



COMPELLED

Honoring the Legacy,
Shaping the Future

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Campaign *for* Campus Investment



Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) was established in 1863. Created to train pastors for the Wisconsin Synod, the seminary has a rich history of preparing men for ministry, including nearly a century on its Mequon campus.

Today, that mission is as important as ever. Our changing world needs the changeless gospel. Our synod needs more pastors to fill current vacancies and seize new opportunities.

Meeting these challenges requires God's blessing—and demands our best efforts. Since WLS is the only training ground for pastors in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), it is vital to have facilities that support an excellent educational experience: Modern classrooms that encourage interaction and support technology. Intimate spaces for students and faculty to collaborate, and for seminarians to receive personalized instruction and thoughtful mentorship from their professors. Welcoming places where students, faculty, and their families can meet and develop connections that go beyond the confines of the classroom.

To that end, plans are in place for a new education center with classrooms and small-group spaces, a new gathering hall, and renovation of existing spaces to provide a student lounge and on-site offices for all faculty.

Why these improvements? Why now? Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is to relate a day in the life of a seminarian.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SEMINARIAN | *Seeing the Opportunities*

It's 7:15 on a sunny fall morning. A first-year seminarian on his way to class takes in the beauty of the campus: orange leaves blaze against a blue sky and frame the historic buildings he's about to enter. He walks under the iconic arch and into the classroom building. In front of him is a wide hall bathed in golden sunlight and lined with the pictures of some of the thousands of men who have gone before him during the seminary's 162-year history. To his right, a spiral staircase winds up to the wood-paneled Tower Room. There is much history and beauty in this place!

But he's not going up that staircase; he's going down to his classroom in the basement. He descends the steps and passes through one classroom with windows too high for most students



“There is much history and beauty in this place!”

to open and a ceiling crisscrossed by bundles of wires and pipes that bang and hiss. Down a dark, narrow hallway is another staircase that brings him to his classroom. It's cramped and a bit musty. It does have windows on one side, but they're ten feet up and cannot be opened.

At 7:30 New Testament class begins. The professor likes to have the students work in groups but, in this room, there's not enough room to arrange the tables in pods, or even for students to get up and move around without bumping into each other. So, he settles for having them talk to their tablemates. He would like to walk around and listen in on their conversations, but since that means stepping over briefcases and daisy-chained extension cords while navigating 24-inch aisles, he mostly stays put.

To be fair, this space wasn't intended for classes. **The basement was originally a gymnasium.** Over the years it was partitioned into other rooms as needed—a practice chapel, a computer lab, a storage room, a classroom. And, to be fair, not all classrooms are like this. Some have more windows. Some have more space.



“When this building opened in 1929, students stayed in place while they listened to lectures and took notes with pencils.”



The new education center will provide six spacious classrooms with integrated technology and abundant natural light, which research shows enhances student learning.

But few have room for tables arranged for groups, and none have easy access to outlets. And why would they? When this building opened in 1929, students stayed in place while they listened to lectures and took notes with pencils.

The students and professors make do. They are grateful for a place to teach and learn. But we can do better for them. The students in these classrooms today will be teaching us God's truth tomorrow, and we can provide them with a dynamic environment that prepares them for that task: Spacious classrooms with lots of the natural light that experts say supports student learning. Flexible seating arrangements and room to move so that students can easily form groups to discuss real ministry applications. Technology that allows instructors and students to make the most of their time together. None of these things will increase the love for God's word that fills them; only the gospel of Jesus does that. But these improvements will enhance the teaching and learning of that word, which is the heart of the ministry these men are training for.



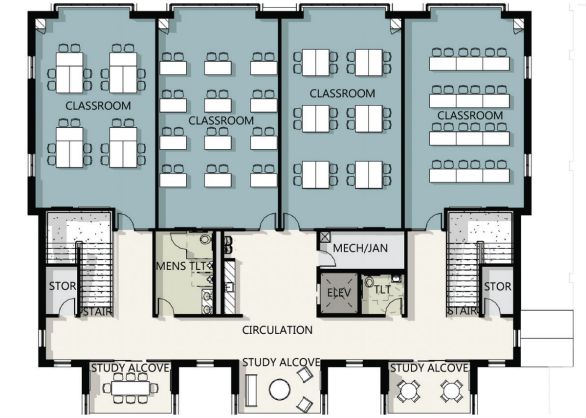
“An incredible brotherhood develops as we spend time together, both in class and outside of it. The result isn't just ‘buddies for life,’ but men we can count on being there for us in the difficulties of life and challenges of ministry.”

