



# AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

## SELF-STUDY REPORT

Draft of March 2, 2020



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# I

## INTRODUCTION

*And they said to him, "We are able."*

Mark 10:39

In one of his best-beloved sermons, St. John Henry Newman made much of this aspiration, offered by the apostles James and John in reply to Jesus' question whether they could drink the cup that He would drink. It indicated, Newman thought, their willingness to make a "venture of faith," not knowing where their generous promise would take them.\* The Augustine Institute has been a venture of faith since its founding in 2005 and continues to be so today, as it remains true to its mission through many changes of personnel and programs. As the Institute engages in a self-study for re-accreditation, its members are steadied by another truth famously captured by Newman: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."†

The Institute was founded as a lay Catholic non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Trustees in order "to establish an institute of higher learning to serve the community of the Catholic faith, to provide education in the history, culture and dogma of the Catholic faith and Scripture, all being faithful to the Magisterium of the Church and in accord with John Paul II's document on higher education, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*" (*Augustine Institute By-Laws*, I.2). Also affirmed in the Institute's charter was the intention to provide "practical training to give Catholics the ability to present the faith in a dynamic and cogent manner" (*ibid*). As the years have passed and the Institute has responded to requests from ecclesial partners, its mission has expanded and been further articulated in a way that puts those two purposes in lively conversation:

The Augustine Institute serves the formation of Catholics for the New Evangelization. Through our academic and parish programs, we equip Catholics intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally to renew the Church and to transform the world for Christ (*Augustine Institute Mission Statement*).

One of the aims of this report will be to offer a reflection upon the Institute's two purposes even as the report's primary and essential task is to measure the practices of the Institute's Graduate School of Theology against the Standards of Accreditation.

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\* See John Henry Newman, "The Ventures of Faith," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (London, 1919), IV:295-306.

† John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (1878; Notre Dame, 1989), 40.

To begin with the theme of change is doubly appropriate, as the membership of the Association of Theological Schools is presently working to revise its Standards, and likely in a way that will recognize that the shape and the practices of its member schools have changed decisively over the past two decades. Even as the Institute prepares to welcome the revised Standards, its members are grateful to have the opportunity to consider the practices enshrined in the current Standards. At this interesting time in its development, the Institute stands to gain much from a sustained reflection upon more traditional forms of institutional life.

The Institute welcomes the self-study process as timely because many of its members are new to its life and work. Nine of the Institute's twenty-one trustees are in their first three-year term of service. Half of the School's full-time faculty members have joined the Institute since the last self-study, as have seven of its nine executives. It is fitting that these new members should be able to reflect upon their mission and work through the lens of this report. In order that their reading should be as fruitful as possible, the report will occasionally refer to passages from the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar popes that shed light upon our mission and identity.

### **The Present Character of the Augustine Institute**

Considered from the outside, the Augustine Institute appears to be a media company within which is located a licensed and accredited graduate program. A couple of rough measures suffice to account for that impression. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, the revenue brought into the Institute by the School—including income from donations explicitly set aside for the work of the School—accounted for just over 10% of the Institute's total net revenue. And the School's thirteen full-time employees represent but one-in-seven of the Institute's total full-time staff. The impression provided by these two data, however, risks obscuring a deeper reality: the Institute's true nature as an organic whole in which its media work is informed and often performed by its academic staff, and its academic life—including the vocational work of its current students and alumni—finds expression in and derives assistance from its media work.

To appreciate this synergy, let us consider the Institute from the vantage of each of its two major programmatic features or purposes, beginning with the Graduate School.

The Graduate School of Theology comprises two Deans, a Director of Admissions, a Registrar, ten full-time faculty and four longstanding part-time or visiting faculty. It counts as additional members some four-dozen on-campus students and over 400 distance-education students, spread through more than 40 states and ten foreign countries. Yet even this enumeration belies additional complexity. One faculty member is a research professor living in another state; two others belong to a semi-independent research center. Another faculty member is on long-term loan to the Institute's curriculum project. The School, moreover, relies upon contributions from the Institute's development, finance, marketing, and studio teams, as well as upon the oversight of its Executive Team and Board of Trustees. The Institute's President is also a faculty member, who in spite of his administrative role makes regular and important contributions to the academic

life by teaching, scholarship, collegial conversation, and mentorship. Finally, ten or more full-time on-campus students work part-time for the Institute, with most of them making contributions on the media side of the organization, while the media departments of the Institute count among their members multiple alumni and current part-time students. Meanwhile, many dozens of the Institute's distance-education students are actively using its religious education curriculum, devotional materials, and online platform in their work in dioceses, parishes, and schools throughout the country.

The Augustine Institute's media work may be divided into audio production, video production, book publishing, and curriculum production, which activities are hosted or supported by its FORMED.org platform. In recent months, faculty have been responsible for multiple audio recordings, substantial contributions to video productions—including two *Lectio* series hosted by faculty, three books, the kindergarten installment of a new religious education curriculum, and many media appearances and works in the form of radio interviews, podcasts, social media posts and videos, as well as numerous essays and articles. In addition, the role played by faculty consultation to the newest venture of the Augustine Institute—the sub-licensed publication of the English Standard Version Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible—was essential to the creation of the partnership with the ESV's owner.

The benefits of the combination of a full-service media company with an accredited school are many and substantial. Nevertheless, this institutional form remains experimental. It should be noted, however, that the joining of media outreach to an ecclesial body devoted to evangelization and catechesis is not foreign to the Church's long experience. Cluniac monastic communities in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were centers of evangelization that expressed the Gospel message in word, song, and image and also performed countless charitable acts of hospitality and healing. At the turn of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Ximenes founded the University of Alcalá with a press, the first major project of which was the publication of a polyglot edition of Sacred Scripture. Jesuit missionary endeavors in the early-modern period regularly combined linguistic study with writing and publishing, whether in the rarefied form of Matteo Ricci's learned treatises for Chinese mandarins or Jean de Brébeuf's dictionary, catechism, and lovely carol for the Huron people. And, of course, in such luminaries as St. John Henry Newman, St. Maximilian Kolbe, and Ven. Fulton Sheen, the work of evangelization and catechesis has been combined with media and publishing work at the highest level of sophistication and has enjoyed great success. It should not surprise us, then, that St. John Paul II should have urged the lay faithful, “to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education—school and university—in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities.”\* Although the Augustine Institute's institutional model is novel from the point of view of recent expressions of higher education in the United

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\* John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (30 December 1988), #44.

States, it is rooted in a tradition that has many inspiring precedents. Accordingly, although the essential work of the self-study process is to evaluate the Graduate School, it is hoped that this Report's readers from across the Institute—including notably its Trustees—will find its perspective helpful for their respective roles.

### **The Augustine Institute's Accreditation and current Self-Study**

The Augustine Institute does not participate in Title IV student-loan programs, and so its pursuit of accreditation has been prompted less by financial concerns and more by the expectations of its various constituencies and its own pursuit of excellence. After a circuitous route that included a formal inquiry with the Higher Learning Commission and the need to await an ATS decision to accredit online programs, the Institute was made an Associate Member of ATS in June 2012. After an extensive process of bringing its programs and procedures into conformity with the Standards of Accreditation, and the submission of a Readiness Report, the Institute was admitted to candidacy for full accreditation by the Board of Commissioners in June 2014. After the requisite self-study and site visit, the Board of Commissioners granted initial accreditation for five years in February 2016.

The grant of initial accreditation covered both of the School's degree programs and the online expression of its Master of Arts (Theology). It also stipulated that the School submit three interim reports: on planning and evaluation (October 2017), on the School's finances (February 2018), and on educational assessment (October 2018). Each of these reports was accepted by the Board of Commissioners; this Report will be in dialogue with their findings in the sections treating the standards under which they fall.

In the summer of 2018, the President appointed the School's Associate Dean to serve as the Director of the Self-Study and its Dean to be the editor of this Report. Three subcommittees were created with members drawn from the trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, and students. The subcommittee assignments were allocated according to the guidelines contained in the ATS Handbook; there was one committee tasked with the consideration of institutional standards 1, 2, 7, and 8, a second one that looked at the academic standards 3 through 6, and a third committee devoted to the Educational Standard and the standards governing the Institute's two degree programs. With the assistance of the Registrar and the Dean, the committees gathered the materials necessary to evaluate the Institute's procedures and met on multiple occasions during the winter and spring of 2019 to discuss the Standards and to formulate their recommendations.

The drafting of the Report was accomplished in the fall of 2019 and winter of 2020, with members of the steering committee reading initial drafts of individual chapters. In February 2020, the Trustees and all self-study committee members were given a draft of the whole Report and allowed three weeks for the submission of written comments and suggested amendments. At the February 25 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the self-study was one of the principal subjects of discussion. In early March, the *Self-Study Report* and selected appendices were posted on the Institute's website for two weeks to allow public comment; the students and alumni of the Institute were all sent the link to the page.

As the table of contents discloses, the body of this Report treats each of the Standards but departs from the strict numerical order of the current Standards. Instead, it is divided into three chapters that reflect the work of its three self-study committees, a division that allows the chapters devoted to the academic programs to stand alone and the administrative support of those programs to be treated in an uninterrupted narrative.



II

THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE'S  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AND  
THE ATS STANDARDS

## Chapter 1

### **The Augustine Institute as a Lay Apostolate: Mission, Integrity, Governance, and Resources**

*The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.*

St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979)

As the Second Vatican Council affirmed, lay men and women play a crucial role in the advancement of the Gospel. In the modern era, their participation in the Church's mission of evangelization and catechesis has become a necessity: "With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone."<sup>\*</sup> In the decades since the Council, it has become common for popes and bishops to characterize our culture as experiencing a spiritual crisis, sometimes called a crisis of faith or of truth, or again, a crisis of catechesis or of memory. However these trends are best to be named, the Augustine Institute's mission to help Catholics to understand, to live, and to share their faith is a much-needed remedy. Yet if that mission is to be fulfilled, it must live within a healthy, vibrant, and well-governed institution, which is the end served by the Association of Theological Schools' General Institutional Standards on mission, integrity, governance, and institutional resources. This chapter contains the School's reflection upon its mission and operations as measured against General Institutional Standards 1, 2, 7, and 8. As each of these standards treats functions and features shared by the Graduate School and the larger Institute, this chapter will include the most sustained discussions of how the School relates to the Institute as a whole. It will also include treatment of how the Institute's two-fold mission to train and to equip men and women who serve the Church's mission of evangelization and catechesis encompasses both the special work of the School and the endeavors of its other departments.

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<sup>\*</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (18 November 1965), #1.

### §1.1. Purpose, Planning, and Evaluation (Standard 1)

The Augustine Institute’s Graduate School of Theology understands its nature and mission to be rooted in its ecclesial identity:

United in the mission to advance the New Evangelization, the School of Theology fully embraces the Church’s vision for an academic community as set forth in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* and as further explicated in other magisterial teachings, in particular the *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*. The School understands its mission to proceed from ecclesial communion as its source and to find its end in the service of the Church’s universal mission of salvation (*Statutes of the Graduate School of Theology*, II.A.1).

As an expression of its nature and for the furtherance of its mission, the School engages in the work of planning and evaluation. The School’s faculty is “self-governing in accord with the principle of subsidiarity,” which means that it is “responsible for its own direction insofar as it is pursuing goods internal to its proper function and to the extent to which it is capable of securing the attainment of those ends by its own powers” (*A Strategic Plan for the Graduate School of Theology*, p. 3). This discussion of Standard 1 will consider the purpose, planning, and evaluation undertaken by the School as an expression of its subsidiary role within the broader Institute. [1.1.2]

#### Purpose

The School’s statement of purpose was originally composed during its pursuit of initial accreditation and approved by the Institute’s trustees at their August 2014 meeting. In the first half of 2019, that document—the *Statement of Institutional Purpose*—was revised by the School’s Academic Council and joined to an updated version of its *Strategic Plan*. That plan, with the statement of purpose as its prologue, was reviewed and approved by the trustees at their August 2019 meeting. The statement reproduces the Institute’s official mission statement:

*The Augustine Institute serves the formation of Catholics for the New Evangelization. Through our academic and parish programs, we equip Catholics intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally to renew the Church and to transform the world for Christ.*

In addition to specifying the School’s confessional commitment as a Roman Catholic institution—a commitment affirmed in the Institute’s by-laws and the *Statutes of the Graduate School of Theology*—this statement also notes the special emphasis of the School’s mission, which is to serve the New Evangelization. Growing from the Second Vatican Council, the New Evangelization is the Church’s expression of its constant and universal mission of evangelization (cf. Mk 16:15) in those regions of the world where, as John Paul II put it, “the reality of a ‘Christian society’ which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life,

measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone.”\* The New Evangelization is a work of re-proposing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to men and women who have been incorporated into the Church’s sacramental life but have not made a mature commitment to practice their faith (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2041-43).

### **[1.1.1]**

The School’s purpose statement acknowledges the novelty of its institutional form by pointing to the combination of “higher studies, catechetical teaching, and media production and distribution” within the life of the broader Institute. It then notes that while the Institute’s media and publishing endeavors “benefit from the participation of the faculty, so does the School benefit from the opportunity to share its teaching in different forms and with audiences around the world and thus to maintain lively contact with the Church’s work of catechesis and evangelization” (*Strategic Plan*, p. 2). There is, then, a healthy realism in the document about the *modus vivendi* enjoyed by the School’s faculty and staff. Even as higher education in general and graduate theological education in particular have changed rapidly during the past two decades, the Augustine Institute has embraced an institutional model that may prove to be suited to the needs of the time. One appreciates, however, that new institutional models are sometimes difficult to live within, as the lack of established structure at times forces creativity and ingenuity upon faculty and staff. Transparency about the mission and the institutional form that it has generated is of the highest importance when new faculty are being recruited and trained. **[1.1.3]**

## **Planning and Evaluation**

In its grant of initial accreditation to the Augustine Institute in February 2016, the Board of Commissioners of the Association of Theological Schools required the submission of three interim reports, the first of which was the *Report on Ongoing Evaluation Procedures for Institutional Vitality* (September 26, 2017). A salutary effect of that requirement was to have spurred the School to produce its own *Strategic Plan*, which was approved by the Board of Trustees at its August 2017 meeting. As noted above, that plan was revised during the self-study process and approved by the trustees in its present form in August 2019. The current *Strategic Plan* contains its own evaluation of the key strategic foci of the earlier plan, an evaluation that underscores the value of the 2017 plan and the process that led to its composition. In view of the growth of the broader Institute in recent years, the existence of a formal plan, approved by the Board of Trustees, has been important for the maintenance and improvement of the School. In particular, the establishment of a student house—owned by one of the Institute’s benefactors and offered to the use of the School—and the receipt of a substantial gift to the School’s scholarship endowment fund are two milestones that had been desiderated in the *Strategic Plan*. In addition, the two versions of the plan have prompted and shaped discussions about

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\* John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Inuente*, Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (6 January 2001), #40.

strengthening the School's offerings in Sacred Scripture and embarking upon a new outreach to non-traditional and global audiences through recorded short courses. **[1.2.1]**

In pursuit of its mission, the School regularly evaluates its work, both with respect to the strategic goals it has embraced in its planning process and with respect to its ordinary operating goals. Of those latter, first and foremost is the provision of a graduate theological education to men and women who wish to put their lives at the service of the Church's life of charity. The special complexion of the School's student body will be discussed in later chapters. Here it suffices to say that the education that they require for their vocational labor is one that enables them to make their own the Church's theological heritage as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Accordingly, the School faithfully executes an annual round of academic assessment, which will be discussed in several later chapters. **[1.2.2.2]**

It hardly needs to be said that the School's educational mission requires it to be a viable institution. One of the areas of constant evaluation and adjustment, therefore, is that of recruitment and enrollment. This area was a special subject of attention in the strategic plan composed in 2017; since then, it has been consistently treated in quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees. The admissions and enrollment processes also generate several key performance indicators that are watched over by executive leadership as well as by the academic administration. Finally, the budget process, which unfolds from February through early spring, provides another locus of evaluation and course-correction. **[1.2.2.1]**

Two observations about evaluation and planning through the budget process are in order.

First, as will be noted repeatedly throughout this Report, the members of the School are deeply grateful to belong to the broader Institute. From the perspective of any of the Institute's parts, the activities of the whole body involve both costs and benefits. The current budget, for the fiscal year 2019-20, entailed some sacrifices on the side of expense allotments for non-essential academic activities (for instance, a speaker's series hosted by the School and extra funds for books and for travel to conferences) in order to provide for the continued well-functioning of media activities that provide crucial outlets for faculty creativity. It is a recommendation of this self-study that the budget for the fiscal year 2020-21 and for subsequent years make significant investments in academic culture (for example, hosting guest academic speakers for public events), the nature and extent of which will be determined by a collegial conversation involving faculty, administrators, and trustees. **[See recommendation I]**

Second, as shall be discussed in later chapters, planning for enrollment growth is necessarily an inexact science because almost 90% of the School's students are adult, part-time, online students who must balance their commitment to graduate study with competing demands, some of which decisively outrank their studies in priority. In addition to that systemic difficulty, the School has now reached an enrollment plateau as the number of new students is roughly equivalent to those who complete the program or depart through attrition. Consequently, after five years of consistent double-digit growth in tuition revenue, the School is now facing the possibility of net tuition revenue remaining flat on a year-over-year basis. A second

recommendation, therefore, is for the fiscal year 2020-21 budget process to include a comprehensive review of enrollment trends and make a new multi-year revenue projection based upon that review. **[See recommendation II]**

As mentioned above, the School engages in strategic planning as a subsidiary part of the broader Institute. The planning function of the Institute as a whole is located in the work of its Executive Team and its Board of Trustees. The Executive Team, under the leadership of the Institute's President, has semi-annual planning sessions, the results of which shape the Institute's defining objectives as well as its ordinary performance indicators. Those planning sessions also shape the presentations made by the President to the Trustees (see the Minutes of the quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees). Special efforts of planning and evaluation over the past two years include a comprehensive institutional audit and a separate technology audit, both performed by outside consultants. Notable achievements of the Institute in recent months—achievements that represent the fulfillment of those audits and earlier plans—include the addition of an Executive Vice President to the Institute's Executive Team, the refinance of its building at 6160 S. Syracuse Way from a private loan to a conventional mortgage, the reorganization of its technology department through the formation of a partnership with a third-party provider for the hosting of its FORMED.org platform, and the launch of its ecommerce site at Catholic.market. Each of these achievements constitutes a significant investment in the long-term viability and stability of the whole Institute, from which the School also benefits.

