

## II. D. Attitudes Toward and the Reputation of D.Min. Programs

### Findings

This section has as its focus attitudes toward the D.Min. degree and the degree's reputation generally. The research reported here (and in preceding sections) is hardly the first occasion for airing attitudes about the D.Min. or expressing opinions about its reputation. Such activity has been going on formally and informally since the D.Min. degree's inception. There have been debates on the floor of the meetings of the Association of Theological Schools, articles and exchanges in the public press, studies conducted by schools as preparation for a decision about whether to give the degree, and numerous informal conversations and discussions. In all this debate and conversation, several questions are raised repeatedly: Should a professional doctorate be given? If so, who should be viewed as its potential constituency? Should such a program be open to or even urged upon all clergy, as a form of structured continuing education? Or should it rather be awarded as a mark of distinction for a smaller body of clergy who have met selective admission standards and rigorous requirements for the degree's completion, and whose work in the program makes a significant contribution to the understanding of ministerial practice? Are D.Min. programs, whatever their intended constituency, soundly structured and conducted with rigor and integrity? In this section, we report the views and opinions of our various respondent groups on these important matters. In subsequent sections (see especially III. A, The Quality of D.Min. Programs) we express our views, judgments and conclusions about these matters.

Running through all the data reported in this section are certain persistent patterns. Most marked is a positive, generous and optimistic tone. Among various groups and institutions that grant the degree, clergy who are or have been students in D.Min. programs, and members of congregations whose pastors have been enrolled in D.Min. programs, there is general approval of and enthusiasm for the D.Min. as an educational undertaking. At the same time, to different extents among different constituencies, there is some doubt about whether all D.Min. programs are as well-conducted as they could be. In general, as we have earlier noted, D.Min. directors are most positive and enthusiastic about the current state of D.Min. programs. Chief executives of institutions that grant the degree are also highly positive, though usually less so than the directors. The majority of faculty members also generally approve of the degree, though they are far more likely than chief executives and especially than D.Min. directors to have questions and concerns about the current design and conduct of programs. Students and graduates are highly positive about the programs they have encountered, though not without criticisms of some program features. Most negativity is expressed by chief executives of institutions that do not grant the degree, clergy who have not been enrolled in D.Min. programs, and some of the laypersons in the very limited group we were able to contact. Several judicatory executives,

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a group that we did not survey overall, also wrote to us expressing reservations about the degree. Overall, however, we did not find any whole groups that are largely hostile toward either the idea of the D.Min. degree or deeply critical of the programs in which it is now offered, though many individuals express strong reservations and criticisms.

### 1. The Concept of the D.Min. as a Professional Doctorate

Should a professional doctoral degree in ministry be offered? When the D.Min. was first proposed, there was considerable resistance to the use of doctoral nomenclature for a professional degree. Does this resistance continue? In Table I, we summarize responses to a question about the concept of a professional doctorate such as the D.Min. Is the concept a sound one or not? Seminary administrators and faculty members from D.Min.- and non-D.Min.-granting institutions alike are in general agreement that the concept is a sound one. There is disagreement, however, about whether all current programs are as sound as the concept that underlies them. Those in schools that offer the D.Min. generally think that their own program is sound; most, however, do not believe that all programs are sound. Of the three seminary respondent groups, faculty members are less likely than chief executives and directors to say that their own program is also sound (67% of the faculty compared with 77% and 84% respectively of the other two groups). Just over half of the chief executives of non-D.Min. seminaries believe that "a minority of D.Min. programs are of dubious quality."

Approximately one-third of the students and graduates believe that the concept of the degree is a sound one and that all programs offer programs of good quality. Wrote one student: "This is the most helpful and meaningful of all continuing education efforts for the active clergy." Another student believes that the great value of the degree is "that it provides for a consistency in study that short-term continuing education does not." A third student compared the D.Min. and the M.Div.: "I do not see the D.Min. as academically more advanced than, for example, the M.Div. I do see it as generally more useful simply because it comes (for most of us) after several years in the ministry and hence frequently is put to more realistic use."