~ 2024 Graduate Clayton Fury

After two hours of class in the basement, our seminarian surfaces for the highlight of the day: worship in the chapel. After the service, everyone spills out into the hallway. A professor is looking for our student. It takes some jostling and craning to find him, and they talk briefly there amid the traffic and noise.



In addition to this gathering area, library renovations will include a climate-controlled research room for the seminary's rare books collection, improved lighting, upgraded technology, and private and shared study spaces.



Along with classrooms, the new education center will include five study alcoves to promote formal and informal group learning.

By the time they finish, everyone has dispersed—to classrooms, dorm rooms, the library, the faculty lounge. It's a shame, because this is the one time all day that the whole campus is together. What if that time could be prolonged? What if there were space for students to mingle with each other and their teachers, basking together in the glow of the gospel they just heard and strengthening relationships with each other?

This is what will happen in a reimagined portion of the library. Here the path from the chapel to the new classroom building will open into a wide, comfortable space with tables and chairs, soft furniture, a fireplace, and a coffee bar. There will be room for anyone who wants to linger in conversation, while large windows into the library will draw others toward tables for group study. This may not be the most prominent part of the project, but it will do so much for the seminary's cherished campus culture. Relationships are the key to this culture, and indeed to the ministry. Seminarians form a fellowship on campus that serves them for a lifetime. Those bonds can be strengthened as men from different sections and classes—along with faculty and staff—share moments together throughout the day.



“Meaningful learning happens as much outside the classroom as inside it.”

~ President Earle Treptow



After chapel is “flex hour,” a time for meetings between students and professors, individual or group study, or just a mid-morning mental break. Today our seminarian and a partner are meeting their evangelism professor to practice presenting the gospel. They arrive at the classroom only to find another group has claimed it. Together, the pupils and professor walk through the buildings looking for an open space, without success. Students are studying in other classrooms; the faculty room is

still buzzing with conversation; no private areas are open in the library. After six minutes of searching, they settle on the only suitable space they can find—the library workroom. They sit at a table surrounded by stacks of books. It makes for interesting small talk as they play the parts of evangelists and prospect, but now the presentation and feedback will be rushed. Worse, the unintentional message received is that this exercise isn’t a priority.

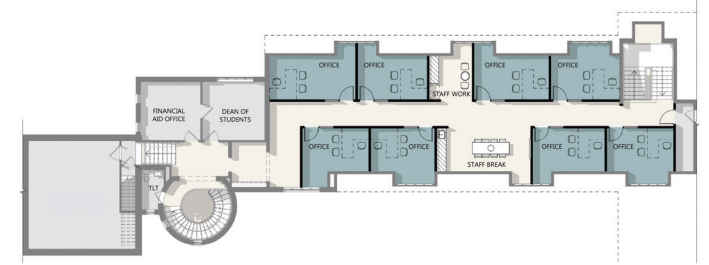


“These new spaces will increase faculty collaboration, making us better professors and helping us form better pastors.”

~ Professor Steven Pagels

So many important things happen during this hour. Professors meet with advisees. Small groups of students meet to critique each other’s sermons. Time-strapped students do homework or research. Students and faculty chat about life and ministry. Having enough appropriate spaces for these kinds of interactions is vitally important. The vision for the new classroom building includes a variety of such spaces—some with comfortable seating and others with tables and chairs; some open to the hall to invite spontaneous interaction and others with sliding glass doors to provide quiet. Spaces like these foster the relational, transformational work of training gospel servants for modern ministry.

After lunch, our seminarian has a free hour before he goes to his afternoon job. He goes back to his classroom to get a head start on homework and remembers something that he wanted to talk about with his professor. The professor is at his home office, though. The student doesn’t want to impose on the professor’s space, but he doesn’t want to ask him to come over to school, either. So, he decides to wait for the next day in class. It’s unfortunate, because the next day, he forgets, and an opportunity for a good conversation was lost.



