

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Schreiner University launch innovative MDiv/MBA dual degree program

BY JEFF SANCHEZ

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Austin Seminary) and Schreiner University have partnered to offer a dual degree program blending theology and business education. Upon completing the program, graduates will be awarded a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree from Austin Seminary and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Schreiner University.



(l to r) Austin Seminary President José R. Irizarry, Austin Seminary Vice President for Academic Affairs Margaret Aymer, Schreiner University Provost Lucien Costley, and Schreiner University President Charlie McCormick pose for a picture to celebrate the dual degree program launch.

In this new venture, Austin Seminary and Schreiner University have collaborated to offer an innovative four-year dual degree program empowering students with the skills necessary to meet the evolving demands of faith-based leadership in today's complex world. This collaboration reflects Austin Seminary's commitment to adapting its educational offerings and equipping seminary graduates with the essential tools to serve as spiritual and organizational leaders.

The new program merges theological education with business acumen and responds to the growing demand for faith-based leaders of nonprofit agencies, bi-vocational pastors, faith-based entrepreneurship, and the needs of seminary graduates entering solo pastorates.

“For years now, we have heard that bi-vocationalism is emerging as a new model of doing ministry in the church. Students engaging in this degree will be equipped with professional knowledge and skills to help them bring an ethical mindset to the industries or organizations they will work with,” said Austin Seminary President José R. Irizarry. “It will equally enhance the administrative capacities of those called to lead congregational life.”

As pastors and faith leaders are increasingly called upon to oversee the spiritual formation and ethical administration of community and faith-based nonprofits, business administration skills are critical.

“The MBA in Ethical Leadership is designed to strengthen business competencies, improve networking skills, and

foster leadership traits that challenge business making decisions based on the right thing for the common good versus for the bottom line,” said Schreiner University Provost Lucien Costley. “The ethical leadership component is a nice complement to the divinity program as they prepare for their roles as ministerial leaders.”

Margaret Aymer, vice president for academic affairs and academic dean at Austin Seminary, affirms the necessity to meet the evolving demands of faith-based leadership.

“Our alumni are entering the ministry at a time of great change. More of them are being asked to take on solo or senior pastorates earlier in their ministry, and they have little time to apprentice with a more experienced pastor. They have told us that they desire more preparation for ministerial leadership as they enter their vocation.”

While each institution continues to offer its respective degree programs independently, the dual degree

program provides a flexible and cost-effective pathway for students to gain comprehensive knowledge in both disciplines. With integrated coursework that fulfills the requirements of both Austin Seminary and Schreiner University, students can expect to graduate with a unique

skill set designed to make an impact across various professional settings.

This venture between Austin Seminary and Schreiner University strengthens their shared mission of higher education within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and

sets a new standard for integrating faith and leadership in education.

“This dual degree allows our students to continue to live and learn in community, being formed for the ministry of the gospel while preparing themselves to be better financial and administrative leaders,” said Aymer.

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