

2017 Goals and Accomplishments

Please describe accomplishments, relative to each of your convention assigned Ministry Assignments, in the past year that create "value added" to the Cooperative Program dollars that New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary receives.

The greatest challenge that our students face is finances. Many current ministers remember paying \$150-200 for an entire semester at seminary. Today's students pay over \$200 per credit hour (about \$750 per course), and over \$900 per course for online classes. The value added from Cooperative Program funding is that it makes theological education more affordable for these students. Most of these students will not go to "top shelf," well-paying jobs. They will go to church plants, mission settings, small churches, or entry level church staff positions. Unlike most professionals like attorneys or medical doctors, their earnings will not be sufficient to repay large student loans. Some missions volunteers already have to delay their going to the missions setting because they cannot afford to do so. NOBTS has no other source for \$7-8 million dollars per year, which comprises just over a third of our total budget. The Cooperative Program is not just a "value added," it is our lifeline without which we could not exist. It allows most students the freedom to enter ministry without a large student debt.

I. Assist churches by programs of prebaccalaureate and baccalaureate theological education for ministers.

Leavell College of NOBTS had 1,657 undergraduate students taking courses for credit on the main campus, at extension centers, and by Internet, a modest increase over the previous year. This does not count about 600 not-for-credit certificate students offered in church and associational settings. The "value added" is that these are typically older, second career people called into ministry later in life, who can fill the many bivocational and small church ministry positions in the SBC. Many of them are also ethnic or minority students who can serve in ethnic church settings, particularly African-American, French-speaking Haitian, Hispanic, and Korean students. These older students do not fit well in a typical Baptist college setting, but Leavell College is designed specifically for them. Leavell College also had 574 for-credit certificate students. Many of these certificates were for laypersons in churches, from large to small, as well as in National Baptist churches, predominantly African American SBC churches, Haitian churches, and Hispanic churches. Our certificate programs are our most ethnically diverse programs, which addresses the initiatives in this area by the SBC.

II. Assist churches by programs of master's level theological education for ministers.

NOBTS had 1,692 master's level students last year, 1,059 of them being Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree students, which we consider the standard ministry preparation degree. However, many students at NOBTS and other seminaries have transferred to the new shorter M.A. degrees offered online, extension centers, and on campus. The remaining 633 master's level students were in these various degree programs providing focused training for music ministry, discipleship ministry, counseling ministry, or for specific areas in theological and biblical studies. We consider the training of master's degree students to be our primary assignment from the convention, and it is the focus of our efforts. We believe that the "value added" of these degrees from NOBTS is particularly in their practical focus -- with courses

such as Interpersonal Skills, Church Revitalization, Discipleship Strategies, and Church Leadership and Administration, along with the standard biblical, theological, and ministry courses offered in most seminary degrees. We strive to prepare each of our graduate students (particularly M.Div. students) in seven crucial areas of ministerial competency – Biblical exposition, Christian theological heritage, disciple making, interpersonal skills, servant leadership, worship leadership, and spiritual and character formation.

III. Assist churches by programs of professional doctoral education for ministers.

The D.Min. (Doctor of Ministry) and D.Ed.Min. (Doctor of Educational Ministry) at NOBTS continue to be among the strongest such programs in the nation, with 376 students enrolled. The D.Min. program continues to be one of the largest and best such programs, with 321 students enrolled. Of that number, 63 are Korean D.Min. students, although enrollment in this program has been hindered by strict enforcement of immigration rules. The NOBTS D.Ed.Min. is one of just five such programs in the United States, and with 55 students enrolled. The "value added" of these professional doctoral programs is that as Southern Baptists are upwardly mobile and better educated, they desire a better educated clergy. In many churches, the D.Min. has become the required degree for consideration of prospective pastors. This program provides students with that credentialing, and does so with excellence. Since the D.Min. and D.Ed.Min. programs only accept ministers with three or more years of experience, these degrees probably do more than any academic degree to help ministers make mid-career adjustments in their own ministry that positively impact the churches and ministries in which they serve.

