


THE VOICE

THE FUTURE IS
CENTRAL

Central Board of Directors
November 2023



"[I chose Central because] many of the people I most respect and admire through my work are Central graduates. Everyone I have met that is a Central graduate had only good things to say."

Sergio Moreno-Denton
Current MDiv student and staff chaplain at a local hospital

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A Word from the President

리더십의 중심 센트럴, 센트럴에서 리더십으로

Since 1901, Central Seminary has provided high quality theological education for ministers and leaders in the Midwest and beyond, and for all of those years, the seminary has adapted its curriculum and educational delivery to remain relevant and accessible for its students.

For the last seven years, Central has embraced virtual educational delivery via Zoom, and currently, with the exception of providing required in-person class time for international F-1 visa students, a few Master of Arts in Counseling students, and some Doctor of Ministry students, the seminary does not offer ongoing classroom experiences (meeting daily or weekly) on the Shawnee campus. In this virtual education mode, Central provides students with high quality classroom experiences and an abundance of digital library resources.

The outcomes of Central's commitment to virtual education are that we now have a scattered student population (living in 33 states and 10 countries), and our 45,000 square foot Shawnee building is underutilized. On 70% of days, we have no students in our building, and in 2023, we averaged only 13 students in the building each month. The financial burden of maintaining the building has resulted in Central diverting money to a mortgage and upkeep rather than investing in our mission and our students.

What we believe is our truest and best way forward in 2024 is to downsize our physical space, lessen our financial investment in a building, and continue creating virtual learning communities as we together seek to live into our mission wholeheartedly and with excellence. I am proud of the good leadership of our Board of Directors of proactively and missionally moving Central into the future! (See pages 4-6 for details) ✨

1901년 설립 이래로, 센트럴신학대학원은 중서부 지역과 그 외 지역의 목회자와 지도자들에게 고품질의 신학 교육을 제공해 왔으며, 그 기간 동안 신학교는 학생들이 관심을 갖고 접근하기 쉽도록 커리큘럼과 교육을 제공해 왔습니다.

지난 7년 동안, 센트럴은 줌(Zoom)을 통한 가상 교육 제공을 받아들였으며, 현재 F-1 국제 학생들, 상담학과 학생들, 그리고 일부 박사과정 학생들에게 필수적인 대면 수업 시간을 제공하는 것을 제외하고, 학교는 쇼니 캠퍼스에서 정기적인 교실 수업(매일 또는 매주)을 제공하지 않습니다. 반면, 새로운 가상 교육 모드에서, 센트럴은 학생들에게 양질의 교실 경험과 풍부한 디지털 도서관 자원을 제공하고 있습니다.

가상 교육에 대한 센트럴의 노력의 결과로 현재 학생들은 전역에 분산되어 있고(33개 주 및 10개 국가에 거주) 그 결과 45,000평방피트 규모의 본교 쇼니건물은 제대로 활용되지 않고 있습니다. 연중 70% 기간 동안은 우리 건물에 학생이 없으며, 2023년에는 매달 건물에 평균 13명의 학생만 있었습니다. 건물을 유지하는 데 드는 재정적 부담으로 인해 센트럴은 우리의 사명과 학생들에게 투자하기보다는 모기지 및 유지 관리에 돈을 사용하고 있는게 현실입니다.

2024년에 우리가 앞으로 나아갈 가장 진실되고 최선의 방법이라고 믿는 것은 물리적 공간을 축소하고, 건물에 대한 재정적 투자를 줄이고, 함께 진심을 다해 우수하게 우리의 사명을 실천하기 위해 노력하면서 가상 학습 커뮤니티를 계속 만드는 것입니다. 저는 센트럴을 미래로, 적극적이고 선교적으로 나아가게 하는 이사회와 훌륭한 리더십을 자랑스럽게 생각합니다! (자세한 내용은 4~6페이지를 참조하세요) ✨

Pamela R. Durso

LIVING INTO THE FUTURE



Central Seminary has always been an adaptive, responsive theological institution. Throughout our history, we have anticipated what is most needed by our students and equipped them to address emerging congregational and societal changes with imagination, creativity, and hope. In response to recent trends in educational delivery and technological innovations, Central's Board of Directors along with President Pamela R. Durso, the administration, and the faculty are reimagining the seminary's future and preparing to move into our next season of providing Christ-centered, mission-focused theological education. We are pleased to announce, "The Future is Central," three strategic initiatives that will propel our mission and vision forward.