**[1.2.3]**

### **Recommendations**

**I.** The budget for the fiscal year 2020-21 and for subsequent years should include significant investments in academic culture, the nature and extent of which will be determined by a collegial conversation involving faculty, administrators, and trustees. **[cf. 1.2.2.1]**

**II.** The fiscal year 2020-21 budget process should include a comprehensive review of enrollment trends and make a new multi-year revenue projection based upon that review. **[cf. 1.2.2.1]**

## §1.2. Institutional Integrity (Standard 2)

The Lord marveled at the faith of the Roman centurion (cf. Mt 8:9), whose dutifulness toward divine calls was matched by his zeal for his ordinary duties. In its annual convocation, the Augustine Institute community hears its faculty pledge their fidelity to God in a similar spirit with the promise “that in my words and in my actions, I shall always preserve communion with the Catholic Church” (see *Statutes of the Graduate School*, appendix, Oath of Fidelity). Although not every employee of the Institute is or is required to be a practicing Roman Catholic, all are held to a high standard of integrity (see *Staff Handbook*).<sup>\*</sup> In pursuit of that integrity, enjoined by the New Law of the Gospel, the employees of the Augustine Institute willingly comply with the rules, regulations, and laws that are applicable to them according to their presence in the State of Colorado and the United States of America and their membership in the Association of Theological Schools.

The School, together with the administration and trustees of the Institute, is committed to maintaining cordial relations with the Board of Commissioners and the ATS. The School has been a member of the ATS since 2012 and accredited since 2016. During these five years of initial accreditation, the School has submitted its annual statistical Report to the ATS, completed three interim reports at the request of the Board of Commissioners (see appendices), and replied to a Board action letter of September 12, 2018, that concerned a formal complaint (the complaint was subsequently dismissed by the Board of Commissioners). In preparation for the institutional self-study, the Institute sent its Associate Dean to participate in the ATS School for New Deans. **[2.1]**

The School is subject to oversight from several other bodies and jurisdictions, including the State of Colorado, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. The School does not participate in Federal Title IV programs but has been authorized by the U.S. Department of Education for the deferment of undergraduate student loan debt payments by its students during their tenure at the School. The reporting duties specific to academic operations are handled by the Office of the Registrar. Conformity with relevant labor regulations is ensured by the Office of Human Resources (see *Staff Handbook*, pp. 5-9). Accounting best practices are monitored by the Institute’s CFO and authenticated annually through an independent audit, conducted by Biggs Kofford, P.C. (see audited financial statements for FY18 and FY19). **[2.2]**

The School’s administration, particularly its Director of Admissions, works closely with the Institute’s marketing department to ensure that the website, social media sites, and printed and digital promotional materials are all in conformity with the School’s mission and actual operations. In August 2019, the *augustineinstitute.org* website was given a fresh design. Work on the content of individual pages is ongoing and is shaped by the *Graduate Bulletin*, which is revised annually and has been edited to ensure that

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<sup>\*</sup> See also *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Part II: General Norms, Article 2, §4: “Catholic teaching and discipline are to influence all university activities, while the freedom of conscience of each person is to be fully respected. Any official action or commitment of the University is to be in accord with its Catholic identity.”

men and women are spoken of with an inclusivity that responds to concerns of equity while avoiding grammatical errors. [2.3]

The School's conformity with the highest ethical standards, current State and Federal employment law, and widely-accepted best practices is ensured by the provisions of its *Statutes*, *Graduate Bulletin*, and *Staff Handbook*. The most recent version of the *Staff Handbook* was promulgated in January 2019. From December 2019, the Institute has a certified human-resources professional on its permanent staff. The Institute's non-discrimination policies may be found in the *Graduate Bulletin* (p. 24) and the *Staff Handbook* (p. 5). Each document contains an explanation of grievance processes that are to be used by faculty, staff, and students respectively (see *Statutes* II.E.7, *Staff Handbook*, pp. 5-6 and 29, and *Graduate Bulletin*, p. 34). The tuition refund policy and related financial policies for students may be found on pages 35-6 of the *Graduate Bulletin*. The School's finances are handled by the Institute's finance department, under the leadership of its Chief Financial Officer. The Institute's financial statements are scrutinized quarterly by the finance committee of the Board of Trustees; the Institute's budget is approved annually at the May meeting of the Board. The annual independent audit takes place in early autumn. [2.4]

A matter of special importance to the Augustine Institute is that it should comply with the provision of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* 39: "As a natural expression of the Catholic identity of the University, the university community should give a practical demonstration of its faith in its daily activity, with important moments of reflection and of prayer. Catholic members of this community will be offered opportunities to assimilate Catholic teaching and practice into their lives and will be encouraged to participate in the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist as the most perfect act of community worship." Accordingly, it is Institute-wide policy that meetings are not to be scheduled during the noon hour so as not to conflict with Holy Mass, which is offered in the chapel most weekdays at that time (see *Staff Handbook*, p. 11).

The School's promotion of the awareness of the vast cultural diversity present within the universal Church and also within the Church in North America is primarily accomplished through its curriculum, on the one hand, and its media outreach, on the other. Both degree programs include required courses that address the subject: *The Church & Modernity* from the point of view of history and mission, with considerable attention paid to missionary outreach in North America from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present and to the rise to prominence within the Church of African Christians; *Catechesis for the New Evangelization* (for students in the M.A. in Leadership for the New Evangelization) with respect to the principles governing the enculturation of the Gospel in diverse settings. A special help to the School's appreciation of the diverse communities in which its students and alumni work is its partnership with Christ in the City Missionaries, an apostolate to the homeless that is based in Denver and works closely with the School for the formation of its missionaries. The Augustine Institute has a robust outreach to Catholics of Hispanic descent, both in the United States and abroad, through its own Spanish-language video and audio productions, its bilingual FORMED.org platform, Spanish-language book publishing, and now an effort to translate its video programs into Portuguese. The

Institute's office of Hispanic Business Development has employed graduate students, preparing them for future leadership in the field of Hispanic ministry. The School's Mother Teresa scholarship fund is specially designed to give financial assistance to students who are working in underserved areas such as inner-cities, most of which are culturally-diverse locations (see appendices for a list of Mother Teresa Fund grants in recent years). A recommendation of this self-study is that additional resources be sought for the Mother Teresa Fund by identifying donors who wish to support it, so that it can become a higher-profile expression of the Institute's mission and lead to the theological training of more Hispanic and other minority leaders.

**[2.5] [See recommendation III]**

In recent years, the Institute has been able to make some key appointments of women to leadership positions, including the executive positions of Chief Financial Officer, Chief-of-Staff, and Executive Vice President for Strategic Advancement, as well as the position of Secretary of the Board of Trustees. The Director of Admissions was recently given an expanded suite of responsibilities in recognition of her essential leadership role within the School. And the School's faculty was pleased to add Dr. Elizabeth Klein to its ranks in 2017 and continues to enjoy the part-time assistance of Visiting Professor Dr. Gwen Adams. Both women have published new books with the Institute's Press this year and also made crucial contributions to its *Why Believe?* high-school apologetics curriculum. The School continues actively to recruit female faculty candidates—and gave special attention to that desideratum during its Fall 2019 faculty search—but is aware that additional creativity and funding may be required in that area due to the relatively low supply of female theologians seeking positions that involve out-of-state relocation. **[2.6; see the discussion in Degree Program Standard B and recommendation XVII]**

The School's transfer policy and criteria for accepting transfer credits are explained on page 25 of the *Graduate Bulletin* and published at [augustineinstitute.org/graduate-school/admissions/transfer-policy/](http://augustineinstitute.org/graduate-school/admissions/transfer-policy/). **[2.9]**

The School's internet communications policy may be found on page 33 of the *Graduate Bulletin*. The policy is enforced with care; in recent years, two students have been disinvited due to their noncompliance with the policy. The faculty are enjoined by the "Guidelines for the Administration of Distance Education" (*Statutes of the Graduate School*, II.A.2) to maintain a high standard of responsiveness and etiquette in their communication with students, including a specific request to refrain from sending emails on the Lord's Day. **[2.10]**

**Recommendation**

**III.** Additional resources should be sought for the Mother Teresa Fund so that it can become a higher-profile expression of the Institute's mission and lead to the theological training of even more Hispanic and other minority leaders. **[cf. 2.5]**

### §1.3. Authority and Governance (Standard 7)

The Augustine Institute is an educational apostolate founded and directed by Catholic laity. The Institute is juridically independent of the Catholic Church but understands itself as serving the Church's mission of evangelization and catechesis and sees its highest purpose in strengthening the bond of charity that is the Church's communion. As noted above, the Institute is committed to maintaining its fidelity to the Church's Magisterium and as a manifestation of that fidelity maintains an institutional commitment to uphold the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Education *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (see *Augustine Institute By-Laws*, I.2). Although the Institute is neither a university nor a canonical organ of the Catholic Church, it sees in the Apostolic Constitution explicit statements that justify its reception of the document as normative.\* In the spirit of its voluntary submission to the authority of the Catholic Church, the Institute also seeks to keep its structures and practices of governance in conformity with the best practices enshrined in the Standards of Accreditation. [7]

#### Authority

The Augustine Institute was authorized by the Department of Higher Education of the State of Colorado to grant graduate degrees in the fall of 2005, having been incorporated in the State of Colorado earlier that year. [7.1.1] The *By-Laws* of the Institute indicate that all powers of governance are vested in the Trustees. The Archbishop of Denver is not an *ex officio* member of the Trustees, nor is his office granted any special legal powers by the Institute's *By-Laws*. Nevertheless, in accord with the recommendation of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* 28 that even when the local bishop does not "enter directly into the internal governance of the university," he should be seen as a "participant in the life of the Catholic university," the Institute has always welcomed either the Archbishop or his representative as a member of the Board of Trustees. [7.1.2 and 7.1.2.1]

The *By-Laws* (§1) and the *Statutes of the Graduate School* (I.A.1) are two formal records of the delegation of the authority from the Board of Trustees to the President. The *Statutes* (I.A.2-3) also note the advisory role of the faculty with regard to curricular and academic matters, through the agency of the Dean's Council and the Academic Council. It has been the consistent practice of the Institute and its Board of Trustees to allow the Academic Council to initiate and to direct all changes that relate specifically to its academic programs and the life of teaching and learning. [7.1.3]

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\* For instance, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* 10 addresses "the many Catholic Institutions of higher education" that are not universities and affirms that its audience is "meant to include all Catholic Institutions of higher education engaged in instilling the Gospel message of Christ in souls and cultures." And *Ex corde Ecclesiae* 25 notes that "in most Catholic universities today, the academic community is largely composed of laity."

## Governance

The Institute makes a concerted effort to engage its faculty and staff in a common deliberation about its work and mission and the processes of governance that serve them. The chief manifestation of this collegiality is in the Academic Council, but also significant are the unofficial but frequent consultation by individual members of the Executive Team with their colleagues in the School, including individual members of the faculty and staff. **[7.2.1-3]**

The Board of Trustees of the Augustine Institute is composed of committed Catholics (and one non-Catholic Christian) who exercise fiduciary responsibility for and give wide-ranging counsel about the Institute's activities. Meeting quarterly at the Institute's offices in Greenwood Village, the trustees are provided information packages with the agenda of each meeting, financial statements, an operational report, and other pertinent materials. **[7.3.1.1]** The Board has four committees: compensation, governance, finance, and executive. The Finance Committee reviews financial statements prior to each quarterly meeting, and the Board's Executive Committee also holds a meeting prior to each quarterly meeting of the whole Board. **[7.3.1.10]** The Institute's President also offers monthly call-in meetings to which all trustees are invited. Throughout the self-study process, the trustees have been apprised of the Institute's progress toward re-accreditation. In addition, several members of the trustees were appointed to sub-committees of the Self-Study, and all trustees received a draft of this work in February 2020 and discussed it at its February meeting. **[7.3.1.2]**

The Board of Trustees includes philanthropists, business leaders, and educators from around the United States and Canada. Trustees are eligible to serve two terms of three years each, with their rotating replacement ensuring continuity of leadership. Prior to attending their first meeting, new members of the Board are given a handbook containing the essential documents that inform their work, including the text of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, the Institute's *By-Laws* and the Graduate School's *Strategic Plan*, the Job Description for Board members, and the Conflict of Interest Policy. Generally on the day of their first meeting, new trustees attend a half-day orientation session during which they are briefed by directors of the Institute's departments, including the Dean of the Graduate School. **[7.3.1.3]**

The essential tasks of the Board of the Trustees include the choice and evaluation of the Institute's President, the approval of the budget, and ongoing planning for and evaluation of the Institute's operations. The trustees are informed of all large contracts and commitments and, when it is advisable to do so, are asked to approve such measures. Otherwise, the day-to-day administrative leadership of the Institute, including the conferral of degrees and the hiring of faculty, is delegated by the Board to the President. **[7.3.1.4]** The Board of Trustees discussed and approved the Graduate School's current *Strategic Plan* at its August 2019 quarterly meeting. **[7.3.1.5]** The trustees sign a conflict of interest declaration each year. **[7.3.1.9]** It is the task of the Governance Committee to evaluate the work of the Board itself. It is typical for the quarterly meetings to have time designated for a report by the Governance Committee, but the May meeting is when the annual

evaluation is presented. [7.3.1.11] The Executive Committee of the Board evaluates the President annually during the summer months, with the evaluation being received at the August meeting. [7.3.1.12]

Due to the size of the Board of Trustees and the complexity of the Augustine Institute, recent quarterly meetings of the Board have tended to focus on a small number of issues of high strategic importance. Few of these matters have directly concerned the Graduate School. Although the Board consistently receives reports from the School and discusses them periodically, it would be helpful to the School's continued growth and success if there were to be a special effort made to focus on its needs. Accordingly, it is a recommendation of the self-study that the Board should constitute a permanent subcommittee devoted to the oversight of the Graduate School of Theology, with special attention to strategic planning and evaluation. This function of this subcommittee would be to assist the Academic Dean in the strategic direction of the School, especially by helping to align the School's strategic priorities and needs with those of the Institute as a whole. [See recommendation IV; cf. standards 7.2.3, 7.3.1.6, and 7.3.1.10]

The Executive Team provides administrative leadership for the Institute. Directed by the President, the team includes eight other members, one of whom is the Academic Dean, *ex officio*. The Team meets weekly on Mondays, to discuss the provisions of its defining objective—set semi-annually at dedicated strategic planning and evaluation sessions—and whatever additional agenda items are submitted by Team members prior to the meeting. Currently composed of three women and six men, the Team represents each of the major departments of the Institute and collectively oversees major questions of management and personnel. The members of the Executive Team are evaluated annually by the President during the summer months. They are in turn expected to perform annual written evaluations of their direct reports. [7.3.2]

The faculty of the Augustine Institute's Graduate School of Theology participate in governance through the regular meetings of the Academic Council. The Council initiates all changes in curriculum, evaluates the curriculum annually through its academic assessment function, and has an advisory role in the strategic planning process. In all of its activities, the Council strives to proceed by consensus. Minutes of the Council's meetings are kept by one of its members acting as secretary. [7.3.3] The Institute makes no provision for the formal participation of its students in governance, but regularly surveys them about their experience of the program. [7.3.4]

#### **Recommendation**

**IV.** The Board of Trustees should constitute a permanent subcommittee devoted to the oversight of the Graduate School of Theology, with special attention to strategic planning and evaluation. [7.2.3; cf. 7.3.1.6 and 7.3.1.10]

#### **§1.4. Institutional Resources (Standard 8)**

Of all the General Institutional Standards, it may not be overbold to surmise that this one—imposing in its length and complexity—is the most likely to undergo major renovation and to emerge at the summer 2020 biennial meeting of the ATS in a dramatically different form. We shall, therefore, exercise the freedom first to address all of its parts save section 8.2 on financial resources, and then to turn to that section so that it receives the careful treatment that it deserves.

#### **Personnel and Institutional Environment**

In the course of 2019, the Institute has made several important strides in the area of human resources. Late in 2018, the Institute engaged an independent human resources firm, G&A Partners, for a one-year contract beginning in February 2019 to provide consulting services which included the assignment of a part-time liaison. The first achievement that resulted from this arrangement was the review of the *Staff Handbook*. This handbook includes all of the relevant policies for discrimination and harassment, along with other important matters such as acceptable use of technology. **[8.1.2]** In the Winter, a comprehensive review of salaries across the Institute was undertaken, with the result of compensation changes for a number of employees. Later in the year, a revision of the evaluation procedure was accomplished, and evaluations were gathered from all managers into a new central virtual file. In the Fall, an inventory of job descriptions was completed. **[8.1.3]**

As the one-year contract with G&A was coming to a close, the Institute's Chief-of-Staff conducted a review of the human resources function. This review was performed with the assistance of a senior human resources professional from New York who is a member of the Institute's Board of Regents (an unofficial advisory body composed of former trustees and consistent major donors). Upon presentation of her report, the Executive Team accepted her finding that the human resources function should be divided between a managerial position that oversees compliance, complaints, and other employment processes—the responsibility of the Director of Human Resources who began in December 2019—and an executive-level role overseeing the company's culture and communications. That function was assigned to the Chief-of-Staff, whose first work in that area was to constitute the St. Monica Advisory Team, a body with a membership representing each of the Institute's major departments, including remote and part-time employees.

Also during 2019, the Institute has refreshed its monthly all-staff meetings, which are recorded for viewing by remote staff, and supplemented them with a newsletter, *Narratio*, which contains notices of birthdays, employee biographies, introductions to the departments of the Institute, and letters from the President and the Chaplain. In addition to these achievements that concern process, communication, and culture, the Institute continues to maintain the St. Monica Fund, a mutual assistance fund that provides financial help for employees who face unanticipated challenges, usually in the area of health care expenses.

And, as has been mentioned, the spiritual support of the Institute’s chaplain and ready access to the sacraments is central to its identity as a Catholic institution. [8.1.1]

The decision to institute a new advisory council was prompted, in part, by responses by employees to a reorganization accomplished in the spring of 2019. The major component of that reorganization was a new approach to providing technical support to the Institute’s FORMED.org platform. The platform was originally built as proprietary software and enjoyed good success for its initial launch and first several years of operation. By its fourth year of service, however, the original platform had become too expensive to maintain compared to the cost of newly-available third-party-hosted solutions. The decision to move to a third-party solution entailed the reduction of the Institute’s technical staff. That change, coupled with necessary changes in the development office, led to a reorganization that was experienced as abrupt and confusing by some employees. In the wake of that process and aided by the findings of an institutional audit conducted by a Denver-area trustee and another outside consultant, the Institute created the St. Monica Advisory Team, which functions as a collective ombudsman for the employees, who have been encouraged to bring concerns about the Institute’s culture to its members. [8.5.2]

### **Physical Resources**

In November 2017, the Augustine Institute purchased the property where it resides through a wholly-owned subsidiary, Augustine Properties, and with the help of a private mortgage provided by the foundation of a benefactor. In 2019, the Institute refinanced that private note; the building’s debt is now held by the Institute’s principal banking partner, the Denver-based *FirstBank*. Through the process of purchasing the building, the Institute maintained the services of the management firm that had previously owned and operated the building, the Sperry corporation. Today, Sperry continues to handle the building’s tenant relations, ongoing expenses such as taxes and utilities, interior and exterior cleaning and maintenance, and security. Augustine Properties is managed by the Institute’s Executive Vice President; its standard procedures include the setting aside of a reserve fund to cover major repairs and systems’ replacements. The financial statements of Augustine Properties are incorporated into the Institute’s official financial statements, which are given independent scrutiny annually during the Institute’s audit.

