The Strategic Plan for Phillips Theological Seminary  
May 2012 through June 2015

Overall goal: Adapt to a changing climate for theological education and work with God faithfully and effectively to transform the world.

In order to accomplish this goal, PTS shall adopt and promote new statements of identity and mission, expand the seminary’s audiences and programming consistent with the new statements, and realign the seminary’s internal operations consistent with the new directions.

Goals

Expansion:
1. Adopt and publicize new statements of identity and mission.
2. Develop educational offerings to engage identified audiences and to expand the number of persons participating educationally with PTS.
3. Explore and develop strategic external relationships.

Realignment
4. Realign program, personnel, and financial resources to fit the new identity and mission.
5. Live into a sustainable funding formula.

1. Adopt and publicize new statements of identity and mission.

Identity statement:
- Phillips Theological Seminary offers theological education dedicated to learning the way of Jesus in order to cultivate vital communities, vital conversations, and the public good.

Mission statement:
- The seminary’s mission is to learn and teach how to be: attentive to God; responsible biblical and theological interpreters; faithful individuals and communities acting with God to transform the world.

Tag line:
- Theological education for cultivating vital communities, vital conversations, and the public good.

The principles which undergird the new statements include:
- PTS engages its publics as a Christian theological seminary. Learning together the path or “way” Jesus of Nazareth taught and lived regarding how to love God and neighbor—and how to follow that path faithfully today—is at the heart of the seminary’s reason for being.
- The world is the arena of God’s activity. The following theological claims about working with God in the world are the basis for using the phrase “public good” as an outcome of PTS’s mission.
  - Working with God in that world is best done when human beings seek to understand religion and spirituality within particular traditions as well as through the lenses of the social and physical sciences.
SUMMARY OF THE PLAN APPROVED BY THE PTS TRUSTEES ON MAY 11, 2012

- A public approach to theological education values research, historical evidence, experimentation, and the relationship between informed democratic conversation, debate, and truth-seeking.
- In the world, Christians need to expect to work and know how to work with people of other faiths and of no particular faith in ecumenical, interreligious, and public contexts.

- “Vital” communities and conversations seek, embody, and cultivate the virtues of love, justice, resistance to all forms of injustice, and shalom. A major subset of vital communities is vital congregations. Providing leadership education for cultivating vital congregations (existing and new) is one of the essential tasks of PTS.

2. Develop educational offerings to engage identified audiences and to expand the number of persons participating educationally with PTS.

Strategies for May 2012 – June 2014:

a) Administration and faculty will develop programs for the seminary’s audiences through a combination of discernment, market research, and experimentation (underway, and continuing through June 2014).

b) Student services office will implement a comprehensive recruitment plan (already underway).

c) Student services and the business office will implement a revised tuition pricing and financial aid plan (adopted for Fall 2012).

d) The administration will develop and utilize resources to publicize the seminary sufficiently to gain the attention of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) leaders, ecumenical and interfaith partners, the Tulsa community, new participants in conversations, and prospective students (degree, certificate, and diploma) (beginning immediately).

The first two years of the plan implementation should be understood and engaged as experiments.

*For degree-seeking students:* the faculty is working toward a revised Master of Divinity program to be available in Fall 2013. This program will be premised upon identifying vital communities (including congregations and other expressions of community) and conversations (especially conversations about difficult topics where participants are trying to find bridges between deeply divided sides) about which we want to learn. Moving into a revised MDiv program may also eventuate in proposals for new degree programs.

*For non-degree students:* PTS is beginning a program in Interreligious Understanding, utilizing teachers from 6 different religious traditions. Fall 2012 in Tulsa.

*For the publics PTS can attract through partnership with particular congregations:* PTS is developing FaithLife Connections. FLC is a topical, weekend lecture series and workshop offered twice per year in each of 7 Disciples congregations in locations within the seminary’s covenant area (Tulsa, Edmond, Fayetteville, Columbia MO, Wichita, Kansas City, Denver). PTS faculty members will present Friday night and Saturday morning, and events will include a panel and workshop comprised of a combination of PTS personnel and local resources. The program will begin in Fall 2012.
3. Explore and develop strategic external relationships
   a) Develop and implement a plan of strategic listening (2012/13)
   b) Investigate institutional partnerships (2012/13)
   c) Explore programming with new constituencies (July 2012 and ongoing)

Listening
The administration, faculty, and board will identify individual persons and communities with whom the seminary should be in regular dialogue.
   • Congregational leaders, ordained and lay, who are trying to navigate the transition into new ways of being church;
   • Leaders of non-congregational vital communities and hosts of vital conversations;
   • Selected pastors and judicatory leaders from the seminary’s partner denominations;
   • Leaders in new church and community starts and in emerging/emergent congregations;
   • Leaders in vital non-profits doing work consistent with the seminary’s identity and mission;
   • Religiously-interested professionals in non-religious professions (e.g., a business leader or medical doctor interested in ethics or in the role of faith in healing);
   • The publics involved in the programs offered with partner congregations.

Institutional Partnerships
During the 2012/13 academic year, the administration will actively investigate institutional partnerships.
   • With colleges in order to help student populations underserved by graduate theological education gain access to seminary education;
   • With graduate programs in other fields and professions;
   • With non-profits in which joint community educational programs and student internships could be developed;
   • With institutes and church agencies.
In addition, during the 2013/14 year, the administration will explore the possibilities of relationships with one seminary or school outside the continental United States.

New Constituencies
By the end of the years addressed in this plan, PTS will make a decision regarding whether or not the seminary should and can offer programming designed for Latino/a communities.

4. Realign program, personnel, and financial resources to serve the new identity and mission.
   a) As soon as the board approves the strategic plan, the administration will take action on employee position reviews.
   b) An ad hoc committee comprised of board members and the administration will compose “principles for transitional times.”
   c) Beginning immediately, the administration will seek additional communications/promotions contractors.
   d) A search for a new faculty member to support the “vital communities and vital conversations” program emphasis will be conducted during the 2012/13 academic year.
   e) As soon as funding can be secured, the administration will search for a senior-level position in seminary relations.
5. **Live into a sustainable funding formula**
   a) Continue to grow the endowment through new additions (ongoing).
   b) Reduce the draw/gift request on QuikTrip shares used for operations to a sustainable level by June 30, 2014.
   c) Consider an endowment campaign to fund new initiatives. (FY 2015 and beyond)
   d) Increase tuition and fee revenue. (beginning FY 2013)
   e) Increase annual gifts. (FY 2013 and beyond)
   f) Make additional operations money available from reserves, endowment, or both for the next 3 years. (FY 2013 – FY 2015)

**Conclusion**

Phillips Theological Seminary has a history of making bold, adaptive changes. The proposed changes would help PTS to become an adaptive organization—a quality which is critical in a period of strong disruptive forces affecting organizations of all types. If PTS is successful in embracing its identity and embodying an expanded mission, in re-orienting the organization to function in a more outward-facing way, in engaging audiences in revised and new conversations and programs to fulfill that mission, and in attracting increased attention from students and donors, PTS will be a very significant and valued voice in the publics of Tulsa and among congregations, other communities, and conversations where people seek vitality as expressed in the way of Jesus and characterized by love, justice, resistance to injustice, and shalom.