INITIATIVE #1

Embracing and Enhancing Virtual Learning as the Future of Theological Education at Central and Beyond

OUR EXPERIENCE

- The preference of current Central students is to study remotely. It allows them to more effectively balance their educational commitment, job requirements, and family needs.
- Our students reside in 33 states in the U.S. and in 10 countries around the world. Less than 8% of our students live in the Kansas City metropolitan area, and most who live within driving distance of the Shawnee campus have expressed a desire to attend remotely.
- Like Central, most other U.S. seminaries have increased their online offerings or have shifted fully to virtual learning platforms, and competition for seminary students is now extremely high.

- Few programs at Central now require in-person learning. Only international students living in the U.S. on a student visa, a few counseling program students, and some doctoral students are required to attend occasional in-person classes.

OUR STRATEGY

- In 2023, Central is embracing our identity as a majority virtual seminary and is setting the standard for what a technologically enhanced seminary can and should be. With this renewed commitment of taking theological education to our students, wherever they may be, the Board of Directors has made the decision to right-size our physical space and relocate our campus headquarters to a more suitable location in the Kansas City area. This strategic move will allow Central to direct more resources to students, programming, and our mission by reducing the financial overhead of unused physical space, decreasing our financial liability, making new technologies easier to adopt, and lessening our ecological footprint. The new location will position Central for a successful future with a more efficient, versatile space designed for the changing landscape of theological education.

The plan is also available online



◀ English

Korean ▶



See page 4 for Frequently Asked Questions

INITIATIVE #2

Anticipating and Addressing the Evolving Needs of Students and Graduates

OUR EXPERIENCE

- Students often enroll at Central as they seek to live into a call to vocation. In 2023, the students enrolling are more mindful than ever of the changing nature of job opportunities available upon graduation. Many recognize that their pathway may include part-time, bi-vocational ministry, and they are aware that they may need to secure non-ministry employment to meet their financial needs.
- Our students are pursuing ministry through more avenues than ever before, including chaplaincy, non-profit leadership, and clinical counseling.
- Many of our students prefer shorter degree programs that are less expensive and have more focus on practical application and adaptive leadership.
- Educational requirements for ministers seeking ordination or endorsement are changing. Some denominations now accept other credentials as alternatives to the traditional Master of Divinity degree.
- The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) reports that less than half of the 2023 Master of Divinity graduates anticipate serving in a congregational/parish ministry context in the next 5 years.
- Seminaries across the U.S. are more innovative in their curriculum design and more responsive to the needs of the graduating student seeking employment.

OUR STRATEGY

- Central is attentive to what congregations need and what students want and need from theological institutions. The seminary is continually assessing our current programs and considering the addition of new programs in order to ensure that our graduates have both the theological foundation and the practical skills necessary to lead and minister in today's world.
- Central's evaluation and reimagination work focuses on our mission, our marketability, and our financial sustainability. As a seminary, we are also cognizant of the financial requirements to sustain high quality theological education. We further recognize that while there are many innovative educational programming opportunities, Central must move forward in addressing the great needs in our world as well as our ability to generate revenue to resource our programming.

INITIATIVE #3

Resourcing Students who Struggle to Afford Seminary

OUR EXPERIENCE

- The financial limitations of Central's prospective and current students continue to have an impact on our enrollment. Many of our students struggle to pay Central's modest tuition and fees.
- The average age of Central students is 43, and most are working and living with many other financial obligations.
- Prospective Central students often hesitate to take on new financial responsibilities and accumulate educational debt. This hesitation has been a reality for many years, but in wake of current inflation and economic challenges, it has been amplified.
- Prospective Central students are aware of their salary possibilities following completion of degree program, and many now seek to determine the cost benefit of enrolling.
- Central is not enrolled in federal financial aid programs, which often is a barrier to prospective students.

