

Empowering and Equipping Ministers Earlham School of Religion

Brief Summary:

ESR's Lilly-funded project intends to do the following:

- a) We will address the current financial realities that face our students, developing financial literacy with a goal of empowering them to make informed financial decisions and build healthy financial habits.
- b) We will create faculty/student/constituent teams to research new faith community formats that compete with the church and determine how this data could enhance the vitality of congregational life, ultimately reducing financial stress.
- c) We will research the realities of small church and bi-vocational ministry to determine how to better equip leaders to succeed in those settings, particularly with regard to creating a well-balanced life and new models for ministry.
- d) We will develop programs in entrepreneurial ministry that match the gifts of future leaders with new models for outreach and service as a means of proclaiming the gospel.

ESR anticipates multiple outcomes:

- a) We will create a superb set of standing resources and educational experiences for students, area pastors, and alumni/ae with regard to a theology of money, an approach to debt, and a financial planning strategy. Our staff will be better prepared to guide our students and our students will have the knowledge to avoid resource-draining financial decisions.
- b) We will create communities of dialog as a consequence of the research we do into new models of faith communities and into the realities of bi-vocational ministry. This dialog is valuable on at least two fronts. First, it creates quality extra-curricular learning opportunities within the seminary community as a whole, as ideas are exchanged and critique emerges. Second, it provides a forum for meaningful engagement with constituents, and especially area congregations, as research is gathered and data is shared. These processes are valuable for improving the relational connections of these groups, but also as agents of institutional transformation.
- c) We will design new programming within the M. Div. degree and also a certificate educational model - one that will encourage leadership development that is entrepreneurial in its vision of ministry within the church and in the wider world.

In summary, this proposal will empower ministers to exercise more control over their financial futures so that debt does not unduly determine their paths in, or out of, ministry. Equally exciting is its potential to invigorate congregational life by employing strategies that attract today's seeker population and create a Church more focused upon ministry than upon self-preservation. ESR believes this ambitious proposal is worth the risk of labor and capital.

Key activities to date:

1. Selection of team and initial planning session for developing financial acumen among students.
2. Selection of consultant for bi-vocational research, identification of potential participants, and creation of first draft of survey instrument.
3. Identification of participating faculty, identification of potential alternative movements, and first draft of survey instrument.

Resources produced:

No completed resources to date.

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