

Future In Focus

The First 10 Years of Luther Preparatory School

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Everything looks better in hindsight. Or so it is said. When I look back on my life I see an endless reel of mistakes replaying like television reruns in my mind. I wish in some cases I could try it all over again. But constantly reliving your past, especially one so decorated by questionable judgment, is like burying your head in the sandy shores of life. Moving forward means finding the off button for those annoying reruns. It means taking your head off the swivel and fixing your attention straight forward, on the future.

Still, there is a difference between dwelling on the past and learning from it. It is helpful to know where we have been so that we can better gauge where we want to go. That holds true whether the past is full of mistakes or not.

Luther Preparatory School, in Watertown, WI, has only a short past to study. There will not be an exhaustive list of mistakes to reel off. But just ten years of high school history will open up a far greater window into their future. This paper will share as many perspectives on the past as facts. God willing, this examination will help us all see the *Future in Focus* for one of the Wisconsin Synod's two ministerial training schools.

LPS opened its doors in 1995. The high school amalgamated two former places of ministerial training: one from Prairie Du Chien, WI, called Martin Luther Prep School, and the other from the existing site in Watertown called Northwestern Prep. The total cost of amalgamation was around \$4.5 million. Its budgeted building projects included a link between the old Northwestern Prep chapel and the adjacent library building, refurbishing dorms, student center renovations, and upgrades on every faculty member's home.¹

Further campus building projects have included a cafeteria addition and an additional wing to the Augsburg dormitory. The projects cost a total of \$250,000 and \$1 million

¹ According to an interview with President Schroeder, addendum, p.2.

respectively. Even with these two major additions, the amalgamation is still seen as the largest scale project in LPS' brief history.

LPS President, Mark Schroeder, was a visionary during the amalgamation process. He saw challenges beyond the rubble of massive building projects. How would the two faculties meld together? Would student morale include bitterness and division? Or would faculty and students quickly adjust to new Christian surroundings? This is what he said in response to a question about the biggest project in Prep's history:

“Amalgamation was by far the hardest. Not just the buildings, but melding two faculties into one. Determining how to succeed by combining the best elements of two schools. We delegated eight separate committees who dealt with how to join forces smoothly. I began attending meetings at old MLPS a year in advance because I considered it crucial for me to know my brothers and sisters who would be new to the faculty.”²

Today many faculty members remain from the amalgamation years. To the best of anyone's knowledge, mutterings about the merger rarely occur. LPS boasts a faculty of 35 professors/instructors, 10 tutors, and 8 piano teachers.³

Student bonding posed a different social problem early on. Before LPS, an all male Northwestern College shared the campus with Northwestern Prep. The social relationships between young men and women were unique. College men dated high school girls from time to time, but did not necessarily want to be seen mixing with the high school crowd. A stigma developed among the men on campus. “Because of the all-male college, guys used to date but not socialize – that's finally disappeared.”⁴ But in 1995 the carry-over effect made a negative impression on students from a different campus social climate. Former MLPS student Dan Schmidt said, “We never understood why prep [NPS] guys didn't talk to or hang out with girls as

² Ibid, p.3.

³ <http://www.lps.wels.net>

⁴ Ibid, p.4.

much as we did.”⁵ Today the social climate between guys and girls is developing some normalcy. In the first year of LPS though, it contributed to the awkwardness between students from MLPS and students from NPS.

Another issue between students involved disciplinary procedures. In the last few years at Prairie Du Chien, enrollment numbers struggled to stay at a survival level. It has been said that as a result, a small number of troubled students were allowed to continue attending school for the sake of enrollment.⁶ When two student bodies combine there will inevitably be a few bold kids who toe the line. In the first month LPS had to discipline a handful of students for various reasons. Of the total amount of students disciplined the smaller number had an NPS background. So the perception was that MLPS kids were being singled out by a biased Dean (Pastor Snowden Sims served as Dean at that time) or administration. The administration certainly held no bias, but for high school kids perception is reality. I say this all to illustrate the social difficulties that accompanied all the other challenges in the first year after amalgamation. How troublesome were all these social problems? “After the first 2 months or so, surely after the first semester – things settled down pretty nicely.”⁷

