

Project Title: Opportunities for a Lifetime of Teaching Outside the Academy

University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program in the Study of Religion

Description of Problem or Need

Those of us actively engaged in PhD education are aware of the increasing challenge of placing our students in fulltime tenure track positions. The most recent AAR/SBL jobs report paints a grim picture. The number of jobs in religious and theological studies has declined significantly over the last ten years. In 2005-06, the number of jobs advertised through AAR/SBL was 598; in 2015-16 the number was 404, a drop of over 30%. Perhaps more disturbing is the decline in the number of discreet institutions advertising positions. In 2006 it was 347; in 2016 it was 248. The reduced number of institutions looking to fill positions indicates a decline in the number of institutions dedicated to the teaching of religion and theology at all. There is no disputing the reality that there are fewer and fewer fulltime teaching positions, leaving many PhD graduates, who worked so hard to attain their degree, profoundly disappointed.

To address this situation, the DU/Iliff Joint PhD Program (hereafter JDP) would like to explore ways we can prepare our graduates for careers where teaching is an essential component but which lie outside the usual classroom context. We have identified three potential venues in which pedagogy plays a significant role and in which there are increasing career opportunities: 1) curators and directors of education in museums associated with religious sites or controlling significant collections of religious artifacts; 2) academic technologists who assist faculty with developing their technological skill as part of their pedagogy and the design of online courses; and 3) hybrid positions in higher education where administrative work is combined with pedagogical roles (e.g., directors of service learning, teaching and learning centers, or study-abroad programs). Many of these types of careers either require a PhD or give preference to individuals who hold PhDs. Many are particularly suited to the religion scholar.

To illustrate in more detail, let us take the example of academic technology. Traditionally those who worked in university technology services were considered technical staff whose work intersected the work of faculty only if the latter's computers weren't working. That is rapidly changing. For example, sensing the demand for the work of computer visualization and simulation, DU recently hired a PhD in English, Patrick Ryan, to work with faculty willing to learn the coding skills that could enable such research and teaching. (Patrick has the requisite computer skills which he simply picked up "along the way," since, of course, his graduate studies in English offered no training in computer programming. It could as easily have been a JDP graduate such as Amy Balogh, whom DU's Center for Judaic Studies hired into an administrative role that will include some teaching, not only of university students, but within Denver's Jewish community more broadly.) Digital Humanities is exploding in higher education (though it has yet to have any impact in seminaries); yet the typical humanities PhD has no training in programming. Because of the nature of digital humanities projects, it requires serious teamwork with those who have different knowledge and skill sets; that means faculty, librarians and academic technologists must actively work together. Such work usually means the librarians and technologists are the teachers and the faculty are the students.

If the JDP became a program that provided opportunity and training for our students to serve in contexts beyond traditional classroom teaching, they would be better prepared to obtain employment in other arenas where their advanced knowledge and pedagogical skill would be valued. Instead of work in alternative venues acting as a “consolation prize” for those who do not obtain employment as a fulltime faculty member, such careers may come to be seen as desirable in their own right, thereby encouraging students to see how their PhD in the study of religion is valuable even if they do not become professors in tenure track positions.

Virtually all of our faculty graduated from PhD programs designed exclusively to prepare the kind of teacher-scholars that populate most colleges, universities, and seminaries. In terms of pedagogy, our doctoral faculty teach almost exclusively in classrooms or online and are therefore unprepared to devise new ways of teaching our students for careers that locate them in hybrid positions that require para-classroom teaching (like academic technology) or are outside academia altogether. We have serious work to do in order to educate ourselves if we are to become a program that provides ways for students to develop their pedagogical skills in these new directions.

Project Objectives

As the current directors of the JDP, we recognize the potential enormity of such a radical shift, for it involves expanding the purpose of the PhD program and some of its learning goals. Thus our objectives during the grant period are a) to *explore* the curricular options, feasibility, and challenges of taking our program in such a direction; b) to *educate* ourselves about careers outside the classroom, as well as what sort of pedagogy and programming our PhD program would need in order to prepare students to teach in other contexts; and c) to *assess* faculty interest and capacity to commit.