The Institute’s Graduate School of Theology makes use of spaces throughout the building, from the chapel and library on sub-basement level b2, to the classrooms on basement level b1, the café on the first floor, and the faculty and staff offices on the third floor. These spaces are commodious and well-maintained. Nevertheless, the faculty observed in the School’s *Strategic Plan* that our “lack of a campus with a distinguished academic ambiance may prove something of stumbling block” to the work of recruitment to the on-campus program. The plan suggested various improvements in the building, such as moving the chapel to the first floor, modifying the atrium, and providing a dedicated student lounge. It is a

recommendation of this self-study that the Institute endeavor creatively to respond to these requests from the School's *Strategic Plan*. [See recommendation V; cf. 8.3.3]

### **Cooperative Use of Resources**

The only contractual arrangement in which the Institute is involved for the cooperative use of resources is with the Cardinal Stafford Library of St. John Vianney Theological Seminary. It will be discussed below, in the section of this report that treats Standard 4: Library and Information Resources. [8.6]

### **Information and Instructional Technology**

Although it lives within an organization that employs a wide array of software platforms and technical solutions, the School has relatively simple needs in information and instructional technology. For academic support, the School has worked with Blackbaud's Education Edge for many years and is currently implementing a long-awaited upgrade. When the data transfer is fully-accomplished—sometime early in 2020—the School will enjoy a single platform for all communications with students from initial contact through alumni status, with integrated admissions, billing, and registration functionality. The Blackbaud system in its current form already allows the School to maintain the data that it needs for operations, planning, and reporting; the upgraded system will make access to that data wider and easier. The technological needs of the faculty and staff are supported by a spare but responsive technology team consisting of the Chief Technology Officer and an on-site contract employee from Optimum Networking. Hardware is renewed on a regular schedule and access to the full suite of office software tools is ensured, with faculty and staff receiving the training and support they need to navigate these applications with ease. [8.4]

On the side of instructional technology, both faculty and students enjoy the resources and training that they require. Online classes are made available to students through the *Canvas* platform, which has a robust help page; the Registrar is the first line of support for distance students, with one of the professors who has an acknowledged expertise in the area serving as the official administrator and fallback support. In general, reviews of the *Canvas* experience are positive, in large part because of the quality of the videos produced by the Studios team, hosted by Vimeo, and uploaded to *Canvas*. The one area of instructional technology where there have been challenges is with video conferencing, which is used regularly by the faculty. After a study of the various options, the School has switched its video conferencing to the Zoom platform in 2020. A recent student survey generated responses that focused on the use made of technology rather than its technical features; that survey data will be examined in the context of sections treating instruction. From past surveys, we have benefited from requests that have had to do with the work of the video team and have resulted in new camera placements, changes to classroom lighting, improvements to microphones that give coverage to the students in the classroom, and heightened attention to the quality of

the view of the white board. The surveys have not registered a significant number of complaints about *Canvas* or our ability to support students’ use of it. **[8.8]**

**Financial Resources**

As discussed above, the Augustine Institute considered as a media company, and the Graduate School of Theology considered as an accredited school share a single life. And as sharing a single life, these two parts share the financial, fundraising, and administrative functions that circulate the money that supports the mission. In its letter granting initial accreditation, the Board of Commissioners asked for a follow-up report that would “clearly differentiate the needs and resources of the graduate school from other programming of the Institute.” And it was, to be sure, a reasonable request, especially in light of the provision of this standard that a “larger institution should provide adequate financial resources to support the mission and programs of the theological school” (see standard 8.2.1.5). The finding of the self-study on this point is mixed. On the one hand, the “mission and programs of the theological school” are well-supported, by any measure, especially when viewed in the context of the general recession confronting graduate theological education. On the other hand, this self-study will recommend that this support be placed on a more formal footing. It should be noted, however, that the School’s posture with respect to the Institute as a whole is fundamentally one of gratitude.

It has been noted that the Institute’s property at 6160 S. Syracuse Way is held and managed by the wholly-owned subsidiary corporation, Augustine Properties. The management of Augustine Properties ensures that the asset is maintained and protected (see detailed financial statements for Augustine Properties). The challenge for the Institute has been the maintenance of a cash reserve appropriate to a corporation of its size. Accordingly, a recommendation of this self-study is that the Institute’s next budget (FY2021) and its accompanying three-year revenue projection include a plan to accumulate a cash reserve that will ensure “the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.” **[See recommendation VI;**

**8.2.1.1]**

The following table supplies data about the School’s revenue over the past five years:

Year ending	Gross Tuition Income	Scholarship Expense	Net Tuition Income	Annual Growth of Net Tuition	Discount Rate
6/30/2015	\$ 1,189,406	\$ 129,542	\$ 1,059,864	n/a	11%
6/30/2016	\$ 1,399,994	\$ 218,399	\$ 1,181,595	11%	16%
6/30/2017	\$ 1,633,535	\$ 304,942	\$ 1,328,593	12%	19%
6/30/2018	\$ 1,981,848	\$ 347,494	\$ 1,634,354	23%	18%
6/30/2019	\$ 2,109,740	\$ 377,676	\$ 1,732,664	6%	18%

For the current fiscal year (ends 6/30/2020), the budget took the actual revenue figures for fiscal 2019 as a basis for the projection and assumed a growth of 6%, half of which would be attributable to the 3% increase in the price of tuition and half to organic growth. Those projections are:

Gross Tuition (FY2020)	\$2,170,000
Scholarship cost	\$370,000
Net Tuition Revenue	\$1,800,000

At the year's midpoint, it appears that the School will experience a slight short-fall from those projections, or, perhaps meet the gross tuition number but fall slightly short of the net tuition revenue number. There are several factors that account for the result, including the increase in number of online students graduating from the program, but the most significant one is the smaller than expected entering class of online students beginning the program in June 2019 (20 new students compared to 36 in each of the two previous Summer terms). The gravity of this problem was noted immediately, and a strong marketing and recruiting effort led to the successful attainment of our goal of 68 new online students for August 2019, that is, the Fall term. The number of students beginning the M.A. program in January 2020 is a very encouraging number that exceeded the goal of 40. The immediate conclusion that presents itself is that the School does enjoy a "stable and predictable source of revenue" from tuition, but that the labor of achieving that revenue is neither an easy one nor without risk of failure. As will be discussed in a later chapter, the School operates in a market in which there is significant pressure from competition, some of which is competition with respect to price.

**[8.2.1.2]**

Considered as a line of business, the School operates prudently. In the last fiscal year, the School's net revenue nearly met expenditures before the recognition of fundraising support, which was the anomalous result of two senior members of the School having had much of their salary cost assigned to curriculum projects outside the School. In the current budget, the School was allocated an amount of fundraising support equal to the anticipated cost of its scholarships, thus \$370,000, which represents less than 10% of the overall fundraising budget of the Institute. This budget allocation makes sense in light of the School's overall expenses being roughly equal to its anticipated gross tuition revenue. The difficulty or cost of that allocation was that in order to align its expense structure with the constraint imposed by the general budget, the School had to cut a number of non-essential academic expenses—including conference attendance costs, additional funds for subscriptions and books, and a guest speaker series—on the order of \$40,000. Over the long term, however, it is advantageous for the School and for the Institute that the academic culture of the School be a vibrant one, which is why the School's *Strategic Plan* asked for assistance in this area, in these terms: "The faculty realizes that the School operates within the context of the Institute as a whole, and that the Institute's ability to fund these kind of non-essential functions ebbs and flows. We are also grateful for the Institute's provision of a competitive salary and benefits package for its faculty. The strategic task, then, is to work towards a model for budgeting for the School that incorporates advancements in this area." It is a

recommendation of this self-study, accordingly, that as a part of its budget process, the Institute engage in an open-ended conversation about the strategic considerations that should shape the annual expense allocation to the School as a business line, a conversation that should include members of the faculty, Executive Team, and Board of Trustees. **[See recommendation VII; 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.1.5]**

The School's *Strategic Plan* also asked for the creation of an endowment for scholarships, and a generous donation was received in the Fall. The occasion prompted the Institute to reexamine its endowment policy and to draft and to promulgate the Endowment Rules that are attached to this Report as an appendix. The Institute's current plan is to refrain from drawing investment income from the endowment until its principal has reached a permanently-restricted balance of \$1 million. **[8.2.1.4]**

### **Accounting, Audit, Budget, and Control**

One of the signal benefits enjoyed by the School is the superlative work of the Augustine Institute's finance department. The department is led by our CFO, who is a certified public accountant, and is staffed by accountants with the appropriate professional training and an impressive record of performance. The finance department handles all of the Institute's revenue processing, vendor and partnership payments, and payroll, and also provides the financial data required by the annual ATS Report. **[8.2.3]** Thanks to its finance department, the Institute has a long and distinguished record of compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and the relevant regulations, as the management letters attached to its audited financial statements attest (see appendices). The School's budget is constructed as a line of business within the general budget of the Augustine Institute. That budget is presented to the Board of Trustees prior to its May meeting, approved at that time, and closely monitored at the subsequent quarterly meetings (see Minutes of the quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees). The finance department provides monthly financial statements of actual revenue and expenses compared to budget for each business-line manager within the Institute.

#### **[8.2.2.1-3 and 5]**

The most recent three-year revenue and expense projection by the School was submitted to the Board of Commissioners with its February 2018 interim report on finances; the net tuition revenue budgeted for FY2020 was within 1.5% of the projection submitted a year before. The current assumption is that the School's operations are on a plateau for the next several years, with only modest annual increases in revenue and expenditures. The *Strategic Plan* includes a variety of requests for capital expenditures, but these have not been budgeted and will be undertaken only in response to donations. As part of the budget process, the three- and five-year projections for the School will be constructed, but as they have not yet been accomplished at this date, that task will be noted here as a recommendation. **[See recommendation VIII;**

#### **8.2.2.4]**

The School also benefits from the Institute's robust program of institutional advancement, under the leadership of its Executive Vice President for Strategic Advancement. The development effort includes the

active participation of the Institute’s President, who is its principal major gifts’ officer. The development program includes a monthly-donor component, the “Mission Circle,” with over 1,400 recurring donors at the time of writing. Planned and already underway is a vigorous effort to expand the Mission Circle to the size of 5,000 donors during the fiscal year 2020. The Institute’s annual fundraising goal is manageable compared to the size of its various constituent lists, for example, the 1 million registered users of its FORMED.org platform. There is a healthy culture of gratitude at the Institute, with, for instance, many managers participating in the annual Christmas card thank-you campaign. [8.2.4]

### **Recommendations**

**V.** The Institute should endeavor creatively to respond to the School’s request for improvements to the building that would accentuate its academic ambiance and functions. [cf. 8.3.3. and *Strategic Plan*, p. 7]

**VI.** The Institute’s next budget (FY2021) and its accompanying three-year revenue projection should include a plan to accumulate a cash reserve that will ensure “the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.” [cf. 8.2.1.1]

**VII.** As a part of its budget process, the Institute should engage in an open-ended conversation about the strategic considerations that should shape the annual expense allocation to the School as a business line. The conversation should include members of the faculty, Executive Team, and Board of Trustees. [cf. 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.1.5]

**VIII.** As part of its budget process in the winter of 2020, the School will produce three- and five-year projections of revenue and expenses. [cf. 8.2.2.4]

## Chapter 2

### The Graduate School as an Academic Community

*All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

John 15:15

The faculty, staff, and students who belong to the Augustine Institute’s Graduate School of Theology embrace a twofold mission: lovingly to receive and deeply to contemplate what the Lord has revealed, and joyfully to bring that saving truth to others (cf. *Dei Verbum* 1). It is this shared mission that constitutes the School as a community, in accord with St. John Paul II’s observation that a Catholic university’s unity “springs from a common dedication to the truth, a common vision of the dignity of the human person and, ultimately, the person and message of Christ which gives the Institution its distinctive character” (*Ex corde Ecclesiae* 21). This chapter will be a sustained reflection upon that mission, the common academic life that proceeds from it, and the participation in that life by faculty and students.

#### **§2.1. The Theological Curriculum (Standard 3)**

In understanding its mission to consist in a reverent keeping of the Catholic tradition and a generous handing on of its riches—most especially to lay men and women who wish to serve the Church’s mission of evangelization and catechesis—the School is responding to the call of the Second Vatican Council: “Let the laity devotedly strive to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth and let them insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom” (*Lumen Gentium* 11). In the service of this mission, the work of the School receives its organization and order from its curriculum, which is both a scheme of courses and educational goals and a set of practices that constitute its shared life of learning, teaching, scholarship, and apostolic activity.

#### **Goals of the Theological Curriculum**

As the School prepares its students to serve the Church’s mission, both of its graduate programs are structured by the twofold goal of making one’s own the theological wisdom handed down by the Church’s tradition and of transmitting that saving wisdom to the world. The two degree programs (M.A. in Theology and M.A. in Leadership for the New Evangelization) share programmatic goals in theology and evangelization that together emphasize the transformation of intellect and will required of the mature disciple who wishes to lead others in the life of discipleship. The goal of theological instruction commits professors and students to a

reception of the faith that illuminates conviction and directs action. The goal of instruction in evangelization similarly calls for an adjustment of vision to embrace the Church's call to mission together with a docility to the Holy Spirit, who is the primary actor in all evangelization (see *Programmatic Goals*). These common goals are supported by a suite of practices, ranging from the mentorship and internships enjoyed by the on-campus M.A. Leadership students, through the communal formation shared by all on-campus students, to the more attenuated but still rich sharing in our community by our distance education students. The School makes great efforts to enable distance students to participate in our community, whether by its policies of timely communication with students (see *Statutes* II.A.2), by the provision of opportunities to take week-long intensive courses on campus, by the regular sharing of their prayer intentions with our chaplain so that they can be remembered at the daily Mass, or by the formation provided by online interaction (see *Graduate Bulletin*, pages 22 and 33). **[3.1.1]**

Another feature of the curriculum that is common to both degree programs is its anchoring in Sacred Scripture. Believing with the Second Vatican Council that “the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology” (*Dei Verbum* 24), the School privileges the thoughtful and faithful reading of the Bible by requiring all students to begin with the course *Salvation History*. A sign of the course's importance is that although many transfer students are welcomed to the program each year, few of them are given exemptions from *Salvation History*.

The two degree programs diverge according to their respective specific goals. The Master of Arts (Theology) adds goals in Sacred Scripture and History and requires a course in Pauline Literature as well as two courses on the history of the Church. For students in the Theology program, these courses are the primary vehicles for the consideration of evangelization and the inculcation of the qualities of an evangelist and catechist. As the majority of Theology students are studying at a distance, it is understood that there are limits to the human and pastoral formation that they can be given. The typical distance student, however, is a mid-career professional in the field of evangelization and catechesis whose ecclesial role already provides much of that formation. Indeed, with some two dozen students in formation for the permanent diaconate and another dozen or more who are professed religious or priests, the population of distance students includes many who are already themselves formators. The M.A. in Leadership for the New Evangelization will be described in more detail in the next chapter. The formative components of this degree program are detailed in its programmatic goals, especially the goal for spiritual maturity (see *Programmatic Goals*). **[3.1.2]**

### **Learning, Teaching, and Research**

From the earliest days, the Church has privileged the prayerful and thoughtful consideration of what God has revealed, as St. Paul's exhortation to Timothy shows: “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim 4:13). It is, accordingly, with devotion that the School's faculty

addresses the work of learning, teaching, and research that together realize the goals of its degree programs and curriculum.

### *Learning*

A good way to gain an appreciation of the seriousness of the School's approach to learning is by considering the texts assigned in its classes. Among them, the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* have pride of place. In the courses *Salvation History*, *Jesus & the Gospels*, *The Creed*, *Mystagogy*, and *Moral & Spiritual Theology*—required of all students in both degree programs—the Bible and *Catechism* are read extensively, each almost in its entirety. In both cases, these essential texts are read in the company of important interpretive works (the *Catechism* is already a crucial interpretation of Sacred Scripture), whether ancient, medieval, modern, or contemporary. Those works include Joseph Ratzinger's trilogy *Jesus of Nazareth*, the *Meditations on Christian Doctrine* of St. John Henry Newman, selections from Fathers and Doctors of the Church, notably including St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Therese of Lisieux, and more recent works of scholarship such as Raymond Brown's *Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997), Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering's *Holy People, Holy Land: A Theological Introduction to the Bible* (Brazos, 2005), and Roger Nutt's *General Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Catholic University of America, 2017). As students move from the common required courses to the ones specially required of their degree programs and thence into electives, they find readings that take them deeper into the Church's tradition—such as the major constitutions of the Second Vatican Council and the major writings of the post-conciliar popes, or Patristic, Medieval, or modern texts by such writers as St. Basil, St. Bernard, and St. Teresa of Avila—or challenge them to be in conversation with contemporary writers who treat our present cultural and ecclesial situation or have contributed to important scholarly and public debates. Examples in the latter category include Cal Thomas's *Deep Work*, Sherry Weddell's *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Elizabeth Currid-Halkett's *The Sum of Small Things*, and Thomas Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos*. (See syllabi for the academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20)

#### **[3.2.1.1]**

The assignments in the five required courses shared by both degree programs privilege the close reading of primary texts. In *The Creed*, for instance, the essay assignments require students to read relatively brief but demanding texts and to analyze them carefully. The rubrics for the essays underscore the importance of ordered exposition and accurate writing (see syllabus for *The Creed*, Fall 2019). Similarly, in *Moral & Spiritual Theology*, students are asked to write two short essays that “demonstrate careful reflection on the relevant texts and make appropriate use of the concepts and methods introduced in the course” (see syllabus for *Moral & Spiritual Theology*, Fall 2019). And in *Salvation History*, the first essay assignment is governed by the rule “no quotations allowed, not even from the Bible,” in order to prompt students to focus on the quality of their argumentation (see “Paper Assignments,” *Salvation History*, Fall 2019).

