

CTSFW Admission: Connecting With

By Randall P. Wurschmidt



Dr. Charles Geischen, academic dean and professor of Exegetical Theology, guides future pastors through the book of John during Gospels III class.

The Admission Office is made up of four counselors (one of which takes care of deaconess applicants) and an administrative assistant who tries to hold it all together. As a team, we help to identify future students, assist them with the application and bring them into the Seminary community.

I only found out that one current student was planning to attend Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, Indiana, when we received his GRE scores out of the blue. I had to call *him* and ask, “Are you planning to apply to the Seminary?” Another student met with me over dinner, where he talked and talked about the other things he was doing in life; he already had a doctorate in another field. He seemed to have no intention of becoming a pastor, and frankly, I didn’t expect him to come.

Future Students

Still another student came to visit with me at a church in the Denver area because his pastor recognized his talents and thought he should at least talk to me (“He’s a theological pistol,” his pastor told me); it turns out that this guy had actually thought about being a pastor, but this was the first time anyone else suggested it to him, and it threw him for a loop. I also didn’t expect him to come, but God had other plans.

All of these men (who are terrific students, by the way) have one thing in common: they eventually spoke to an admission counselor who guided them through the application process. They are from very different backgrounds, range from 22 to 37 in age, have quite different personalities, and yet, I have no doubt they will all make fine pastors.

The Admission Office is made up of four counselors (one of which takes care of deaconess applicants) and an administrative assistant who tries to hold it all together. As a team, we help to identify future students, assist them with the application process and bring them into the Seminary community. Sometimes they are still in high school and many years away from applying. Sometimes they are older (even *much* older), and feel that they can no longer run away from what it seems God is calling them to do. But by talking to us, meeting with us and visiting the campus, they can discern whether or not becoming a student is the right thing for them.

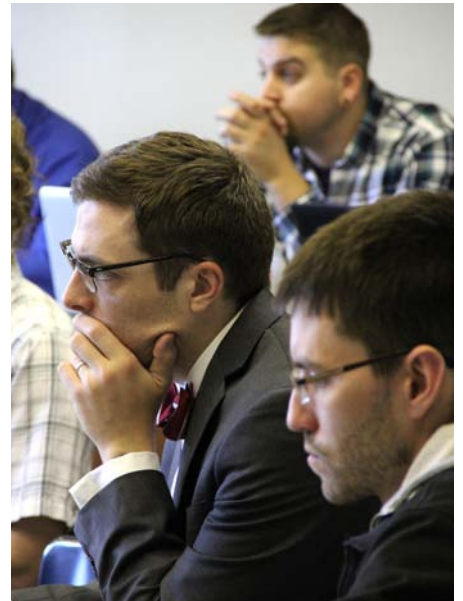
Many men and women have families to consider, must think about their teenagers in school, their spouse’s job or a house to sell. Sometimes the financial obstacles seem insurmountable (they rarely are, though, and we’ll make sure you talk to someone in the Financial Aid Office). Sometimes the idea of leaving your life-long home is just too hard to

overcome, you have parents who need assistance or you’re not prepared to live just anywhere in the country. Our admission counselors can speak to all these common objections, but in the end, *you* have to make the decision and nothing good can come from us twisting your arm. You have to want to be here. Some people want to come right away. Some wait for years before finally applying.

The application process is relatively easy, and as of this year is entirely online. There’s your name and address, of course. There are some very short theological questions (if you know your *Small Catechism* you can easily answer these). There’s an autobiographical statement, which allows us to get to know you a little better and helps you to think through, “How in the world did I get to this point where I’m thinking about *seminary*?!”

One important part of the application is for your pastor to write a recommendation. Usually your own pastor will have a unique perspective and will be very supportive of sending you here. For the men, another important piece is an interview with your district. Some district presidents will interview you directly, some will send a small group to where you live. For the women, you will interview with the director of the Deaconess Formation Program. And for everyone, you will send transcripts for all your college credits. Not every student of the Seminary has a college degree; your admission counselor can talk to you about the exceptions.

Every few weeks, a committee (made up mostly of professors) meets to go through completed applications. They look at your recommendations and your grades, they consider aspects of personality and competence. Through the meeting it is



The application process is relatively easy, and as of this year is entirely online. There’s your name and address, of course. There are some very short theological questions (if you know your *Small Catechism* you can easily answer these). There’s an autobiographical statement, which allows us to get to know you a little better and helps you to think through, “How in the world did I get to this point where I’m thinking about *seminary*?!”



your admission counselor’s job to build you up and present you to the committee in the best light (which is why it behooves you to get to know your counselor!). Once you are admitted, we will help you with relocation and all the little details which come with a big change in your life.

We can’t do our job as a seminary if we don’t have students. And our job is to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. How can we have students if there is no one to identify them? And (to paraphrase St. Paul), how will we have any preachers and teachers if there is no seminary to teach them? This goes beyond the work of a few admission counselors. This is the work of the Church. God has commanded us to pray that He would send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38), and so it is up to the Church to encourage men and women and boys and girls to consider church work. It is up to pastors to say, “Hey, have you ever considered being a pastor?” or “I could see you being an awesome deaconess.” It is up to parents and friends and fellow parishioners to encourage the young people in the congregation to attend Christ Academy—High School or Phoebe Academy—High School or just to plant the seed of interest. And it is up to the Church to support the seminaries in your prayers and giving, to donate to the Food & Clothing Co-op, to adopt a student, to train a vicar and to welcome a new pastor straight out of the Seminary.

Together we can ensure that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

is poised to bring the Gospel to a broken and hurting world. Together we can proclaim confidently Christ crucified and risen from the dead in a society that is searching for answers. Together we can raise up future church workers to proclaim the works of God “that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God” (Ps. 78:6-7a).

In many ways, my job is easy: I love Fort Wayne and this Seminary, so I can tell you truthfully and enthusiastically why you should come here. Of course, whether or not you decide you want to attend has way more to do with the Holy Spirit than with any individual admission counselor. But I can encourage you to come to CTSFW; you will have the best theological education available to you, you will attend the finest chapel services in the world and you will make friends and have colleagues to the ends of the earth who will pray for you and support you as you consider this important work. 🏡

The Rev. Randall P. Wurschmidt (Randall. Wurschmidt@ctsfw.edu) serves as an admission counselor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Interested in learning more about the admission process? Go to www.ctsfw.edu/Admission, email Admission@ctsfw.edu or phone 800-481-2155 and one of the staff will be happy to answer all your questions.

We can’t do our job as a seminary if we don’t have students. And our job is to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. How can we have students if there is no one to identify them? And (to paraphrase St. Paul), how will we have any preachers and teachers if there is no seminary to teach them? This goes beyond the work of a few admission counselors. This is the work of the Church.