By the end of the grant period, we hope to have in place the necessary curricular components that can provide interested students with the additional pedagogical skills and know-how appropriate for careers in museums, academic technology, and hybrid academic positions that involve para-classroom teaching. Although we cannot know with certainty now which curricular modifications will be optimal, we anticipate the following: combining resources with other departments to either develop new courses or modify existing ones so as to accommodate our students and/or creating certificate programs, and implementing internships so that our students have the opportunity to have pedagogical experiences outside the university and seminary classroom.

As a result of a proposal to DU’s Office of Graduate Studies and the Center for Teaching and Learning, we will begin next year offering a teaching certificate, which has a much fuller set of requirements beyond our existing program for teaching assistants. In order to offer this certificate, we have developed the requirements in close collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning. This certificate is focused on teaching in the classroom right now, but it may be possible to build upon this model. We mention this certificate program here to demonstrate our ability to collaborate with other departments of the university as well as our commitment to enhancing opportunities for teaching and learning among our students.

Description of Activities

During a 2 ½ year period, we envision the following kinds of activities to enable exploration and ready ourselves for implementation of the necessary curricular changes: 1) inviting in speakers who

currently work in one of the three arenas named above—in a few cases we have alumni (specified below) who enjoy successful careers in academic technology and hybrid positions; 2) discussions among faculty to begin reimagining a program that is not exclusively focused on preparing students for classroom teaching and/or ways our pedagogy in current courses might need to adapt (e.g., devising assignments that allow students to develop skills in museum work or coding); 3) pursuing workshops and programming with other academic departments and teaching and learning resources of the university to explore the possible curricular options for students interested in pursuing careers outside of fulltime classroom teaching (e.g., supplemental non-credit certificate programs, or required courses in other departments, such as computer science or the school of education).

In more specific terms, we propose the following:

- **Initial Meeting:** Project Directors convene JDP faculty to talk about what they think they are preparing our students for, to present information on current academic job market and potential other markets, to determine what role our newly developed teaching certificate might play, and to cultivate interest in participating in the symposia and workshops.
- **Symposium I:** bring back alumni who currently teach in *unconventional venues* to talk to faculty and students about how they got there, advantages and disadvantages, best practices for institutionalizing preparation to teach in such a setting as theirs.
 - We have identified one soon-to-be alum who is willing to participate: April Favara. Last year, April was hired by iLearnERP as a training consultant. Although April had no expertise in computer software development, iLearnERP hired April precisely because of the teaching experience she acquired as a PhD student, and because iLearn ERP believed expertise in the study of religion trained one to be culturally sensitive towards others. The company needed an experienced pedagogue to develop curriculum to train new clients in using their software. April is in the last stages of writing her dissertation, but I do not expect to see her applying for fulltime academic teaching positions. April loves her job, and from her perspective, she *already* holds a satisfying teaching position.
 - Another potential alum is Amy Balogh. While a student in our program Amy did a summer internship with the Israeli Antiquities Authority in museum curation. Currently Amy is employed as Administrative Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at DU, where she does some classroom teaching, but she also plans and coordinates with other Jewish organizations to sponsor events, short courses for the general public, and exhibitions at the Mizel Museum for Jewish Art.
- **Symposium II:** bring back alumni in *hybrid positions* where part of their job is teaching and part may be administrative or other. Add to this a few such hybrid religion scholars who seem like great models for our students and learn from them what it takes to do these jobs and how they think one should train for them and find positions.
 - One of our alums, Janet Everhart, is willing to participate. Jan is associate professor and chair of the Religion Department at Simpson College in Iowa. When Jan was originally hired at Simpson, she taught half time while the remainder of her time was dedicated to directing a Lilly-funded project, aimed at developing programming to help undergraduates cultivate a vocational call—something far beyond making students aware of the job skills required in this or that profession. The success of this project depended on the invention of unprecedented curricula—unprecedented because helping students nurture their vocational calling in the spirit in which

Simpson was trying to do it meant that it could not happen in the classroom, nor in the career services office. Jan rose to the occasion with extraordinarily creative programming, teaching, and mentoring. To hear her speak about her work with students, especially those who have pursued work in ministry, public service, and the non-profit sector, is to be inspired. We look forward to hosting her on campus to share her wisdom and experience.

