FROM: The Office of the Dean

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REVISIONS TO CENTRAL’S MASTER OF DIVINITY CURRICULUM

Central’s Faculty is announcing revisions to the seminary’s Master of Divinity program, which are designed to better prepare graduates for today’s ever changing ministry challenges and contexts. Initial courses in the revised curriculum will begin with the fall 2015 semester for students at the Shawnee location. The revised MDiv curriculum is a product of several years of preparatory work by the faculty and of 18 months intense work by a team within the Academic Division, including the Dean, Professor of New Testament, Registrar, the Director of the create program, and an external consultant with expertise in Distance (Online) Education and competency-based education.

The Faculty utilized a widely-acclaimed Carnegie Foundation research report on educating clergy to guide its curricular deliberations, resulting in the decision to incorporate several values into the revision process: (1) ministry (job) ready graduates, (2) learner-centered education, (3) an integrated curriculum, and (4) mastery of essential ministry competencies. With this foundation, the Revision Team worked to identify, define, and develop the structures, course descriptions, goals, and outcomes, which are being used by faculty content experts to shape the learning topics, activities, and assessments needed to create an integrated curriculum.

Drawing upon insights gained from Central’s six-year-old create program and the Carnegie study, the revised MDiv curriculum features learning on a vertical plane (i.e., major competencies are broken down into component parts so that mastery is attained gradually as the learner progresses from course to course on the way to graduation) in addition to learning on the horizontal plane within the courses themselves. To accomplish this, the revised MDiv curriculum was built around four vertical learning pillars identified in Educating Clergy as signature pedagogies – the pedagogies of interpretation, formation, contextualization, and performance (of ministry functions). To these Central’s Faculty added contextualized learning (internships and capstone) designed to help the learner better integrate the competencies needed for successful ministry in a complex and changing world.

In order to facilitate the two axes of learning, levels of competency in these four skill areas have been identified for each course and the courses have been organized so the learner progresses from initial levels of competency to professional levels by graduation. This means that moving through the curriculum sequentially is absolutely essential. In order to enable this, the MDiv will be offered in three 12-week terms (fall, spring, and summer). When fully implemented, a student will be able to begin during any one of those terms and progress term-by-term to completion.
Another feature of the revised MDiv will be the dismantling of lines separating Online and face-to-face study. Classes will be structured so that learners work to attain learning objectives through utilizing methods appropriate to a particular student’s contextual situation, but do so while interacting with other learners in the course whether each is physically present or remote.

Most current MDiv students will have opportunities to take courses in the revised curriculum, but a plan to enable completion within the existing model also will be available to many students. Send questions to the Registrar for additional information regarding your particular situation.