This kind of disciplined reading and writing—and, in some courses, public speaking—is expected throughout the curriculum, with some elective courses being especially demanding in this regard (see, for example, the syllabus for *Virtue, Happiness, and the Common Good*, Fall 2018). It is worth noting in this context that the faculty have often discussed the trends of weakened habits of attention and a less-satisfactory liberal arts preparation, both of which have been increasingly manifest in students over the past five years. One fruit of those discussions was the resolution that faculty should “remember that less is often more in theological studies, that a slower pace of study (e.g. more deliberate reading) may lead to more lasting gains of comprehension” (See Academic Assessment Memorandum of 12 February 2018). On balance, it is the faculty’s conviction that most of our students need more to improve their basic skills of conceptual analysis, criticism, and constructive synthesis—especially as those skills are honed by close reading and careful writing—than they need to gain skills of scholarly research. Or, rather, that the skills of scholarly research of which they stand in need must be founded upon necessary work at the more basic level that was once accomplished in undergraduate liberal arts instruction. Accordingly, most research assignments are placed in courses later in the curriculum sequence or in electives. **[3.2.1.2]**

As will be discussed immediately below, assignments are often targeted at the needs of our students to reflect deeply upon their own faith commitments and to prepare concretely for the ministry experiences that await them or in which they are already engaged. **[3.2.1.3]** The School’s work of academic assessment is an important manifestation of its commitment to ensure the quality of its program, and it will be treated in the context of the Educational Standard in Chapter 3 of this report. **[3.2.1.4]**

### *Teaching*

Of the duties of the professor at the Augustine Institute, teaching comes first. Excellence in teaching is ensured by the evaluation of faculty teaching being “the weightiest of the criteria for faculty evaluation,” with the explicit understanding that such excellence “proceeds from the earnest cultivation of wisdom,” is nourished by “seeking that wisdom in prayer,” and manifests itself in, among other characteristics, “respect for students and concern for their individual needs, especially as manifested in prompt and courteous communication with students and the timely and thorough evaluation of their work” (see *Statutes*, II.B.2). Student surveys routinely include attestations of gratitude such as these: “I like the ‘vibe’ at the university [sic]. It’s very welcoming and warm”; “the generosity and flexibility of professors and staff helping me to achieve this degree is amazing. There is an understanding that life is happening outside of just attaining this degree”; and, “Often in classes, another student will share what they [sic] are doing in their parish/school/diocese etc. and I’ve been able to bring those ideas back to my own school” (from the Self-Study Student Survey, Spring 2019). It can be affirmed with confidence that the faculty’s teaching is characterized by high professional quality and a warm generosity of authentic engagement with students. **[3.2.2.1]**

Assignments also regularly take account of the different educational backgrounds of the students as well as of their ecclesial roles and contexts. In the elective course on the writings of St. Luke, for example, students are given the choice between a research paper conforming to professional scholarly expectations or an essay on the mysteries of the Rosary that are narrated in St. Luke's Gospel. To write the latter essay requires a substantial work of reflection and composition, but does not take students deeply into scholarly literature, a journey which some of our students find far afield from their pastoral ministry (see syllabus for Luke/Acts, Fall 2019). In general, students seem to choose their electives based upon their backgrounds and ecclesial commitments, with teachers, for instance, often taking electives in philosophy or Scripture and youth ministers and catechists choosing courses from the leadership degree. In the leadership courses, assignments are regularly tailored to the students' work, such as this one from the course *Discipleship and Christian Life*:

**Developing a Plan for Evangelization or a Pastoral Plan for Missionary Discipleship**

\* You have a choice for this assignment to engage a document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on either Evangelization or Missionary Discipleship.

- Evangelization: *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States* (2001).
- Missionary Discipleship: *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization* (2017).

a) Provide an executive summary of the document you choose mentioning its main points and sections (no more than one page).

b) Each document has a set of goals [Evangelization: Three goals and objectives; Missionary Discipleship: Six Dimensions for a pastoral plan]. *Either* evaluate a current "ministry" or apostolic work you are familiar with at your parish (or some other "ministerial" setting) *or* construct a plan for a new apostolic work at your parish (or some other "ministerial setting").

c) Provide explanations for why you think your plan will be the most effective way to invite and lead people to a life of deeper discipleship to Jesus Christ. Be as thorough as you can in the descriptions of the elements of your plan, including possible challenges you might encounter. You are welcome to incorporate related aspects from other documents engaged in class.

As the use of technology in our instruction will be treated in the response to the Educational Standard, it will not be discussed here. [3.2.2.2]

One of the distinctive features of the School's curriculum is that the majority of its courses are required—8 of 12 in the M.A. (Theology) and 9 of 12 in the M.A. in Leadership. Each of the required courses is taught in a tradition that reaches back, in one way or another, to the Institute's founding. These courses, which total 12 in number, are the common property of the faculty and provide the major matter for discussion during the annual cycle of academic assessment. Changes to the array of required courses are rare. The 2013-14 academic year was the last occasion on which wholesale changes were made; those changes followed from the decision then made to reduce the number of credit hours required for the M.A. degree from 48 to 36. During the current academic year, the decision was reached to reduce the course *Theology of the New Evangelization* to elective status (see Minutes of the Academic Council, 14 November 2019). At the same

meeting, the faculty determined that the regularly-offered elective course *Faith & Reason* should be taught annually instead of biennially and should include additional material relating to the traditional concerns of courses in fundamental theology. The faculty also agreed that a new course on Christian anthropology should be developed to address questions on that subject that our students often raise. With respect to other elective courses, which are normally offered biennially, individual professors enjoy a great deal of freedom in their construction and execution; there is, however, a healthy culture of collegiality that keeps those courses from being merely the result of personal faculty interest. **[3.2.2.3]**

As has been said above, the School's practice of academic assessment will be treated in the response to the Educational Standard. This practice is one way the quality of instruction is kept in line with the best standards of scholarship and Catholic intellectual life. Another is the formal evaluation of its teaching provided by the annual round of the evaluation of professors (which takes into account student responses to course surveys) and by the healthy give-and-take of its collegial life. **[3.2.2.4]**

### *Research*

Research occupies an important but subordinate place within the curriculum, in accord with the School's understanding of the ecclesial and cultural context of its mission.

The role of research within the School's academic life is subordinated to teaching and learning by express commitment in the *Statutes of the Graduate School* (II.B.2): "The primary work of the School of Theology is teaching." It should be noted, however, that what the School expects of its faculty is a growth in wisdom that in other institutional contexts would be considered to be a kind of research (*ibid*): "As excellence in teaching proceeds from the earnest cultivation of wisdom, each faculty member will maintain a concrete plan of study directed toward Christian wisdom—especially as it has been expressed by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church."

The curriculum's approach to research is also shaped by our cultural context. Students today, at every level of instruction, are suffering from a lack of fundamental intellectual skills—in grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and in the kind of basic knowledge that constitutes cultural literacy—as well as from impairments to their cognitive lives brought about by their habits of using personal media devices. It seems wise to admit that we are not living in an age that is likely to produce great works of research for the simple reason that the essential foundations of advanced research are now found only in the rare woman or man.

Another factor shaping the School's approach to research is its mission to form men and women who will be or are teachers, catechists, youth ministers, or will occupy other posts of lay ecclesial service, most of which have little use for the specialized skills that pertain to advanced theological research. What our students do need is a broad and deep knowledge of Catholic doctrine and its sources in Scripture and tradition coupled with the ability to make that knowledge available to others by clear, effective, and compelling teaching. In short, the School teaches teachers, not researchers. And because, as Newman aptly

put it, “To discover and to teach are distinct functions” that are “not commonly found united in the same person,” the School’s priority has been to assemble a faculty whose first commitment is to good teaching.\*

It is nevertheless the case that the School encourages its faculty in their scholarly research and also encourages those of its students who aspire to scholarly endeavors to pursue and attain excellence in research. Certainly, an important aspect of that good teaching is that the teachers continually refresh their understanding of their subject matter by entering into conversation with current works in their field and deepening their understanding of the field’s essential sources. As will be documented below, the faculty is committed to that work of research and fulfills it admirably (see the response to **5.4**, *Faculty Role in Theological Research*). Student research is generally limited to those who pursue the M.A. in Theology. There is one obligatory research paper in the curriculum, assigned in Pauline Literature. Several elective courses require research papers. In recent years, several students have so excelled in their research work that they have presented papers at the annual conference of the Society for Biblical Literature; others have gone on to pursue Ph.D. training. The recent addition of a concentration in Sacred Scripture within the M.A. (Theology) program will provide a small number of students with additional opportunities for research (see *Graduate Bulletin*, page 15). Students may choose to write a Masters’ thesis in place of one of their electives. The faculty’s recent experience with the Masters’ thesis course, however, has been mixed and has led to the imposition of a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.7 for eligibility to the thesis. (For an explanation of the guidelines for the M.A. thesis, see the Assessment Memorandum for August 2019, the provisions of which were incorporated into the latest *Graduate Bulletin*, see page 14.) **[3.2.3]**

### **Theological Scholarship**

The Apostle’s admonition “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16) is a charter for theological scholarship. Christ’s word is indeed like the mustard seed: when planted in the soul and nourished by prayer and reflection, it grows freely and vigorously into a veritable tree of charity.

#### *Scholarly collaboration*

Academic life at the Augustine Institute is characterized by broad and fruitful collaboration. The first sphere of collaboration is with colleagues who are within the Institute but outside the School. With those colleagues, the faculty, staff, and students of the School share a common mission to help Catholics to understand, to live, and to share their faith. That common mission is anchored in the daily Mass that, as has been noted, is a privileged point of unity for all of those who work in the apostolate. The mission finds expression in many different outward works, from social media posts to long-form video programs, from individual books to a K-8 religious education curriculum, from articles, parish talks, diocesan retreats and

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\* John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), xl.

training sessions to the large network of parish leaders who use the FORMED platform and its programming. In all of this work, faculty and students collaborate with other staff members, and staff members are themselves often students or auditors of graduate courses. The line between scholarship and its popular expression is possible to draw, of course, but to draw it may obscure more than it reveals. Professor Christopher Blum, for example, has delivered papers at scholarly conferences on John Henry Newman and published peer-reviewed essays on his life and work, but has also given multiple popular talks on Newman, recorded an audio performance of one of his sermons that has been distributed through the Institute's Lighthouse Talks program, and edited two volumes of Newman's sermons for publication as devotional works for Advent and Lent that have been published by the Institute and promoted by its outreach teams, both to individual consumers and to parishes and dioceses. And this example could be multiplied.

A second locus of collaboration is with the School's students and alumni. With over 500 alumni spread through 47 states and a dozen foreign countries, and another 400 active students in its distance education program, the School has contacts in many different cultural and ecclesial settings. These contacts frequently lead to fruitful collaboration for the Institute's broader mission and, in turn, contribute to the work of recruitment of new students to the School. Recent examples of this kind of collaboration include Dr. Blum being invited to give retreat conferences on St. John Henry Newman to a men's group in the Midwest that was founded by a current student, Dr. Akers serving as the advisor to our students who are currently FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) missionaries and collaborating with the leadership of FOCUS for their continuing formation as missionaries, and some three dozen current students and alumni serving as pilot users of the Institute's *Why Believe?* apologetics curriculum during the 2018-19 academic year.

These students and alumni constitute a community that includes a wide range of cultural, ethnic, and ecclesial memberships. The Institute's Hispanic outreach—which typically employs one or more current students in its work—has an impressive record, from its participation in *Encuentro V* to its partnership with the Spanish publisher *BAC* for the world-wide distribution of its recent book *Tengo sed*. During the past year, the Director of the Hispanic Business Development has explored the prospect of collaborating with one of the School's distance students who is a lay leader in Ecuador. The School has a growing number of students and alumni in the Spanish-speaking world, thanks especially to its contacts with Hispanic ecclesial movements that have expressions in Denver (e.g. *Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, Disciples of Jesus and Mary*). Other international students and alumni of note include a contingent from Singapore one of whom is a high-level chancery official, a missionary priest in Ireland, and a missionary nun in Ethiopia. In each of those cases, the students either learned of the Institute through its FORMED platform or have subsequently made use of the FORMED platform in their local apostolic works. And, inasmuch as the FORMED platform contains various extensions of the School's scholarly activities—such as, notably, the *Lectio* Bible study programs and the *Symbolon* catechetical program (both of which have editions in Spanish)—that use is a fine example of our collaboration across national boundaries. **[3.3.1]**

### *Freedom of Inquiry*

In keeping with the consistent teaching and example of the Church, the School understands academic freedom to exist within the proper context of ecclesial fidelity (see *Statutes* II.E.1-2). Explicitly following the teaching of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* 29, the Augustine Institute recognizes that the teaching, scholarship, and apostolic work of its faculty members proceed within a context of freedom for the sake of service to the truth and the common good (see *Statutes* II.E.2). Indeed, the academic community at the Institute is characterized by a healthy freedom and even a spirit of innovation. Each faculty member submits an annual work plan to the Dean, plans that typically include both scholarly and popular activities. The principal administrative control in recent years has been to remind faculty members that their time and energy is limited; their creativity, however, is welcomed and encouraged. **[3.3.2]**

### *Involvement with diverse publics*

As has been noted, the faculty's outward works extend along a continuum from the scholarly to the popular, with many of those works being located in the middle of that continuum in service to ecclesial audiences of one kind or another, as this list indicates:

#### **A Sample of Recent Faculty Ecclesial Presentations**

Ben Akers, "Nurturing the Hungry Heart," Evening Keynote Address, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, Anaheim, California (May 2019).

Ben Akers, "Following in the Footsteps of the Crucified Lord," Lenten Day of Reflection, St. Michael's and All Saints Episcopal Church, Denver, Colorado (March 2019).

Mark Giszczak, courses on The Bible and Spirituality, The Psalms, and the Gospel of John for the Missionaries of Charities sisters, novices, and tertians, Park Street House, Calcutta, India (July-August 2019).

Scott Hefelfinger, Catholic Teacher Training seminars in Austin, Texas and Denver, Colorado (January 2019).

John Sehorn, "Priesthood in the Early Church," Convocation of the Presbyterate of the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire (May 2019)

Lucas Pollice, "How to Engage Parents in Sacramental Preparation," Gulf Coast Catechetical Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana (January 2019)

An example of the depth of this engagement is the work of Professor Michael Barber, a recognized scholar of the Pauline corpus; his co-authored volume *Paul, A New-Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Eerdmans, 2019) has been welcomed by a wide-ranging audience of scholars with different confessional commitments, and that volume, in turn, was indebted to scholarly papers presented at the *SBL* and other conferences. This scholarly work finds its immediate audience in Professor Barber's classes, but then also has found popular and ecclesial audiences in numerous public-speaking engagements, media appearances, and publications, notably his book *Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know*. The ecclesial groups to which Professor Barber has presented his work on soteriology include Catholic school teachers, diocesan priest convocations, lay

leadership groups such as Legatus, and parishes (see Professor Barber’s cv). This breadth of engagement is common for the School’s professors, who are widely in demand by the same kinds of ecclesial audiences and various local and national media outlets (see faculty cvs). The kind of engagement that the faculty have with these audiences is broadly-speaking catechetical and formational. In general, the Augustine Institute’s professors do not serve as subject-matter experts on topics that are being contested in the public sphere (e.g. gender and sexuality, social justice), but instead are regarded as valued presenters on education, spirituality, and pastoral theology. **[3.3.3]**

#### *Global awareness and engagement*

The truly catholic nature of the School’s instruction and outwards works has already been gestured to; here it will be discussed directly. In the curriculum, the works and figures studied include important theologians, missionaries, and witnesses who either come from or work in a rich variety of cultural settings, from the Eastern and Syrian Fathers through early-modern missionaries such as St. Jean de Brébeuf to Robert Cardinal Sarah. The student body and alumni community, as has been mentioned, is increasingly global; in recent semesters, we have welcomed new students from Dubai, the Philippines, and England. And the School’s Mother Teresa Scholarship—already the focus of a recommendation of this self-study—provides assistance to those who work in missionary fields whether domestic or international. A recent development in this vein is the pilot of a “School of Christian Doctrine” (the name is provisional) that will provide low-cost theological instruction through an online platform. Its aim is to make it possible for Catholics in Africa and Asia to gain some of the benefits of the School’s academic life, without requiring the same educational attainment or economic ability as participation in the Master of Arts program. The broader Institute is leading the way with engagement with the Hispanic world (including Portuguese-speaking Catholics), but the School hopes to follow the Institute’s lead in due time, perhaps through a Spanish-language “School of Christian Doctrine.” **[3.3.4]**

#### *Ethics of scholarship*

The provisions of the *Statutes of the Graduate School* (see especially II.E.1) secure the ethical character of the School’s work on a formal basis, but the stronger basis of that probity is in the common life of the faculty and students, a life rooted in prayer and shaped by charity. The School’s theological scholarship, whether professional or popular, does not extend into areas in which specialized ethical codes are required. **[3.3.5]**

## §2.2. Library (Standard 4)

The School views its library resources as an essential support of its curriculum and its work of learning, teaching, and research. Nevertheless, its faculty are mindful that we are at the end of an inflationary period in higher education generally and in academic publishing and library investment in particular. The 1980s and 1990s saw a fascination with the sheer size of library holdings, as universities vied for status on that basis, among other quantitative measures. Then, after 2000 came the rise to prominence of multi-national academic publishing endeavors associated with names such as Rupert Murdoch; these companies engaged in efforts of collectivization and were quick to provide online access to texts at fees that increased annually at rates far higher than the general rate of inflation. It can surprise few who know higher education that there have been many and insistent outcries against these trends in the past decade and mounting calls for open-access materials and the relaxation of copyright restrictions. And the now generation-long fear about the possible bursting of the higher education bubble finds many institutions ruing investments in resources that were then thought necessary but are now seen to have been luxuries. By placing the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* at the center of its program and surrounding them with the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and then in that context providing students carefully curated access to contemporary scholarship, the School pursues a prudent course of minimizing its exposure to unsustainable financial commitments.

This course of action is made possible by the generosity of the Seminaries of the Archdiocese of Denver, with which the School has a longstanding agreement for the provision of library resources that fulfill the requirements of ATS/BOC accreditation. The School's library of record is the Cardinal Stafford Library of the St. John Vianney and Redemptoris Mater Seminaries. In return for a monthly fee that is adjusted annually to take account of the School's use of library resources—especially access to electronic databases and interlibrary loan—the Cardinal Stafford Library provides excellent service and access to library materials for the faculty and for the subset of our students who wish to make extensive use of them. In addition, the School has its own private collection of over 9,000 volumes, the Archbishop Aquila Library, the contents of which are fully-catalogued and searchable through an online database. The School is also able to provide important resources to its students through faculty-curated materials made available on the course management pages of its courses or by link to sources available in the public domain.