IV. Assist churches by programs of research doctoral education for ministers and theological educators.

NOBTS has developed two delivery systems to make our Ph.D. program accessible for interested nonresidential students wherever they live, not requiring the students to live at the main campus. Seminars and colloquia in the following six Ph.D. majors are offered in a block format that allows students to meet in on-campus sessions Thursday through Saturday three or four times during the semester. Campus meetings may be supplemented by virtual real-time sessions between class meetings.

- Christian Education
- Christian Leadership
- Evangelism
- Great Commission Studies
- Missions
- Psychology and Counseling

In June 2016 the ATS Board of Commissioners approved a three-year experiment allowing an exception to the Commission's on-campus PhD residency requirement, allowing roughly two-thirds of the PhD program's total credits to be available to nonresidential students through synchronous interactive video. Students who are unable to take advantage of the campus scholarly environment can participate fully in seminars and colloquia through live Internet connections. Some workshop courses still will require travel to the main campus in January or summer breaks.

Also, courses in the following ten Ph.D. majors have the option of being taken via synchronous interactive video:

- Biblical Exposition
- Biblical Interpretation

- Christian Apologetics
- Christian Education
- Christian Leadership
- Church History
- Evangelism
- Great Commission Studies
- Missions
- Theology

These new delivery systems have created a much greater interest in the NOBTS Ph.D. program. Last year, 163 students enrolled in the Th.M., Ed.D., D.M.A., and Ph.D. programs last year. NOBTS launched a new Doctor of Education (Ed.D) program in Fall 2014, and 9 students are enrolled so far. The Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree program enrolled 17 students last year, which was among the most DMA students ever at NOBTS, and the largest such program in the SBC. NOBTS intends to add two new Ph.D. majors in Apologetics and in Christian Leadership next year. The "value added" of these programs is to train the next generation of seminary and college teachers, in addition to providing highly trained practitioners in every area of ministry.

Based on each of NOBTS' Convention assigned ministry statements, what opportunities or challenges do you see on the horizon from 2017 and beyond that would necessitate changes, or new directions, in how NOBTS is accomplishing the above Ministry Assignment?

I. Assist churches by programs of prebaccalaureate and baccalaureate theological education for ministers.

The greatest challenge confronting most undergraduate students is the problem of affordability and student debt. Many of these older students have children, and it is very difficult for them to juggle several jobs (ministry and secular) in order to get by while earning their theological education.

II. Assist churches by programs of master's level theological education for ministers.

Two main challenges confront masters' level theological education. One challenge is the proliferation of many Master of Arts degrees that are significantly shorter than the M.Div. degree. Obviously, these M.A. degrees do not offer as much training as the longer M.Div. degree, but many students are taking them as a shortcut to ministerial training. The second challenge is the proliferation of new competitors. The six SBC seminaries had little direct competition a decade or so previously, but now there are many competitors. Baptist colleges are offering over 50 master's degrees in theological and ministerial areas. New CBF-connected seminaries have arisen all around the South, most of which offer tuition-free training. Some online seminaries have gobbled up over 10,000 students, many of whom are Southern Baptist. These new competitors create a drain on our pool of potential students make it more difficult to provide theological education as efficiently or cost-effectively as we could have otherwise. One new opportunity we are offering is that we now have the Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) degree available online in both Korean and Spanish. We hope this will help train leaders in these important segments of SBC churches and around the world.

III. Assist churches by programs of professional doctoral education for ministers.

Our professional doctorate programs are among the best in the country, so we anticipate no major changes. We will investigate new locations and language groups to serve in the days to come.

IV. Assist churches by programs of research doctoral education for ministers and theological educators.

The key to the success of a Ph.D. program at NOBTS is offering the seminars in a format that is accessible for nonresidential students. The number of ministers around the New Orleans area is limited (due to the small Baptist population in South Louisiana), but the number of students who would come to our campus for a short term visit is large, as evidenced by our D.Min. program. So the key to providing training at the Ph.D. level is a nonresidential format that nevertheless maintains the highest academic standards. As noted earlier, we have designed both a block format and a synchronous video format for research doctoral delivery options to address the needs of our nonresidential students. With special approval from our ATS accreditation agency for an experiment, NOBTS offers all but two of its Ph.D. majors in formats accessible for nonresidential students, with few trips to the main campus required.