- Another graduate of the JDP, Gail Murphy-Geiss, also began her post-PhD career in a hybrid academic position at Colorado College. Gail's position was half time teaching and half time dedicated to counseling and advising. In addition to her PhD Gail had a background in ministry and pastoral care and was thus well suited to working with students in this role. One of the strengths of our PhD program has been in the area of Religion and Psychological Studies/Pastoral Care and Counseling, so we often have PhD students who possess skills similar to Gail's. As with the others already mentioned, Gail's wisdom and experience would benefit us greatly as we explore expanding the vocational options for our graduates.
- **Workshop I:** DU has 2 graduate museum studies programs (anthropology & art history), both of which teach museum education courses and neither of which has specific expertise in religion. We need to see if our students could benefit from existing courses, what modifications to those courses might be needed, and/or to explore a new course in museum studies specifically designed for our students. We envision a workshop to do this work, one that brings together JDP administrative staff, museum studies faculties of anthropology and art history (who have already indicated a desire to work more closely on their museum studies programs), and two or three outside experts on education in museums of religion to explore this track.
- **Workshop II:** Iliff currently has a strong department of academic technology, which is staffed by two recent graduates of the JDP, Justin Barber, Micah Saxton, and one who will graduate at the end of this academic year, Michael Hemenway. We have already consulted with them about their participation, and they expressed enthusiasm and willingness to participate. Iliff is recognized as a leader in online education—we were the first to pursue a hybrid M.Div, where most of the students' work was done non-residentially. We firmly believe that Iliff's success in online education is due in large part to the human resources we enjoy in academic technology. We also believe that had it not been the case that our technologists held PhD's and had teaching experience, we never could have prepared our faculty so quickly nor produced the high quality online interfaces and digital integration with resources beyond simple learning management systems. It is a testament not only to the technological skill of these men, but also the pedagogical ability that they developed while in our PhD program. As PhD's in Religious Studies (or almost PhD's, as they were when they started), they could not only communicate with theological school faculty effectively, they understood the pedagogical objectives and challenges that preoccupy teachers in this context. On the DU side, I have also been in contact with Patrick Ryan, mentioned above. We therefore have strong local human resources, some of whom are our alumni, eager to offer workshops to educate our faculty and students about what sort of training would be necessary for students who chose to pursue this path.
- **Pilot Micro-Internships:** Create three internships in alternative venues for current interested students. We anticipate forming potentially productive relationships through the symposia and workshops. Such internships would give students the opportunity to augment their experience as teaching assistants in the classroom with the kinds of

pedagogy appropriate to the other venues. Annette Stott, who will begin serving as the Director of the JDP next academic year (and will serve as one of the project directors), is professor of Art History and former director of the School of Art and Art History. Annette has close contacts with curators in local museums, including the Denver Art Museum. Some of these colleagues are experienced teachers themselves who serve as affiliated faculty at DU. One of our Iliff faculty, Ted Vial, has connections at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and he believes there are a couple of curators there who would be interested in partnering with us. We intend to capitalize on these connections to initiate museum-affiliated internships. (Ted also recently informed us that he has had a long-standing interest in designing a course on “religious studies in museums”—this grant might just well provide that opportunity!)

Evaluative Strategies

We intend a mid-grant self-evaluation (January 2019), which we envision as a brief report prepared by the project directors on the work of the two symposia, which we will then circulate internally. Such a report would be feedback from the participants both during and after the symposia as well as written feedback collected from participants. (Both symposia and workshops will conclude by asking those involved to fill out a questionnaire about their experience and in what directions they imagine proceeding.

