, in particular the problem of student loan debt. Although the issue of student loan debt is a key issue, CTS desires to ultimately engage lay members, clergy, church body leaders and seminary supporters in becoming aware of the challenges facing our students and motivate them to get involved in providing solutions that help alleviate this problem.

Activities:

The first year (2013) was dedicated to developing surveys and then sending them out for the gathering of data. Much time was spent in writing the survey questions. There were discussions on what questions to include, as well as how to frame the multiple choice responses that would be offered. The end result produced four different, yet similar, surveys directed toward four different target groups. Survey number one (S1) was directed to alumni of CTS who graduated in the last 20 years. Survey number two (S2) was directed to the current population of students who are enrolled in the three residential programs at CTS that produce pastoral ministry and deaconess church workers for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Survey number three (S3) was directed to CTS donors who had donated $100 or more to CTS. Survey number four (S4) was directed to a sample of LCMS churches, approximately one-third of the congregations in our church body, chosen at random.

The four surveys were sent out to the intended target groups during the August through October time period of 2013. The first two surveys (S1 and S2) were sent out by email via the Survey Monkey software. The last two surveys (S3 and S4) were sent out by paper via postal mail. A pre-addressed, postage-paid business reply envelope was provided with each paper survey. The last two surveys also gave the recipients an option to submit their data electronically via the Survey Monkey website which was also provided to them in the mailing.

Products:

We are currently in the process of analyzing the survey response data. From this analysis several products will be developed. A special edition of the seminary magazine is planned for publication later this year. Production of a video, brochure and Power Point presentation are also expected to be completed during the second year of the grant project (2014).

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