

INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVES

IDENTITY, MISSION & VISION

Who We Are... Cornerstone is a Christ-centered University with a passion for global influence through the transforming power of the Gospel.

Why We Exist... Cornerstone University exists to empower men and women to excel as influencers in our world for Christ by offering a student-focused learning community where Jesus Christ is central.

What We Aspire To... We aspire to create a thriving community of fully devoted followers of Jesus in a spiritually contagious, academically excellent, richly resourced and culturally diverse learning environment that attracts outstanding students, faculty and staff who influence our world for Christ, His Church and His Kingdom.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary is a graduate school that prepares biblically and culturally informed ministry leaders for service through Christ's church.

The seminary exists to achieve the following six purposes:

1. To advance biblical, theological and ministry knowledge and skill.
2. To nurture theological, spiritual and leadership formation.
3. To encourage the development of critical thinking and worldview formation governed by biblical teaching.
4. To nurture a global ministry perspective.
5. To enhance the cultural relevance of ministry practice within the bounds of a distinctively Christian theological framework.
6. To encourage lifelong and collaborative learning.

CORE VALUES

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary enacts its mission on the basis of the following core values:

1. **Biblical Worldview** – We engage theological education from a high view of biblical authority, with appreciation for the flow of the biblical story, and with a commitment to exegete the whole Bible in its original languages.
2. **Spiritual Transformation** – We understand and pursue ongoing spiritual transformation as a communal redemptive process of growth in faith, a process fostered by knowledge of the Word of

God and expressed in character development, ethical transformation and greater love for God and people.

3. **Critical Thinking** – We believe critical thinking requires a strong commitment to scholarship, engagement with diverse viewpoints, and appreciation for the tension of ideas associated within the developmental process.
4. **Christ's Church** – We exist to serve Christ and His worldwide church as partners in the development of ministry leaders through a variety of formal and non-formal means.
5. **Disciplinary Integration** – We nurture skillful integration of the theological disciplines to foster holistic growth in theory and practice, while affirming the value of specialization in the theological disciplines.
6. **Lifelong Collaborative Learning** – We foster a disciplined approach to learn throughout one's lifetime and as a shared journey with others.
7. **Cross-Cultural Understanding** – We affirm cross-cultural interdependence with the diverse cultures and perspectives of the world, and recognize the importance of cultural exegesis and sensitivity for effective service.
8. **Diverse Community** – We value an academic community which includes men and women of diverse ethnic, socio-economic and Christian theological traditions.

GRTS MOTTO

The motto of Grand Rapids Theological Seminary is "Learning, Serving, Leading." The motto provides insight concerning the identity, values and mission of GRTS and is worthy of further consideration.

Learning. Student learning is central to the mission, values, and overall culture of Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. Through a disciplined and rigorous learning environment, faculty members temper the challenge with grace and support. The core curriculum is designed to enable students to conduct disciplined interpretation and application of the Bible, articulate a coherent understanding of Christian theology, and demonstrate basic knowledge, values and competencies associated with spiritual, worldview, and leadership formation. In addition to core curriculum, the various degrees include areas of specialization, equipping students for a wide range of ministry and human services vocations.

GRTS conceives of learning in holistic terms, seeking to foster growth of the whole person. Traditional classroom teaching, interaction with faculty scholars, a battery of student assessments, and an extended field education experience (i.e., Ministry Residency or Counseling Practicum and Counseling Internship I and II) combine to foster cognitive, affective and behavioral learning. Since ministry and other forms of human service are always engaged as whole persons, the preparation must foster holistic learning and growth. GRTS understands this and structures a diverse set of learning experiences that foster maturation of the whole person.

Serving. In addition to working with faculty scholars to develop exegetical skills and theological understanding within traditional classroom settings, GRTS offers students the opportunity to work with seasoned ministry and human services professionals to refine their gifts, confirm their calling, and mature in character within the context of authentic service and/or practice.

Through Ministry Residency or Counseling Practicum and Internships I and II, and as part of the degree program requirements, students serve side by side with experienced ministry leaders and professional counselors within local church, parachurch, and other vocational contexts. The sustained nature of the Ministry Residency experience, throughout the duration of the degree program, enables students to establish a life pattern of learning and serving, the necessary foundation for mature and effective vocational service.

Leading. At GRTS, we believe that ministry leadership emerges from the mastery of learning and serving. Leadership, or influence, in ministry is not inherent to a position or established by exerting authority, but by the authentic confession of faith, affirmation of gifts, demonstration of commitment and competence, expression of care, and credibility of character.

At GRTS, we believe that ministry leadership is best understood as stewardship, consisting of a stewardship of truth, of persons, and of organizations. Ministry leaders, regardless of position, are responsible to accurately represent God and His word, nurture the faith and contribution of others, and foster a mature and responsive faith community.