Rendering of collaboration area and office spaces

There are only a few faculty offices on campus, a reflection of a bygone era when pastors met members (and professors met students) in home offices. This is an issue for us today, when students crave one-on-one conversations with their teachers more than ever, but privacy concerns make the home office unappealing. Imagine, then, if all faculty had offices in the main campus buildings. Students with spontaneous questions could pop in the open door and get answers. Students seeking pastoral counsel could meet in a private, confidential setting. Every one of these interactions is an opportunity for teaching and relationship building. Our professors are all men with rich pastoral experience. These conversations allow them to share godly wisdom and practical advice as they model a shepherd’s concern for his sheep—pastors forming pastors by example.



When the new education center is complete, most of the current classrooms will be converted to easily accessible offices, allowing these vital interactions to take place. Student concerns will be addressed more quickly. Professors will benefit from this, too, as their proximity to each other increases their collaboration. Men teaching in the same department could have offices near each other, making it easier to discuss their area of expertise. Veteran instructors will have more opportunities to mentor their newer colleagues.



Like iron sharpening iron, professors will help each other become even better at the work to which they have been called.

In the evening, there is a gathering planned for students and professors and their wives. Everyone heads to the dormitory basement. It's crowded and loud. Our student and his wife try to carry on a conversation with a professor and his wife.

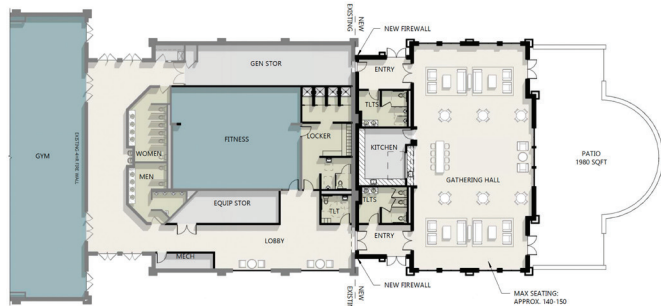
They're briefly interrupted by another student carrying his laundry through the crowd on his way to the washing machine, then by a different student carrying the supper he cooked in the dorm kitchen back through the crowd to his room. They carry on the best they can, but no one forgets that they are in a dormitory basement.

For the seminary's first few decades on this campus, students weren't even allowed to be married. Now, typically a quarter of our students are married when they arrive on campus, and three quarters are married by the time they leave. Their wives are crucial to their ministries, as every married pastor knows. But we simply do not have a good place for these women to meet with each other or with the rest of the seminary family. What message does that send?

Imagine a dedicated gathering space, ample and comfortable, where wives feel just as at home as students and professors. Picture a place where wives can meet without feeling like they don't belong—a place where they can gather for Bible studies or book clubs, for devotional or marriage workshops with their husbands, or for playdates



“Women ... form(ing) a support network they can rely on not only at the seminary but in the years to come.”



The new gathering hall will be attached to the current auditorium building, positioned to serve both students and their families and guests to the campus



“We would love a comfortable space to get to know and encourage one another during the short time we're on campus together, so we can remain connected in future ministries.”

~ Liz Borgwardt, seminarian wife

with their children. Providing such a space would tell each seminarian's wife how much she matters to her husband's ministry, to the seminary, and to us as a synod. It would also allow these women to form a support network they can rely on not only at the seminary but in the years to come.

This is a major purpose of the planned gathering hall. Groups large and small, from all parts of the seminary family, will finally have a comfortable, accessible place to get together. Connected to the auditorium, this will also be a place to receive visitors who come to campus for Call Day, concerts, and conferences. Our Lord wants his people to practice fellowship and hospitality—Christian habits that are as important as ever in today's world. The addition of this accessible, comfortable place will help Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary show itself to be a warm, welcoming family.



Rendering of gathering space interior

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITIES

In 2029, the seminary's Mequon campus will turn 100. Anyone who has visited will agree that the campus our forebears have bequeathed to us is a treasure. It has served us for a century, and in some ways its age is part of the appeal, providing unique beauty and projecting stability as the preparation of pastors has continued through the generations.

