

Report of the Cluster Re-structuring Task Group
July 20, 2009

We were asked by the Executive Committee during the March meeting of the Eastern Cluster to work on restructuring the current Board. We had several conference calls in preparation for a face to face meeting. On June 24th AND 25TH we gathered at St. Mary's in Baltimore to review the current structure of the Eastern Cluster Board and to propose some changes. Present were: Nelvin Vos, Lowell Almen, Robin Steinke, Glenn Ludwig, and Sara Lilja, as Chair.

The following issues were identified as concerns that brought us to this table: The current Cluster Board...

- Seems to be dealing with a mismatch of the governance structure and the work of the cluster
- Cost too much
- Is appallingly large
- Lives with an un-natural change in leadership (rotation of leadership is difficult)
- Is not able to hold one another accountable for previous agreements
- Is it just another demand?
- How do we respond to the question, "What does the mission of the church require of us in Theological Education"?
- How does the current economic situation call us to engage in new ways?

After we had voiced our concerns we built a process for our time together. The conversation was organized along the following flow:

A. Review together relevant documents:

Study for Theological Education, Appendix F and G
ATS manual on Cluster governance- Standard 9.7
Summary document, "Eastern Cluster Takes Stock"

B. Reflection on the question, "What does the mission of the church require of us in theological education?"

C. Discussion: Principle of Organization for the Cluster

D. Discussion of the size and membership of Cluster Board

Rotation of leadership
Supervision of staff
Review those entities who relate to the Cluster Board presently

E. Draft of Recommendations for the Board

Identification of work still to be done

What follows is a summary of our discussions with recommendations.

**Discussion of Relevant Documents-
ATS Standard 9.7**

- We need assessment data. What is it costing each Seminary to be engaged in the Cluster? What are the benefits?
- What about the Cluster strengthens the schools? What would be lacking if we were not apart of the cluster?
- We need a mechanism built into the governance structure to ask these questions.

Discussion of “Eastern Cluster Takes Stock”

- We need to develop a comprehensive plan for the cluster vis a vis Distributive Learning Strategy
- Within the Memorandum of Agreement each school agreed to “consult” with one other before any new initiatives are taken, How do we remind each of these commitments?

Discussion on the question, “What does the mission of the church require of us in theological education?”

The Cluster’s Role is to model shared Mission for the Church. We do this by...

- The way we give attention to church and baptismal vocation.
- The transparency in institutional life for the sake of mission. An example of this is the funding formula discussion and vote
- A willingness to engage in difficult questions.

- An improvisational spirit...staying/being flexible.

- The Cluster strengthens the individual schools through cooperation.
- We have a stronger offer to students because of our relationships.
- Sharing wisdom, not just information
- Sharing vulnerability...learn from what we learned.

- The future of theological education depends on the creativity and energy of those around our table, both at the individual schools and at the Cluster level.

Discussion of Governance Principles and Structure:

- We are in this together!
- We have come so far, we can’t go back...
- Form follows function
- We need to tease apart operations from governance
- We need an evaluation and outcome assessment built into the structure
- What is our relationship to the Network of Life Long Learning?
- We need an organizational notebook for orientation of new leaders

- What constitutes “consultation”?
- We need to review the memorandum of Agreement, 2001.

During these difficult economic times we need to be working to eliminate redundancies.

- Admission Office
- IT- build capacity
- Financial Aid / Officers
- Back Office work
- Key faculty areas- Ethics, Evangelism
- Contextual Education
- Common Calendar

Discussion of the Cluster Board Re-vised:

Working Assumptions:

Re-commitment and Renewal of the Cluster.

New paradigm of how we are looking and working together.

Need less governance focus, more operations focus.

The entire Board is to be planning and assessment focus.

Recommendations:

Membership- 3 Presidents, 3 Board Chairs, 3 Deans

Cluster Fellows will have voice but no vote.

The Board will meet 2 times a year; face to face-once, and by Video Conference once. All members are Ex-officio with voice and vote; an operational board.

Leadership-

The Presidents will have collegial conversations and arrive at an agreement as to who will serve as Executive Director for a 3 year term.

After the Ex. Dir. position has been filled there will be elections for: the Cluster Board Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer (3 year term),

The work of taking minutes during meetings will be provided by the host school if the Secretary is unable to do so.

The work of managing the financial records will be provided by Gettysburg’s business officer.

New Position: Cluster Fellow-ONE AT EACH SEMINARY

This new position is based on an outcome of the Faculty retreat where more collaboration and involvement on the part of faculty was called for.

Faculties are key players for reimagining theological education. The Cluster Fellows will take up this visioning role.

The Cluster Fellows will be nominated by the Presidents, and ratified by the Cluster Board

It is envisioned that these persons will be a senior faculty persons, serving a 5 year term. Each institution will receive stipend of \$5,000 annually from the Cluster to the School. Disbursement of these monies will be handled through each school's compensation guidelines.

