



Preparing Transformational Leaders

*The Strategic Plan of Methodist Theological School in Ohio 2008-2015
Adopted May 16, 2008*

Our Aspiration

In response to the grace and call of God in Jesus Christ, Methodist Theological School in Ohio will prepare and invigorate transformational leaders to engage the church and the world in leadership and service.

Our Identity and Purpose

Methodist Theological School in Ohio is a center for rigorous theological inquiry, spiritual formation and professional development which is rooted in the scriptures and traditions of the Christian faith. We provide a vibrant learning environment for the preparation of skilled, passionate transformational leaders for churches, religious institutions, emerging faith communities, and the wider world. Grounded in our Wesleyan tradition and influenced by our ecumenical and interfaith commitments, we attend to the theological, spiritual, and vocational formation of a diverse group of students involved in a wide range of pursuits. Expecting active participation in our community of learning, we maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness, teaching how to engage in conversation with the past and with others so that new and faithful perspectives may emerge. We strive for our graduates to demonstrate a deep understanding of the heritage disciplines of religious study, to be highly competent in areas of practical theology, and to show evidence of thoughtful reflection. We are committed to individual wholeness, social justice, inclusiveness, and religious diversity. We take seriously our responsibility for stewardship of the intellectual life of the church and our commitment to a just and sustainable world.

Our Approach

In our quest to prepare transformational leaders for leadership and service, and out of dedication to our school's aspiration, identity and purpose, Methodist Theological School in Ohio will commit the next seven years to the pursuit and achievement of the following strategic goals.

Strategic Goal One

To identify, articulate, and address emerging realities of twenty-first century religious life and faith communities, and their implications for spiritual leadership and theological education.

This strategic goal will be achieved by committing ourselves to the ongoing engagement of the following objectives as we work with the more tangible tasks associated with the Strategic Goals Two, Three and Four. By June 1, 2008, this goal and its objectives will be integral to on-campus conversations. By June 1, 2009, our alumni, donors, peer schools and local judicatories will know about and understand our commitment to this goal and its objectives. By June 1, 2011, we will be known in theological education and in the Church as a leading institution regarding this goal and its objectives. We will carefully survey our various constituencies at each of these target dates to determine our effectiveness in achieving this goal.

Objectives:

- A. Become a center of knowledgeable interpretation of the contemporary religious landscape and of the primary objectives of contemporary theological education.

Tactics:

1. By September 1, 2008, appoint a part-time sociologist of religion to a one year term appointment to lead our effort to achieve this objective.
2. By May 1, 2009, host a regional summit that will allow us to both lead and learn in relation to this objective.

- B. Become a center of thoughtful reflection and balanced theological education regarding the significant social and ethical issues facing the church in the world in the 21st Century.

Tactics:

1. By March 1, 2008, appoint a Christian Ethicist to the faculty to help frame and shape conversation both on campus and in the region regarding the significant social and ethical issues of the day.
2. By May 1, 2010, host a regional summit that will allow us to both lead and learn in relation to this objective.

- C. Promote our definition of transformational leader as one who:

- Has acute attentiveness to the leadings of God with keen awareness of the past, sensitivity to signs of the times, and creative imagination about the future.
- Is committed to recognizing and addressing barriers of thinking and acting that inhibit just relationships and healthy communities.
- Bridges past and future by creating and developing dynamic movements in present community contexts, evoking imaginative vision and resulting action.

- Has clarity of her or his own self and is in organic and integral relation to the community and can lead with competence, skill, and energy to minister to the needs and hopes of people and peoples.

Strategic Goal Two

To become the leading academic center that seriously addresses our regional context for Christian ministry in its full sociological, cultural, theological, and religious complexity.

Objectives:

- A. By January 1, 2009, complete an evaluation of our present degree programs: Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Arts in Christian Education, Master of Arts in Counseling Ministries, and Doctor of Ministry, for relevance and effectiveness in the formation of transformational leaders and identify required changes.
- B. Develop our academic resources in such a manner that we are the leading theological resource in our region.

Tactics:

1. By March 1, 2009, finalize a procedure for identifying and cultivating persons with relevant academic research credentials presently functioning in non-academic professional positions and other professionals with academic interests whose expertise would enhance the learning of our students or expand the level of expertise available on campus for positions as fully-affiliated faculty members.
 2. By June 1, 2009, establish an academic advancement protocol which encourages our faculty to become more distinguished in the academic and ecclesiastical worlds and which is committed to the provision and sustenance of support for faculty research goals and professional development.
 3. By September 1, 2009, finalize a program to position the library as the premier library for master's level theological research and reference in our region and by June 30, 2013 show evidence of having achieved that position.
- C. Develop programs which will be attractive to persons with vocational and spiritual interests apart from traditional forms of ministry that can be met within the resources and mission of the school.

Tactics:

1. By June 1, 2009, develop a partnership with Ohio Health to offer programs for health care workers that address spiritual and religious issues as they relate to medical care.

2. By June 1, 2009, develop a track within the MTS (Master of Theological Studies) which explicitly focuses on issues that have been determined through careful research as good central questions for the spiritual and intellectual growth of young adult learners.
3. By June 1, 2009, develop a track within the MTS for persons in professional life which concentrates on emerging issues of inter-faith relations, cross-cultural understanding, and religion.
4. By June 1, 2009, develop a track within the MTS for persons in professional life which concentrates on issues of meaning, purpose and ethics.