In addition to those who are generally positive about most D.Min. programs, another six of ten graduates and students believe that their own programs are sound, but are somewhat doubtful about other programs. Among non-D.Min. clergy, approximately half believe that the concept is sound but some programs are of dubious quality. Faculty members, chief executives of non-D.Min. seminaries, and non-D.Min. clergy are the most likely of the various groups to believe that the D.Min. degree is based on a sound concept, but all current programs are of dubious or poor quality; though the percentages even for these groups are quite small in this category (8%, 17% and 6% respectively). These three groups are also more likely to believe that the degree is based on an unsound concept.

TABLE I The Concept of a Professional Doctorate by Respondent Type

	CEO	Dir.	Fac.	Stu.	Grad.	Non- D.Min. Clergy	Non- D.Min. Sems.
<u>The Concept of a Professional Doctorate is:</u>							
Sound, and in general all seminary D.Min. programs offer educational programs of good quality.	15%	12%	12%	30%	33%	24%	12%
Sound, but some seminary programs (not including our own) are of dubious or poor quality.	77	84	67	60	58	NA	NA
Sound, but some seminary programs (including our own) are of dubious or poor quality.	7	0	7	3	3	49*	54**
Sound, but most or all current programs are of dubious or poor quality.	1	3	8	<1	1	6	17
Unsound; the D.Min. program should not be given.	0	1	5	<1	<1	5	7
No Opinion	0	0	3	5	4	16	10

NA means that they were not asked the question.

\* The wording of the question for non-D.Min. clergy excluded the phrase, (including our own).

\*\*The question for non-D.Min. seminary CEOs asked about "a minority of seminaries," and excluded the phrase (including our own).

Overall, then, there is considerable agreement that the degree is based on a sound concept, but respondents vary in their views about their own program and others than their own.

We note, however, in counterpoint to these generally favorable assessments of the degree, that many faculty members and administrators interviewed in our case studies expressed serious doubts about the soundness of the program, and several believed that it probably should be discontinued. We cite comments from one school's faculty members and administrators as an example of particularly strong negative feelings about the D.Min. -- their own program as well as the degree

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generally. "This faculty wonders," said one faculty member deeply involved in the school's program, "whether the D.Min. was not conceived in sin and has lived out its life in iniquity." Another faculty member, less involved, says there is general "frustration that the D.Min. has expanded around the country the way it has. We have little empirical data," he continued, "but from what we know, we are unhappy with what goes on elsewhere. We do not think a student will be hurt here in our program. Plenty of interesting things go on. But the general view in this faculty is, 'I don't know whether we should be doing this.'" And the director of this program concurs: "The D.Min. is in serious trouble nationwide. It has lost its integrity. Good people don't want it." He went on to criticize existing D.Min. programs and the clergy who want the degree for an overly functional view of ministry which identifies advanced work as "religious education, counseling, preaching." He continues:

I would be happy therefore, if the whole theological world got out of the business [of the D.Min.] and investigated what education is appropriate for ministers at the advanced level. The M.Div. is only a modest beginning. There is a place for further achievements for the more gifted and for achieving a level of mastery.

A consequence of this negativity, concluded the director, is that "[the D.Min.] is our lowest priority."

In a communication to the research team, a dean of an institution that grants the D.Min. also raised other serious concerns about the D.Min. degree. Space prohibits full citation of his evaluation, though, several of his concerns can be summarized. His basic concern is that the D.Min. "distracts us significantly from our reason for existing -- the education of M.Div. students for entry into professional ministry." This is particularly true, he believes, in schools with large D.Min. programs who fail to augment their faculty and resources commensurate with the number of students admitted into the program. "It is...an embarrassment to me and to many others that the Doctor of Ministry program has become, in essence, an institutional goose that continues to lay golden eggs for the Board of Trustees in many schools." -Further, he believes that, unlike other professional degrees such as the M.D., D.D.S. or J.D. that are terminal professional degrees, the D.Min. lacks a clear identity and purpose. Related to this, he notes that many students "enter D.Min. programs for the purpose of resolving vocational and/or identity problems in ministry rather than to achieve a new level of academic and professional competence." While these are important needs, "I doubt [they constitute] a reasonable motivation for engaging in a course of doctoral study."