Professors built strong bonds with each other. Eventually students mixed well together. What about professor – student relationships? Or what about tutor – student relationships? Roger Kuerth, a professor for LPS’ entire 10 year history, said when interviewed,

“Informal has always been the best and the most natural relationship. There can be a tendency for students to be very negative about tutors or a dean because they live with them. So discipline in class and at functions is typically more easy for professors at times to maintain because they have a more consistently upbeat relationship with students, especially those students who resent authority.”⁸

⁵ Quote used by permission from informal interview with current Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student, Dan Schmidt.

⁶ According to an interview with former LPS Tutor and current Pastor Jim Turriff, addendum, p.4.

⁷ Schroeder, addendum, p.4.

⁸ Addendum, p.3.

Over and above the social relationships are the spiritual relationships. Dean Matthew Crass emphasized he has no social influence, but spiritual, “Spiritual? I suppose only God will know. My hope? Encouraging kids for ministry. Seeing kids become pastors, teachers, and vicars.”⁹ A former tutor shared a similar sentiment. He believed his highest, most influential role was to model ministry and to provide encouragement toward that goal. “One of the best things about being a tutor is the opportunity to influence kids’ impressions about future pastors and teachers. It was an honor to be looked at by kids a decade younger and to offer them encouragement.”¹⁰

Those who proffered perspectives on LPS in its early years described some of the various programs that make LPS a valuable place for training young men and women for the ministry. LPS provides two particular programs which give young people a chance to taste real life gospel ministry. *Project Timothy* started even before LPS did. In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, the Siebert Lutheran Foundation made monies available for foreign travel. President Schroeder brainstormed for ways he could utilize the money for the benefit of kids thinking about ministry.

“What could we do to expose our kids to different cultures? We had already done inner city work. Were there other foreign missions with English speaking capability? That’s where St. Lucia and Antigua became obvious choices. NPS didn’t have Spanish at the time. It started small. Eight kids to each place. Two locations. I went along. My intent from the start was to give kids an experience of gospel ministry in another culture. President Olsen and Wendland to this day both say *Project Timothy* is among students’ most frequently mentioned event in exit interviews, which influenced them in their pursuing public ministry. Nowadays there are more options. Funded in 3 ways – budget, student out of pocket, and gifts that consistently come in from organizations and groups.”¹¹

Today kids have opportunity to experience world and home missions in twelve different locations – including the Ukraine, Puerto Rico, and New York City, language and cultural

⁹ Addendum, p.3.

¹⁰ Turriff, addendum, p.3.

¹¹ Schroeder, addendum, p.3.

immersion, and a true taste of gospel ministry through Project Timothy. Even for kids who are unsure or have less eagerness about future ministry, Project Timothy can be a tremendous source of encouragement. “It seals the deal for many kids. If nothing else it will let them see mission work first hand, which can be a great memory for a lay person in the future church as well.”¹²

The other program which offers a valuable taste of ministry is called just that, *Taste of Ministry*. The Lord blessed me with an opportunity to go on a weekend getaway to Middleton, Wisconsin. My classmate and friend in the pastor track Ben Kuerth joined me for a weekend of observation at the church and home of Pastor Randy Hunter. Ben and I will sometimes still reminisce about the pastoral heart and joy with which Pastor Hunter served. He shared with us his plans for a new church building, his efforts in catechism instruction, and his overall joy in preaching and teaching the gospel in that area of the Lord’s vineyard. Needless to say my Taste of Ministry experience left a fond flavor in my mouth. It served as a tremendous influence on me personally and spiritually. It is also a favorite high school memory I can enjoy with a seasoned pastor and a good friend.¹³ Today Taste of Ministry still provides an outlet into the parish for seniors in the pastor track who want a bird’s eye view of pastoral life.

