

INTEGRATIVE CHURCH LEADERSHIP: COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY'S APPROACH¹

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Columbia Theological Seminary, located in Decatur, Georgia, completed in the spring 2005 a full curriculum review for its Master of Divinity program (M.Div.). One of the major outcomes of this two-year review is an approach that promotes cross-disciplinary, integrative, team teaching across the curriculum. This approach focuses on three required courses, named in the new curriculum *Intersections*, *Explorations*, and *Integrations*, that in concert help train men and women to be *integrative church leaders*. Through both their contents and pedagogies, these three courses encourage leadership formation by teaching, modeling, and providing experiences of the integrative practices that are vital to good ministerial leadership (e.g., the interconnections among personal life, theological studies, and vocation).²

Effective church leaders, as understood by this approach, are able to integrate biblical, theological, historical, and ecclesial perspectives with the challenging vocational demands church leaders face. This means that they are:

1. Reflexive,³ where leaders regularly reflect on how the gospel⁴ and their contexts are shaping them as individuals and communities (through, e.g., language, symbols, rituals);

¹ I am deeply indebted to my colleagues on the integrative course planning group for their wisdom and friendship. The heart of this paper belongs to them. They are professors Charles Campbell, Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi, Mark Douglas, William Harkins, Stanley Saunders, and Christine Roy Yoder.

² Columbia's faculty did not use formally the term "integrative church leader" yet, from my perspective, this term best describes the primary intent of these three integrative courses.

³ For an experiential learning model through reflection, see Victoria J. Marsick and Alfonso Sauquet, "Learning through Reflection," in Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (eds.) *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, 2000) 382-99. For a discussion on reflective practice, especially regarding inquiry-oriented teaching and critical reflection for teachers, see Bud Wellington, "The Promise of Reflective Practice," *Educational Leadership*, 48/6, (March 1991): 4-6.

⁴ The word "gospel" is not capitalized, following the convention in Biblical Studies to capitalize only when referring to the four Gospels of the New Testament. Here the word gospel is intended to be broader than just the four Gospels and thus refers to the good news we witness in the whole canon.

2. Readers of Contexts,⁵ where leaders are able to examine values and assumptions critically and to discern faithful ways of participating in God's mission in the world (e.g., sacramentally, prophetically);
3. Imaginative,⁶ where leaders engage in integrative imagination about effective practices of ministerial leadership; and
4. Resilient,⁷ where leaders have the capacity to thrive in situations of dislocation, difference, and conflict, and to discern in such situations the movement of God and the opportunities for transformation.⁸

One predominant focus for these four aspects concerns situations in which church leaders regularly find themselves dealing with both personal and communal transition.

In order to better understand Columbia's approach for teaching leadership, it will be helpful to begin with a brief description of the contextual setting of the seminary's M.Div.

- 5 See Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1997). See also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Anchor Books: New York, 1966). For a discussion of two schools of contemporary discourse analysis-Critical Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis-using narrative analysis of African asylum seekers' stories in Belgium, see Jan Blommaert, "Context is/as Critique," *Critique of Anthropology*, 21/1, (March 2001): 13-33.
- 6 See Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001). For a helpful example of how imagination, specifically poetry, can be used as a highly effective resource for teaching congregational life and leadership, see Thomas E. Frank, "We're Going to Read Poetry in This Class?" *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 8/1, (January 2005), 47-51. For hearing a case that imagination is a legitimate way of knowing, see Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For an article that explores the ways one teacher, from a leadership camp, helps undergraduate students find their creative selves, see Cynthia Argona, "Touching Students Hearts and Lives: A Holistic Approach to Leadership," *Paths of Learning*, 23, (Winter 2005): 7-11. See also J. M. Watkins and B. J. Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001).
- 7 For ways of strengthening resilience that are suggested to expand a leader's speed and capacity for meeting demands, see Briskin, Alan, "Inspiring the Confidence to Continue," *Journal for Quality & Participation*, 24/3 (Fall 2001): 20-21. For an excellent article on resilience in children, see Ann S. Masten, "Ordinary Magic," *American Psychologist*, March 2001, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 227-239.
- 8 For an assessment of transformational and charismatic leadership that distinguishes between the two leadership styles and provides essential attributes and features for being a transformational leader, see Barbuto, John E., "Taking the Charisma out of Transformational Leadership," *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 12/3, (September 1997): 689-98.