A current student raised another question about the identity of the degree. Though appreciative of some aspects of the degree, he wrote:

The D.Min. degree means little outside the walls of the church (if it has much meaning there). The reason for this is that the standards for the degree are ill-defined. It is a joke at some institutions. It takes work at others. Still others have a lot of "make work" which is an attempt to set standards but amounts to little. The root problem of the whole D.Min. process is the difficulty of defining ministerial competence. This is so hard to define that the program may never be completely satisfactory as a degree. The value of the D.Min. program is not the degree but the rigor and discipline that it provides for continuing education.

Thus, although the questionnaire responses indicated a generally positive view of the soundness of the concept of the D.Min. from a large majority of all respondents, there were some who expressed strongly negative feelings and others who raised serious concerns about the program as it now is offered.

## 2. A Mark of Distinction or Structured Continuing Education

Should the D.Min. be viewed as a program for most or all clergy, or should the degree, rather, be developed to attract a more limited, especially able group? This debate has been sharply aired in discussions of theological education and in clergy journals. Some have argued that since M.Div. programs are limited in what they can achieve by the general lack of experience in ministry of their students, a D.Min. or its equivalent in structured, disciplined continuing education is required for clergy to reflect on and address issues of practice that they were not equipped to appreciate or understand prior to actual pastoral experience. Such a program should be open to all clergy, its advocates argue, and perhaps even mandated for all clergy at some time in their career. Others, however, see dangers in such an approach. Though they would not argue against the need for serious continuing education after the basic seminary course, they believe that it is unnecessary to place such training in a doctoral structure. If there is to be an advanced professional doctorate at all, the nomenclature should be reserved for a more selective and rigorous program.

Our respondents were asked to indicate whether the D.Min. should be viewed as a mark of distinction with selective admissions policies and rigorous standards for completion or as structured continuing education for clergy open to all who wish to apply. Table II displays replies to this question.

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TABLE II Attitudes Toward the D.Min. Degree

	<u>The D.Min. Should Be</u>	<u>Our/My Program Is/Was</u>	<u>Most Programs Are</u>
a. A mark of distinction with selective admissions policies and rigorous standards for completion.			
CEOs	85%	65%	NA
Directors	86	76	NA
Faculty	86	43	NA
Current Students	66	68	32%
Graduates	75	80	41
Non-D.Min. Clergy	42	NA	35
Presbyterian Members	18	NA	NA
Presbyterian Elders	22	NA	NA
Non-D.Min. Seminary CEOs	83	NA	4
b. Open to all clergy who want a structured program of continuing education			
CEOs	14	33	NA
Directors	13	24	NA
Faculty	10	57	NA
Current Students	34	32	68
Graduates	25	20	59
Non-D.Min. Clergy	58	NA	65
Presbyterian Members	59	NA	NA
Presbyterian Elders	44	NA	NA
Non-D.Min. Seminary CEOs	15	NA	92
c. The degree should not be given.			
CEOs	1	2	NA
Directors	1	0	NA
Faculty	4	1	NA
Non-D.Min. Seminary CEOs (Not Asked of Others)	2	NA	4

### Notes:

1. NA signifies that the question was not asked of the respondents.
2. The Presbyterian Panel respondents could also check "Don't Know/Don't Care," or "Other;" thus, the percentages for them do not add to 100%.