A lesser known program has blossomed into quite a blessing at LPS. The *Junior Classics League* is a team of Latin students who vie in a classics competition each year on behalf of LPS. Professor Ron Hahm teaches all levels of Latin at LPS and is the coordinator and coach for the JCL.

“A very beneficial addition has been the Junior Classics League competitions in the Latin program. It’s been in existence for at least 8 years. In qualitative competition LPS has won first place for the last six years competing with the likes of high quality schools like

¹² Crass, addendum, p.4.

¹³ I also had the privilege of reminiscing over my Taste of Ministry weekend with Pastor Hunter when he visited my vicar congregation in Austin, TX. He and I both expressed joy in the Lord uses our life experiences to shape us into friends, servants in his kingdom.

Madison West. The competition is held in Madison each year. It's a testimony to the quality of the liberal arts program at LPS."¹⁴

Although not officially documented, the percentages of students from the Latin program that continue on to MLC is high. Included in the JCL courses are not just vocabulary and grammar exercises but histories of Roman culture, art, and life.

Latin is a part of the curriculum that has seen significant changes in the 10 years of LPS. In 2000, the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee of our Wisconsin Synod published a report which encouraged LPS and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, to change its requisites in Latin and German for the pastor track students. Here is what they published.

"After a great deal of study and discussion, we have come to the conclusion that at both prep school and college a student should have the opportunity to concentrate on only one foreign language (other than the biblical languages). In our opinion, this gives the average student the best chance to excel in that language. Fully aware that our model college curriculum in the pastor track has students studying two languages at once throughout their college years, we conclude that incentives to do just that should be placed in the prep curriculum, particularly for boys intent on training for the pastoral ministry. We also concluded that at both of those levels there should be the option to excel in more than one language for students gifted in that area."¹⁵

Opinions vary on whether this was beneficial change in the curriculum for students in the pastor track. Professor Kuerth said,

"The mandate to soften the Latin requirements has decreased enrollment of Latin trackers. However the Junior Classics League has helped maintain some interest and incentive for the Latin program. By and large the change in language [both Latin and German] requirements depends on your personal opinion."¹⁶

Other areas of the curriculum were affected positively by conclusions presented in the MECC Report. For example Spanish became one of the highly valuable living languages¹⁷ offered at LPS. And overall "LPS has a broader choice of electives now compared to previous

¹⁴ Hahm, addendum, p.1.

¹⁵ *Report of the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee (MECC)*, p.3.

¹⁶ Addendum, p.2.

¹⁷ *Report of the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee (MECC)*, p.10.

years including: advanced biology, general science, pre-calculus and statistics, advanced speech, and economics – among other things.”¹⁸

One area of concern in regard to the new curriculum is the amount of academic progress teachers and professors are able to make in their freshman classrooms. When I asked him about whether he noticed any academic trends developing in students over the years, President Schroeder said,

“We can’t seem to get as much accomplished in the first year as we used to. Kids are coming less and less prepared in English grammar – a very big concern. Math has improved on the grade school levels so kids are better prepared for advanced high school math classes. Language skills are what are declining – that’s probably the biggest weakness.”¹⁹

Even with curriculum changes and language skill struggles among freshman students, LPS still maintains an impeccable graduation rate and scores highly in comparison to the national average on its ACT’s. “Scores are cumulatively higher than the national average of 20 on the ACT. Prep kids consistently average 23 or 24.”²⁰

Sports, as well as academics have been an additional source of pride among prep students. Sports, theater and the arts have proven to be an important part of campus morale and activity throughout LPS’ history. “Sports, music, and the arts all play tremendous roles for lifting morale and keeping kids involved. Keeping kids involved is always extremely beneficial especially at a boarding school.”²¹ LPS has continued to provide a wide array of options for both sports, music and the arts.

LPS offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities. In addition to interscholastic sports and various musical activities, students can discover and develop their talents in many different ways.

¹⁸ Schroeder, addendum, p.1.

¹⁹ Addendum, p.4.

²⁰ Mensching, addendum, p.4.