curriculum before describing the specifics of the three courses Intersections, Explorations, and Integrations. Cumulative and specific course objectives for these three courses were approved by the faculty in March 2005, and all three will be taught in the 2005-06 academic year. Since the syllabi for 2005-06 are not yet complete, recommended resources for teaching the various topics in this approach can be found in the footnotes. A final section in the paper briefly lists pedagogical suggestions for teaching this integrated church leadership approach.

COLUMBIA AND ITS M.DIV. DEGREE PROGRAM

Columbia is “an educational institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a community of theological inquiry and formation for ministry in the service of the church of Jesus Christ.”⁹ For more than 175 years, Columbia has prepared leaders for service in the church, typically serving local congregations in the Southeastern part of the U.S. Today, Columbia’s mission calls the seminary to be “a center for theological studies”¹⁰ through six degree programs and four components of lifelong learning. In each of these ten programs, students are taught about leadership in the church. For instance, in Columbia’s New Church Development program, leaders of immigrant communities are equipped to lead new congregations that are developing in the North American context. In Columbia’s Doctor of Educational Ministry program, religious educators (who have served at least three years in church leadership positions) receive an advanced and critical study of organizational and leadership development. While it would be fruitful to explore more thoroughly the theological and theoretical frameworks and the primary resources used in each of these programs, the focus here will be exclusively on Columbia’s Master of Divinity curriculum and, specifically, its three new integrative courses.

⁹ Catalog 04/06, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. (2004): 2.

¹⁰ The statement “A Center for Theological Studies of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” is printed on the footer of the seminary’s stationery.

Integrative Course in 1994 Curriculum

The M.Div. degree (formerly a Bachelor of Divinity, B.D.) is Columbia's oldest program and remains central to the Seminary's fulfilling its mission. Currently, more than 160 women and men are enrolled in this residential program. In 1994, the faculty revised the curriculum after a three-year study funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. One important assumption then and now is that the M.Div. program "must encourage a hermeneutic of critical appropriation and integration of the traditions of the faith, so that the liberating power of the Gospel is maintained in the face of powerful temptations to turn the traditions of the faith into sources of control or domination by one group—*ecclesia reformata, sed semper reformanda*."¹¹

The desire for more integration and flexibility in the M.Div. curriculum is not a new one for Columbia. In 1992, Columbia's self-study reported that "faculty and students alike recognized the rigidity of the curriculum structure. Some seventy-eight percent of the curriculum [prior to 1992] was composed of required courses. It was recognized that integration of course work was minimal at the faculty level, and that integration was left almost entirely to the student."¹² The M.Div. curriculum from 1994 to 2004 was composed of seventy-one percent (71%) required courses, and the new curriculum that begins in the fall 2005 is composed of sixty-eight percent (68%) required courses. More importantly, one of the principal ways the 1994 curriculum encouraged a hermeneutic of critical appropriation and integration was the establishment of two courses created to be genuinely cross-disciplinary—(1) Baptism and Evangelical Calling and (2) Eucharist and the Church's Mission.

The Baptism and the Evangelical Calling course was required of all M.Div. students and was taken in their first semester. This interdisciplinary course enabled students to understand the Christian identity in the world through baptism. Specific attention was given to discerning how God's grace has been at work in a student's own baptism and personal history, and to discerning the particular gifts of God

11 "Self Study Report," Columbia Theological Seminary, (1992): III-9.