### *Library collections*

The collection of the Cardinal Stafford Library is more than sufficient for the degree programs and research interests of the students of the Augustine Institute. With holdings of some 165,000 volumes, chiefly in philosophy and theology, including all of the major reference works commonly used by Catholic theologians, Biblical scholars, and historians, the Stafford Library is a model of careful curation. The library also participates in local consortia and in national interlibrary loan programs. In addition, the School's faculty

have been able to use nearby theological libraries—at the Iliff School and the Denver Seminary—to gain access to specialized monographs. The School’s students and faculty also have access to the Stafford Library’s digital collections, which include EBSCO Host, ATLA, SCELIC and Lynx. With all of these resources at their disposal, the majority of the School’s faculty, when surveyed, indicated that their library needs are being met. There was, however, a significant minority voice in the faculty survey responses, which pointed to the difficulty of obtaining the latest specialized monographs in certain fields. Certainly, these faculty members are encouraged to submit their requests for purchases to the Director of the Cardinal Stafford Library, and they have done so from time to time. As the Seminary faculty is larger and, for the most part, has a different set of research aims, it is to be expected that the Augustine Institute will need to supplement what the Stafford Library is able to offer. Each Augustine Institute faculty member has an annual book allowance to support his or her teaching and also an annual allowance to fund purchases for the Institute’s local collection, held in its Archbishop Aquila Memorial Library. As has been mentioned above, however, broader institutional commitments have necessitated that those allocations be modest in recent years. It is a recommendation of this self-study, accordingly, that beginning in fiscal year 2020-21, individual faculty members be encouraged to submit a budget request for purchases of specialized academic monographs, reference works, primary sources, or digital collections to the Dean’s Council so that a targeted request be added to the School’s annual budget. **[see recommendation IX; cf. 4.1]**

*Contribution to learning, teaching, and research*

It is well to keep in mind the context in which our libraries exist and function: the internet. Few can be unaware of the trend of libraries to be transformed into internet cafés, complete with coffee shops, and for book collections to be digitized, transferred to annexes, and sold off. Still fewer can doubt the hold exercised by personal media devices upon the learning habits of the younger generations, and their tendency to accept as authoritative the discussions and pronouncements of ephemeral videos more than reasoned argumentation on the printed page. A century-and-a-half ago, John Henry Newman asked, in the persona of a student, “Why need we go up to knowledge when knowledge comes down to us?” The phenomenon Newman confronted was periodical publication made possible by cheap paper. His reflection upon it is entirely relevant today:

We have sermons in stones and books in the running brooks; works larger and more comprehensive than those which have gained for ancients an immortality issue forth every morning and are projected onwards to the ends of the earth at the rate of hundreds of miles a day. Our seats are strewn, our pavements are powdered, with swarms of little tracts; and the very bricks of our city walls preach wisdom, by informing us by their placards where we can at once cheaply purchase it.\*

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\* John Henry Newman, *Rise and Progress of Universities* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 7.

Newman did not condemn this ready access to knowledge, but he labored to adjust our expectations about it and reminded his readers, then and now, that the attainment of wisdom requires not merely broad but persevering reading and, above all, discipline of mind.

In reflecting upon the role played by its library resources in the life of learning and teaching, the School’s faculty has been aided by the results of its self-study survey of alumni and students. The survey was conducted in the Spring of 2019 and enjoyed a healthy sample set, with 90 alumni respondents and 101 student respondents. Each survey included 15 questions on library services, many of which received substantive responses in addition to numerical ones. The overall picture given by the survey is consistent with the range of responses by students to the question, “How necessary do you think using the library is to your success as a student?”

<b>How necessary do you think using the library is to your success as a student?</b>	
<i>Response</i>	<i>Representative Comments</i>
Not Important 33%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I do not use a library. The professors either use books I buy or make documents available in <i>Canvas</i>.</li> <li>▪ All of my research was online.</li> <li>▪ I appreciate knowing it is there as an option however I typically order on Amazon. More than the resources I value the possibility of human interaction among other people within the AI community.</li> </ul>
Somewhat Important 27%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I have used the library once and am doing well in my classes. Being a distance education student, I don’t have easy access, though. More online resources would be great.</li> <li>▪ As a distance student, I have barely used the library in my time with AI. I may have used it for one class. Most of my professors provided all the resources and reading material needed for class. However, it is nice to know that I have access to it in case I really need it.</li> </ul>
Important 21.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During my time studying through AI I only wrote a few research papers, where it was necessary to find scholarly sources. (The majority of the papers were based on a specific source or sources) Although I did use libraries in my area, I think that the research papers could have been written using sources published on EBSCO-Host or other online venues.</li> <li>▪ I take the lists and/or resources named by the professor and gather the necessary books through inter-library loan or else I buy them. That’s the most successful for me.</li> </ul>
Very Important 18.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I have found that having access to a good library is very helpful. However, as a distance education student the online library is difficult to navigate and there has been little to no assistance in trying to figure out how to use the resources available there. Thankfully there is a local Catholic university that I have been able to use for books in order to write papers.</li> <li>▪ Introduction to the wealth of resources provided by Augustine Institute. The library should include a subscription to <i>Verbum</i>.</li> <li>▪ If you are wondering if our papers should require outside sources, I think they should, though this could be more challenging for distance students. Even though outside sources have not been a requirement in some of my past papers, I have found the use of other sources to be rich in learning for me. Perhaps you could provide an orientation to some on-line resources for distance students. Being a librarian, I have to opt for the use of the library being important in the life of every student, especially those who are studying at the Master’s level.</li> </ul>

Some general observations about the significance of the data can be hazarded.

First, the majority of the School’s students are satisfied with their access to library resources. And as responses to other questions in the survey show a high degree of satisfaction with the curriculum and instruction, something about the current practice must be working. In connection with this question, the practice is that of professors including in their *Canvas* pages a selection of ancillary or recommended readings

(and sometimes a library of those readings). Between required and supplemental readings, the School's students are being apprenticed to a rich conversation about the truth of the Gospel and how best to communicate that truth. That conversation includes many different scholarly voices, with tried-and-true classics such as Otto Bird's "How to read an article of the *Summa*" (1953) finding a place beside new classics such as Richard Hays's *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (2016). And those readings also include selections from or recommendations of canonical adversaries and conversation-participants who bring their insights, as it were, upon the slant (see "Recommended Historical Overviews" *The Church in the Ancient and Medieval World*, Fall 2019, and the admirable selection of recommended readings provided in *The Book of Wisdom*, Fall 2019).

Second, that some 1 in 5 students should desire additional library resources, especially access to online databases, and relish the prospect of additional research assignments is not surprising. Within the School's current student body are found several dozen individuals with truly impressive credentials and backgrounds, including several professors, a handful of physicians and surgeons, multiple engineers and lawyers, and a number of ordained clergy and professed religious with years of formation behind them. The School will not be quick to pass along to its entire student body the very expensive cost of a general subscription to a software platform such as *Verbum*. Nevertheless, there may be sufficient grounds for one or two paths forward on the basis of these data. The faculty can be encouraged to give optional research assignments for their courses; the School may want to explore the possibility of an honors track for students who already have advanced credentials. At this stage of reflection, neither of these options rises to the level of an official recommendation. They are, however, worthy of continued consideration.

A third observation based upon the data is that the School is not yet fully successful in its attempt to communicate with its students about the full suite of library resources that is available to them. It seems plain that nothing short of an inculcation of what those resources are and how they are best to be used will be required. That inculcation can begin with a fuller discussion of the subject in the *Graduate Bulletin*, and it is a recommendation of this report that such a treatment be added to the *Bulletin* for the academic year 2020-21. In a publicly-accessible document such as the *Bulletin*, however, it is not possible to share the login credentials for our various online resources nor access to interlibrary loan. Accordingly, individual faculty members will need to provide that information in each course (currently, the Registrar distributes that information upon request, unless individual faculty members choose to distribute it to their classes). It would, however, be unwise to present that information in such a way as to suggest that the mere perusal of additional library resources is what is being recommended. Wisdom, the sage tells us, is to be pursued "like a hunter" (Sir 14:22), which implies a trace to follow and a quarry to be captured. It is a further recommendation of this report, therefore, that the Academic Council discuss and approve a plan for encouraging in the students the integration of research skills with the pursuit of theological wisdom, and that this plan be enacted in courses begin in the Fall semester 2020. **[see recommendation X; cf. 4.2]**

### *Library Resources and Administration*

As has been mentioned above, the School relies upon the Cardinal Stafford Library and its staff for the fulfillment of the detailed requirements present in the current Standards of Accreditation. Although the annual subscription fee that the School pays to the Seminaries of the Archdiocese of Denver is considerable from the point of view of the School's budget and its use of the library resources, it is reasonable to suggest, and even to recommend, as has been done above, that additional funding for library resources be made available. As the School's current *Strategic Plan* indicates—and as shall be underscored in the response to Standard 6—the School is operating in a highly-contested business environment and facing stiff competition for students. The Augustine Institute has taken a principled stand within the world of theological distance education and will not be changing its emphasis on faculty-student interaction grounded in real collegiality, in spite of the high personnel costs that such a model requires. It would be a simple matter for a virtual university with low overhead costs to provide much more extensive online library resources for its distance education students. It may be doubted, however, whether such access to additional information would contribute in a positive way to the students' attainment of wisdom. To that end, the witness of the tradition is plain: "If you see an intelligent man, visit him early; let your foot wear out his doorstep" (Sir 6:36). It is on our doorstep that we seek to meet our students, and, by listening to them and responding to them on a footing of brotherly and sisterly equality, aid them in finding the path to wisdom.

### **Recommendations**

- IX.** Individual faculty members should be encouraged to submit a budget request for purchases of specialized academic monographs, primary sources, reference works, or digital collections to the Dean's Council so that a targeted request be added to the School's annual budget. [cf. 4.1 and *Strategic Plan*, p. 7]
- X.** The Academic Council should formulate a plan to offer students a more robust orientation to the library resources available to them, to revise the *Graduate Bulletin* to discuss library resources in connection with the programmatic goals of the curriculum, and to help students integrate research and writing skills more fully in their coursework. [cf. 4.2]

### §2.3. Faculty (Standard 5)

The School is inspired by the teaching of St. John Paul II that a faculty is bound together by “that *gaudium de veritate*, so precious to Saint Augustine, which is that joy of searching for, discovering and communicating truth” (*Ex corde Ecclesiae* 1). Accordingly, the School’s statutes, administrative practices, and common life are ordered to the maintenance of that joy.

#### The Office of the Professor

The faculty of the School responds to the hope expressed at the Second Vatican Council that “many of the laity will receive a sufficient formation in the sacred sciences and that some will dedicate themselves professionally to these studies” (*Gaudium et spes* 62). It is not by design that all of the full-time members of the faculty are lay men and women, but it is also not contrary to the School’s aims and purposes. At present, there are eight full-time faculty whose employment is governed by the *Statutes of the Graduate School* and who are full members of the Academic Council. In addition, there are three research professors, the Institute’s President, and four Visiting Professors of long-standing part-time participation in the School’s mission. Of the eight full-time faculty, all but one hold the doctorate, with the exception being the Director of the M.A. in Leadership, whose qualification for that role and for his teaching is the degree of M.T.S. together with two decades of parish and diocesan ecclesial service. The apostolic backgrounds of the various faculty—full-time and part-time—include leadership roles in multiple dioceses and archdioceses and in several different apostolates, undergraduate teaching and leadership, and missionary work. In addition, many faculty members have concurrent roles—advisory, volunteer, and, occasionally, as contract employees—in a broad suite of apostolic endeavors, from the national apostolate FOCUS to a local charitable outreach to the urban poor. Together, the faculty shares a habit of seeing the essential setting of their work as in the Body of Christ (see faculty cvs for details). **[5.1.1]**

As has been noted, the School affirms the essential role of freedom and creativity in the academic life of its faculty within the context of its ecclesial commitment (see *Statutes* II.E.1-2). **[5.1.2]**

The School’s faculty includes a healthy variety of backgrounds and experiences. Some faculty members are converts; others are life-long Catholics. They are from different parts of the United States and Canada and are in a range of ages from early 30s to mid-60s. The faculty includes one of Asian descent and another of Pacific Islander background, but in the past five years has twice attempted to hire Hispanic-American faculty without success (once by formal offer, the second time informally but with a formal offer ready). The School deeply values the contribution of women to its mission and numbers two women among its faculty, one full-time and resident, the other part-time and remote. In the past five years, three times the School has had offers of full-time employment to female candidates declined, in each case the choice stemming from a decision not to relocate to Colorado. **[5.1.3, and see recommendation XIX]**

As is affirmed by the *Statutes of the Graduate School*, the School's faculty meeting in its Academic Council has jurisdiction over its curriculum and its practices of teaching, learning, and research (see *Statutes* I.A.3). In keeping with its commitment to fostering the faculty's joy in the truth, the School endeavors to keep the number of required meetings to a minimum and to have those meetings proceed on the basis of consensus whenever possible. The deliberations of the Academic Council are recorded and demonstrate that its work and decisions shape the School's academic life (see Minutes of the Academic Council). **[5.1.4]**

The School's policies for the employment of its faculty are contained in two documents, the *Staff Handbook* of the Augustine Institute and the *Statutes of the Graduate School*. The latter document explains the relationship of the two to one another in these terms: "These statutes are understood to supplement and to specify the employment practices of the Institute as found in the *Staff Handbook*. Where these statutes are silent, the provisions of the *Staff Handbook* apply in full" (*Statutes*, prologue). The *Statutes* contain a full account of the employment status of the faculty members and the rules and procedures governing candidacy, evaluation, and promotion (see *Statutes* I.B-D). The School does not recognize tenure. Moreover, the Augustine Institute does not give guaranteed contracts to any of its employees, including the Institute's President. All employees of the Institute are at-will employees; in the case of the faculty, however, the annual cycle of faculty evaluation makes provision for the rhythm of academic employment and thus affords some additional protection for the faculty beyond what is enjoyed by non-faculty employees. It should be noted, however, that in the event of a necessary business decision (such as the closure of a branch facility or degree program or a forced downsizing of the Institute), this protection is not guaranteed (see *Statutes* I.B). **[5.1.5-6]**

Faculty leaves are provided for by the *Statutes* (see II.E.4). In the past three years, two faculty members have been granted semester-long leaves. **[5.1.5]** Faculty salaries and benefits are competitive with similar institutions in northern Colorado; the Institute offers a congenial situation for academic life, with courteous and professional support in human resources and office management. **[5.1.6-7]**

Faculty workload is calculated on a twelve-month basis each summer, with the expectation that faculty teach six or fewer courses each year, with no more than five preparations in a given year, and with a total of 150 students or fewer taking the classes for graduate credit (see *Statutes* II.A.1). Faculty members are active in the work of promoting the School through participation in the Institute's *Faith & Culture* podcast, writing for its *Faith & Culture* website, and providing video footage for its social media pages. When the Institute's overall financial performance allows, they are offered bonus compensation for that work, depending upon its volume and extent. When faculty are called upon to make non-trivial contributions to the Augustine Institute's media work (with a trivial contribution being a 30-second cameo appearance or a 2-minute voiceover), they are offered additional compensation for that work, whether in the form of stipends or royalties. In recent years, this participation has often been significant, especially as the Augustine Institute has launched new lines of popular books (the *What Every Catholic Should Know* series) and a K-12 religious education curriculum. Accordingly, the School's Strategic Plan has noted the faculty's contribution to the

Institute's media work and recommended that the size of the faculty be increased to allow that work to continue alongside the normal duties of the academic life:

Given the exemplary work-ethic of the faculty and the contributions made by faculty members to the general life and media apostolate of the Institute, it seems a good strategic goal to attempt to improve the student-to-faculty ratio; a goal of 15:1 seems attainable and appropriate, given the current phase of the Institute's growth. (The national average is 18:1; elite universities and colleges are often 10:1 or better.) (*Strategic Plan*, p. 7)

It is a recommendation of this self-study that the three- and five-year budget plans under construction reflect the goal of a 15:1 FTE student-to-faculty ratio. **[See recommendation XI; 5.1.8]**

### **The Tasks of the Professor**

This report has already had the occasion to affirm the primacy of teaching within the academic life of the School's professors. And it will address the subject of technology in the next chapter in the context of its response to Educational Standard 4 on distance education. At this point, it will be well to address the question of the faculty's role in helping the students to integrate the various aspects of the education that they are receiving, both the different kinds of theological instruction they are receiving (and instruction in subordinate disciplines) and also the various aspects of formation that they receive through the School, according to their degree program and participation as on-campus or online students.

This subject has been the preeminent one arising from the faculty's annual work of academic assessment. Thematic in those discussions has been the widespread difficulty of students to rise above the immediate topic before them and to take a synthetic view of the whole of the curriculum and of the Catholic theological heritage. This is a matter of some concern for the faculty because both degree programs place a premium on learning from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—both in its concrete teaching and in what may be called its theological style or mode—while the *Catechism*, for its part, presents itself as “an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition” (CCC 11). The difficulty that our students are facing is in rising to that synthetic point of view. According, a recent determination of the faculty addressed the subject:

Inasmuch as theological principles bear fruit only after sustained reflection upon them, it was agreed that the faculty should pay special attention to how they can offer to students the occasion to think more deeply about the principles that are common to the curriculum as a whole and to what might be called the intellectual custom of the *Catechism* (February 12, 2018 Assessment Memorandum).

Furthermore, the faculty intended the self-study process to include reflection on “the depth of engagement with theological texts and the synthetic grasp of Catholic theology by our students” (see Interim Report on Academic Assessment, September 26, 2018). That reflection has indeed been forthcoming and has already

achieved an improvement to the on-campus program that we believe will be salutary, an improvement taking the form of a new four-semester series of obligatory seminars for on-campus M.A. Theology students, beginning in the Fall semester 2020 (see *Graduate Bulletin*, p. 20). It is to be noted that the M.A. Leadership students already have an obligatory four-semester sequence of seminars that supports the integration of their studies and apostolic work. Concurrent to the implementation of those on-campus seminars, the School will relaunch its Theology 701 distance education seminar to support that same work of integration. It is, nevertheless, a recommendation of the self-study that the School include in its annual cycle of academic assessment for the years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 special scrutiny of this needed integration, by considering evidence of various kinds that will help to evaluate the students' progress with respect to programmatic goals in theology and evangelization, and, in particular, with respect to these "elements of understanding" or learning outcomes:

- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers "an organic presentation of the Catholic faith in its entirety" (CCC 18) by means of which we can grow in knowledge and love of God;
- Theology is a pursuit of wisdom—using both faith and reason—by which we study God and His Revelation, and consider all things in relation to Him;
- Evangelization proceeds by lived witness and proclamation;
- The principal agent of evangelization is the Holy Spirit; and,
- Evangelization is oriented toward the incorporation of men and women into the life of the Body of Christ.

**[See recommendation XII; cf. 5.2.2]**

A second area of faculty work that deserves special commentary is their contribution to student learning through advising. It is well, however, to divide the subject between consideration of the on-campus students and the distance students, for their advising needs are different and their ability to meet the faculty also differs widely. This subject will be treated in the context of the Standard 6, where it is the subject of a recommendation about career advising. **[5.3, esp. 5.3.3]**

This section, however, will be the best place to discuss the component of our academic life that answers to the standards on "faculty role in theological research."

The first point to be made in that connection is that the School does not wish its commitment to wisdom to be mere words. The faculty take with the utmost seriousness the directive of St. John Paul II that they are "called to be witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life, which evidences attained integration between faith and life, and between professional competence and Christian wisdom" (*Ex corde Ecclesiae* 22). The *Statutes* commit the faculty to labor "to perfect their minds as due instruments for the understanding and conveying of Divine Truth" (II.A.1) and, accordingly, direct faculty to submit an annual plan for reading and reflection in pursuit of wisdom (II.B.2). As has been noted above, in other institutional contexts, this

commitment and this practice would be considered to be activities analogous to or part of the life of research. In the School, they are considered to be the proper soil from which fruitful research can grow.