OUR STRATEGY

- Central is committed to offering accessible and affordable theological education. Currently, Central is one of the most affordable accredited seminaries in the country and has implemented only one minimal tuition increase in the last 12 years.
- In 2024, Central will focus on expanding our already robust student scholarship opportunities with the spring launch of a "100 Scholarships in 100 Days" campaign with the goal of raising \$100,000 for scholarships and tuition reduction measures.
- Central will continue to build an endowment that supports scholarships and helps keep operational costs down, therefore keeping tuition low.
- Central is committed to ensuring equitable and accessible scholarships are available to all students.

The courageous implementation of these initiatives will ensure that our seminary will continue to serve the church and the world for many decades to come. It will allow Central to remain laser-focused on our mission of preparing leaders for seeking God, shaping the church, and serving humanity and all creation.

We invite you to follow our progress on Central's website and social media as we implement "The Future is Central" in the coming months and years.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What will Central's new physical campus headquarters be like?

Instead of owning and maintaining a campus of over 45,000 sq. ft. of interior space and 9 acres of land, Central's Board of Directors has directed the administration to find a suitable location estimated at approximately 8,000-9,000 sq. ft.

The new seminary campus will be located in the Kansas City metropolitan area, continuing the tradition of Central's being headquartered in the state of Kansas since 1901.

Our new campus space will include multiple classrooms outfitted with cutting-edge technology, office space for staff and faculty, several meeting rooms, a gathering area, and a small print library. While the print collection will be reduced, most books and journals along with millions of other resources are now and will be available on the Digital Theological Library.

What is the Digital Theological Library?

Almost exclusively, students at Central use the Digital Theological Library (DTL) to access books, articles, journals and more. Formed in 2016 as an independent not-for-profit corporation with the mission of creating one co-owned library for a large group of small seminaries, the DTL acquires print collections and digitizes them making the content available to students and researchers around the world. Students, no matter where they live or study from, have immediate access to more than 1.5 million books, 104 million articles, 61,000 journals, and 174 databases. As we reduce our physical campus space, DTL will add much of Central's current print collection to the DTL at no cost to seminary, which will enable students and faculty across the United States and around the world to access even more educational resources.

Does this move indicate that Central is in trouble?

No. Central is stronger than ever. This proactive decision made by the Board of Directors is intended to right-size our physical footprint. Our current space in Shawnee is much larger than what we now need. Given that more than 90% of our students attend class remotely, our current physical classrooms often sit empty, and this underuse of the Shawnee building will increase over time. Relocating to a more appropriately sized space is both financially and ecologically responsible.

Will Central be fully virtual?

No. Some in-person classes are now taught in the Shawnee building and in other Central sites and that will continue on the new campus. Central is simply rightsizing its physical administrative location. We will have a building that is more efficient and versatile, allowing for increased staff, faculty, and student collaboration. In addition, our local international students, counseling students, and Doctor of Ministry cohorts will continue to gather for periodic in-person classes and intensives.

What options did you consider before deciding to sell the current campus building?

Central exercised due diligence for more than a year, exploring various possibilities. Options explored included identifying partners, including other non-profits, educational institutions, and churches, for space sharing of the Shawnee building. After consulting with commercial real estate professionals, we concluded that finding a viable tenant with which to share space would be exceedingly difficult, and finding a tenant who could lease at the market rate without serious retrofitting of the building would be next to impossible. Leasing our space would also require Central to continue carrying the financial responsibility and liability as landlord and would have necessitated the added costs of hiring property management personnel. Seeking a partner with whom to share space, we concluded, would detract financial resources from students, faculty, and programming. Relocating allows Central to remain laser focused on the mission.

Will this impact accreditation?

No. We will relocate campus headquarters in accordance with the regulations of both of our accrediting bodies (the Higher Learning Commission and the Association of Theological Schools) as well as all federal and state governmental agencies.

What about the donors that provided funding for your current campus?

The legacy of their gifts will live on. Our current space was built with the generous gifts of so many supporters, partners, and alumni of Central. While we will not be in the space their gifts originally helped construct, the proceeds from the sale of the space will be used in strengthening operations and growing our endowment. 🌱

100
Scholarships
100 DAYS



Launching February 1, 2024

Your future ministry leaders are Central's current students.

Scholarships make it possible for our students to enroll at Central, stay focused on their studies, learn and grow intellectually, spiritually, and professionally, thrive in their ministries, and finish their programs.



Be the first to give! Join us today!