At the same time, that age is holding us back. It may be our grandfathers' campus, but it's not our grandfathers' seminary. When Professor J. P. Koehler designed its buildings, all seminarians were single and pastors met parishioners in their homes. He did not anticipate small-group discussion in the classroom and could not have imagined laptops and Smartboards. Education has changed along with the students, and we want to offer them—and, most importantly, our Lord—the best.

As faithful stewards, we can maintain the beauty of our campus while adapting it to the realities of a new generation of students and teachers. We can hold to the doctrine that has been passed down to us while creating an environment that allows us to teach it more effectively. We can honor the legacy we have received while shaping the future of our work. Both gratitude and necessity compel us to tackle the challenges of an aging campus and equip the seminary for its mission today and tomorrow.



“Education has changed along with the students, and we want to offer them—and, most importantly, our Lord—the best.”



“We want to prepare pastors who know the CHANGELESS TRUTH and know how to communicate it in a CHANGING WORLD.”

~ President Earle Treptow

This is also a special opportunity to show current and future students how much they matter to us as a church body. These men thank God for the generous gifts of God's people each year, which furnish a place for them to study, provide professors to mold and guide them, and allow them to reduce their debt or keep them out of it. But more than that, they see these gifts as an expression of love for the ministry and the ministers, which inspires them on their path.

As we look to recruit more students in this time of pastoral vacancies, a building project like this says to potential students concretely what we're saying in our words and prayers—how much we need and value shepherds in God's flock. Our students will hear that message and relay it to other young men in their lives and ministries, creating a ripple effect that can benefit our synod for years to come.

These are not simply buildings; these are places where the gospel will be proclaimed. These are spaces where the Holy Spirit will be at work, preparing hearts to serve the Lord. Imagine the impact these facilities will have as students take the truths they learn and the relationships they form out into the world.

A project of this caliber is a large undertaking that will require significant generosity, and that is not something the leadership of our seminary and synod take lightly. This is a generational opportunity. The last major building project on campus was the addition of the auditorium in 1985, and the last educational project was completed in 1968. It is time for a project that will meet this moment of need and, God willing, serve our church body for decades.



“These are spaces where the Holy Spirit will be at work, preparing hearts to serve the Lord.”

HOW WE CAN PARTNER TOGETHER

Together we can provide classrooms that accommodate the best practices in teaching and learning. We can supply spaces that facilitate more interaction between professors and students—more of the pastors-forming-pastors dynamic that is our seminary’s specialty. We can furnish places for students to work together, for wives to meet each other, and for faculty, students, and wives to get together, forming a stronger support network for our pastors and their families.

Ultimately, this project is about presenting God with our best. He has entrusted to his church the task of proclaiming the gospel, and his love compels us to bring that gospel to the world. Contemplate how we might best glorify God as we train men for that mission today. Consider how you might partner in this work so that our seminary can continue to faithfully and effectively provide pastors for generations to come.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: \$15,000,000 Goal

| NUMBER OF GIFTS | \$ GIFT AMOUNT | \$ AMOUNT FROM LEVEL | \$ CUMULATIVE AMOUNT | % OF TOTAL |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1 | \$4,500,000 | \$4,500,000 | \$4,500,000 | 30% |
| 1 | \$2,000,000 | \$2,000,000 | \$6,500,000 | 43% |
| 3 | \$1,000,000 | \$3,000,000 | \$9,500,000 | 63% |
| 2 | \$500,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$10,500,000 | 70% |
| 4 | \$250,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$11,500,000 | 76% |
| 8 | \$100,000 | \$800,000 | \$12,300,000 | 82% |
| 6 | \$75,000 | \$450,000 | \$12,750,000 | 85% |
| 12 | \$50,000 | \$600,000 | \$13,350,000 | 89% |
| 20 | \$25,000 | \$500,000 | \$13,850,000 | 92% |
| 35 | \$10,000 | \$350,000 | \$14,200,000 | 94% |
| many | <\$10,000 | \$800,000 | \$15,000,000 | 100% |

Interested in learning more about our efforts?

Contact Sean Young _____



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