In the criteria for the evaluation of faculty, the *Statutes* speak in general terms about what may be included as works of research or scholarship in view of promotion: “Recognized scholarly endeavors include: the acquisition of a language or another auxiliary science or the completion of a degree program or certification; attendance at professional conferences; the presentation of scholarly papers and public lectures; publications; participation in public dialogue in one’s particular field” (II.B.2). This description is in keeping with the different backgrounds of the faculty, and with their professional commitments and roles at the Institute. In the criteria for promotion, works of scholarship are expected, but are not specified beyond the sentence just quoted above (see *Statutes* II.C).

The Augustine Institute supports the scholarly endeavors of its faculty by the provision of professional development funding sufficient to cover two memberships in scholarly associations and one trip to an academic conference per year. With some creativity, the funding can be made to cover two conferences. In addition, there is special funding for those faculty who wish to attend the annual *SBL* conference. There is a healthy culture of camaraderie among the faculty with respect to their scholarly endeavors, and a recent effort of gathering the faculty together to hear faculty papers—either before or after a conference presentation—has been met with enthusiasm.

#### **A Sample of Recent Faculty Conference Presentations**

Michael Patrick Barber, “The Ransom Saying (Matt 20:28) and Overlooked Cultic Imagery in Daniel 7: A Fresh Solution to an Old Problem,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* (November 2019).

Christopher Blum, “Aristotelian Epistemic Reserve,” paper presented at the *American Catholic Philosophical Association* annual meeting (November 2019).

Mark Giszczak, “Timber or Tinder? The Wood of Haggai 1:8–9,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* (November 2019).

Scott Hefelfinger, “The Virtue of Husband and Wife: Marital Friendship in Aquinas (With a Little Help from Homer).” Paper presented at the annual conference of the *di Nicola Center for Ethics & Culture* (November 2019).

Elizabeth Klein, “Ecclesiology in the Donatist Martyrdom Stories,” at the annual meeting of the *North American Patristics Society* (May 2017).

John Sehorn, “‘To Be His Own Special People’: Christology and Exegesis in 1 Clement,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* (November 2018).

The full-time faculty not on research appointments are eligible to receive honoraria for their academic publishing. In general, it may be affirmed that the faculty are encouraged in their desire to keep their scholarly tools sharp, and that the School’s teaching load, sabbatical policy, and academic resources enable them to

engage in research and to publish in accord with their personal goals in that area, as the table below indicates.

[5.4]

**A Sample of Recent Faculty Peer-Reviewed Articles or Invited Chapters**

Michael Patrick Barber, “Did Jesus Anticipate Suffering a Violent Death?: The Implications of Memory Research and Dale C. Allison’s Methodology,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (forthcoming).

Christopher Blum, “Nature and Modernity: Can One Philosophize about Nature Today?,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (2017) Published online October 2019 (doi: 10.5840).

Mark Giszczak, “The Rhetoric and Social Practice of Excommunication in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (forthcoming).

Elizabeth Klein, “Perpetua, Cheese and Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicity” in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28.2 (forthcoming Summer 2020).

John Sehorn, “Threading the Needle: Fear of the Lord and the Incarnation in St. Augustine,” chapter 3 in Ann W. Astell, ed., *Saving Fear in Christian Spirituality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Press, 2019), 76–101.

In addition to these and other articles, various faculty members have published notable books in recent years, including Professor Barber’s co-authored study of St. Paul, mentioned above, and Professor Brant Pitre’s co-authored *Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament* (Ignatius Press, 2018).

**Recommendations**

**XI.** The three- and five-year budget plans under construction should reflect the goal of a 15:1 FTE student-to-faculty ratio. [cf. 5.1.7]

**XII.** The School should include in its annual cycle of academic assessment for the years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 special scrutiny of the students’ integration of their studies and formation, by considering evidence of various kinds that will help to evaluation the students’ progress with respect to programmatic goals in theology and evangelization and to the specific “elements of understanding” identified in the text of the *Self-Study Report*. [cf. 5.2.2]

## §2.4. Student Services (Standard 6)

The School's students have in common a mature faith and a deep desire to serve Christ the Lord in the mission of evangelization and catechesis. They are otherwise a diverse lot. From a missionary nun in Canada to an attorney in Chicago, from Catholic school teachers and FOCUS missionaries to dozens of parish catechists, our students together represent almost every conceivable expression of apostolic life. At any one time, they come from over 40 states and a handful of foreign countries. Whether they relocate to Denver, come to Denver only for a week-long intensive course, or complete their studies without ever joining us on campus, they enrich our pursuit of truth and charity immeasurably. We are honored to serve them in their pursuit of theological wisdom.

### Recruitment and Admission

Foundational to the work of the School's Office of Admissions is the conviction that what awaits the prospective student is a process of discernment (see *Graduate Bulletin*, p. 24). That process is essentially conversational. It begins, for some 25% prospective students, in a word-of-mouth contact with one of our current students or alumni. Another 25% or more prospective students first encounter the Augustine Institute through our FORMED.org platform and the catechetical video programming it offers. In other cases, the prospective students have met one of our students or staff at the annual FOCUS conference or have read a book or listened to an audio talk written or recorded by one of our faculty. Prospective students, therefore, typically come to us already knowing something about the Institute. The process of recruitment attempts to broaden and deepen that acquaintance as much as possible. The means used to that end include an informative website that gives access to sample lectures, webinars and phone conversations with faculty and admissions staff, and complimentary participation in an abbreviated online course. For potential on-campus students, many of whom come recommended by undergraduate faculty who are themselves knowledgeable about our program, there is the City of God Seminar in June, which gives a short but intense experience of our on-campus life. And throughout the year, the Department of Admissions hosts visit days, which are attended by prospective on-campus and distance students alike. The Director of Admissions works with the Institute's marketing department to ensure that the website, emails, and social media posts are closely aligned with the School's values. A special effort is made to ensure that the cost of the program is easily found on the website (see <https://www.augustineinstitute.org/graduate-school/admissions/tuition-and-fees/>) The site's FAQ page includes a measured statement of what graduates typically do with their degree (<https://www.augustineinstitute.org/graduate-school/admissions/frequently-asked-questions/>), and, in general, the message that we offer to prospective students about their employment opportunities in the Church is simple and clear: the jobs are plentiful, but they are chiefly rewarding in spiritual ways rather than material. [6.1]

In recent years, the School has seen an average of 160 students join the program each year, with some 20 on-campus students beginning the program in August and the online students beginning either in August, January, or June. Today, as is well known, most prospective students engage in extensive window-shopping through the internet before contacting an institution, and of those who do make initial contact, many discern out of the process before its completion. In accord with that trend, the Office of Admissions processes on the order of 200 complete applications in its annual cycle of work. That process includes scrutiny by a two-person faculty admissions committee, assisted by the Dean and Associate Dean when necessary, and a 20-minute telephone or video-conference interview with each applicant who does not come to Denver for an on-campus interview. The process takes into account undergraduate transcripts (and, in some cases, graduate transcripts), three letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and a writing sample. The number of applicants that is denied admission outright is a modest but increasing one. The usual determining factor has been poor quality of writing. In the case of applicants who do not meet the 3.00 cumulative grade point average minimum, some will be offered conditional admission, which means that they are invited to study as non-degree-seeking students for two courses; if they attain a 3.00 cumulative gpa in those courses, they are invited to degree-seeking status. With so many new students each year, it is impossible to screen with perfect effectiveness. The first three courses, accordingly, are especially demanding and closely monitored. When a student is plainly not able to accomplish the work in one or more of those courses, he or she will be disinvited from the program—in most cases, a full refund of tuition has been accorded to those thus disinvited. It is a mark of the effectiveness of the admissions process that the failure rate is on the order of 2%. [6.2]

As has been mentioned above, the School's Mother Teresa Scholarship is its principal outreach to potential students serving in lower-income and missionary contexts. The St. Paul Scholarship, just inaugurated in the current academic year, will also help candidates from those settings who are full-time employees of the Church and receiving compensation that puts their family income below the median values for their state of residence. [6.2.4]

### **Student Services, Financial Aid, and Borrowing**

The School is blessed to be able to provide its students with service that is authentically personal while also conforming to the highest ethical and professional standards (see *Graduate Bulletin*, pages 32-34 for the essential policies, including complaints and grievances). With almost 500 active students, the provision of that service is time-consuming and energy-intensive, and with only a single full-time employee to handle most of the students' administrative needs, it is also efficient.

The Office of the Registrar is the principal locus for student academic services. The registrar keeps all student records, with cloud-based electronic backup storage and paper files (essential ones in fireproof storage) ensuring their security. Academic policies and degree-program requirements are clearly presented in

the *Graduate Bulletin* and on the various pages of the School’s site. Those requirements are in keeping with national norms. The School anticipates a transition in the Office of the Registrar, the current incumbent of which is planning to relocate out-of-state sometime in 2020. In anticipation of that transition, the School has produced a job description for a Director of Student Services position with expanded responsibilities. It is anticipated that the gains in automation that are expected from a software upgrade currently underway will make the record-keeping burdens of the Office of Registrar more manageable and will allow the new Director of Student Services additional time to accomplish strategic goals such as improved communication with alumni and an improved process for student career advising.

The cost of the School’s programs is consistent with that of peer schools. The immediate competitive landscape within which the School operates is indicated in this table:

School	Participates in Title IV	Published Cost of M.A. in 2015	Published Cost of M.A. in 2020
Ave Maria University	Yes	\$24,360	\$29,032
Augustine Institute	No	\$18,840	\$21,600
University of Dallas	Yes	\$28,120	\$21,190
Franciscan U. Steubenville	Yes	\$18,000	\$18,900
Christendom College	No	\$16,700	\$18,620
Catholic Distance Univ.	Yes	\$18,720	\$18,090
Holy Apostles	Yes	\$12,600	\$12,960

Several data are worth noting. First, the School has kept its annual rate of tuition increase to a modest 3%, which represents only the annual increase of its personnel costs and does not take into account other changes in its cost structure. Meanwhile, most of its peer schools are either lowering their tuition or raising it at an annual rate lower than the prevailing rate of inflation. Second, the School is almost alone among its peers in its decision to forego participation in Federal Title IV student loan programs; that decision stems from a commitment to be free for mission both in terms of the integrity of its theological instruction and with respect to the School’s goal of keeping its administrative costs low. Third, it is to be noted that these are published tuition and fee expenses. Schools do not normally disclose what students actually pay after discounts and scholarships have been applied. The cost of the Augustine Institute’s scholarship program has been approximately 18% of gross tuition in recent years.

The financial aid offered by the School is merit-based, mission-based, and need-based. The on-campus program is the principal locus of merit-based aid through the St. John Paul II program, which offers a limited number of full-tuition scholarships coupled with a paid internship. The School also offers a number of merit-based partial-tuition scholarships to on-campus students. All students are also eligible for the

School's various mission-based scholarships, although in fact most of the recipients are distance students. Those scholarships include, notably, the Mother Teresa Fund for students serving in areas of great evangelical need, which are typically in low-income communities, but in the past have included foreign missions and work on tribal lands in Montana. The School now offers two need-based scholarships, the St. Paul Scholarship, eligibility for which is restricted to students who are in the full-time employ of the Church or a recognized apostolate and are the principal bread-winners of their families, and the St. Nicholas Fund, which gives variable grants each semester upon demonstration of financial need to any student who has completed at least three courses in good academic standing. The programs are administered by the Registrar and the Bursar and are open to all students.

The School has a small student loan program, open only to full-time on-campus students. The number of students to have participated in the program since its inception is 27, only one of whom has defaulted. The program is administered by the School's Bursar; its structure and costs are plainly presented on the School's website (<https://www.augustineinstitute.org/graduate-school/admissions/student-loan-program/>).

The steady improvement of student services over time is a strategic emphasis for the School (see *Strategic Plan*, strategic objectives A and B, pages 6-7), in the first place for on-campus students. In keeping with the *Strategic Plan*, it is a recommendation of this report that the School steadily pursue improvements to its campus ambiance and amenities over the next three years. **[See recommendation XIII; cf. 6.3, but especially 6.3.2].**

## **Placement**

The School takes with the utmost seriousness its duties with respect to its students' career aspirations. It should be noted, however, that those aspirations vary widely, especially between on-campus students and distance students. With respect to distance students, some two-thirds of them enter the program already employed in the work of evangelization and catechesis. Others are pursuing the online program as part of formation for the permanent diaconate. Still others are studying for personal enrichment only or expressly in preparation for volunteer work. Distance students are, moreover, spread over some 45 states. Accordingly, the School's assistance to the placement of its distance students is chiefly informational. Nevertheless, that service is a real one. The self-study survey showed that 86 of 93 student respondents attested that they had received job announcements from the School; these are typically in the form of emails from the Registrar. Within the "Student Center" portion of its website, the School maintains a page of job listings relevant for its students (<https://www.augustineinstitute.org/job-listings/>).

### **An Effective Education**

A survey of 50 MA Theology graduates who completed the program between Summer 2017 and Spring 2018 showed that 44 were placed in positions for which the degree prepared them. 4 have not responded to survey, and 2 are in continuing education.

A survey of the 8 graduates of the M.A. in Leadership for the New Evangelization who finished the program in May 2018 showed that 7 of the 8 were placed in positions for which the degree program prepared them, regardless of whether those positions are compensated or volunteer. One placement is considered “other,” falling outside the vocational placement parameters.

The School’s placement efforts on behalf of its on-campus students tend to be personal. With approximately 20 second-year on-campus students each year, it is not burdensome for faculty advisors or the Deans to discuss career plans and aspirations with them, and those conversations are a regular feature of on-campus life. Nevertheless, gains can easily be made in this area, by better gathering and publishing of information about job openings, by a process of career advising administered by the new Director of Student Services (beginning Fall 2020), and by the creation of an alumni network to help current and prospective students know what the School’s graduates are doing and where they are located. It is, accordingly, a recommendation of this report that the School expand its placement and career advising resources through the re-articulation of the Office of Student Services in 2020 and, in particular, the creation and curation of an online job board. **[See recommendation XIV; cf. 6.5]**

### **Recommendations**

**XIII.** The School should work steadily to achieve the goals detailed in strategic objectives A and B of its current *Strategic Plan*, to strengthen the School’s on-campus program and academic culture. **[6.3.2]**

**XIV.** The School should expand placement and career advising resources through the re-articulation of the Office of Student Services in 2020 and, in particular, the creation and curation of an online job board. **[6.5]**

## Chapter 3

### The Degree Programs

*The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*

James 3:17

The Augustine Institute’s Graduate School of Theology orders its educational practices to its mission to help Catholics to know God more deeply and to share that knowledge with the world. This chapter treats those educational practices in detail, measuring them against the Educational Standard and the degree program standards that govern its two programs.

#### **§3.1. Our Approach to Education (The Educational Standard)**

For an educational program to achieve its goals, they must be shared by its faculty. Accordingly, the School’s priority is that its faculty enjoy a mutually-enriching pursuit of wisdom and charity (see *Statutes*, II.B.2). It is equally plain, however, that the program—understood broadly to include educational practices and administrative policies—makes manifest the goods shared by the faculty. A defect in the practices and policies of a program would indicate a defect in that common life.

#### **Degree Programs**

From its founding, the School has combined theological instruction with formation in the Christian life and practical training for lay ecclesial service. In the first three years of its existence (2005-8), the School experimented with an array of degree programs on a continuum between a highly-academic program in Sacred Scripture aimed at preparing students for doctoral work and an internship-based program for the formation of lay leaders. During the years of its initial exploration of distance education and the preparation for accreditation (2008-12), the School slowly winnowed its programs down to one, a Master of Arts offering a broad theological formation appropriate for many different vocational purposes. Upon taking the first steps toward accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting, the School learned that membership would require it to offer at least one “Standard B” program that would train students for ministerial leadership. In effect, this requirement asked the School to reach back into its own

experience to draw forth familiar courses and practices that had been set aside for several years. In Fall 2014, therefore, it began offering the Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization as a Standard B program. When full accreditation was granted in 2016, the grant covered both the Master of Arts (Theology), in its on-campus and distance versions, and the Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization as an on-campus program.

As has been noted above, the two degree programs share five courses, two in Scripture (*Salvation History; Jesus & the Gospels*) and three in Doctrine (*The Creed; Mystagogy; Moral & Spiritual Theology*). Each program has required courses of its own, three for the M.A. in Theology and four for M.A. in Leadership. Each program also has a different set of seminars required for on-campus students, and each has characteristic electives that buttress its required courses. After a relatively slow start, the Leadership program has become the more popular of the two for on-campus students; the Theology program is the only one available for online students, who are, however, welcome to take some of the Leadership core courses as online electives. In general, the Leadership degree appeals to students who are thinking primarily of parish-based vocational work, whereas the Theology degree appeals to students who wish to teach. **[ES.1.1.1]** Both programs have healthy on-campus communities numbering well over a dozen students at any time. **[ES.1.1.2]**

The program in Leadership will be discussed in detail below. Central to it is the requirement that students complete four semesters of internships in Denver-area parishes, schools, or apostolates. Together with the required Leadership Seminar, these internships contribute to the formation of the students and their training for vocational ministry. The courses specific to the Leadership program are designed to help the students to reflect upon those settings and experiences in a fruitful, theological way. **[ES.1.2]**

The Master of Arts (Theology) will also receive a dedicated discussion below. By virtue of adding courses in the history of the Church and on the Pauline corpus, together with a regular suite of electives in Scripture, Doctrine, and Philosophy, this program provides a broad theological education suitable for many different subsequent endeavors, including further study. **[ES.1.3]**

### **Our Campus in Greenwood Village**

The history of education could be told as the story of groups of friends seeking the truth together, with their teachers guiding that search and sharing in that friendship. One thinks of Glaucon and Adeimantus conversing with Socrates or Alypius and Nebridius with Augustine, but other examples could easily be found. Perhaps one unlooked-for advantage of the era of distance education is that it forces teachers and students to reflect anew upon the benefits of face-to-face instruction, learning, and fellowship. It is certain that friendship can be nourished through the various forms of modern communication we regularly employ in our work—and it can even sprout anew in digital soil—but it seems equally sure that the privileged place for an academic friendship is a campus. At the close of the nineteenth century, Richard Church penned an evocative description of how Hurrell Froude and John Henry Newman had grown in friendship when they were

youthful Fellows of Oriel College, Oxford: “intimacies of this kind grow in college out of unnoticed and unremembered talks, agreeing or differing, out of unconscious disclosures of temper and purpose, out of walks and rides and quiet breakfasts and common-room arguments, out of admirations and dislikes, out of letters and criticisms and questions; and nobody can tell afterwards how they have come about.”\* It is just this sort of spontaneity and freedom that we hope our campus in Denver offers, to our on-campus students primarily, of course, but to our students at a distance as well.