The three groups of seminary respondents (chief executives, directors and faculty members) are in considerable agreement that the D.Min. should be a mark of distinction (85% or more). Graduates (75%), slightly more than students (66%) also agree. But, only four of ten non-D.Min. clergy agree, and only approximately two of ten Presbyterian members and elders agree. In majority, these latter groups believe that D.Min. programs should be open to all who desire it as a form of structured continuing education for ministry. At least one chief executive seems to concur in the latter view. He wrote on his questionnaire:

To me the D.Min. program is probably the best ongoing Continuing Education program for the pastors of our particular church body.... I think the more we enlarge this program, the better the ministerium will be serving the congregations of our church.... I believe that the present program which offers concurrent full-time ministry with the ongoing Continuing Education provided by the D.Min. program is an excellent way to involve a maximum number of clergy.

Some disagreement prevails when respondents are asked to assess their own programs. Faculty members (43%) are considerably less likely than chief executives (65%) or directors (76%) to believe that their program actually is a mark of distinction. Indeed, a majority of faculty believe their program is essentially structured continuing education open to all. As is evident, this contrasts sharply with their view of what it should be. Twice as many faculty members believe that the degree should be a mark of distinction (86%) as believe that their school's program actually is a mark of distinction. When we control for faculty field, the percentage holding the mark of distinction view about their own program drops to 32% for faculty members in the so-called classical fields (Bible, theology, history, or ethics), but increases to 54% of faculty members in various ministry study fields (preaching, pastoral care, worship, education, etc.). These differences were typically reflected in our case study interviews. Faculty members in classical fields were much more likely to be critical of their program than their colleagues in the practical fields.

In contrast to faculty members, D.Min. graduates are highly likely to believe that their program is a mark of distinction (80%), and current students are only slightly less likely to agree (68%) about their own programs. At the same time, neither graduates nor current students are as likely to believe that most D.Min. programs are, in fact, marks of distinction (at least six of ten say they are not). One student expressed the widely-held view: "My general concern is in respect to the overall uniform quality of D.Min. programs. I am led to believe...that the quality of D.Min. programs varies greatly and that some programs are much less than they ought to be."

We also asked chief executives of seminaries not offering a D.Min. for their opinion. Like their counterparts in schools with D.Min.

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programs, they strongly affirmed the view that the D.Min. should be a mark of distinction. More than any other types of respondents, however, they are unlikely to think this is the case. Almost unanimously (92%) they think most programs are open to all clergy who want structured continuing education.

We gave all seminary respondents an opportunity to indicate that they believe the degree should not be offered at all, but only a very small percentage chose this response. This was true whether their institution currently offers the D.Min. or not.

The overall pattern of response, then, is this: Virtually everyone, whether or not involved with D.Min. programs, believes that the degree should be given. Those who work in seminaries believe that the degree should be "a mark of distinction." Students and graduates are of divided opinion on this matter. In general, those connected as teachers, administrators or students to institutions that grant the D.Min. degree are more likely to believe that their own program is a mark of distinction, but faculty members are much less likely than others to make this judgment. Those unconnected to seminaries that grant the D.Min. are more likely to believe that many or most current programs do not function as "marks of distinction."

We further analyzed views of D.Min. programs by type of seminary and program. In Table III, we show responses of chief executives, directors, faculty members and graduates and students (combined) broken down by seminary and program types. For simplicity, we have used only the responses to the "mark of distinction" option (both "should be" and "is") in this table.

When we control for the denominational type of seminaries of the various respondents, most of the differences are not great. One notable difference is the contrast between what chief executives of evangelical seminaries believe the D.Min. degree should be and what they believe their own actually is. A 29% difference separates their assessments. In contrast, directors of evangelical programs are quite high on both evaluations, while roughly twice as many faculty members in both seminary types believe the degree should be a mark of distinction as believe their own programs actually are.