²¹ Crass, addendum, p.2.

School Publications

Two school publications are staffed and published by the students of LPS. The student newspaper (the *Phoenix*) is produced quarterly throughout the school year. Production of the newspaper provides students with the opportunity to use and develop skills in composition, art, graphics and design, as well as the opportunity to communicate to students the activities and events at LPS.

The school yearbook (the *Flame*) is produced annually and distributed to students in the spring of the year. Students work with a faculty advisor in the planning and production of this book.

Student Council

The Student Council is the student government at LPS. The Student Council represents the student body in bringing suggestions and concerns to the faculty and administration, plans and organizes special events, and promotes school spirit throughout the course of the school year.

The Student Council is comprised of representatives elected by each of the four classes and officers elected by the entire student body.

Student Organizations

A number of different student organizations have been formed to provide students with opportunities to pursue special interests and to use their talents in providing services to the school and to the student body. Among these organizations are the Pep Club, the Camera Club, and the Science Club.²²

For ten years sports at LPS have included football, cross country, basketball, track, baseball, wrestling, golf, soccer and tennis for boys. Girls can play volleyball, cross country, pom poms, soccer, track, tennis, and softball. The theater program offers a chance for kids to develop their talents in acting in musicals and children's theater, forensics, choir, band, handbells, and the Prep Singers. The Prep Singers annually travel through different synodical districts providing concerts for the congregations.²³

The oversight for all school sports, activities, policies, and overall administration belongs to the governing board. The board is made up of eight men who serve as pastors, teachers and

²² <http://www.lps.wels.net>.

²³ <http://www.lps.wels.net>.

laymen throughout the synod. They are: Pastor Dennis Hayes (Watertown, South Dakota), Chairman; Mr. Richard Brucker (Boulder, Colorado), Vice Chairman; Teacher Daniel Feuerstahler (Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin), Secretary; Teacher David Brohn (South Haven, Michigan); Pastor Steven Sauer (Green Bay, Wisconsin); Pastor Joel Luetke (Olivia, Minnesota); and Mr. Ralph Schmidt (Oconomowoc, Wisconsin).²⁴ President Schroeder said the Governing Board has served as an invaluable help and encouragement to his ministry.

“They have been extremely valuable. They set the overall policies of the school. They have the final say on every operation of school. They have functioned in a way that allows the administration to operate freely on a day to day basis. They evaluate set policies. They review whether purposes and directions are being followed. They also do the calling. They hear any appeals to student discipline or school decisions. They give the president freedom to do private or personal planning which can be presented to the board. They’re personally supportive in affirming what the president is doing is the right thing and they evaluate his weaknesses honestly and evangelically.”²⁵

More important than LPS’ high graduation rate is what percentage of graduates have gone on to Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. Over its ten year history, LPS has averaged 57.42% of its seniors moving on toward further ministry training.²⁶ In fact, with every individual area Lutheran high school and MLS combined, LPS has proudly sent the highest amount of its seniors by comparison to MLC.²⁷ That shows a consistent focus on the future.

“Keeping the single purpose, focus of the school narrow – on training people for ministry – that is our only legitimate reason to exist and if it isn’t then the church shouldn’t continue to support us.”²⁸

The reality of it all is church support, more specifically synod support, is dwindling. That bleak fact presents LPS with one of its biggest challenges to date.

²⁴ <http://www.lps.wels.net>

²⁵ Addendum, p.5.

²⁶ Based on findings of the *Final Report of the Prep School Study Committee – 2, 2005*, p.16.

²⁷ Ibid, p.16.

²⁸ Schroeder, addendum, p.6.

“The challenge is to keep the doors open without as much synodical support. Here are some reasons why: It’s hard to maintain and increase enrollment with the rising cost of student tuition. The affordability level especially for families with multiple kids is difficult. . . .Demographics are a real worldly challenge. Decline of students is general because of a lower number of kids per household to synod parents.”²⁹

Dean Crass added, “Affordability for students to go from Prep to MLC [is the biggest challenge LPS faces today]. For those in the middle of the road it becomes harder to choose MLC after high school. [He added to that] Replacing the perception among parents that LPS and MLC aren’t lasting establishments.”