12 "Self Study Report," III-8.

given to each of us for Christian life and ministry.¹³ This course was last taught in the fall 2004 with the aim “to begin the process of learning how to do theology for ministry by:

1. Identifying and exploring *biblical texts* that portray God’s calling and forming a people for discipleship and mission and discerning the place of baptism in this calling and forming;
2. Tracing major *historical developments* in the Church’s understanding and practice of baptism and assessing the continuing impact of these on its sense of calling and community;
3. Considering how *modernity and postmodernity* have influenced the Church’s understanding and practice of baptism; and
4. Beginning to formulate a *baptismal practice* consistent with the student’s emerging sense of the evangelical calling of the Church.”¹⁴

During the spring term of their first year, students took the second required integrative course established in 1994, Eucharist and the Church’s Mission. This interdisciplinary course examined the ministry of the church as it relates to the Lord’s Supper and the missional practices of a particular congregation. From this base, the course explored the ways in which the church may participate in the *missio Dei* (the mission of God) in denominational and ecumenical efforts. Specific areas that were addressed included the ways in which the Lord’s Supper informs and empowers evangelism, a ministry of compassion, and the church’s commitment to justice, peace, and stewardship of creation and life. In the spring term 2005, the final “integration” of this course was “designed to provide participants with resources to make it possible for students to:

- State a theological vision for how the church’s missionary nature and practices and its celebration of the Eucharist inform and relate to each other.

¹³ Catalog, 00/01, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, (2000): 72.

¹⁴ William P. Brown, Kathy L. Dawson, Stephen Hayner, Kimberly Long, Cameron Murchison, and Stanley Wood, “Syllabus H110: Baptism and Evangelical Calling,” Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, (Fall 2004).

- Trace developments in the basic understandings and practice of Eucharist and mission through the history of the Christian traditions.
- Explore the power of congregational narratives (stories) and culture upon the ways Christians understand and serve God.
- Design and present a service of Christian worship that includes the celebration of Eucharist.
- Begin to identify pastoral skills and perspectives that help nurture a community of faith for mission in and for the world.”¹⁵

In many ways over the past ten years, these two required cross-disciplinary courses provided the basis for the curriculum. To achieve the cross-disciplinary goal, they were team taught with at least one professor from each of Columbia’s academic areas: Biblical Area, Historical-Doctrinal Area, and Practical Theology Area.

The third element of the 1994 curriculum that requires description is Columbia’s “Alternative Context” course, which had been required of M.Div. students since 1984. This course combines academic and experiential study to deepen the experience and understanding of a significantly different cultural context and God’s mission in it. The course also makes every effort to provide an opportunity for theological reflection on the experience and its implications for ministry. Over the two decades, students in Alternative Context have traveled internationally to China, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, and South Korea and within the United States-to Appalachia and the inner city of Atlanta.

Integrative Courses in 2005 Curriculum

In 2002, the faculty began its next periodic review of the M.Div. curriculum. This assessment found the 1994 curriculum to be functioning well overall in preparing women and men for the ministry. It did, however, identify three pressing matters: (1) a lack of flexibility in the curriculum (e.g., limited

¹⁵ Ann Clay Adams, Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi, Jane Fahey, R. Leon Carroll, and Stanley Saunders, “Syllabus 1111: The Eucharist and the Church’s Mission,” Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, (Spring 2005).

number of electives with 9 elective and 22 required courses and frequent scheduling conflicts for out-of-sequence students); (2) discontent regarding the number, placement, and function of the 1994 integrative courses; and (3) a heightened interest in equipping students with more leadership skills for the practice of ministry.¹⁶ It was these pressing matters that prompted the faculty to develop its next generation of integrative courses, building on those developed and used since 1994. The outcome of this development work is Columbia's integrative approach to leadership formation.

Columbia's integrative approach to leadership holds that good ministerial leadership is more than trait-based or skill-based. A trait-based understanding views the qualities of an effective leader as inherent to the person. These traits could be physical attributes, intellectual ability, and/or personality.¹⁷ The phrase, "A born leader," captures this perspective. Skill-based leadership (sometimes referred to as task leadership) is concerned with accomplishing a task by organizing others, planning tactics, and dividing work.¹⁸ Therefore, skill-based leadership training focuses on giving students the *proven* techniques for accomplishing assigned duties.