Final evaluation will take place during the transition between the final phase of the grant and implementation of curricular additions or adjustments. It will include debriefing meetings and small work groups for faculty and students (we envision three such groups tied to each of the teaching venues named above) to figure out how to use the information gained from the above in our program.

Products and Outcomes

Ultimately success will be measured by implementation of the desired curricular changes, including permanent internships, and the embrace of these new programming and teaching opportunities by our students. In order to reach that point, the faculty will need to have understanding and clarity about what students need to become teachers in the world-beyond-the-classroom. Of course, the buy-in of the administration and faculty of the two institutions will need to be demonstrated. We are optimistic that the verbal expressions of support for this direction will turn into a demonstrated commitment by the end of the three years. Many of us are motivated by an ethical mandate: if we are going to keep producing PhD graduates in religious and theological studies in spite of the grim prospects our graduates have for obtaining full-time teaching positions in academe, then we must find ways for them to fulfill their desire to educate others and to be valued by those they teach in whatever context they do their teaching, whether it be outside of academia or inside it in non-traditional teaching roles.

Assuming the requisite support and resources and using the feedback provided from questionnaires and follow-up consultation, the directors will produce a report on the findings resulting from the work of the project. This report will culminate with a series of recommendations for implementing the courses/certificate-programs/internships. It will be circulated among our JDP faculty colleagues for comments and suggestions. Following receipt of those responses, the directors will make any changes they deem necessary, and submit the recommendations to the JDP Committee for approval.

If the Committee affirms the recommendations, then the appropriate processes at the University of Denver will be followed, which includes submitting the application for curricular changes to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will then be funneled to the Graduate Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council for approval. If approved, this administrative process insures that the registrar's office has what it needs to track our students as they move through the program. Also, since we have never had an internship program for teaching outside the institution, we will need to learn how to resource and manage those internships.

Institutional Support

Since the JDP is a joint program, it is overseen by two deans, one from each institution: Barbara Wilcots, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at the University of Denver and Albert Henandez, Vice President and Dean of the Faculty at Iliff. They are both supportive. Through informal canvassing and conversation, we believe about 8 Iliff faculty and at least 4 JDP faculty at DU are willing to explore the directions we have outlined here. (These numbers do not include faculty not formally part of the JDP but whom we plan to work with interdisciplinarily to pursue course offerings or certificates available through other departments that could benefit our students, e.g. computer science.) We are also prepared, however, to encounter faculty who are resistant at the start—perhaps because it is unknown territory, perhaps because they feel anxiety about adjusting their own pedagogy, or just because change is always hard. In our experience of leading curricular change, people need opportunities to learn about options and discuss with others what a new path might look like. This grant would provide us with the time and space to do that. We believe the vast majority of the JDP faculty are dedicated to their students' success, and because they know the employment challenges facing new PhD's, we are confident they will want to be productive partners in exploring how we can help our students find meaningful work as teachers, whether or not they ever go by the title "professor."

Project Timeline

2017

Fall: Planning Symposia; Research and consultation by directors. Hold initial meeting.

2018

June: Symposium I

December: Symposium II

Mid-project evaluation

2019

June: Workshop I

December: Workshop II

2019-2020

Internships

2020

Final Evaluation: Report on findings and recommendations for curricular changes and internships.