Even amidst difficult financial challenges, LPS has made every effort to maintain its focus on the future of the church. When asked if any current challenge compares to others faced over the last 10 years, Dean Crass and President Schroeder gave synonymous responses.

“Nothing is comparable – but an ongoing challenge is consistently encouraging young people to go to MLC. The biggest challenge hasn’t changed – to retain and promote the single focus of Prep – to encourage and prepare kids for future ministry prayerfully.”³⁰

By maintaining the mission of equipping young hearts and souls for future ministry maybe it goes without saying, the future of the church will look better in hindsight.

²⁹ Kuerth, addendum, p.6.

³⁰ Addendum, p.6.

Bibliography

1. *Final Report of the Prep School Study Committee – 2, 2005*. Viewable at:
<http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?2601&collectionID=869&t=121444>
2. <http://www.lps.wels.net>.
3. Phone interviews conducted Friday December 9th, Saturday December 10th, and Sunday December 11th, with former tutor now Professor at LPS Randy Menshing, Professor Roger Kuerth, Professor Ron Hahn, former tutor now Pastor Jim Turriff, Dean Matthew Crass, and President Mark Schroeder. See attached addendum.
4. *Report of the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee (MECC)*, adopted by the Board for Ministerial Education, 10/15/00. Used by permission of the President's Office, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

ADDENDUM

Phone Interviews Conducted With President Mark Schroeder, Dean Matthew Crass, Professor Ron Hahm, Professor Roger Kuerth, Professor Randy Mensching, and Pastor Jim Turrif

What is a week's schedule like in the life of the president/professor/tutor?

President Schroeder – 3 classes of junior religion per week. Much administrative correspondence. On average about 5 hours a week of meetings – with dean, dorm staff, maintenance, faculty, advisors, or etc. Long term planning takes a lot of thought and time. Dealing with student and parental concerns takes up a majority of time. Project Timothy planning – with mission contacts. Fall of the year is most hectic for getting things up and running. Of those fall months the week or two right before school starts are most hectic

Professor Kuerth. – classes start at 7 a.m. Most professors up by 6 a.m. Average anywhere between 22-30 hours of class hours per week. Other responsibilities include fund raising and coaching. Obviously extra responsibilities vary to a lesser or greater degree by professor.

Former tutor/Current Professor Mensching – Demanding schedule for tutors. Up by 6 a.m. In bed at 1. Between 10 + 20 class hours a week. Study hall, dorm staff meetings, and coaching are other responsibilities.

Former Tutor Jim Turriff – Weekly staff meeting. 4 study halls a week, one night off a week. Around 10 hours a week teaching. Chapel twice a month.

Dean – 2 hours a day teaching; 3 meetings a week w/tutors; evening chapels almost once a week; responsibilities haven't changed too much since Mrs. Dean left

What have been the most beneficial additions to the curriculum for the ministerial education students?

Professor Kuerth – Most beneficial is Spanish.

Dean Crass – Every student has to take 1st year Latin, which is very helpful for a foundation for other languages. It helps pastor track students especially.

President Schroeder – A variety of very beneficial additions. LPS has a broader choice of electives now compared to previous years including: advanced biology, general science, pre-calculus and statistics, advanced speech, and economics – among other things.

Professor Ron Hahm – A very beneficial addition has been the Junior Classics League competitions in the Latin program. It's been in existence for at least 8 years. In qualitative competition LPS has won first place for the last six years competing with the likes of high quality schools like Madison West. The competition is held in Madison each year. It's a testimony to the quality of the liberal arts program at LPS.

(Although not officially documented the percentages of students from this Latin program that continue on to MLC is high. Included in the JCL course is not just vocabulary and grammar but history of Roman culture, art, and life.)

What have been the biggest curriculum losses?