The trait-based and skilled-bases approaches are not invalid; yet, when taught in isolation, they are not sufficient. Church leaders need character, skills, and the ability to work within the specific contexts they are called to serve. Thus, an integrative approach to leadership formation attempts to take seriously the contextually dependent complexities of ministry. In other words, leadership is fundamentally different in different contexts. One size does not fit all; the opportunities to participate in God's mission are unique to particular manifestations of the Body of Christ in this place at this time

¹⁶ "Curriculum Review Committee Report to the Faculty," Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, (March 3, 2005): 1.

¹⁷ Gary Johns lists intelligence, energy, self-confidence, dominance, motivation to lead, emotional stability, honest and integrity, and the need for achievement as traits that have associated with effective leadership in the literature. Johns, however, states that "as you might expect, leaders (or more successful leaders) tend to be higher than average on these dimensions, although the connections are not very strong." *Organizational Behavior: Understanding and Managing Life at Work*, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996) 310.

¹⁸ P.C. Bottger, "Expertise and Air Time as Basis of Actual and Perceived Influence in Problem-solving Groups," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69, (1984): 214-221.

(this local congregation on this day). Consequently, the integrative approach endeavors to expand the student's leadership *capacity*—in role, ability, and dimension—so that they can grow as leaders in multiple contexts. At its center, capacity is about a leader's availability and response to God's mission within the specific context that he or she is called to serve.

The capacity of *role*, what is represented in church offices, varies by tradition (e.g., priest, pastor, preacher, minister). In the Presbyterian tradition, the classical understanding of the role of the pastoral office was, "namely, to preach the Gospel of Christ to the faithful, and to administer the sacraments."¹⁹ Accordingly, role is conferred by the rite of ordination; the leader is ordained to the office. The process and rite of ordination is a very important part of church leadership, but good church leadership is more than just the role. It is not enough simply to preach (in the narrow sense) and administer the sacraments; a good leader also requires other abilities.

An *ability* is the capacity to employ effectively all the technical skills of competent leadership (abilities, e.g., in management, conflict resolution, personnel, finance, electronic communications, etc.). If the classical understanding of what made a leader was by office (authoritatively conferred upon the person), the contemporary emphasis is on ability. Much of the literature on leadership over the past three decades (both religious²⁰ and non-religious²¹) has focused on necessary skill components. It is without question that people who do not acquire the necessary skills for leadership often fail to lead. However, a good leader needs more than a title and the prerequisite skills in order to be a good church leader. A good church leader also requires the capacity of dimension.

¹⁹ "The Second Helvetic Confession," *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church: Part I, The Book of Confessions*, (2005): 5.156.

²⁰ For instance, James Gill writes about the development of traits, skills, and styles of leadership in "Educating for Leadership," *Human Development*, 26/2, (Summer 2005): 21-30.

²¹ For instance, Gary Johns and Alan M. Saks, *Organizational Behavior: Understanding and Managing Life at Work*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001) 270-305; Kimball Fisher, *Leading Self-Directed Work Teams: A Guide to Developing New Team Leadership Skills* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

A *dimension* is the leader's capacity to fully practice his or her role and ability *within* the range of healthy functioning. Those who embody the role and are highly competent, yet who overextend and burn out, are not good church leaders. One way to think about this dimension capacity is by the concept of differentiation. Leaders who are differentiated are neither disconnected nor enmeshed with those whom they serve.²² For example, a leader who labors six days and keeps the Sabbath by resting, worshipping, and recollecting the redeeming work of God demonstrates a larger capacity for leadership.²³

Columbia's new approach is based on the premise that students learn the capacity for church leadership through the integration of biblical, theological, social, and relational facets of ministry. In this way, the three integrative courses explicitly rely upon the other courses in the curriculum to provide much of the biblical, theological, and historical content. It was not until the most recent curriculum review that the faculty envisioned a full set of integrative courses that build upon one another. It was also conceived that the teaching teams would model integration through their pedagogy of collaborative teaching (see below) in an effort to bring their particular disciplines (e.g., theological reflection, biblical interpretation, historical investigation, and ministerial practice) into the class in a parallel rather than a serial way. In the latter mode various disciplines are taught one subject after another. Here, the team might first have the historian teach, then the theologian, and finally the practical theologian, each about their particular subject matter. In the parallel mode, however, the team might bring a case study where the historian, theologian, and practical theologian bring their perspectives about the particular subject matter in direct dialogue.