Prepare curricular implementations in AY 2020-21

Budget

Initial Planning Meeting with Faculty and Deans - Fall 2017

- Food 20 x \$25 \$500

Symposium I – June 2018 (one full day)

- Expenses for 3 alumni presenters, 2 remote, 1 local:
 - Transportation 2 x 600 \$1200
 - Hotel 2 x 178 \$356
 - Food: 2 x 75 \$150
 - Stipends: 3 x 500 \$1500
- Food at symposium 23 x 65 \$1495
- Stipends for faculty 10 x 250 \$2500
- Stipends for students 8 x 150 \$1200
- Subtotal = \$8401

Symposium II – December 2018 (one full day)

- Expenses for 2 alumni, 1 local, 1 remote
 - Transportation 1 x 600 \$600
 - Hotel 1 x 178 \$178
 - Food 1 x 75 \$75
 - Stipend 2 x 500 \$1000
- Expenses for two local professionals in hybrid academic positions
 - Honoraria 2 x 500 (half day) \$1000
- Food at Symposium 23 x 65 \$1495
- Stipends for Faculty 10 x 250 \$2500
- Stipends for Students 5 x 125 \$1200
- Subtotal = \$8048

Narrative regarding symposia: The cost of expenses for presenters and participants follow Wabash recommendations and current rates at a nearby hotel. The food cost for the events was calculated by gauging the per person cost of two meals plus snacks/coffee/tea during the day.

Workshop I – June 2019 (1 day)

- Expenses for two consultants from local museums
 - Honoraria 2 x 500 (half day) \$1000
 - Prepare presentation materials \$100
- Food for Workshop 14 x 65 \$910
- Stipends for Faculty 7 x 350 \$2450
- Stipends for Students 5 x 100 (half day) \$500
- Sub-Total = \$4960

Workshop II – December 2019 (1 day)

- Expenses for three local academic technologists
 - Honoraria 3 x 750 \$2250
 - Prepare presentation materials \$100
- Expenses for one outside consultant
 - Fee for half day 1 x 750 \$750
 - Transportation 1 x 600 \$600
 - Hotel 1 x 178 \$178
 - Food 1 x 75 \$75
- Food for Workshop 14 x 65 \$910
- Stipends for Faculty 5 x 350 \$1750
- Stipends for Students 5 x 100 (half day) \$500
- Consultation between JDP Staff and Computer Science Faculty \$250
- Total = \$7363

Narrative regarding the workshops: The workshops involve smaller numbers of faculty since they are working groups and will require preparation time and homework for faculty. The academic technologists require more preparation time so we have allotted a slightly bigger stipend for them. We have also budgeted for one outside consultant. We intend to hire someone from another institution who is both a senior academic and who holds a high level position in university administration such as a V.P. for Academic Technology. The other presenters and leaders are part of our local academic community, with some being our own alumni.

Micro Pilot Internships

- Supervisors 3 x \$600; Students 3 x \$1000 \$4800
- Fringe @12% \$576
- Subtotal = 5376

Narrative: We have budgeted only a modest amount here but since these are pilot internships, we do not anticipate they will last for more than one month.

Administration

- Stipend for Faculty Project Director for 2 years + initial planning time
 - 2 x 3600 (one course release at Iliff each year) \$7200
 - Compensation during sabbatical \$1000 \$1000
 - fringe @12% \$984
- Stipend for Project Student Assistant for 2 years + fringe
 - 2 x 2000 (equivalent to what we pay a GTA) \$4000
 - fringe @12% \$480
- Administration of Grant Finances \$900
- DU Office of Research and Special Programs
 - We anticipate being approved for an exemption. n/a
- Subtotal = \$14564

Narrative: Annette Stott assumes oversight of the JDP next AY and her term will last until 2020. Since she is already paid a stipend to serve as director and is given a teaching reduction, we have not budgeted for her an additional stipend. The other project director, Pamela Eisenbaum, will be stepping down as director at the end of this AY, and thus return to normal faculty status. In order to insure there will be adequate time in her schedule for oversight of the grant, and anticipating that she will devote more hours to the work of running the project, we have budgeted her a stipend equivalent of one course release. Pamela will also be on sabbatical next year, but, in consultation with Dean Albert Hernandez, she will devote a small portion of her time to planning, which includes activities such as preliminary research on careers in the contexts we describe above, inviting speakers, and meeting with administrators and faculty in other departments to encourage participation.

Grand Total = \$49212