TABLE III Attitudes Toward the D.Min. Degree by Seminary/Program Type Among Various Types of Respondents

	<u>Denominational Classification</u>	
	<u>Mainline</u>	<u>Evangelical</u>
1.a. D.Min. Should Be a <u>Mark of Distinction</u>		
CEOs	80%	88%
Directors	86	85
Faculty members	88	84
Graduates and students (combined)	62	65
b. Our/My D.Min. Program Is/Was a <u>Mark of Distinction</u>		
CEOs	67%	59%
Directors	74	82
Faculty members	41	46
Graduates and students (combined)	72	80

	<u>Program Format Type</u>			
	<u>Local</u>	<u>Campus-based Intensive</u>	<u>Extension Colleague</u>	<u>Multiple Options</u>
2.a. D.Min. Should Be a <u>Mark of Distinction</u>				
CEOs	74	92	75	82
Directors	90	89	60	82
Faculty members	90	85	79	90
Graduates and students (combined)	69	63	59	61
b. Our/My D.Min. Program Is/Was <u>Mark of Distinction</u>				
CEOs	53	72	75	70
Directors	90	75	60	60
Faculty members	38	50	42	36
Graduates and students (combined)	78	78	63	81

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TABLE III continued

	Educational Philosophy		
	<u>Independent Specialized</u>	<u>Unique Content</u>	<u>Extended M.Div.</u>
3.a. D.Min. Should Be a <u>Mark of Distinction</u>			
CEOs	87	67	78
Directors	84	75	92
Faculty members	89	75	89
Graduates and students (combined)	65	51	64
b. Our/My D.Min. Program Is/Was <u>Mark of Distinction</u>			
CEOs	69	67	57
Direct	69	67	88
Faculty members	37	38	53
Graduates and students (combined)	78	71	74

The majority of respondents in all program format types believe that the D.Min. should be a mark of distinction. Respondents from extension-colleague program types are somewhat less likely than the others to hold this position; but they are not notably different from the other respondents in their views about their own programs. Faculty members in campus-based intensive programs are more likely than those in other program types to believe their program is a mark of distinction.

Like respondents in extension-colleague program types, those in programs of the type we have called "unique content or method" are also somewhat less likely to hold to a "mark of distinction" perspective about what the D.Min. should be; though the differences are small and two-thirds to three-fourths of all chief executives, directors and faculty members believe it should be a mark of distinction. But only 51% of the students in unique content programs hold the mark of distinction view. Faculty members and directors in multi-option programs are substantially more likely to evaluate their programs as marks of distinction than their counterparts in the other program philosophy types.

We can only speculate why the slightly more "democratic" perspectives exist in the extension-colleague format types and in programs with "unique content" educational philosophy. For the latter, the difference may stem from the conviction that the unique focus of the program -- case study, church growth, stewardship, organization development and the like -- is something needed by all clergy. Since the unique content or method of the program cannot usually be acquired through the M.Div., it should therefore be available as broadly as possible. Several factors may lie behind the slightly more egalitarian stance of those associated with extension/colleague group programs.

First, programs are not limited to those clergy willing or able to come to their campuses to study. Rather, they make themselves widely available. Second, as we were told by several administrators in schools with extension formats, it is not always easy to be selective in admissions when a minimum number of clergy is needed to constitute a colleague group. Thus, at least some of the participants may be less strong academically than others in the groups. As noted earlier, the belief that such programs are not "marks of distinction" is fairly widely held. The head of an institution with a different program format type expressed the widely-held view:

I believe strongly that the extension D.Min. situation in [the] U.S. is out of hand. The numbers and low quality are undermining the validity of the degree in general. This is unfair to schools like ours which struggle to give the D.Min. credibility for the sake of the church's ministry.

In another comparison, we used D.Min. directors' reports about their program's admissions policies to construct an index of current selectivity. (See section II. B. 3. b for a further discussion of this index.) This was done by dividing the number of persons who applied to the program during the academic year 1983-84 by the number that were actually admitted. Index scores varied from 1.0 (meaning that all who applied were admitted -- true for eight schools) to 3.75 (meaning that the school admitted just under one in four applicants -- four schools ranged between 2.0 and 3.75). We then cross-tabulated the index values with the directors' attitudes about their own D.Min. programs. Table IV summarizes the results.