²² For clarification on the concept of role differentiation and a re-evaluation of some of the basic evidence for differentiation, see Lewis, Golmon H., "Role Differentiation," *American Sociological Review*, 37/4, (August 1972): 424-35. For an short example of a pastor who is not differentiated, see Jones, L. Gregory, "Needy Pastors," *Christian Century*, 119/21, (October, 9 2002): 62.

²³ Patrick Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990) 79-84.

Purpose of New Integrative Courses

Columbia’s three required integrative courses—*Intersections*, *Explorations* (formally Alternative Context), and *Integrations*—are interrelated and placed in the curriculum as shown in chart 1. The faculty considered their placement carefully. Since 1994, *Explorations* (as Alternative Context) had been offered only during the January term. Now, in order to give greater flexibility, a single section of *Explorations* is also offered in the summer. *Intersections*, which addresses students in their first year, is taught over a long term (spring), with the belief that the integrative work of this introductory material requires longer gestation. *Integrations* is taught during the third year, as an intensive three-week course in January in an immersion format. While a student engages in only one of these courses a year, all three courses are designed to contribute to meeting cumulative objectives as well as their own specific objectives.

Chart 1: M.Div. Curriculum (in a typical sequence)

SUMMER	FALL	JANUARY	SPRING
Essentials of Greek <i>(two courses)</i>	OT Survey NT Exegesis Church History Elective	Elective	NT Survey Worship & Preaching <u>Intersections</u> Elective
Supervised Ministry <i>(two courses)</i>	Hebrew Christian Theology I Pastoral Care Elective	<u>Explorations</u>	OT Exegesis Christian Theology II Presbyterian History & Polity Elective
Clinical Pastoral Education <i>(optional)</i>	Christian Ethics Christian Education Elective Elective	<u>Integrations</u>	American Religion & Cultural History World Christianity Elective Elective Elective

In two significant ways, *Intersections*, *Explorations*, and *Integrations* are intended to be more interrelated than were their predecessor courses, Baptism and Evangelical Calling, Eucharist and the Church's Mission, and Alternative Context. First, students engage in the process of leadership formation through integrative learning in a required course in each of their three years of theological education. The assumption is that students *come* to seminary with biblical, theological, and ecclesiology understandings and that these very understandings (even the most malformed ones) provide the basis for begin integration.²⁴

A second way these courses are intended to be interrelated is through a deliberate increase in the familiarity among them. To do this, each teaching team is well versed in the pedagogical methods and content of the other courses. In this way they each inform, interact with, and build on each other. At least one member of the teaching team from *Intersections* tracks with that particular class of students through *Explorations* and *Integrations*.

These three courses, moreover, demonstrate integrative practices-practices vital to ministry (e.g., the interconnections among the student's personal life, academic work, and vocational practices)-in both their content and pedagogy. To do so, members of the teaching teams integrate their particular proficiencies (e.g., theological reflection, biblical interpretation, historical investigation, and ministerial practice) in ways that meet the course's specific objectives. Consequently, the teaching teams are set up deliberately to take advantage of the various diversities (gender, academic discipline, denomination, geography, ethnicity, race, age, etc.) within Columbia's faculty so that they can model integrative

²⁴ The faculty is not of one mind about this assumption. Some believe you must first provide some content before the student can begin the process of integration and point to the fact that an increasing number of students do not bring nearly as strong ecclesiology of the Presbyterian Church as did previous generations of students. Others, myself among them, believe that students are not blank slates when coming to seminary but rather already have biblical, theological, and ecclesial information (even if it is just hearsay) when arriving on campus for their first class. The new curriculum uses this latter perspective as one of its assumptions but does give students at least one long term of material before the first integration course (see chart 1).

practices. For instance, the faculty comprises one out of three who are not Presbyterian,²⁵ two out of five who are women, and one out of six who is an ethnic/racial minority person.