A Conversation with Kathy Maxwell

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty

Dr. Kathy Maxwell began service as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty on July 24, 2023. She relocated to the Kansas City area from Florida along with her husband, Dr. Nathan Maxwell, and their two sons last summer. In her new role, Dr. Maxwell serves as the seminary's primary academic officer, providing vision and leadership in directing and overseeing the work of all faculty and academic activities that are consistent with Central Seminary's mission, vision.

What is your professional background?

I earned my Ph.D. at Baylor University, where I focused on the narratives of the New Testament.

I taught university and seminary students for 16 years before coming to Central. One of the things I love most about teaching New Testament is helping students connect with the complex and beautiful story of the Bible. When we listen empathetically and imaginatively to each other and the biblical text, unexpected things may happen!

I'm also a certified biblical storyteller through the Network of Biblical Storytellers, which

is a wonderful combination of my personal interests, with both the academic and church world. Embodying scripture by telling it as a story helps us hear – and see! – scripture from another angle. I love bringing storytelling into both the classroom and the church, and I love teaching others to tell the biblical story, too!

What attracted you to Central Seminary?

Central's values statement first attracted me to the seminary. Moving from a career of teaching into administration was a big decision. When I read Central's values: community, empathy, growth, and tenacity, I immediately thought, "If such a place exists,

I want to invest in that work.” As I researched the seminary, I looked at the faculty and leadership, the programs taught, the students served, and the vision of the school. We aren’t perfect in our pursuit of these goals, but I could clearly see these four values everywhere I looked. Visiting with faculty, students, and staff during the interview process only enforced my conclusion. I knew that moving into an administrative role would be a challenge but that I could contribute to Central’s good work in theological education.

What role do you see Central playing in helping prepare people for the rapidly changing ministry needs of our communities?

One way Central equips students is by allowing students to remain within their communities while pursuing theological education. Most of our students have established roots, and synchronous hybrid education allows them to remain connected. Our students’ communities are so diverse. Some are engaged in chaplaincy ministry, others in parish ministry. Some are refugees, others are in the inner-city, and still other are in affluent suburbs. Some live in their childhood neighborhoods, others don’t have family within 8,000 miles. The beauty of Central is that these students learn together in the classroom. While they learn to better lead in their own local areas, they build a community more diverse than ever expected. The values I mentioned earlier are highlighted in the classroom: community, empathy, growth, and tenacity. Central prepares students to lead in local and global contexts, a necessary skill for the world today.

You decided to learn the Korean language. Tell us about that decision.

Before I came to Central, I knew that 70% of Central’s student population was Asian, and that Central offered several Korean-language programs. I have many conversations with students, faculty, and staff who work hard to communicate with me in my first language, English. As slow as I am at learning the Korean language, I want to reciprocate as much as possible. Our Registrar, Hana You, is an

excellent and patient teacher! She teaches me the Korean language, and she also teaches me about Korean culture. Our conversations are challenging and fascinating, and as much as my brain hurts from studying some days, I am so grateful for this opportunity!

What have you found in your time at Central?

Happily, I’ve found that indeed Central is committed to the values of community, empathy, growth, and tenacity. In fact, I have found that while the public “Values Statement” is fairly recent, these values have marked the seminary from the beginning. I’ve also found that Central is a complex place. Our commitment to making theological education accessible to students through technology, gifted supplemental faculty, and student’s heart languages is a wonderful – and complicated – thing! Weekly, I encounter new people connected to the seminary in one way or another, and I’m continually amazed at the breadth of Central’s impact. Lastly, I have found a group of students, faculty, alumni, staff, and leadership who love this institution. Through times of celebration and suffering, Central’s people have rallied around the seminary because they believe in the mission of equipping students to serve all of creation. ✨



Registrar Hana You (right) instructs Kathy Maxwell (left) in Korean.

This is Central
Steven McKee,
Master of Arts
in Counseling '22

“My joy is in seeing people get over themselves. I know what it feels like, I know what it looks like, I know what the fruit of that is. I lived it.”