Our campus is a small suburban office building with a difference, and that difference is the School’s presence. As the visitor first ascends into the building’s atrium, she is greeted with a view of a monumental crucifix hanging above a gracious open space. The century-old piece was commissioned from German artists prior to the First World War by a parish in Connecticut; it was redeemed from storage by one of the Institute’s benefactors and restored before its ceremonial installation on September 14, 2018. Standing beneath the crucifix and looking up at it, the visitor has to her left the Tolle Lege café—where students and faculty regularly meet for planned and unplanned conversation, and to her right the offices of Augustine Institute Studios and the FORMED.org digital platform, where many students work or intern during their years of study. An open staircase ahead and to the left leads down to two basement levels. The first sub-floor holds the School’s two classrooms, one for seminars and the other the studio classroom where distance education classes are recorded. Also on the first basement level is the film studio and the distance education control room. The second sub-floor holds the Chapel of St. Augustine, where Holy Mass is offered daily at noon and various prayer meetings of differing levels of formality meet at the initiative of students or staff. The Chapel also contains a confessional where the Sacrament of Reconciliation is regularly offered. Also on the second sub-floor is the Archbishop Aquila Memorial Library, which contains study carrels and a seminar room. Looking up from the atrium, past the Crucifix, the visitor sees two levels above her. On the second floor, the Institute welcomes a number of Catholic apostolates and other tenants. On the third floor, the Institute has its main offices, with the faculty and administrative offices of the School occupying the north-east corner. The School is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on normal working days, and the faculty are generally present in their offices when they are not teaching, visiting a library, or traveling to give public lectures. Most classes are held once per week for three hours. Seminars and meetings with professors are typically scheduled during the period between the completion of Mass at 12:30 p.m. and the afternoon class, which begins at 2:00 p.m. Evening events are occasionally held, but these are increasingly offered at off-campus sites as well, notably the student home on Mercury Circle in nearby Lone Tree.

The common life of the campus in Greenwood Village is at the heart of the School’s educational mission. At the heart of this life is the ongoing conversation among the faculty and staff about their common practice as educators and scholars. This conversation ensures that distance education students belong to the

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\* R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years, 1833-1845*, ed. Geoffrey Best (1891; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 27.

faculty as a whole and not merely to the individual instructor with whom they happen to be taking a class in a given semester. The School is not a virtual community but an embodied one. The best way for students at a distance to experience that community is to join it during one of the three weeks during the year that week-long intensive courses are offered. In recent years, some 40% of online students have been able to make the trek to Denver for at least one of these optional weeks during their years of study. In order to facilitate that practice, the School offers a 33% intensive course scholarship to any online student who would otherwise find the cost of travel and lodging added onto tuition to be prohibitive. It is always a special delight for the faculty to meet their online students in person, and for those students to experience the faculty not as persons on a screen but as real men and women.

The conversation of the faculty is further shared with staff around the Augustine Institute, many of whom welcome students into internships or part-time jobs during their years of study. Whether those colleagues be in curriculum development, Hispanic business development, digital platforms, book publishing, or in the film studio, they are all participants in the broader mission of the Augustine Institute and, therefore, enhance the common life of the faculty and further augment the community life experienced by the on-campus students. Another important feature of our campus life is that it is regularly enriched by the participation of the other apostolates housed in the building—including notably ENDOW (Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women), Families of Character, Real Life Catholic, and Amazing Parish, as well as the Catholic Foundation of Northern Colorado—and by the many local visitors who come to the building for meetings or to participate in the liturgy. Regular local visitors include representatives from organizations or institutions that welcome our students as interns or employees, such as local parishes, schools, Christ in the City, FOCUS, and Catholic Charities of Northern Colorado.

The Augustine Institute's home in Greenwood village provides a fitting setting for the formation of our students because of the rich life that it fosters. To give that summary judgment, however, does not imply that our work of improving campus life is complete. One difficulty of maintaining a strong campus life is the tendency of on-campus students to drift into distance education. In some cases, this drift is unavoidable or even a positive development. In recent years, for example, several on-campus students have begun the program as full-time students but transitioned to part-time as they took advantage of full-time employment opportunities, entered into Holy Matrimony, or welcomed a first child into the family. In other cases, however, the drift into part-time and even distance status has been avoidable and, on balance, detrimental to the academic experience. Knowing of this trend, the School's faculty determined to promulgate a new set of expectations for on-campus students, which was discussed at length in the Academic Council and published in the *Graduate Bulletin* for the current academic year (2019-20). The implementation of the policy, however, was delayed until Fall 2020 so that prospective students could be made fully aware of it during the admissions cycle. The new policy distinguishes more carefully between distance education students—as all part-time

students will be designated beginning in 2020—and on-campus students, who must study full-time to retain their privileges:

So that full-time students may participate most fruitfully in this academic culture, they will register for a full slate of courses in each of four successive terms and complete the degree in two years, taking all but one of the program’s twelve courses during the Fall or Spring terms (the remaining course may be taken as a week-long intensive course or via distance education). Maintaining full-time status and a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 makes a student eligible for our merit-based scholarships, work-study positions, and student-loan program (*Graduate Bulletin*, p. 21).

The faculty is anticipating that substantial benefits to the on-campus culture will follow from this policy.

In addition to being for its own sake, the improvement of the School’s campus will also be an important help to the efforts of student recruitment. Although the School’s online students vary widely in age—from mid-20s to 70s—its full-time on-campus students are mostly within a few years of having completed their undergraduate education and expect or at least hope to find in a graduate program some of the communal features of that undergraduate life. It has been the experience of the faculty and staff that the School’s lack of a conventional campus puts it at something of a disadvantage compared to its peers. Accordingly, improvements to the campus are a central feature of the current *Strategic Plan* (see p. 7), which topic has already been made the subject of a recommendation of this report. **[see recommendation V; ES.2]**

### **Distance Education: Principles and Practices**

The School’s distance education program offers asynchronous online access to the same instruction offered to its on-campus students in the Master of Arts (Theology). The way in which the on-campus and online educational experiences are blended at the Augustine Institute may be unique; certainly, our approach to distance education is distinctive. Inasmuch as the detailed standards in ES.4 often have in view an online program that differs substantially from its on-campus sibling, whereas our online and on-campus programs are essentially a single unified program **[cf. ES.4.2.1-2]**, this treatment of distance education will occasionally depart from the order of the standards. Those standards that presume a division between distance education and the on-campus program and are accordingly passed over silently here will find their concerns met in the previous chapter, in the general discussion of academic assessment below, or in the degree program standards. **[cf. ES.4.2.5]**

#### *Distance Education for Mission*

As was common at many institutions in the last decade, the School’s initial foray into distance education in 2008 was by correspondence, with students studying at a distance receiving DVD sets of recorded classes and interacting chiefly with teaching assistants. This initial experiment was abandoned in

2013 in favor of what may be called direct instruction, in which distance students receive online access to recordings of classes and interact directly with the faculty whom they see on camera. These same faculty design their courses, grade all student work, and participate with their colleagues in the ongoing evaluation of the courses and the curriculum. The maximum shelf-life of our recorded lectures is twelve months. Elective courses are used only once for distance education, that is, during the same semester they are taught on campus. The core courses of the M.A. (Theology) are recorded in one term, with both in-class and distance students, and then used again for a second term and sometimes a third term before being permanently retired. But those three terms are always in succession, either Fall-Spring-Summer or Spring-Summer-Fall. Typical online courses at other institutions involve much less classroom content, employ a course designer or architect who is different from the instructor, and, at times, use teaching assistants to moderate online discussions and to grade student work. In contrast to this common model—which does seem to be the industry standard across higher education in general—the School’s approach to distance education is time-consuming and expensive. The Augustine Institute’s choice to offer its classes at a distance is a choice for mission, not for cost-savings.

At least two-thirds of the School’s online students are concurrently employed in vocational work during their years of study. Consequently, they take an average of four years to complete the program. As has been mentioned, the online students vary widely in age, with their average age being approximately 40. Many of the students live in small towns or at a great remove from campus-based theological programs. For them, online education is a tremendous boon. By welcoming these students to a broader theological discourse and a vibrant academic community, the School offers them—and, through them, their parishes—a chance for enrichment. The faculty and staff are especially aware of their gratitude when they travel to Denver for an optional one-week intensive course or for the commencement exercises.

#### *A Faculty Dedicated to Distance Education*

The practice of distance education is central to the life of the School’s faculty. There is, of course, an immediacy to the on-campus program and its students, who do enjoy a richer academic life than their online counterparts. Yet in the daily work of the faculty member, there is no sharp division between the two groups. The evaluation of written assignments, the response to questions and comments posted on the course management system’s online pages, conversations on the telephone, and exchanges of email are just as likely to be with on-campus students as with those studying at a distance. One of the features of the distance program that makes it attractive to faculty is that it brings older students into the class, and often an instructor finds that he has an unexpected experience or connection in common with a distance student that sparks a closer relationship than would otherwise be anticipated. The School employs four regular adjunct or contract professors, each of whom is recognized in the *Graduate Bulletin* with the title Visiting Professor. Of these four, one is a founding faculty member of the School who has always been associated with it on a part-

time basis, two others are former full-time faculty members who have changed careers and retained their association with the School, and the fourth is an adjunct professor of long standing. These are the only four part-time faculty who are involved in distance education to any degree, and all are conversant with our classroom procedures, technology platform, and expectations for grading and interaction with students. **[cf. ES.4.2.15]**

The faculty's work of academic assessment and its ongoing deliberation about the quality of the education offered by the School takes distance education as its standard. **[cf. ES.4.2.5]** In recent years, as noted above, the on-campus program has had to be singled out for special attention due to the challenges of recruiting students who might otherwise choose to study at a distance without incurring the personal and economic costs of moving to Denver. A key difference between the experience of the M.A. (Theology) in Denver compared to online is the average length of study. Full-time on-campus students finish the program in two academic years; online students typically require four years and take their courses one at a time. As a result, the online program does pose a different challenge for students to draw their courses together into a synthetic theological vision. To date, the faculty have only experimented with an optional online seminar to aid that work of synthesis, but the conversation about the need for such synthesis is ongoing and has already been the subject of a recommendation from the self-study. **[See recommendation XII]**

#### *A Community of Learning*

The School has enshrined in its *Statutes* (II.A.2) the expectation that faculty members will labor diligently to offer their distance students a satisfying and truly formative experience of our academic community. The expectation is three-fold: prompt communication, timely grading with the provision of substantive comments, and the use of discussion-type features within their courses. The responses of online students to the self-study survey corroborate the administration's judgment that the faculty are diligent in the performance of these duties. The comment of one student that "some professors are great about responding promptly, others not so much," is outweighed by many student responses taking a form similar to this one: "All of my professors have been incredible in responding promptly to questions and concerns." This culture of ready communication is further assisted by the policy of assigning each distance student to an academic advisor on the faculty. **[cf. ES.4.2.18]**

To grade papers dutifully and to respond to direct emails and phone calls are natural expressions of the teacher's identity; to the practiced instructor, they are actions as normal as breathing. The other major expression of what the standards describe as "regular and substantive interaction of faculty with students" **[ES.4.1]** is the creation and participation in online discussion boards. This practice is, by comparison, artificial. The School's expectation is that faculty will offer no fewer than six invitations for online interaction per course, and their syllabi and *Canvas* pages demonstrate that they are doing so. Just how students

experience these invitations, however, is something of an open question. The data from the student survey in May 2019 are mixed, as this table shows:

<b>How many times do you interact with your professor through <i>Canvas</i> in a semester?</b>		
0-4 interactions	31 responses	32%
5-9 interactions	46 responses	48%
10-14 interactions	15 responses	16%
15-20 interactions	4 responses	4%

These data are difficult to interpret. First, it seems likely that some students take “interaction” narrowly to mean an exchange, as for instance by a professor’s direct response to a discussion post. Second, it also seems likely that some students take “interaction” broadly to govern such things as substantive comments on a paper and emails exchanged through *Canvas*’s internal messaging system. Finally, the question restricts the student to counting interactions through *Canvas*, but many students interact with their professors through direct email, over the telephone, or in video conferences. What can be concluded provisionally is that some online students—perhaps as many as one in four—are reporting a level of interaction that may be too low.

The students written responses to the same survey, however, suggest that the story is more complex. The answers to the question “What suggestions do you have for professors to engage students more fruitfully on *Canvas*?” included numerous attestations of satisfaction such as this one, “The professors do an excellent job reaching out.” Yet for the most part, expressions of gratitude were directed toward the practice of holding video conferences (often called “coffee with the professor”). There were few direct comments about the discussion boards on *Canvas*, and those that were submitted were cautionary:

**Online Discussions: Cautionary Student Testimonies**

*From the Student Survey (May 2019)*

“Good level of interactions. As a student, I wouldn’t burden them with more requirements.”

“Personally, I don’t find the interactive blogging to be an effective replacement of live classroom interaction. As a distance education student, I would prefer to spend my time reading, writing, and listening to lectures than having to ‘create questions’ that I don’t really have and spend time reading and responding to others’ comments/questions. On-line blogging is simply not the equivalent of person-to-person interaction and in my experience is way too time-consuming for the benefit received. If you are enrolling in distance education, it is a given that you have opted out of a true classroom experience. Thank you for your consideration of this comment.”

“I appreciate the efforts but if there is too much discussion board requirements it simply becomes tasks to be completed. The reality is that it is near impossible to have deep authentic relationships through *Canvas* or other digital platforms.”

These responses suggest that some of the students who report a small number of interactions with their professors on *Canvas* may nevertheless be content.

A recent experiment in an elective class offers some support for this judgment. As has been noted, elective classes are generally not re-used for distance education purposes. (The lone partial exception to this practice is the case of one or two June intensives per year that are recorded for one-time use either during the “late-summer” distance education term or the Fall term immediately following.) In an elective class, therefore, the professor is free to bring the distance education students into the classroom by speaking to them by name through the camera. Some students find this technique very much to their liking: “it really brought you into the classroom in a whole new way. I felt like I was a part of the classroom and not just a sit-in” (May 2019 Student Survey). In the Fall of 2019, however, this feature was employed with only mixed success. In a class with eighteen online students and six in the classroom, the professor invited students to post questions or comments during 10 of the class’s 14 weeks and then often replied “on camera” to the comments or questions of the online students. 10 of the 18 online students took full advantage of this offer and submitted comments or questions eight times or more. The other 8 online students were less engaged, with 4 of them submitting comments or questions five times or fewer. These data are in keeping with what was presented above: some percentage of the students seems content to have minimal interaction with the professor, whether for reasons of temperament and preferred mode of engagement or due to their busy schedules.

At this time, the faculty have determined that continued vigilance and study are indicated rather than a change in policy or practice. The faculty know their essential responsibilities and perform them; in addition, they have all made use of videoconferencing to some degree. What we take to be essential is the generous offer of rich and ongoing interaction through various media, including email, telephone, and video conferencing as supplements to the grading of papers and faculty participation in online discussions. That generous offer must be coupled with an insistence upon a minimum standard of student response, and that standard is upheld in our grading. Most courses accord a weight of 20% to the final grade from the discussion component. The School’s experience is that a majority of its students welcome and respond in lively ways to the invitations to interaction offered by our faculty and that those students gain valuable access to formation thereby. **[ES.4.2.3]**

### *Support for Distance Education*

The School is committed to offering a full range of support services to its distance students. Among these, access to library resources is an especially important one. Distance students are apprised of their privileges in the *Graduate Bulletin* (see p. 37). Individual professors routinely make additional materials available to students through their courses *Canvas* pages. In *Pauline Literature* and in elective classes that include a research assignment, professors offer additional instruction on our library resources. The various

challenges that we have faced in this area have been discussed above in the response to Standard 4. **[See recommendation X; cf. ES.4.2.8-9]**

Full participation in the School's distance education program requires little more than an internet access with an up-to-date browser or a personal device capable of running the *Canvas* app. Very few students need technical support, and those who do typically work their way through whatever difficulties they are experiencing within a week or two of joining the program. The School's Registrar is the first line of technical support; she is ably assisted by one of the Professors, who is our official liaison with the platform. When students log into *Canvas* they find themselves on a "dashboard" with a prominent "help" button. When they click it, they are given further options: to search the Canvas online guides, to file a ticket with the professor-administrator just mentioned, to watch training videos, and so on. The School's servers and computers are maintained by a private contract with a local technology services firm, and the Institute's Chief Technology Officer is also a point of reference when needed. The professors are all conversant with the technology and frequently experiment with it. A special point of pride for the School is its close partnership with the Augustine Institute's Studios team for the consistent provision of the highest quality video content. As visitors to the School can see, the studio classroom is equipped with all of the resources needed to make experience of students watching the recorded lectures to be as fruitful as possible. Those resources, which include cameras, lighting, microphones, and integrated software (e.g. PowerPoint), are carefully maintained through an annual audit and updating process overseen by the Studio's Executive Director. The Studios team supplies videographers who record the lectures. **[ES.4.2.10-11]**

Thorough communication with prospective online students is provided by the Office of Admissions. The School's website gives access to sample lectures and syllabi, and prospective students are regularly invited to join a "short-course" version of one of our courses in the *Canvas* platform. This practice, inaugurated in the summer of 2019, has the added advantage of enabling prospective students to work out any necessary technological kinks before deciding to enroll. **[ES.4.2.16-17]**

## Academic Assessment (ES.6)

The School has a healthy habit of critical reflection upon its work, a habit which is made manifest in its annual administrative reporting cycle and by the annual process of academic assessment, which will be the focus of this section. Before turning to that topic, however, two subjects treated in the prologue of Educational Standard 6 should be mentioned briefly. The first is the completion rate, which as the table below substantiates, is improving but not quite what one would hope it to be:

Academic Year	Total number of students matriculated	M.A. degrees awarded as of Oct 2019	Completion rate as of Oct 2019	Number of remaining active students	Completion rate if all remaining active students were to graduate
2013-14	108	48	44%	10	54%
2014-15	89	46	52%	9	62%
2015-16	97	41	42%	24	67%
2016-17	139	30	22%	61	65%
2017-18	159	32	20%	91	77%

This table combines in one data set on-campus students with distance education students, in keeping with the School's approach to its program. It is worth noting, however, that on-campus students complete the program at a much higher rate than these figures. A second subject mentioned in the prologue is that of career placement. As noted above, in the response to Standard 6, alumni who responded to our survey of recent graduates testify that nearly all of them who wish to find employment in their chosen vocation field have done so. **[ES.6]**

The School's work of academic assessment is accomplished in an annual cycle, typically completed in May. Academic assessment is the faculty's practice of considering both its performance but especially the students' learning, comparing both to the programmatic goals for its degree program. As noted above, the degree programs share programmatic goals in theology and evangelization. The Master of Arts (Theology) adds to these goals in history and Sacred Scripture; the Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization adds goals in Catechesis and Pastoral Care, Leadership, and Spiritual Maturity. Each goal comes with a list of four or more "elements of understanding" that make the goal's content more precise. These goals inform the construction of syllabi and are posted on the Student Center page of the School's website. As the list of the seven goals with their associated elements of understanding is an imposing two-page document, it is not included in the *Graduate Bulletin*. It is a recommendation of this report, however, that the *Bulletin* should be revised in the summer of 2020 to include abbreviated accounts of the programmatic goals in its narrative introductions to the School as a whole and to its two degree programs. **[See recommendation XV; cf. ES.6.4.2]**