TABLE IV      Attitude of D.Min. Directors About Their Institution's D.Min. by the Index of Selectivity (ges)

	<u>Our D.Min. Is:</u>	
<u>Index of Selectivity</u>	<u>Mark of Distinction With Selective Ad- missions and Rigorous Standards for Completion</u>	<u>Open to All Clergy Who Want Structured Continuing Education</u>
Low (1.0 - 1.10)	26%	13%
Medium Low (1.11-1.25)	38	20
Medium High (1.26-1.50)	15	20
High (1.51-3.75)	<u>21</u>	<u>47</u>
	100%	100%
	(n=39)	(n=15)

Kendall's Tau C = .27 (probability = .02)

There is a significant relation between the variables; the relationship is, however, directly opposite of what we expected. Directors who rate their programs as a mark of distinction with rigorous admissions

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policies are in institutions that accept a high proportion of those who apply. Directors who believe their program is essentially open to all are more likely to be in schools with higher rejection rates. We are unable to provide an adequate explanation for this finding. One possibility is that some schools engage in advance screening of potential applicants so that those who do finally apply meet admissions criteria. Some directors of programs we visited indicated that this is the case. But we doubt that this accounts for all of the differences evident in the table. We suspect that some directors -- who as a group are highly enthusiastic about the D.Min. -- rate their institution's program as a mark of distinction regardless of its selectivity in admissions.

### 3. Attitudes Within D.Min. Granting Seminaries

To assess further attitudes of various seminary constituencies about the degree, we asked chief executives, directors and faculty members to indicate what they believe is the majority attitude toward the D.Min. in their institution among several groups: Administrators (other than themselves), trustees, alumni/ae and other external constituencies, M.Div. students and the majority of faculty. They were also asked to characterize their own attitude. Table V summarizes the perceptions of chief executives, directors and faculty members. The table shows that positive feelings predominate, both in self-ratings and for beliefs about the attitudes of others. But within this overall positive evaluation, faculty members are significantly less likely to indicate that they personally are very positive about the D.Min. (49%) than are chief executives (65%) and directors (83%). Fifteen percent of faculty members say that they are somewhat negative. Further, the majority of faculty members are also perceived to be less positive than all groups other than M.Div. students. Only 27% believed the majority of the faculty is very positive. If our faculty group is indicative, however, something close to a majority of faculty is very positive: 49% of our respondents described themselves this way.

Directors are most likely to believe that other administrators and trustees are very positive, though they are quite similar to faculty members in their perceptions of the attitudes of the majority of the faculty, M.Div. students and graduates. Directors are most positive about the program, though 5% identify themselves as somewhat negative. Chief executives' responses are not too different from those of faculty members except for their personal evaluation of the program. Almost two-thirds are very positive, and another 29% are somewhat positive.

TABLE V Perceived Attitudes Concerning the D.Min.: CEOs, Directors and Faculty (Percentages and Means)

PERCEIVED ATTITUDES OF:	<u>Mean*</u>	<u>Very Positive</u>	<u>Somewhat Positive</u>	<u>Somewhat Negative</u>	<u>Very Negative</u>
Administrators (other than yourself)					
CEOs	1.5%	58%	37%	3%	2%
Directors	1.3	73	25	2	0
Faculty members	1.5	55	43	2	0
Board of Trustees (if any)					
CEOs	1.5	57	39	4	0
Directors	1.3	73	25	2	0
Faculty members	1.5	55	43	2	0
Alumni/ae and other external constituencies					
CEOs	1.5	47	53	0	0
Directors	1.6	45	52	2	1
Faculty members	1.6	42	55	3	0
M.Div. students					
CEOs	1.7	33	60	7	0
Directors	1.8	25	71	4	0
Faculty members	1.8	27	65	8	0
Majority of faculty					
CEOs	1.8	32	57	11	0
Directors	1.8	29	59	9	3
Faculty members	2.0	27	57	16	0
Yourself					
CEOs	1.4	65	29	6	0
Directors	1.2	83	12	5	0
Faculty members	1.7	49	36	15	0

\*1 = Very positive; 4 = very negative

In our discussions of the data from the study, we came to refer to those respondents who indicated that they are "very positive" about their institution's D.Min. as "cheerleaders" for the program. Do these individuals vary by the program type? In Table VI the responses of chief executives, directors and faculty members who are very positive are broken out by program types.

