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Higher Education & Leadership Ministries

of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES
REPORT TO THE GENERAL BOARD OF
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

**Submitted by
Bernard "Chris" Dorsey, President
January 2, 2019**

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Higher Education and Leadership Ministries works with wider church and higher education partners to develop and nurture Christian leaders who are transforming church, society and world.

Higher Education and Leadership Ministries continues to promote Disciples higher education institutions and provide cutting edge leadership development programming throughout the church. This is accomplished most effectively by working closely with Disciples colleges, universities, theological institutions, congregations, regions, and general ministries of the church.

Colleges and Universities

HELM has continued to work closely with the leadership of Disciples Colleges and Universities to strengthen the relationship between Disciples schools and the church. Here are a few highlights:

- Over the past two years, nearly all of the Disciples colleges and universities have experienced dramatic increases in undergraduate applications. Several schools have also seen significant increases in enrollment.
- HELM has held info sessions at churches, regional assemblies, and racial ethnic constituency gatherings, to share information with high school students and with their parents.
- HELM staff has promoted other Disciples ministry programs for young adults by working with Disciples chaplains and campus ministers. This has led to Disciples college students participating in the NBA XPLORE program, DOM Global Mission Intern Program, and DHM Disciples Peach Fellows.
- During 2018, HELM worked closely with Tougaloo College to bring the school into full covenantal affiliation with the church. The final step in the process will be a vote by the Administrative Committee at the February 2019 meeting.

Theological Education

- HELM hosted the Council of Theological education in April and featured presentations on student enrollment data across ATS north American schools and Disciples schools in particular. The leaders of the schools committed to engaging in intentional conversations around increasing enrollment of Disciples students at Disciples theological education institutions.
- A number of our Disciples theological institutions is experiencing a transition of leadership. Gary Peluso Verdend stepped down from his role as president of Phillips Theological Seminary to return to teaching and to lead up other initiatives at the seminary, Matt Bolton ended his tenure as president of Christian Theological Seminary, and Mark Miller McLemore retired from his position as Dean of the Disciples Divinity House of Vanderbilt Divinity School.

- Lexington Theological Seminary received a \$1,000,000 thriving in ministry grant from the Lilly Fund and will continue the cutting edge work they are doing in helping build mentoring relationships between experienced clergy and emerging clergy.

Leadership Programs

- HELM's Leadership Fellows program welcomed 8 new students into the program and held the annual Leadership Fellows program for 28 new and returning fellows in New York City. Union Theological Seminary hosted the retreat and President Serene Jones was a featured plenary speaker.
- The third year Leadership Fellows who are focusing on the theme of global awareness, were able to participate in a delegation to Morocco, thanks to support from Global Ministries
- Four fellows became the first group of students to graduate having been through all four years of the new format of the program.
- Next year's leadership fellows retreat will take place in California and the global awareness international trip will be to Colombia, where students will learn about how our partners have been involved with the peace process there.
- Along with the Office of the General Minister and President, HELM convened a group of leaders to discuss the role of the seminarians conference in the life of the church. Plans are underway to develop and new strategy for how to nurture and form emerging clergy leaders.

Grants and Scholarships

- HELM distributed over \$100,000 in scholarships and grants to over 45 undergraduate and graduate students.

With respect to its stated priorities of financial equilibrium, program and staff efficiency, engagement with higher education, and board development and participation; HELM reports the following highlights:

FINANCIAL EQUILIBRIUM

In the past four years, HELM has continued to plan for and experience balanced budgets. These surpluses are enabling HELM to pay down loan debts that were incurred during the financial crises of 2008/2009. HELM's financial equilibrium continues to enable a shifting of more funding to program activities and increasing support for participants in HELM's programs. This Disciples Education and Leadership Fund, which has been started with the investment of a \$126,000 bequest into a fund with the Christian Church Foundation, continues to grow. HELM is also on target to reduce it's effective draw from investments by ½ of a percentage point in the coming year.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

HELM's board of directors has been strong throughout the years. In 2017, the board voted to reduce the size of the board from 16 to 12 at large members. The board also voted to change the ex officio campus ministry position to a board elected position. At the end of 2018, three longtime board members ended their terms of service, having completed the maximum allowed number of terms. HELM is thankful for the faithful service of Bill Bailey, Yvonne Gilmore, and Beau Underwood. HELM elected three new board members, along with new officers. The new board members are Joan-Bell Haynes, Colton Lott, and Michelle Scott-Huffman. The new officers are Lonora Graves – Chair; Santiago Pinon – Vice Chair; and Pamela Sparks – Secretary. The Spring 2019 board meeting will be held in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area.

The board continues to be deeply engaged and involved in supporting and leading HELM.

CONCLUSION

HELM continues to discern how best to meet the needs of the church, with respect to the established mission of its ministry.

With gratefulness to God and enthusiasm for continued commitment to ministry, HELM hereby submits this report to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Yours in Christ,



Bernard "Chris" Dorsey

Recommended Action

The General Board receives the report from Higher Education and Leadership Ministries and forwards it to the General Assembly for consideration and discussion.