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Lilly Endowment Gives \$12.3M to Help Theological Schools Improve the Economic Well-Being of Future Ministers

INDIANAPOLIS – Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded more than \$12.3 million for 51 theological schools across the United States as part of the second round of its Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Issues Facing Future Ministers.

Recent research indicates that student educational debt in excess of \$30,000 is not uncommon for seminary graduates, and some students are graduating from seminary with loans of more than \$100,000. The financial pressures caused by these debt levels severely limit the ability of seminary graduates to accept calls to Christian ministry and undermine the effectiveness of too many pastoral leaders.

To help address this issue, Lilly Endowment created the Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Issues Facing Future Ministers. The initiative's aim is to encourage theological schools to examine and strengthen their financial and educational practices to improve the economic well-being of future ministerial leaders.

“The Endowment believes that pastors are indispensable spiritual leaders and guides, and the quality of pastoral leadership is critical to the health and vitality of congregations,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's vice president for religion. “Financial hardships can make it difficult for pastors to lead their congregations effectively.”

The Endowment conducted an experimental pilot of the Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Issues Facing Future Ministers in 2012. Grants were given to 16 theological schools to develop programs to improve the economic well-being of their students and graduates.

The promising programs created by these grantees led the Endowment to offer a larger, second round of this initiative in 2013. All theological schools fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) that did not receive grants in the first round were invited to submit grant proposals. 49 grantees representing 51 theological schools were awarded grants. Nearly one-quarter of all ATS schools have received funding in rounds one and two of this initiative.

“Theological schools are uniquely positioned to address the educational debt issue and to lead broad efforts to improve the financial circumstances facing pastoral leaders,” Coble said. “Our hope is that these grants will help them build relationships with church organizations and others to lessen the debt burden and increase support for future ministers.”

Theological schools will pursue a range of activities that include: examining new models for financing theological education, exploring ways to reduce the number of hours it takes to complete degree programs, advising students on how to lower the amount of money they borrow, broadening sources of scholarships and financial aid, and creating distance learning programs. Many schools will create programs to improve their students’ personal financial literacy and ability to help manage congregational funds. Efforts also will be made to raise awareness of this issue among pastors, congregations and other constituents.

To coordinate the efforts of the theological schools participating in this initiative, the Endowment also awarded a grant to ATS. ATS will monitor the progress of each program, convene project leaders and stakeholders to share insights with one another, and organize working groups to explore specific challenges faced by the theological schools in implementing their programs.

Grant recipients from the first and second rounds of this initiative include:

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; \$248,324

Anderson University School of Theology, Anderson, Ind.; \$248,772

Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass.; \$239,050

Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, Mo.; \$249,700

Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky.; \$249,741 (2012)

Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio; \$236,544

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas; \$224,906 (2012)

Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.; \$249,954

Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Mass.; \$250,000

Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, Texas; \$250,000

Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$250,000

Candler School of Theology of Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.; \$250,000 (2012)

Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Ill.; \$250,000 (2012)

Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, Kan.; \$250,000

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.; \$249,151

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind.; \$250,000 (2012)

Denver Seminary, Littleton, Colo.; \$250,000

Duke University Divinity School, Durham, N.C.; \$250,000

Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, Ind.; \$248,948

Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries, Gettysburg, Pa.; \$750,000

Comprising three seminaries:

- Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa.
- Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University, Columbia, S.C.

Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.; \$247,733

Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.; \$250,000

Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.; \$250,000

George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University, Waco, Texas; \$249,132

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Mass.; \$250,000 (2012)

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary of Cornerstone University,
Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$117,575

Howard University School of Divinity, Washington, D.C.; \$250,000

Illiff School of Theology, Denver, Colo.; \$249,982

James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology of Mercer University,
Macon, Ga.; \$249,251 (2012)

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.; \$248,150 (2012)

Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, Ky.; \$250,000

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; \$249,992

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; \$239,500

Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, Ill.; \$250,000

Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn.; \$249,371 (2012)

Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.; \$250,000 (2012)

Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.; \$250,000

New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, N.J.; \$250,000

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.; \$250,000

New York Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y.; \$250,000

North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill.; \$249,550 (2012)

Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lombard, Ill.; \$250,000

Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas; \$250,000

Payne Theological Seminary, Wilberforce, Ohio; \$250,000

Perkins School of Theology Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; \$249,981

Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, Va.; \$250,000

St. John's University School of Theology-Seminary,
Collegeville, Minn.; \$249,873 (2012)

Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University,
Richmond, Va.; \$250,000 (2012)

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle, Wash.; \$250,000

Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas; \$250,000

Sioux Falls Seminary, Sioux Falls, S.D.; \$249,750

Talbot School of Theology of Biola University, La Mirada, Calif.; \$250,000

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International University,
Deerfield, Ill.; \$250,000

Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio; \$250,000 (2012)

Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Va.; \$250,000 (2012)

United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio; \$250,000

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, New Brighton, Minn.; \$184,355

University of the South School of Theology, Sewanee, Tenn.; \$249,996

Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Nashville, Tenn.; \$250,000

Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Winston-Salem, N.C.; \$249,964

Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa; \$250,000

Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.; \$250,000 (2012)

Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Mich.; \$250,000

Winebrenner Theological Seminary, Findlay, Ohio; \$102,950

Yale University Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.; \$250,000