A sustainable rhythm for the School's work of academic assessment involves examining each of the seven programmatic goals at least once every three years. Because of its commitment to look closely at the

students’ progress in gaining a synthetic grasp of Catholic theology **[see recommendation XIII]**, the School envisions the following schema of its academic assessment over the next two years:

Programmatic Goal	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Theology	X		X	X
Evangelization	X		X	X
Scripture		X		
History	X			X
Catechesis		X		
Leadership	X			X
Spiritual Maturity		X	X	

The faculty’s assessment work is facilitated by the Dean, the Associate Dean, and the Registrar, who among them provide access to the student artifacts and survey data that the faculty need. It is the faculty as a whole, meeting in Academic Council, that sets the assessment agenda each year. The faculty find the assessment meetings to be constructive periods of substantive conversation and decision-making for the improvement of the program (see annual assessment memoranda). **[ES.6.2]**

In its work of academic assessment, the faculty examine different samples of student work, from comprehensive exam essays and final examinations to integrative summaries of their formation experiences written by Leadership students. The work is assessed according to a simple numerical scale that tracks excellence according to the elements of understanding for each programmatic goal. The faculty have used various indirect sources of data for its assessment work, including various surveys of students and alumni as well as course surveys from individual courses. The data have generally sufficed to form the basis of confident judgment. Nevertheless, it is a recommendation of this self-study that the School adopt a formal plan for annual data collection by a survey tendered automatically when the “intent to graduate” form is submitted. **[See recommendation XVI; cf. ES.6.3.2]**

To gain an appreciation for the faculty’s work of academic assessment over the past several years, the interested reader may wish to consult the report on assessment submitted to the Commission on Accrediting in September 2018. Last year’s assessment memorandum was completed in August 2019 and reviewed by the Board of Trustees that month. It provides a summary of the faculty’s discussion of its programmatic goals in Sacred Scripture, Catechesis, and Spiritual Maturity, together with a record of its inquiry into the quality of work submitted for its prior learning assessments for missionaries from FOCUS and other apostolates (see the next section for details). The survey data and student work examined as part of the assessment of the goal

in Sacred Scripture supported the conclusion that the intended outcomes are being met, but that “it would be good to experiment with reading and writing assignments that would invite students to make the careful reading of Scripture in light of the Church’s tradition a regular part of their intellectual and spiritual lives.” Student performance with respect to the goal in Catechesis was uniformly high. Examination of the Leadership students’ integrative summaries with respect to the programmatic goal in spiritual maturity gave the faculty confidence that the goal is being met significantly better than the previous time it had been evaluated, but that further gains could be made by encouraging the students to assess themselves not merely with respect to the cardinal and theological virtues, but also with attention to the place of suffering in their lives, their imitation of Christ, and their reliance upon the grace of the sacraments. Having come to this conclusion, the faculty further agreed to evaluate the programmatic goal for Spiritual Maturity again this academic year. The only major change to the academic program that proceeded from the assessment cycle of 2018-19 was a specification and toughening of the requirements for eligibility to write the Master of Arts thesis (see *Graduate Bulletin*, p. 14).

The School submits its assessment memorandum to the Board of Trustees each year (see Minutes of the Board of Trustees), [ES.6.4.3] and annually updates its statement of education effectiveness on its website. [ES.6.4.4]

### **Academic Guidelines (ES.7)**

Admission to the School’s programs is restricted to students who have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution (see *Graduate Bulletin*, p. 24, and student files for transcripts). [ES.7.1.1] Exceptions to this policy have been few and have typically been made in favor of fully-professed members of religious orders or men in formation for the permanent diaconate. [ES.7.1.4]

The School’s transfer policy is available on its website and in the *Graduate Bulletin* (see p. 25). The normal limit of 12 transfer credits is increased to 18 for men who have been pursuing the Master of Divinity degree in Catholic seminary and have discerned a vocation to the laity. Although it is customary for the School to grant credits for on-campus work at accredited institutions, it has found that the requirements of online degree programs—even accredited ones—are so highly variable that it reserves the right to examine syllabi prior to granting transfer credits for online courses. [ES.7.2]

The School has entered into partnership arrangements with three apostolates—The Fellowship of Catholic University Students, Catholic Christian Outreach, and Christ in the City—for the granting of advanced standing upon successful completion of a prior learning assessment. In each case, the apostolate is a missionary group that has a formal process for the formation of its missionaries with which the School is familiar. Details of the prior learning assessments are available on request; the artifacts are stored on the School’s *Canvas* platform and include quizzes, essays, and letters of recommendation. The maximum number of credits awarded by prior learning assessment is 9, which conforms with the provision of ES.7.4.3 that no

more than one-fourth of a degree program's total credits may be awarded as advanced standing. The School also offers one course of advanced standing to graduates of the Denver Catholic Biblical School who pass a competency examination for the course *Salvation History*. [ES.7.4; see documentation of prior learning assessments in appendix]

### **Non-degree Programs (ES.8)**

The School has a variety of non-degree-seeking students, including Christ in the City missionaries and candidates for the permanent diaconate who are taking courses as part of their formation programs. The School is also experimenting with an online series of short-courses tentatively called the “School of Christian Doctrine.” The program is in its infancy. If released according to plan, it will offer online courses with three to four hours of lecture-based instruction, associated readings, and automated quizzes. The plan is for a series of these courses to meet with the award of a certificate. The strategic reason for pursuing this project is to offer a form of intermediate theological instruction—more sophisticated than the catechist training associated with the FORMED.org platform but much less involved and difficult than the graduate program—for students who do not meet the School's eligibility requirements or who cannot afford the tuition. The “School of Christian Doctrine” is also envisioned as an important outreach to English-speaking communities in Africa and Asia. The instructors will primarily be drawn from the Graduate School's faculty but may include modules offered by qualified adjuncts. [ES.8]

### **Recommendations**

**XV.** The *Graduate Bulletin* should be revised in the summer of 2020 to include abbreviated accounts of the programmatic goals in its narrative introductions to the School as a whole and to its two degree programs. [cf. ES.6.4.2]

**XVI.** The School should adopt a formal plan for annual data collection to support its work of academic assessment by a survey tendered automatically when the “intent to graduate” form is submitted. [cf. ES.6.3.2]

### §3.2. Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization (Standard B)

The School offers one Standard B degree program oriented toward ministerial leadership, the Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization, a “classification II” program in specialized ministry. The program’s target audience is young men and women, recently graduated from college or university, who seek theological training coupled with practical training and spiritual formation for lay ecclesial service, that they might dedicate themselves to the renewal of the Church and the reconciliation of the world to God in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). **[B.1]**

#### *A Program for New Evangelization*

The programmatic goals of the M.A. in Leadership are five in number: two are shared with the M.A. (Theology) and three are distinct. These five goals, together with their articulation in a series of elements of understanding, paint a portrait of a well-instructed and mature Catholic woman or man who is ready to serve her or his brothers and sisters in Christ with excellence and compassion. The graduates receive a theological formation that teaches them the “organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas” (CCC 89) and “invites the Christian to seek a life of friendship with God which is nourished by prayer” (see Programmatic Goal for Theology). They are offered a pastoral and communal framework within which to seek a spiritual formation that encourages confidence in the Holy Spirit and prompts the requisite self-knowledge to admit that conversion is a life-long process of following the Lord. They are taught the essential principles and trained in the necessary skills of parish-based leadership, catechetical teaching, and pastoral accompaniment. (See programmatic goals for theology). These goals are accomplished in a two-year on-campus program that joins course-based study with a required internship, external mentorship, and ongoing formation through personal advising and participation in the M.A. Leadership seminar.

<b>Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization</b>	
<i>Year 1</i>	
<b><u>Fall Semester</u></b> Salvation History The Creed Discipleship and Christian Life Leadership Seminar & Practicum	<b><u>Spring Semester</u></b> Jesus and the Gospels Mystagogy: Liturgy & Sacraments Catechesis for the New Evangelization Leadership Seminar & Practicum
<i>Year 2</i>	
<b><u>Fall Semester</u></b> Pastoral Care and Ecclesial Life Moral and Spiritual Theology Elective Leadership Seminar & Practicum	<b><u>Spring Semester</u></b> Leadership for the New Evangelization Elective Elective Leadership Seminar & Practicum

The program’s learning outcomes are the subject of regular assessment, as discussed above in the response to the Educational Standard. **[B.1]**

The curriculum of the M.A. in Leadership is best appreciated in the light the four pillars that are common to the formation of priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and lay men and women: intellectual, human, spiritual, and pastoral. The intellectual formation offered by the program is in the first place a theological one, with two required courses in Scripture and three in Doctrine that are rooted in the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the call of the Second Vatican Council for an well-informed, indeed wise, laity. Human formation—never entirely foreign to either intellectual formation or spiritual formation—is accomplished primarily through the mentorship offered by the external mentors for the four practicum internships required of each student. Each mentor is a mature lay, clerical, or religious leader of known credibility in the Denver area, and each receives training from the program’s Director prior to taking on the mentorship responsibility. The object of the human formation is growth in the moral and theological virtues, but also for the students to grow experientially from the challenges they face in ministry. The required course in *Leadership for the New Evangelization*, taken in the students’ final semester, addresses human formation directly and invites the students to reflect more deeply upon their training in light of classic and contemporary texts on virtuous leadership and the example of Catholic leaders through the centuries. The spiritual formation offered is centered in the work of the Institute’s chaplain but is also sparked by the first of the four special courses required of leadership students, *Discipleship & Christian Life*. In this course, students are given a vision and a roadmap for a life characterized by a mature commitment to follow Christ. Finally, the program’s pastoral formation is anchored in two courses—*Catechesis for the New Evangelization* and *Pastoral Care and Ecclesial Life*—that offer the students a grounding in the main pastoral teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium. The skills begun in these courses are further honed by the students’ practicum assignments. Finally, in their course work, students in the leadership program have three electives; regular offerings that are especially suited to their vocational goals include, *Faith & Reason*, *Nature, Sexuality, & the Civilization of Love*, and *Christian Marriage*. [B.2]

#### *Practical Training for Catechists and Lay Leaders*

Although the Master of Arts in Leadership for the New Evangelization is only offered as an on-campus program, the courses that it requires beyond the five it shared with the M.A. (Theology) are regularly offered online. In recent years, three students have petitioned to take those four courses at a distance and to have their own concurrent ministry experiences in the field count towards the practicum requirement so that they could earn the M.A. Leadership as distance students. The School has pursued this experiment with these students, two of whom are soon the graduate. At the moment, the School does not have the personnel to continue the experiment, which would require extensive communication and monitoring of the distance students in order to be effective. So, for the foreseeable future, the M.A. in Leadership will remain an on-campus only program. That it should be so is in keeping with the wealth of ecclesial contacts in Northern Colorado enjoyed by the program faculty. From the School’s close ties with the Archdiocese of Denver—

both its Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities—to its wide array of alumni in parishes and apostolates throughout Colorado, there is almost a surfeit of qualified mentors and internship experiences for the students. In recent years, students have been able to engage in extensive classroom teaching, lead or co-lead R.C.I.A. programs, adult-education programs, youth and young-adult outreaches, as well as work with the poor and the homeless and consult with school administrators about curricular reform. The internship component of the M.A. in Leadership is integral to its curriculum, which is why it is regularly assessed under the programmatic goals specific to the degree program (the goals in Catechesis and Pastoral Care, Leadership, and Spiritual Maturity). **[B.2-3]**

Admission to the program has the same process and is governed by the same standards as the M.A. (Theology), and the program's Director takes an active role in the process, especially during the annual scholarship competition in the winter. **[B.4]**

### *Closing Reflection*

Now in its sixth year of being offered, the Master of Arts in Leadership is a well-conceived and smoothly-running program. The program's Director brings two decades of parish and diocesan ecclesial service to bear upon his work, and he is assisted by two of the School's faculty in the work of teaching the program's required courses. A desideratum for the program, however, would be to add a faculty member dedicated to it who could help with its very extensive duties of mentorship and advising. The ways and means of faculty hiring are always complex and subject to broader institutional factors. Nevertheless, it seems to be a distinct possibility that within the next three years such a dedicated program faculty member may be found. The faculty's common desire is for that new colleague to be a woman with deep theological learning and extensive pastoral experience. We pray that God will send us the right candidate swiftly. **[See recommendation XVII]**

### §3.3. Master of Arts (Theology) (Standard D)

The School's largest degree program is a Standard D program for general theological instruction, the Master of Arts (Theology). With just under half of the on-campus joining the whole online community, this program has over 400 active students. What they share in common is a deep love for Jesus Christ and a desire to understand Him more deeply and capaciously as the definitive revelation of the Father's love for the human race. The program's purpose is to assist its students in pursuing a Christian wisdom that is both an intellectual virtue acquired by study and a connaturality with the mind of Christ that is, in the last analysis, a gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### *Theology for the Renewal of Christian Life*

The program's goals reflect its nature as a broad theological formation for men and women who wish to teach the Catholic faith effectively and for the sake of conversion. With eight of the program's twelve courses required for the degree, it is a synthetic presentation of the faith taught from its sources in Scripture and Catholic tradition. As the curriculum has already been discussed above in the response to Standard 3, here it will suffice to reflect briefly on the program's goals as they are articulated in the elements of understanding that are the targets of its academic assessment. The School's intention is for its students to enter into a fruitful dialogue of faith with reason and to learn to appreciate what God has revealed—as articulated in the Creed—as a series of beacons or “lights” (cf. CCC 89) that lead to a truly integrated and peaceful outlook on life and eternity. That outlook finds its horizon in the Church, as students both learn about and participate in the work of incorporating themselves more deeply into the Mystical Body of Christ by participation in the sacraments, a participation that overflows into a desire to invite others to that same ecclesial life. And to enter into that life is to enter into the story of God's plan of salvation, as recounted in the Scriptures, and as it culminates in the Paschal Mystery of the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. And finally, but also crucially, students are invited to contemplate how the Church remains a pilgrim body, one that is composed of different parts all of which are called to sanctity, and how that sanctity is ultimately achieved by a participation in the mystery of Christ's suffering (see programmatic goals). The faculty are sure in the conviction that the School's students are not only learning these lessons but embodying them, and its annual work of academic assessment helps the faculty to ground that confidence in evidence of the students' mature understanding and belief. **[D.1]**

The other salient features of Standard D—on the duration of the program, its location, its expression via distance learning, and its admissions requirements and process—have been touched on in responses to the relevant General Institutional Standards and the Education Standard. Suffice it here to note that fully half of the recommendations made above relate to the improvement of this program in one way or another, and that the faculty are committed wholeheartedly to that work. **[See especially recommendations IX through XVI]**

**Recommendation**

**XVII.** When the financial strength of the Institute and of the Graduate School make it possible to do so, the School should seek an faculty member for the M.A. Leadership who will also serve as Director of Formation for Women, to supplement the instruction and the mentorship offered in that program. **[cf. B.3.1]**

### III

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*In your patience you shall possess your souls.*

Luke 21:19 (Douay-Rheims)

The Augustine Institute's Graduate School of Theology has found its self-study to be a valuable work of reflection and assessment. Although many of its recommendations are to some degree aspirations, the members of the self-study committees are convinced that they chart a reasonable if arduous path forward through the School's second decade and beyond.

### **Recommendations**

**I.** The budget for the fiscal year 2020-21 and for subsequent years should include significant investments in academic culture, the nature and extent of which will be determined by a collegial conversation involving faculty, administrators, and trustees. **[cf. 1.2.2.1]**

**II.** The fiscal year 2020-21 budget process should include a comprehensive review of enrollment trends and make a new multi-year revenue projection based upon that review. **[cf. 1.2.2.1]**

**III.** Additional resources should be sought for the Mother Teresa Fund so that it can become a higher-profile expression of the Institute's mission and lead to the theological training of even more Hispanic and other minority leaders. **[cf. 2.5]**

**IV.** The Board of Trustees should constitute a permanent subcommittee devoted to the oversight of the Graduate School of Theology, with special attention to strategic planning and evaluation. **[7.2.3; cf. 7.3.1.6 and 7.3.1.10]**

**V.** The Institute should endeavor creatively to respond to the School's request for improvements to the building that would accentuate its academic ambiance and functions. **[cf. 8.3.3. and *Strategic Plan*, p. 7]**

**VI.** The Institute’s next budget (FY2021) and its accompanying three-year revenue projection should include a plan to accumulate a cash reserve that will ensure “the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.” [cf. 8.2.1.1]

**VII.** As a part of its budget process, the Institute should engage in an open-ended conversation about the strategic considerations that should shape the annual expense allocation to the School as a business line. The conversation should include members of the faculty, Executive Team, and Board of Trustees. [cf. 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.1.5]

**VIII.** As part of its budget process in the winter of 2020, the School will produce three- and five-year projections of revenue and expenses. [cf. 8.2.2.4]

**IX.** Individual faculty members should be encouraged to submit a budget request for purchases of specialized academic monographs, reference works, primary sources, or digital collections to the Dean’s Council so that a targeted request be added to the School’s annual budget. [cf. 4.1 and *Strategic Plan*, p. 7]

**X.** The Academic Council should formulate a plan to offer students a more robust orientation to the library resources available to them, to revise the *Graduate Bulletin* to discuss library resources in connection with the programmatic goals of the curriculum, and to help students integrate research and writing skills more fully in their coursework. [cf. 4.2]

**XI.** The three- and five-year budget plans under construction should reflect the goal of a 15:1 FTE student-to-faculty ratio. [cf. 5.1.7]

**XII.** The School should include in its annual cycle of academic assessment for the years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 special scrutiny of the students’ integration of their studies and formation, by considering evidence of various kinds that will help to evaluation the students’ progress with respect to programmatic goals in theology and evangelization and to the specific “elements of understanding” identified in the text of the *Self-Study Report*. [cf. 5.2.2]

**XIII.** The School should work steadily to achieve the goals detailed in strategic objectives A and B of its current Strategic Plan, to strengthen the School’s on-campus program and academic culture. [6.3.2]

**XIV.** The School should expand placement and career advising resources through the re-articulation of the Office of Student Services in 2020 and, in particular, the creation and curation of an online job board. [6.5]

**XV.** The *Graduate Bulletin* should be revised in the summer of 2020 to include abbreviated accounts of the programmatic goals in its narrative introductions to the School as a whole and to its two degree programs. **[cf. ES.6.4.2]**

**XVI.** The School should adopt a formal plan for annual data collection to support its work of academic assessment by a survey tendered automatically when the “intent to graduate” form is submitted. **[cf. ES.6.3.2]**

**XVII.** When the financial strength of the Institute and of the Graduate School make it possible to do so, the School should seek a faculty member for the M.A. Leadership who will also serve as Director of Formation of Women, to supplement the instruction and the mentorship offered in that program. **[cf. B.3.1]**