- This compensation is to be for thinking time on behalf of Theological Education located in the East.
- Assisting and extending the functioning of the Presidents on behalf of the cluster and theological education. And reports to the Presidents.
- Seeing the broader vision of what the Cluster implies. Seeing more than a single institution or even 3 institutions.
- With authority to cooperate and collaborate with other Fellows.
- Highly planning and assessment driven.
- Foster Inter-institutional relationships.
- Supervise Cluster Staff at the individual schools.
- Serve on Board Working Groups, Standing Committees, and Consultation Groups as assigned.
- Attend Board meetings as a resource person.
- Consults with the President.
- One of the Cluster Fellows will be involved in facilitating the Library Standing committee
- Have responsibility to work together for planning and assessment of assigned programmatic areas on behalf of the Cluster.
- Spend time working on new mission opportunities, searching for new grant opportunities; focus on efficiencies, and work to bring people together to develop this work.

Qualification for the Cluster Fellow:

- Well respected in ones own faculty and across the church.
- Demonstrated commitment and ability to collaborate and act collegially.
- Recognition as a Senior Scholar in their field.
- Understanding the scope of theological education within the life of the church.

The funds formerly used for the Cluster Coordinator will be allocated for the Cluster Fellows. Other responsibilities of the Cluster Coordinator will be distributed to the following persons...

Agenda Development- Ex. Director in consultation with chair

Budget Development- Finance officer in consultation with Ex. Dir. and TreasureR

Logistics for the meetings- Provided by the host seminary

Video meetings– authorized by the host school President and provided by the IT department of the host school

The Secretary of the Board will coordinate the distribute the information for web distribution.

A Check list of meeting preparation will be developed. The Host Cluster Fellow will initiate this work.

The Re-structuring Task Force saw 3 types of entities to which the Cluster had relationship, we broke these into three distinct groups: Standing Committees of the Cluster, Working Groups, and Standing Consultations.

We recommend the following:

Standing Committees:

Are areas of commitment that the Cluster has ongoing relationship and responsibility to manage. An entity for which the Cluster has governance and operational responsibility. One of the Cluster Fellows will chair this committee.

- Library

Working Groups:

May be grant related or designated in the Budget, projects for which the cluster has operational responsibility. Project specific, time limited, build membership based on the needs, requires 1 cluster Board member as active participant, meets via conference call or on-line when ever possible.

Possible Working Groups-

TEY, Project Connect, Bishop's School, and Intersections Institute

Standing Consultation:

Regular responsibility for consultation; no governance or operational responsibility. These are cooperative relationships in order to meet the overall needs for leadership development in the church.

- Network for Life Long Learning
- Atlanta Center
- Fishers Net

During the last phase of our conversation in Baltimore we tired gave some thought to the role of various members of the Cluster Board.

Role of the Cluster Board...

“Generative and re-generative work”

Cluster Board's Role is to

1. To engage in planning, visioning and assessing of theological education as it serves the mission of the church within a spirit of creativity and flexibility.
2. To discern opportunities for greater efficiencies and collaborative projects within a spirit of engagement and trust.
3. To review the 11 Theological imperatives and identify areas of emerging implementation.
4. To exercise oversight for operational programs and projects.

5. To adopt a budget for the Cluster and develop and implement formulae for allocation to the Cluster and among the three seminaries of unrestricted funds received by the Cluster.
6. To Elect officers of the board.

Role of the Presidents on the Cluster Board...

1. To determine who among them will serve as Executive Director for a three-year term.
2. To interpret the mission and work of the Cluster to: seminary board, faculty, staff, supporting synods, grantors, Vocation and Education Program Unit, other Clusters and anyone else who will listen.
3. Continue to consult and dialogue with the other president's in ways which continue to enhance the implementation of the Cluster's mission.
4. Appoint and supervise the Cluster Fellow.

Role of the Deans on the Cluster Board...

1. Reflect the ecology of the work of the faculty.
2. Provide perspective on capacity within the system for new initiatives.
3. Interpret the mission and work of the cluster with the faculty.
4. To serve in leadership of the Cluster if elected.

Role of the Board Chairs on the Cluster Board...

1. To interpret with the president the mission and work of the Cluster.
2. To communicate with the Executive Committee of the Seminary Board, the full Board and other constituencies.
3. To serve in leadership of the Cluster if elected.
4. To reflect the fissional needs of the whole church for theological education.
5. To ensure the implementation of the 11 imperatives for theological education.

Role of the Executive Director of the Cluster...

1. To be the Chief Executive Officer/President of the Cluster
2. To faithfully carry out all duties that the Cluster Board agrees upon.