

Center for Chaplaincy Studies offers education through partnership

BY ZACHARY MOON

Although the religious landscape in America is changing with traditional congregational participation in decline, a key finding in recent data is the growing trend toward chaplaincy. Even while the total enrollment of those studying full-time trends downward, there is a noticeable increase in enrollment for chaplaincy programs, reflecting a broader interest in spiritual care roles beyond traditional pastoral settings.

Chaplaincy is expanding well beyond hospitals and military settings into areas like social justice movements, airports, and even corporate environments. This diversification is driven by the recognition that people everywhere can benefit from spiritual and emotional support, especially in times of crisis or significant life changes.

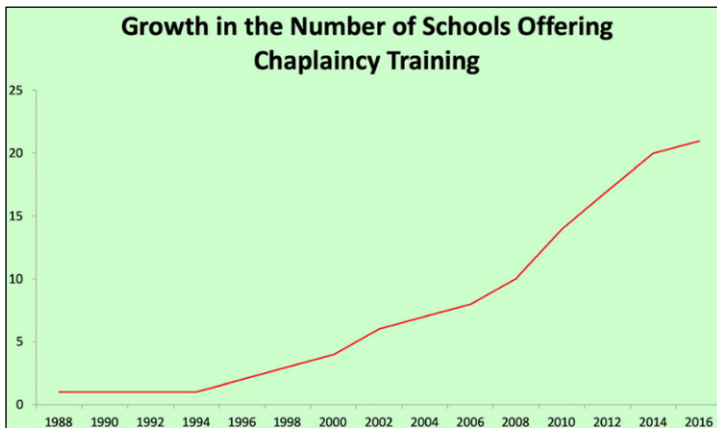
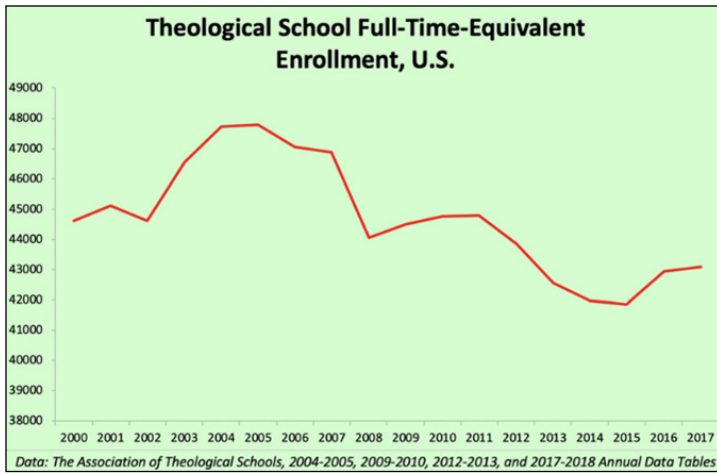
Reflecting these shifts, educational institutions are experiencing a growing demand from students for training that equips them for these broader roles. For instance, data from The Association of Theological Schools highlights that seminaries and theological schools are increasingly offering courses and pathways focused on chaplaincy competencies that cater to interreligious and multicultural ministry, trauma-informed care, and more. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the critical role of chaplains. Chaplains have become frontline workers, providing crucial support in hospitals and in other care settings. This visibility has only increased the interest in chaplaincy roles, emphasizing the need for comprehensive training that prepares chaplains for a



range of scenarios, including using technology to connect with patients and families.

There is a notable shortage of chaplains across all faiths in the military, and an increasing demand for chaplains in secular settings, reflecting an expanding and important role for chaplains in providing spiritual and mental health support in environments ranging from universities and airports to labor unions and government bodies. This expansion is driven by a recognition of the holistic needs of individuals and the unique ability of chaplains to meet these needs without the stigma often associated with traditional mental health services. Recent research indicates that about 25% of US adults have interacted with a chaplain in various settings—55% saying it was very valuable and 31% saying it was moderately valuable. This statistic not only underscores the widespread role of chaplains, but also the diversity of their work, discussing issues like death, mental health, and change.

The Center for Chaplaincy Studies (CCS) is an innovative partnership model that provides three-credit hour semester-long courses, allowing students to deepen



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their education in chaplaincy. CCS offers a diverse range of more than 35 master's- and doctoral-level courses designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective spiritual care in various contexts. CCS courses integrate practical and theoretical components, ensuring that students are well prepared for the multifaceted demands of chaplaincy.

Courses include foundational subjects such as "Introduction to Chaplaincy Studies," which provides an overview of the field, and "Professional Ethics for Chaplains and Spiritual Care Professionals," which explores the ethical dilemmas and standards in spiritual care. Advanced courses like "Trauma-Informed Ministry" and "Moral Injury and Recovery" delve into specialized areas of chaplaincy, preparing students to address complex emotional and psychological issues.

Students can also explore intercultural and interreligious dynamics through courses such as "Interreligious Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care" and "Intercultural Spiritual

Care." Practical application is emphasized in courses like "Spiritual Care in Hospital Settings" and "Prison Ministry & Restorative Justice," which offer insights into providing care in specific environments.

Additionally, CCS addresses contemporary social issues with courses like "Spiritual Care in an Age of #BlackLives-Matter" and "Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care for Social Movements," reflecting our commitment to equipping chaplains to engage with current societal challenges. Other offerings include "Mindfulness in Spiritual Formation" and "Embodied Practices: Yoga & Meditation Studies for Chaplains," which integrate holistic practices into spiritual care.

The course offerings can be tailored to meet student and partner institution demand. All courses have been offered fully online, making use of Zoom and the Canvas online learning platform. An enrolled student said, "Online sessions were creative, flexible, and evoked deeper interactions and insight." Hybrid and in-person intensive courses are being planned.

CCS faculty are distinguished not only by their scholarly achievements and profound practical experience, but also by their dedication to fostering the next generation of chaplains. Holding advanced degrees and having substantial experience in various fields of chaplaincy, CCS faculty members are fundamental to delivering a curriculum that is both intellectually rigorous and richly practical. CCS faculty are carefully selected for their advanced academic qualifications and extensive field experience. This expertise is crucial in developing and teaching courses that address contemporary issues in chaplaincy across diverse settings.

Theological schools can become affiliated partners by emailing admin@chaplaincystudies.org.



Zachary Moon is Professor of Theology and Psychology at Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, and he coordinates partnership development for the Center for Chaplaincy Studies.