Cumulative Course Objectives

Built into the design of the three integrative courses are cumulative course objectives. These objectives are fluid within each particular course, so that a particular teaching team (given its composition of disciplines, aptitudes, and perspectives) can emphasize some objectives over others. Yet, all four cumulative objectives receive significant attention in a circular fashion: over their three years, students keep returning to these objectives. These cumulative integrative course objectives are as follows:

1. *Equip students to reflect on how the gospel and contexts shape us as individuals and communities (through, e.g., language, symbols, rituals).*

These reflections focus particularly on the students' *own* stories, assumptions, and practices in their discernment of a calling to ministry. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the formative nature of Columbia's curriculum and the students' current theological, historical, biblical, and ecclesial perspectives.

2. *Teach students to be theologically-informed readers of the intersections between the gospel and the diverse contexts in which we live (e.g., historical, familial, textual, communal, ecclesial, social, political, etc.).*

Such readers are able to critically examine a community's values and assumptions and to discern faithful ways of participating in God's mission in that community (e.g., sacramentally and prophetically). Contexts of particular pedagogical interest are those involving significant transition, both personally and communally.

²⁵ Columbia's faculty currently has members from African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, American Baptist Church, Disciples of Christ Church, Episcopal Church USA, Evangelical Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), Roman Catholic Church, and United Reformed Church.

3. *Invite students to engage in integrative imagining about how they practice ministerial leadership, particularly during times of significant transition.*

Integrative imagining is where students generate alternative engagements, practices, and/or liturgies (such as case studies, case in point, simulations, and/or role play). This pedagogy model is quite different than an autocratic control of learning outcomes that the traditional lecture style can sometimes afford.

4. *Cultivate in students a resiliency, namely, a capacity to thrive as leaders in situations of dislocation, difference, and conflict, and to discern in such situations the movement of God and the potential for transformation.*

Columbia believes that cultivating resiliency is one way to reverse an alarming trend, namely, the tendency of pastors to leave their first calls prematurely. One study has reported that first-call pastors are “more likely to be directed to the smallest congregations with the greatest need and some of the most difficult pastoral challenges” and that “approximately²⁵ percent of these first calls end within the first three years, and 45-50 percent end within five years.”²⁶ These trends seem alarming. More attention must be given to the graduate’s development of learning while in the ministry setting itself. This is one key function of resiliency.

Particular Course Objectives

Along with these four cumulative course objectives, each integrative course also has specific objectives. All of them, both cumulative and specific, operate in concert.

Intersections is designed to:

1. *Provide students with resources and opportunities to name and lay claim to the gospel through their experiences of God in the world and of God’s people, their ecclesial traditions, and their Christian vocations.*
2. *Introduce students to the mission and sacramental life of the church.*

²⁶ Patricia M. Y. Chang, “Assessing the Clergy Supply in the 21st Century,” Pulpit & Pew Research Reports (Durham, NC: Duke Divinity School, 2004).

3. *Introduce students to methods of analyzing and engaging contexts.*

This course begins with each student's experiences of God, ecclesial tradition, and vocation and works to integrate these three elements with the mission and sacramental life of the church. The curriculum's long experience using the sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) coupled with Christian vocation and the church's mission remain instrumental to the way church leaders are formed. Finally, this course introduces students to methods of analyzing and engaging contexts, with the anticipation of practicing such methods in an alternative context through the second course, *Explorations*.

Explorations

The purpose of *Explorations*, with regard to church leader formation, is to deepen the student's experience and understanding of the church and its ministry in a significantly different socio-cultural context. The engagement with an alternative context has a two-fold nature: it provides insights (1) into the particular alternative context as well as (2) into God's mission in the student's own context. The course seeks to provide opportunities for social analysis, theological reflection, and a deepening of commitments to the gospel. One of the frequent results of the course is a new sense of being linked to Christians across social, cultural, and national boundaries.

