

Seabury Seminary gives faculty notice, cuts staff: Board declares “financial exigency”

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The entire faculty of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, have been notified that their jobs will end in a year, and nine staff jobs will be cut this month as the Episcopal-related school's trustees face up to an insurmountable multimillion-dollar debt.

The board of trustees suspended recruitment and admissions in February for residential doctoral, master's and certificate programs because of the school's \$500,000 ongoing deficit and a debt estimated to rise to \$3.5 million this year.

Gary Hall, dean and president of Seabury-Western, announced April 24 that neighboring Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, affiliated with the United Methodist Church, “has agreed to accommodate our continuing students so that all will be able to graduate in 2009 and 2010 with Seabury degrees.”

The Seabury board also declared a “financial exigency,” a crisis state that allows trustees to end faculty tenure and terminate faculty positions, resulting in costs cuts that will enable the institution to survive in some form. The faculty will draw full-time salary and benefits through June 2009 but will be teaching a reduced load so as to be able to look for other positions, Hall said.

A number of mainline seminaries are facing a combination of rising costs and stagnant or declining enrollments. Tuition at Seabury is \$13,000 a year, but officials say the cost to educate an on-campus student has risen to above \$50,000.