Professor Kuerth – The mandate to soften the Latin requirements has decreased enrollment of Latin trackers. However the Junior Classics League has helped maintain some interest and incentive for the Latin program. By and large the change in language requirements depends on your personal opinion.

Comment on the role sports, theater, musical arts play in the life and morale of the average student.

Professor Kuerth – Don't underestimate it. Kids in high school years are more inclined towards social activities than academics (Although performance at JCL would argue against that). High importance – especially in football. This past year Prep endured its first losing season in football. Music has dramatically improved with Randy Bode and Professor Kieselhorst.

Dean Crass – Sports, music, and the arts all play tremendous roles for lifting morale and keeping kids involved. Keeping kids involved is always extremely beneficial especially at a boarding school.

President Schroeder – purpose is for each student to discover and develop God given talents – all of which can in some way can definitively bless a future church – elements in each co-curricular can bring a different blessing; morale – students need variety, someone purely academic or athletic aren't the well rounded person a church may be looking for

What is the hardest part about being the president/professor/tutor?

President Schroeder – To keep everyone focused on why they're here – to train for ministry. It's easy for students and faculty to lose sight of that focus at times.

Professor Kuerth – Maintaining a balanced professionalism in the classroom. Maintaining an optimism in morale in view of synod struggles.

Tutor Mensching – Coming from an area Lutheran high school the hard thing was acclimating to the different high school climate/atmosphere. Dorm discipline was also a challenge.

Jim Turriff – It was difficult to be a tutor knowing the system he grew up under during his prep days was long gone. The biggest challenges were always overshadowed by the great joys though. Teaching religion and the social time with students was the best.

Dean Crass – Dealing with parents who think you're out to get their child can be the most personally painful thing. A big difficulty is dealing with thievery in the dorms.

What has been the biggest project on Prep's campus in the last 10 years? (Maintenance or Personal)

Professor Kuerth – The addition to the Augsburg dormitory and the addition to the dining hall. \$250,000 funded out of student fees, not taken from the synod budget. Dorm is being funded by a surcharge on every ministerial education student in the system. Library improvements (for him personally) and overall campus reconfiguration (for everyone) upon amalgamation was probably the biggest project.

President Schroeder – Total amalgamation costs for building were somewhere near \$4.5 million for campus center additions, dorm refurbishing, refurbishing every building, upgrading every faculty home, and the student center.

Professor Mensching – The "Decade 2 committee" is a big personal project I'm involved in – to look for ways to improve academics, campus facilities, intramurals, coaching, administration.

Former Tutor Jim Turriff – Consolidating campuses was the hardest. Unloading semi trucks. Settling into new surroundings after amalgamation.

Dean Crass – The biggest and hardest project under way is finding our own financing.

President Schroeder – “Amalgamation was by far the hardest. Not just buildings, but melding two faculties into one. Determining how to succeed by combining the best elements of two schools. We delegated eight separate committees who dealt with how to join forces smoothly. I began attending meetings at old MLPS a year in advance because I considered it crucial for me to know my brothers and sisters who would be new to the faculty.”

Comment on the influence professors have on their students socially and spiritually.

Professor Mensching – As a tutor it’s more informal. Kids feel badgered about chapel at times. Every Professor tries his best to bring ministry to the forefront. It happens most naturally in context of class. More than adequate encouragement comes from recruiters too.

Professor Kuerth – Informal has always been the best and the most natural relationship. There can be a tendency for students to be very negative about tutors or a dean because they live with them. So discipline in class and at functions is typically more easy for professors at times to maintain because they have a more consistently upbeat relationship with students, especially those students who resent authority.

Dean Crass – No social influence. Spiritual? I suppose only God will know. My hope? Encouraging kids for ministry. Seeing kids become pastors, teachers, and vicars.

President Schroeder – Each student will have different appreciation looking back. Most influence will take place outside of the classroom.

Former Tutor Jim Turriff - One of the best things about being a tutor is the opportunity to influence kids’ impressions about future pastors and teachers. It’s an honor to be looked at by kids a decade younger and to offer them encouragement.