The course is generally two-and-a-half weeks in length and involves lectures, interviews, visits to schools, hospitals, church projects and programs, museums, and often to locations of the poor (e.g., refugee camps and squatter villages). Weekends in homes, as the guests of a village, or in a rural church provide students with powerful experiences of a radically different cultural context where God's mission is witnessed. Daily opportunities for reflection are critical for support in the midst of disorientation, for assessments of learning, and for theological interpretation on the meanings of what is being seen, heard, and experienced. Regular worship services, led by the students, together with formal and informal worship with hosts, are essential for the deepening

of commitments, for emotional support in the face of human suffering, and for providing new ways of understanding the faith and life of the church. Finally, in the week following the return to the campus, a day is set aside for each *Explorations* group to report on their integrative learning experience.

Integrations is designed to:

1. *Investigate contemporary situations of transition in the life of the Church.*
2. *Invite students to engage in disciplined theological reflection about those situations through integrative practices that draw on the students' learning across the curriculum and their ministerial experiences.*
3. *Nurture resilient, imaginative ministerial leadership that faithfully participates in God's ongoing mission in the world.*

It is expected that the students halfway through their third year will have strong integrative capabilities. Therefore, this course capitalizes on the foundation laid in the previous two courses (and the whole curriculum to date) and investigates situations of conflict, transition, and change from a church leadership perspective. This course works through a *collaborative* learning style. The students own the problem and work toward a solution that is satisfactory to the learners themselves (as opposed to *cooperative* learning, which strives to get the so-called *right* answer that is in the teacher's mind).²⁷

Pedagogical Suggestions

The workgroup that designed the cumulative and specific course objectives sought to provide the faculty with detailed course objectives, while not going as far as to create the course syllabi themselves. The rationale for this balancing act

²⁷ For stories of university faculty members working in a collaborative learning environment, see Ellen Carusetta and Patricia Cranton, "Nurturing Authenticity: A Conversation with Teachers," *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10/3, (July 2005): 285-98. For a national study that provides evidence of higher student engagement and learning where collaborative learning techniques are used, see, Paul D. Umbach and Matthew R. Wawrzynski, "Faculty do Matter: The Role of College Faculty in Student Learning and Engagement," *Research in Higher Education*, 46/2, (March 2005): 153-85.

was to give the necessary traction and uniform expectations of the courses without tying the hands of the specific teams that would teach them. One way the workgroup achieved this goal was by offering pedagogical suggestions. These suggestions are:

1. Faculty may invite students to write brief faith statements during each course, as markers of their theological and ministerial development.
2. As demonstrated by Baptism and Evangelical Calling and Eucharist and the Church's Mission, the sacraments afford excellent foci for integrative work.
3. As appropriate, faculty should employ case studies, simulations, and/or contextual learning opportunities, drawing on such resources as the Faith and the City program,²⁸ congregational visits, and so on.
4. Ideally, one faculty member should accompany M.Div. class through the sequence of integrative courses.
5. Faculty in the three courses should strive for methodological coherence.
6. Faculty should model dialogical disagreement and agreement and encourage students to "go and do likewise."
7. Reading lists for all courses should include materials about integrative practices.
8. The courses model integrative pedagogies for the rest of the courses in the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Columbia's approach of teaching integrated church leadership has been two decades in the making and will continue to be modified. One reason for this ongoing redevelopment is that the endeavor itself is integrative. An integrated leadership approach begins with the qualities of the students, provides some basic skills, and exposes the students to various contexts and imaginations, so as to increase their leadership capacity. This approach is a process that intersects with the calling of the student, the academic

²⁸ The Faith and the City program is a cooperative effort of three Atlanta theological institutions (Candler School of Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary, and the Interdenominational Theological Center) that seeks to "foster the development of public religious leadership in clergy and clergy-in-formation." For more information, see www.faithandthecity.org.

work of theological education, and God's mission in the world today. This approach, therefore, invites conversation through these intersections. It takes seriously the contexts of the students, the alternative contexts where God's mission is active, and the possible contexts of ministries where students might someday serve. Columbia thus believes that these junctures stimulate the students to cultivate those skills, capacities, and opportunities to become integrative church leaders.