**“The Isaiah Project”**

**TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY**

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“The Isaiah Project” is designed to improve the financial wellbeing of Trinity seminarians, and thereby both to improve the quality of life for those students and to make Trinity more attractive to prospective students. There are eight stated goals, which fall into three broad categories:

1. To increase voluntary participation by students and alumni in existing and new financial education programs.
2. To increase enrollment by focusing on the availability of financial aid at Trinity. Increased enrollment will ease financial pressures on the seminary and on seminarians.
3. To decrease costs for enrolled students via a pilot project that will institute systemic change in curriculum and other aspects of seminary life.

Trinity is currently rethinking the specifics of the project and will soon be proposing a revised timeline and budget to the Lilly Endowment, in light of two realities:

1. We have experienced a significant staff turnover in the past twelve months. We have a new president, a new vice president for advancement, a new vice president for operations, and a new director of admissions. The current Isaiah Project director, retired academic dean Don Huber, replaces the former director who resigned to take another position. The project lost several months of momentum during the transitional period in seminary leadership.
2. The faculty of the seminary recently adopted a “2+2” curriculum for the M.Div. degree. This curriculum features two years of intense residential academic and contextual work followed by two years of internship (mandated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for its students) coupled with continuing academic work accomplished through online and intensive courses. In addition to the educational and family advantages of this plan, the seminary expects students to experience a modest improvement in their personal/family finances. While something like this was anticipated in our original proposal to the Endowment, implementation is proceeding at a much more rapid rate than was envisioned then.

Regarding accomplishments to date, we have completed the implementation of *Intelliworks*, which enables our admissions office to effect a seamless transition from prospective to matriculated student. This software enables our admissions and financial aid departments to focus better on the needs of individual students as they move through the admissions process.

We have also continued and expanded our existing voluntary financial education offerings. We continue to offer individual financial counseling to students, and we have been offering a stewardship of life series entitled *The Generosity Series*. Thirteen students availed themselves of one-on-one financial coaching in 2012-13, and forty-one students participated in three events in *The Generosity Series.*

As Trinity experiences the challenges of significant change, new opportunities have developed. One that is closely related to *The Isaiah Project* is the opportunity to articulate a more comprehensive vision for stewardship education than has previously been the case. The director of *The Isaiah Project* has been tasked with the responsibility of developing an integrated stewardship program that covers both personal and corporate stewardship issues, utilizing curricular and extracurricular strategies for both the first two years of the new curriculum, and the “+2” portion.