Effectiveness and influence in life and ministry require a sustained commitment and engagement in learning and serving. Leadership flows from the expertise and credibility derived from such commitments and actions. GRTS understands itself and its mission in these terms, endeavoring to nurture life patterns of learning, serving and leading.

HISTORY

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary of Cornerstone University traces its founding as a degree-granting institution to 1948, when the State of Michigan authorized it to grant the Bachelor of Divinity degree (now called the Master of Divinity). The first graduating class in 1949 boasted two graduates. The institution originally opened in January 1941 as an evening Bible institute at Wealthy Street Baptist Church. In 1944, a day school was started that became the seminary four years later, at which time the school was renamed Grand Rapids Bible Institute and Theological Seminary. The Bible Institute became a state-approved, degree-granting Bible college in 1963, moved to its present location in 1964, and transitioned into a Christian liberal arts college in 1972. In 1999, the entire institution acquired state-approved university status. Today, Cornerstone University and Grand Rapids Theological Seminary share a 123-acre campus four miles from downtown Grand Rapids. The seminary is housed in the Leon J. Wood Seminary Building which opened in 1977. Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, its administration and faculty, operate under the authority of the Cornerstone University board of trustees.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Grand Rapids is an excellent locale for a seminary. A quiet, sprawling city with a greater metropolitan area population of more than 1,000,000, it has been called “the city of churches” and “the center of orthodoxy.” Several hundred conservative evangelical churches within 50 miles of the school offer many opportunities for Christian service and fellowship.

Grand Rapids has affordable housing, and the cost of living is lower than in many cities its size. Many seminarians live in off-campus apartments or houses. As the commercial center of Western Michigan, Grand Rapids’ banks, offices, hospitals, school systems and factories provide ample employment opportunities for students and their spouses.

Additionally, Grand Rapids is home to four well-known religious book publishers – William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Zondervan Publishing House, Baker Book House and Kregel Publications. Ryerson Library, the main public library in Grand Rapids, includes extensive religious holdings, making it a valuable resource for theological students. Also available are the library collections of two other area seminaries, in addition to the thousands of rare theological volumes held in Cornerstone University’s Miller Library.

Cultural opportunities include ArtPrize, the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Van Andel Public Museum, Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra, Grand Rapids Ballet, Grand Rapids Opera, professional and collegiate sports teams, professional quality community theatre groups, and many traveling artists, concert performances and events held at DeVos Concert Hall, Frederik Meijer

Gardens, and Van Andel Arena. Malls in the area provide comfortable and enjoyable shopping experiences.

CORNERSTONE UNIVERSITY

Cornerstone is a Christ-centered university with a passion for global influence through the transforming power of the gospel. Cornerstone University exists to empower men and women to excel as influencers in our world for Christ by offering a student-focused learning community where Jesus Christ is central. Founded in 1941, the University is a four part academic enterprise composed of the traditional undergraduate college (TUG), Professional and Graduate Studies (PGS) which serves working adults through undergraduate and graduate degree programs, along with two graduate theological schools: Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (GRTS) and Asia Biblical Theological Seminary (ABTS), based in Thailand. The school owns and operates WCSG, an adult contemporary Christian music radio station serving the Grand Rapids and the West Michigan area.

CORNERSTONE CONFESSION

The Cornerstone Confession is the foundational doctrinal statement of Cornerstone University, reaffirmed annually by Cornerstone trustees, faculty, and staff. The Confession expresses our commitment to the key teachings of Scriptures as interpreted through the ecumenical creeds of the early church, the chief insights of the Reformation, and evangelical Christianity.

We believe in one sovereign, omnipotent, and fully omniscient God who eternally exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who in love and for his glory created all things out of nothing and pronounced them good.

We believe that God has revealed himself in the sixty-six canonical books of Scripture, which are verbally inspired, truth without error, and serve as our final authority in faith and life. They lead us to Jesus Christ, who shows us the Father, and rightly interpreted, they enable us to understand God's revelation in humanity, nature, and history.

We believe that God directly created Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the human race, distinct from the rest of creation in their bearing of God's image and their stewardship over creation. Their union as man and woman models God's design for marriage and perpetually stands as God's loving and righteous will for all sexual intimacy.

We believe that our first parents forfeited their original righteousness when they succumbed to Satan's temptation and rebelled against God's revealed will. As a result, every human is born in sin, leaving us totally depraved, alienated from God, and destined to spiritual

and physical death. As such, our sinful ways have corrupted God's creation, resulting in discord to society and nature.

We believe that God's plan to redeem fallen humanity and renew creation flows through his promises to the Jewish people. God's promises to Abraham and David are fulfilled in Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant.

We believe that the Son of God, while fully divine, became fully human through the virgin birth to save the world from sin. Living a sinless life in perfect obedience to His Father, Jesus proclaimed God's reign in word and deed. In his mercy he atoned for our sins by dying in our place. Having satisfied the just wrath of God on our behalf, he rose bodily and triumphantly over sin, death, and Satan. He then ascended to heaven, sent his Spirit to lead and empower his church, and is seated at the Father's right hand where he reigns and intercedes for His people.

