

**Presidential Address:**  
**Lilly Endowment Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative**  
**and the Mission of IWS**

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*IWS was recently awarded a \$50,000 grant in Phase 1 of the Lilly Endowment Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative.*

In the current economic and political climate, students are seeking higher education opportunities that are reasonably priced and accessible, but without a compromise in quality of educational content and formational impact. The low-residency model that IWS has embraced for 22 years has served those needs



very well as we have kept costs at a reasonable level, offered institutional financial aid, avoided increasing student loan debt, and maintained a reasonable time demand on students through the use of semiannual intensives.

Giving consideration to the recent pandemic, the diversity of the student body, shifting demographics in North America and abroad, the rapid growth of digital media, and global and domestic struggles over racism, equity of opportunity, political polarization, poverty, secularization of the Church, postmodern pluralism, etc., we are presented with a number of challenges and opportunities. This spring IWS was awarded a \$50,000 grant in Phase 1 of the Lilly Endowment Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative to begin addressing those challenges and opportunities through assessment and planning activities.

IWS leadership has identified six initiatives of opportunity, and I will discuss them in prioritized order.

**First**, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the surface the need for **educational delivery that goes beyond our core low-residency intensive model**. In the June 2021 session, seven courses that are typically held in our low-residency intensive format were held in the semi-synchronous virtual delivery we have been using since the pandemic struck in early 2020. But, due to the global persistence of the pandemic contrasted with the opening of the U.S., the June session

incorporated an experimental **mixed modality** approach in four of our classes: MWS 503 and 504, and DWS 703 and 704. Mixed modality is a mostly synchronous offering in which some students are in person at our campus, and others attend via technology in real time. Most of you are probably already well aware of the June session's mixed modality. If the session evaluations show that mixed modality delivery system worked as we expected, it could provide us with some needed flexibility in light of continuing global disruptions, whether they be natural, socio-political, economic, or otherwise. This mixed modality format will be carefully assessed for efficacy of educational delivery and interaction. Making this happen required appropriate equipment, personnel, and training. Additionally, in January 2021 the Board of Trustees directed me to form a Mixed Modality Task Force to help plan and assess the efficacy of this delivery method. Dr. Steve Huntley is heading up that task force.

The Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative represents over 60% of the Lilly Endowment Grant expenditures. But how could this initiative advance our mission? In our current strategic plan, the number one priority is maximizing enrollment. Forming our excellent students in Christian worship renewal is why IWS exists. In this unusual year marked by the COVID pandemic, maintaining enrollment has been mission critical. In face of this challenge, and perhaps future challenges, our mixed modality experiment presents a potentially promising opportunity for students to continue matriculating even when facing roadblocks to that matriculation. I am pleased to report at this time that enrollment has remained steady for the past year. Thanks be to God.

**Second**, the diverse nature of IWS calls for the development and implementation of an institution-wide diversity plan with particular reference to the andragogical and technological **adjustment of curricula to enhance the educational experiences of our diverse student body**. Additional strategic priority is given to the recruitment of staff, faculty and trustees that are reflective of the racial, ethnic, gender, age, denominational, socio-economic, and global diversities of our widely dispersed student body. An embrace of diversity, equity and inclusion that is missionally circumscribed will require consulting and training. We held our first training on the topic in the June 2021 faculty retreat led by IWS trustee Dr. Emmett Price, a recognized expert in issues of DEI, (or diversity, equity and inclusion).

In January, the Board of Trustees instructed me to convene a DEI Task Force which I am co-chairing with trustee Dr. Kai Ton Chau. The task force is a diverse group with representation from the student body, faculty, staff and trustees. The

DEI Task Force was asked to assist in the development and implementation of an institution-wide DEI plan. IWS staff have consulted with experts on andragogical sensibilities and communication styles of our widely diverse student body. We are assessing the effectiveness of a mentoring/supervisory experiment and are evaluating the continuation and expansion of this experiment.

How could this initiative advance our mission? The IWS community serves the Triune God and his Church. Through the Church God gathers the world to himself—embracing but transcending nationalities, ethnicities and cultures. The global Church is called out from the oppressive regimes of the powers of darkness and declared to be, universally, “What belongs to the Lord.” In light of this theological position, IWS is committed to reflect the racial, ethnic, gender, socio-economic, denominational and age diversity of the Church universal at all levels—students, faculty, administrative staff and board. All activities and perspectives related to DEI are circumscribed by the mission of IWS as an educational community committed to the traditional orthodox Christian faith and practice.

The goal of the embrace of actions pertaining to diversity at IWS is to direct our constituencies to be intentionally reflective of the diversity of the global Church of Jesus Christ and IWS’s student body. As MWS professor Dr. Pedrito Maynard-Reid stated, the highest goal of DEI is to be like Jesus, including being intentionally incarnational. This initiative involves recruiting, retaining, and promoting the success of a diverse community of learners encompassing all stakeholders.

We are called to revel in the exquisite beauty of the global diversity of the Church, affirming the variety of gifts and charisms in the members of the global Body of Christ. And we do this under the preeminence of the visible unity of the Church. This is a principled and diverse unity centered on the Tri-unity nature of God and the unity of humanity and divinity in Christ.

**Third**, we are investing strategic planning efforts in **educational opportunities beyond the classroom, such as podcasts, webinars, videos, seminars, certifications, etc.** Making available content-driven media to the wider public on worship-related topics could result in greater engagement in Sunday worship services and greater attention to homiletics, catechesis, spiritual formation, prayer, evangelization, aesthetics, ecumenism, the Christian year, care for the poor and marginalized, creation care, improved race relations, cultural reflection, etc. These are all salient topics for continuing education. Strategic planning on these opportunities could be valuable.