Steven McKee



Central alum Steven McKee, MACO '22, wanted to chart a new course. After retiring from a successful career as an airline pilot, he felt called to something new and started in Central's counseling program during the pandemic at the urging of faculty member and friend, Dr. Mike Grubbs. Through Steven's own counseling journey, he learned "how to love people better and how to need my own way a lot less." Steven says, "My joy is in seeing people get over themselves. I know what it feels like, I know what it looks like, I know what the fruit of that is. I lived it." 🌿

Join us at The Well

September 16-18, 2024

Conception Abbey

The Well is a retreat for Central alums that provides time for rest, renewal, mutual encouragement, and connection.



THE WELL
CENTRAL
ALUMNI

THRIVING IN MINISTRY



"Leaving the retreat, I feel repurposed, reoriented, rested, and refilled about my ministry, spiritual life, and relationship with God."

MDiv alum and 2023 retreat participant



Stay informed!

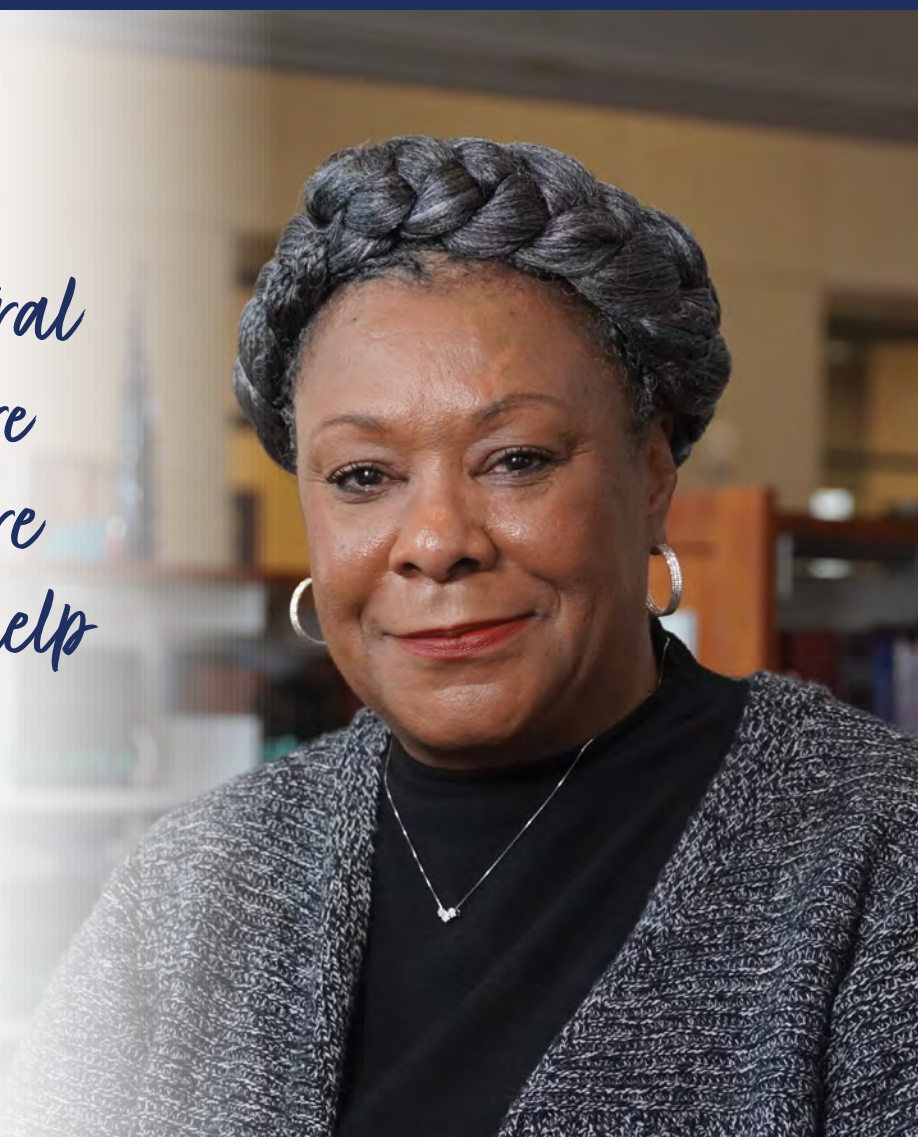
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*"There is a love at Central
that you can feel. There
is an interest and desire
from the professors to help
you truly learn."*

Chris Kelly
Master of Arts in Theological Studies, '20



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