We believe that the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost to establish the church; that he uses the Word of God to give new life to those who repent of their sin and believe in Christ; and that all who by faith alone receive Christ's finished work are by God's grace united with Christ, justified by his shed blood, adopted into the family of God, forgiven of all their sin, indwelt and gifted by the Spirit, and added to the church.

We believe that the one, holy, and universal church is the body and bride of Christ. The church gathers in local assemblies to worship God and celebrate the gospel through the preaching of the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer, and fellowship. It disperses to proclaim the gospel to a sinful world which must hear the good news of Jesus Christ in order to be saved. The church makes disciples of Jesus who, through persevering faith, embody the kingdom values of righteousness, peace, and joy. By loving God, serving others, and caring for creation, they anticipate the redemption of all things at Christ's return.

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ will personally and gloriously return to deliver this world from Satan's rule and bring his reign to its ultimate fruition. Jesus will raise the dead to stand with the living before his judgment throne where he will determine the final state of humanity. The lost will experience everlasting conscious separation from God as the just punishment for their sin, and the redeemed will be welcomed into the unhindered joy of everlasting fellowship with him.

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Assessment of student learning is highly valued at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver on the promise to provide excellence in graduate theological education. At GRTS, assessment of student outcomes is not an externally imposed burden. Rather, assessment of student learning and the disclosure of educational effectiveness is a task of stewardship, a process for organizational learning, and a matter of accountability.

The effectiveness of our educational programs is assessed in a disciplined and routine manner. Through a variety of instruments and processes, we assess the achievement of the intended student learning outcomes of our curriculum, student and alumni satisfaction, readiness for vocational service of our students, and vocational achievement of our graduates.

The following provides a few highlights and demonstrates how GRTS is delivering on its promise to provide excellence in graduate theological education.

READINESS FOR MINISTRY

GRTS students are assessed for their vocational readiness at the mid-point of their degree program and the end of their degree program. The process engages the student with the academic dean, associate dean, faculty advisor, practicum/internship supervisor or ministry residency mentor and the practicum/internship faculty supervisor or ministry residency director to assess student progress holistically as they prepare to serve in their respective vocations. The potential outcomes of the process include the following: (1) The student is making good progress in vocational readiness; (2) The student is making progress in vocational readiness but with specific concerns (with reservation); or (3) The student is not making sufficient progress in vocational readiness. The three-year average outcomes by degree are as follows:

- 96% of Master of Divinity students achieved the highest outcome (i.e., making good progress in vocational readiness) at the mid-point assessment and 100% at the exit assessment.
- 94% of M.A. Counseling students achieved the highest outcome (i.e., making good progress in vocational readiness) at the mid-point assessment and 97% at the exit assessment.
- 93% of M.A. Interdisciplinary students achieved the highest outcome (i.e., making good progress in vocational readiness) at the mid-point assessment and 89% at the exit assessment.
- 100% of M.A. Christian Formation students achieved the highest outcome (i.e., making good progress in vocational readiness) at the mid-point assessment and 100% at the exit assessment.

DEGREE COMPLETION

- 64% of Master of Arts in Counseling students who begin a degree progress to degree completion.

- 72% of Master of Divinity students who begin a degree program progress to degree completion.

VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES

- 74% of Master of Divinity alumni surveyed report being vocationally employed in a ministry context.
- 67% of Master of Divinity alumni have achieved licensure and/or ordination as a minister.
- 67% of M.A. Interdisciplinary alumni surveyed report being vocationally employed in a ministry context.
- 83% of M.A. Counseling alumni have obtained their Limited License or Full License as a Professional Counselor (LLPC/LPC).

Please Note: Data above was taken from the results of a variety of surveys and other evaluative instruments administered in recent years at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary.

ACCREDITATION & ACADEMIC STANDING

ACCREDITED by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada, and the following degree programs are approved:

MDiv, MA in Christian Formation, MA in Christian Studies, MA in Counseling, ThM

The Commission contact information is:

The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada

10 Summit Park Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15275
USA

Phone: 412.788.6505

Fax: 412.788.6510

Website: www.ats.edu

ACCREDITED by the Higher Learning Commission, 230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500, Chicago, Illinois 60604, 800.621.7440.

AUTHORIZED by the Michigan State Board of Education to grant the B.D. degree in 1948, the M.Div. degree in 1968, the M.R.E. degree in 1969, the Th.M. degree in 1977, the M.T.S. degree in 1985 and the M.A. degree in 1996.

The U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force accept M.Div. graduates as candidates for chaplaincy. The United States Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service has approved the seminary for education of international students.

The U.S. Office of Education Directory lists GRTS as an approved graduate theological institution.