We have convened a Continuing Education Task Force chaired by Dr. Kent Walters and me to assist in the analysis and development of co-curricular continuing educational opportunities. This initiative is still in its early stages, but immediate activities include continuing the book reviews we did this spring with Rory Noland, Glenn Packiam, Jeff Barker, Tom Boogaart, and Constance Cherry, an experimental podcast that is planned for the near future, and a possible video lecture series. Stay tuned for more information on this and help us to assess the effectiveness of this initiative.

How could this initiative advance our mission? As an educational institution that is primarily focused on matriculating degree-seeking students, potential continuing education events like those I have mentioned could reach a wider and more dispersed audience, including prospects for future enrollment, friends who have no interest in enrolling, or current alumni. We can perhaps cover topics we don't have time to cover in the curriculum. This initiative will be assessed in the fall to provide us feedback on the continuation or expansion of these events.

**Fourth**, with the sharp increase of the “nones” (religiously unaffiliated) in the U.S. and the attendant decrease in worship attendance, an emphasis on **liturgical, doctrinal, spiritual, and moral formation as a wholistic process of evangelization (historically referred to as “catechesis”)** needs to be recovered in a wider and more robust manner. This was the heartbeat of our founder, Bob Webber, and a cornerstone of the patristic Church. Catechesis is an essential part of Christian formation, congregational life, Church vitality and Kingdom mission. While IWS educates students in liturgical formation, this is still done in a limited manner and needs to be assessed for potential curricular and co-curricular expansion. A number of IWS alumni are involved with this critical work. Joining their experience to the expertise of our faculty and faculty from other schools who teach catechesis would produce an effective means of evangelization in a postmodern culture. This kind of communal, liturgically anchored formation and education is particularly attractive to the younger generation of students who are seeking a sense of historic rootedness in faith formation and practice. An embrace of opportunities of connection and education in liturgical formation across the entire Institute could have broad impact for a more robust recovery of this critical formational, educational and evangelical practice.

We have convened a Catechesis Task Force to assist in the analysis and development of a broader emphasis on catechesis at IWS, and advocacy for potential collaboration. We have engaged the consultative assistance of two

seminary professors who bring to the table great expertise in catechesis: Dr. Ximena DeBroeck, a Professor of Sacred Scripture and Director of Pastoral Formation at Mount St. Mary's Seminary, and Dr. Joel Scandrett, a Professor of Historical Theology and Catechesis and the former director of the Robert Webber Center at Trinity School of Ministry. These consultants will bring their experience and knowledge in liturgical catechetical formation, helping the task force to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of current practices in their contexts, and being transparent in dealing with how ecumenical efforts could address weaknesses and reinforce strengths in multiple church contexts.

How could this initiative advance our mission? Catechesis embraces “process evangelism,” which is a relational, immersive and communal approach to the evangelization of our world. It emphasizes radical relationships reflective of a radically relational Triune God. It involves intentional doctrinal, creedal and liturgical formation over time into Christ-likeness. It has the intention of producing faithful disciples who can withstand the rigors of being Christ-followers in a secular age that promotes a culture of death. More to it, the impact of this strategy will have lasting impact on Christian formation and Church renewal wherever it is implemented. It is rooted in the orthodox Trinitarian and Christological theology found in the creeds and in a solidly pastoral and communal approach to formation.

**Fifth**, since IWS degrees are all applied degrees, giving strategic attention to the possibility of starting a **PhD program** that could have influence in seminaries and the wider academic world should be given consideration. In many seminaries, theological education has relegated worship studies to a fairly insignificant facet of pastoral theology and practice, and in some cases to “elective” status. Many seminary graduates indicate that they have little or no background in worship studies in their education. IWS is advocating that worship studies be a more prominent part of seminary education. Assessing the possibility of offering a PhD could increase our long-term impact in academia for spiritual renewal through worship. A task force co-chaired by trustee Dr. Eric Bolger and me has been formed to assess this opportunity, and community-wide input and external advice on this topic will be solicited.

How could this initiative advance our mission? IWS already has some standing in the academy, with many of our alumni teaching full-time or part-time in academic contexts. Some alumni have gone on after graduation from IWS to earn a PhD elsewhere. Similar to a Doctor of Ministry degree, the DWS degree is specifically a professional applied degree, not intended to prepare the student for a career in the academy. It is meant to dig deeply into contextualized issues, but not in a broadly

applicable way. The PhD degree is a philosophical degree that is more broadly embraced in academic circles, but it is potentially less relevant to a specific context. An enrollment-limited PhD program could potentially give IWS a stronger influence in the academy. This will be carefully studied and assessed.

**Sixth**, given the Institute's dependence on charitable giving, having **consistent consulting for the development team** is highly desirable. This need is a priority for the accomplishment of all the other opportunities we face at IWS. Last month we engaged the development counsel of the Focus Group's CEO Brad Layland, husband of IWS alumna and trustee Dr. Wendy Layland. The Focus Group's counsel will continue through October. Their consulting wisdom in development has been invaluable to the advancement of IWS' mission.

How could this initiative advance our mission? Brad Layland has been an informal consultant to IWS since 2011, significantly helping us to improve in our development efforts and strategies. Through the Lilly Endowment Grant, the Focus Group's counsel will help us to consider how we may sustain the opportunities that we embrace for the long-term so that our mission to serve God by renewing worship around the globe may be advanced.

We are deeply thankful for the gracious support of Lilly Endowment and for their support in assessing these initiatives. May God grant us his wisdom and discernment for the sake of the advancement of his mission working through IWS.