D. Develop programs for continuing education for clergy and other religious professionals.

Tactics:

1. By January 1, 2009, complete a plan to provide ongoing structured occasions for professional, intellectual and spiritual growth for clergy and other religious professionals through the Gault Center as well as develop a program of study institutes, conferences and educational enrichment opportunities, such as the Schooler Institute on Preaching and the Williams Institute, which engages the school with leading scholars and scholarship.
2. By January 1, 2009 complete a plan to promote the use of our academic resources for the purpose of congregational, regional and district educational opportunities and develop on-campus opportunities for clergy to use the MTSO academic resources for advanced study, growth and research.

Strategic Goal Three

To be known and experienced as a theological school with a diverse and vibrant student population of persons who are highly qualified and fully prepared to become leaders in the church, emerging faith communities, and the larger world.

Objectives:

- A. Enact an ongoing enrollment management process to achieve an on-campus FTE enrollment of at least 180 by academic year 2010-2011, and 210 by academic year 2014-2015, while increasing selectivity.

Tactics:

1. Continue to develop our capacity to use our financial aid budget and scholarship money to enhance recruitment goals including greater diversity and a higher level of academic selectivity.
2. Begin immediately to work with church and community leaders in a more focused effort to identify and recruit persons with leadership potential for clergy and other

leadership roles within church institutions, including programs which identify and interest persons early in their educational development.

- B. By January 1, 2009, develop the plan for the MTSO Pastoral Leadership Fellows Program. (Please see description below.)
- C. By January 1, 2009, initiate a comprehensive evaluation of the academic program and campus environment to determine our effectiveness in encompassing and embracing the full cultural and religious complexity of the region and the nation, and examine our curriculum and community life from the explicit standpoint of cross-cultural and anti-racist objectives.
- D. Develop our off-campus and distance capabilities in such a manner that we can serve communities within commuting distance of Columbus with non-degree programs and classes that will concentrate on the first year offerings of our degree programs.

Tactics:

1. By November 1, 2008, complete a study to determine possibilities and directions regarding the creation of entry opportunities through short-term courses and seminars in off-campus venues.
 2. By November 1, 2008, identify satellite campus opportunities as places of initial contact or occasional offerings and determine the feasibility of ongoing commitment to this type of program.
 3. By November 1, 2008, determine appropriate uses of distance learning technology for theological education.
- E. By February 1, 2009, review and revise our cross-cultural and international education programs.
 - F. Continue the development of the Course of Study School of Ohio as an educational resource for licensed local pastors that satisfies and exceeds the expectations of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church.

Strategic Goal Four

To develop the resources needed for substantive, sustained institutional advancement.

Objectives:

- A. Continue to explore new institutional partnerships which might result either in the strengthening of the institutional profile or the savings of operational expenses.
- B. By November 1, 2008, initiate a new program of marketing, communications and public relations to maximize the school's influence, raise our profile in the region, and raise our reputation in the church and academy.

C. Increase participation in annual giving.

Tactics:

1. By May 16, 2008, redefine the Annual Fund as unrestricted and restricted gifts.
2. By November 1, 2008, develop plan for increased stewardship of current donors and re-establishment of relationships with lapsed donors.
3. By November 1, 2008, implement plan to enhance church relationships and encourage linkage to new prospective donors.
4. By June 30, 2015, increase alumni participation in annual giving from 10% to 20%.

D. By January 1, 2015 increase total endowment from \$37 million to \$52 million.

Tactics:

1. By February 1, 2011, identify needs and prospects for major gifts and determine the feasibility of a capital campaign.
2. By June 1, 2012, decrease endowment spending rate from current rate of 5.3% to 5.0%.
3. By January 1, 2015, increase Sterling Legacy Society membership from 162 to 200.

E. Enhance campus facilities to meet the needs of a 21st Century graduate theological school.

Tactics:

By November 1, 2008, study and discern facilities needs and create a campus plan that addresses:

- The possibility of some re-allocation and redesign of space for current and future programming.
- The rapidly changing area immediately surrounding the campus and its impact on our campus environment.
- The need to address approximately \$5 million of ongoing maintenance and capital improvements in the next 3-7 years.

Description of Pastoral Leaders Fellowship Program

(Strategic Goal Three, Objective B)

This will be a leader's fellowship program for a select group of students who, upon nomination or application, may be admitted at the completion of the second year of the Master of Divinity degree program.

In years one and two, the fellows will have participated with all students in a curriculum which focuses on knowledge of tradition (heritage courses) and initial stages of formation (heritage and practical courses). The entry-level leadership course develops student understanding of myriad theological worlds in which persons live. Study of church development aligns with leadership development through imaginative use of texts, civil discourse and challenges to exegete context and correlating leadership roles. Emphasis on spiritual discipline, intellectual analysis and practical work establish an action-reflection model for leadership development.

After the completion of the second year, the fellows will take two leadership courses designed to resource pastoral ministry. In the current environment such courses should address concerns like conflict management/transformation (chaos theory, conflict theory, and theological implications of conflict), church growth with integrity (globalization's effects on the local church, scenario-building for the future, analyzing negative effects of current church practices and trends, and inviting congregational discernment and niche ministry work), and transformational leadership (call to justice work, deeper questions about the ongoing formation of a leader, attention to the spiritual life in conjunction with the spiritual and working lives of prophetic leaders of our time).

Also after the completion of the second year, the fellows will begin work on a final project to be completed prior to graduation, will participate in at least one seminar through the Gault Center for Christian Leadership, will take a course in Preaching and Pastoral Leadership (currently taught by the president), and will be matched with a mentoring team of clergy and laity, chosen for their leadership skill and experience, to develop a relationship that will extend beyond completion of the degree, through the first two years of parish ministry.