

Seminary 2050: Formation in a common life

by [Roy Terry](#) in the [February 21, 2006](#) issue

Way too much emphasis is placed on making theological education accessible and convenient. With the rise of Internet courses and distance learning, seminaries have accommodated to the spirit of individualism rather than drawing on the biblical mandate that leaders be formed through intentional community. It would appear that a seminary education is simply about getting a piece of paper which acknowledges that a person has jumped through the denominational hoops.

In the years to come seminaries will find that the paradigm will shift from accommodating individual needs to calling for participation in intentional community. What will appear to be something new and fresh will actually be a return to a more ancient model of theological education. This model, which has its roots in early monasticism, will emphasize the importance of the individual's joining with a particular community which shares and celebrates a common life together. Students will select a seminary on the basis of its emphasis on a common life and how that community reaches outside the walls of the classroom to serve and experience a variety of cultures, people, worship and gifts. Students will no longer come to a seminary to pick and choose the courses which happen to fit their own interests but will be invited to participate in a formative journey as they work together, live together, eat together, discern together, and discuss together those things which will make them effective leaders in the local church.

Through this paradigm students will be forced to confront the real issues of life within the church. They will be forced to communicate with each other and will have to practice discernment, planning, reconciliation, forgiveness and conflict resolution. This, in conjunction with solid teaching, will give the student a much broader understanding of what it means to serve.