Professor Mensching – A tutor has the most interaction than any other role model. He or she fills a parental and/or a leader’s role. Overall influence will never be intelligently/accurately measured.

Where was the idea for Project Timothy generated? (President Schroeder) An idea unique to Northwestern / Luther Prep. Siebert made a grant available for foreign travel in the late 80’s early 1990’s. President Schroeder brainstormed – What could we do to expose our kids to different cultures? We had already done inner city work. Were there other foreign missions with English speaking capability? That’s where St. Lucia and Antigua became obvious choices. NPS didn’t have Spanish at the time. It started small. Eight kids to each place. Two locations. I went along. My intent from the start was to give kids an experience of gospel ministry in another culture. President Olsen and Wendland to this day both say Project Timothy is among students’ most frequently mentioned event in exit interviews, which influenced them in their pursuing public ministry. Nowadays there are more options. Funded in 3 ways – budget, student out of pocket, and gifts that consistently come in from organizations and groups

Comment – as best you can - on the value of Project Timothy for building enthusiasm and generating interest in pursuing full time ministry.

President Schroeder – Great opportunity for students to see ministry first hand at a young age. NC, Antigua, St. Lucia – Home and World Missions both give opportunities for students to exercise faith.

Professor Mensching – Can be an experience that pushes students one way or the other to ministry.

Former Tutor Jim Turriff – Tremendous encouragement for students who have that opportunity to receive some hands on ministry experiences.

Dean Crass – It seals the deal for many kids. If nothing else it will let them see mission work first hand, which can be a great memory for a lay person in the future church as well.

Have you noticed any academic trends among the students, or any patterns of performance say for example by kids who come from public grade schools to Prep as opposed to private, or from homes where parents were gospel ministers as opposed to homes where parents were not?

Professor Mensching – Nothing noticeable. Average? Scores are cumulatively higher than the national average of 20 on the ACT. Prep kids consistently average 23 or 24.

Former Tutor Jim Turriff – Kids with public school background every so often needed additional attention – if only in areas of religion or synod structure. Making religion an every day subject all four years might be helpful.

Dean Crass – Public school kids seem a little behind in religion. A bad family background interprets into more than bad academics for anyone. It translates into social/behavioral/academic problems.

President Schroeder – Trends: We can't seem to get as much accomplished in the first year as we used to. Kids are coming less and less prepared in English grammar – a very big concern. Math has improved on the grade school levels so kids are better prepared for advanced high school math classes. Language skills are what are declining – that's probably the biggest weakness.

What is the most demanding aspect of being a tutor?

Professor Mensching – Discipline hands down.

Former Tutor Turriff – Tutors enjoy the best aspects of teaching without a lot of the drudgery.

Being an administrator/tutor so soon after the amalgamation was it hard to deal with student morale/opinions/etc.?

Professor Mensching – A little bit in the first 2 years among the MLPS students specifically. Even that wasn't too bad. For the most part students adjusted quickly.

Former Tutor Turriff – It was hard to deal more difficult students who arrived from MLPS. MLPS was hard pressed in its last years to maintain a high enrollment. So some students who otherwise would have been dismissed for bad behavior were kept. A small element of those who shouldn't have stayed became a challenge after the amalgamation for LPS because people accused administration of wanting to eliminate students who were from MLPS when all it was was a standard disciplinary action. Bitter students didn't want to accept that their peers weren't behaving properly.

President Schroeder – After the first 2 months or so, surely after the first semester – things settled down pretty nicely. Because of the all-male college, guys used to date but not socialize – that’s finally disappeared.

Is there any level of animosity about the amalgamation among students today?

Professor Mensching – It’s off the radar for students and professors.

Dean Crass – No. But some faculty simply miss the college influence.

President Schroeder – Amalgamation went much smoother on the Prep level. It was like mating two dogs [MLPS with NPS] versus mating a dog and a cat [DMLC with NWC].

If you could measure the value of ministerial education for its role in helping to carry out the synod’s overall mission how would you measure it?

Professor Mensching – Very highly. As a former area Lutheran high school student I can see the value of Luther Prep for fostering a ministry mindset in students. Friendships built here last into ministry.

Dean Crass – It’s of the highest value. From the pulpit I can know my parents and the system groomed me into a pastor. We exist for MLC and the Seminary.

President Schroeder – As vital today as ever. 57.5% of graduates going to MLC. Until someone has a proven system that works better than this one it is the best.

Who has been the most influential person in Prep’s short history?

Professors Kuerth and Mensching – Overall collective influence has trumped any individual person. Each faculty member has related to different students in positively different ways.

How valuable has the governing board been to the school as a whole? To the president?

Professor Mensching – They visit classes – for review, ask for faculty input on ideas or concerns for board’s consideration, interaction with teachers is positive way to keep system sharp.

President Schroeder – They have been extremely valuable. They set the overall policies of the school. They have the final say on every operation of school. They have functioned in a way that allows the administration to operate freely on a day to day basis. They evaluate set policies. They review whether purposes and directions are being followed. They also do the calling. They hear any appeals to student discipline or school decisions. They give the president freedom to do private or personal planning which can be presented to the board. They’re personally supportive in affirming what the president is doing is the right thing and they evaluate his weaknesses honestly and evangelically.

Who makes up the governing board?

7 men – Pastor Joel Luedtke, Olivia, MN.
Pastor Dennis Hayes, Chairman, Watertown, SD
Daniel Feuerstahler, Secretary, Menomonee Falls, WI.
Dave Brohn, South Haven, MI.
Ralph Schmidt, Oconomowoc, WI.

Mr. Richard Brucker, Vice Chairman, Boulder, CO.
Pastor Steven Sauer, Green Bay, WI.

Karl Gurgel, Peter Kruschel, Herb Prah, Pres Schroeder serve as advisory members

In what ways has the city benefited from or been a blessing to Prep in the last 10 years alone?

Professor Kuerth – Obviously economically it has benefited. Motels, lodging, food, gas, shopping, and etc. Best guess is a couple hundred dollars per student per year on average.

Dean Crass – It's a safe city, environment. We are to them a financially asset and spiritual blessing.

As you see it, what are the biggest existing challenges to face Prep today?

Professor Kuerth - The challenge is to keep the doors open without as much synodical support. Here are some reasons why:

- 1) It's hard to maintain and increase enrollment with the rising cost of student tuition. The affordability level especially for families with multiple kids is difficult.
- 2) The growth of Lakeside and surrounding area Lutheran high schools is a blessing and a curse for LPS. It's not a comparable situation to Michigan Lutheran Seminary.
- 3) Demographics are a real worldly challenge. Decline of students is general because a of lower number of kids per household to synod parents.

Prep consistently sends ~ 60% of its students on towards MLC.

President Schroeder - Keeping the single purpose, focus of the school narrow – on training people for ministry – that is our only legitimate reason to exist and if it isn't then the church shouldn't continue to support us. Not to say there can't be sub-purposes, e.g. the Korean students who could be missionaries in their own way. There is currently a full one year course in Christian doctrine for the Korean kids. First year there was 3 or 4. Really, the sky is the limit for how many would come. We limit them to 5 or 6 a year because we don't want to give a false impression that we're inviting these students with less realistic possibility for future full time ministry into our school just to get tuition money.

Professor Mensching – Enrollment numbers, synod subsidy, tuition affordability – things spiral negatively when those areas are hurting.

Dean Crass - Affordability for students to go from Prep to MLC. For those in the middle of the road it becomes harder to choose MLC after high school. Replacing the perception among parents that LPS and MLC aren't lasting establishments.

Bigger challenges now as opposed to 10 years ago?

President Schroeder & Dean Crass – Nothing is comparable – but an ongoing challenge is consistently encouraging young people to go to MLC. The biggest challenge hasn't changed – to retain and promote the single focus of Prep – to encourage and prepare kids for future ministry prayerfully.