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TABLE VI Those expressing "Very Positive" Attitudes Towards the D.Min by Program Types (Percentages)

<u>Program Types</u>	<u>Position of Those "Very Positive"</u>		
	<u>CEOs</u>	<u>Directors</u>	<u>Faculty</u>
1. Size			
10-25	53	73	44
26-46	72	89	39
47-86	71	78	53
86-721	60	93	57
2. Program Format			
Local/Regional	67	81	42
Campus-based Intensive	77	89	51
Extension-Colleague	50	80	65
Multi-Options	50	75	44
3. Educational Philosophy			
Extended M. Div.	54	88	56
Unique Content	71	100	37
Independent Specialized	73	76	45
4. Denominational Type			
Mainline	61	78	49
Evangelical	74	95	47

With respect to program size, the lowest percentages of chief executives and directors who are very positive about their program are in the smallest size programs, though even so 73% of the directors and 53% of the chief executives in these programs count themselves as very positive. At the other end of the size spectrum, 93% of the directors of the large programs are very positive, and, though only 57% of the faculty members in these programs are very positive, this is the largest percentage of very positive faculty members in any of the size categories. The largest proportions of chief executives (77%) and directors (89%) who are "cheerleaders" are found in programs with a campus-based intensive format. Institutions that offer extension programs show the largest percentage of faculty members who are very positive (65%), while both local/regional and multi-options formats have the lowest proportions of very positive faculty members (42% and 44% respectively). Possible reasons why faculty members associated with large and extension programs are so enthusiastic about such programs have already been explored.

When the educational rationale and philosophy of programs is considered, almost three-fourths of the chief executives in unique content or method programs and independent/specialized programs are very positive, compared with just over half of those in programs with "extended M.Div." philosophies. All of the directors of unique content programs are very positive about their program; only 37% of the faculty

members in these programs, however, indicate that they are very positive -- the lowest in any of the three philosophy types. In contrast, the largest proportion of faculty members who are very positive about their school's program are in programs with an extended M.Div. philosophy (56%). Thus, while directors of unique content programs value highly the special or unique focus that their program provides, faculty members seem more appreciative of programs that take their shape from the familiar M.Div. curriculum.

Of the various comparisons by denominational type, both chief executives (74%) and directors (95%) in evangelical schools are more likely to be very positive than is true for their counterparts in mainline seminaries. Faculty members in the two types of schools do not differ significantly: Just under 50% of each qualify as "cheerleaders" for their programs.

### Discussion

Three issues stemming from this review of data on attitudes toward the D.Min. seem to us worthy of further emphasis.

First, as the current state and future shape of the D.Min. are considered, it is important to remember that the D.Min. is an undertaking highly approved by its public, and, in general, positively evaluated by most persons and groups that know something about it. There exists, in other words, a reservoir of good will toward the degree. Most educators, clergy and laity are in favor of seminaries granting some kind of professional doctorate, and substantial majorities of several groups believe that seminaries are currently doing a good job of offering such a degree. In looking toward the future of the degree, there is no reason to expect a "backlash" of negative opinion or even widespread apathy toward the degree. This is a popular enterprise, a program in which administrators and most faculty members like to teach and clergy like to participate. Even those not closely involved with programs approve of it in concept.

Second, and more troubling, is the evidence we collected that despite the high level of approval of the D.Min. as a concept, substantial proportions of some groups, notably seminary faculty members from D.Min.-granting institutions, heads of institutions that do not grant the degree and clergy who have never been enrolled in D.Min. programs, have doubts about the soundness of some programs. In addition, even persons in those groups that think that most D.Min. programs are sound are often suspicious of large programs or those that operate by extension. As we have said earlier in discussions of these two types of programs specifically, and as we shall explore at greater length in section III. A, The Quality of D.Min. Programs, the uncertain reputation of some kinds of D.Min. programs (or of all D.Min. programs as viewed by certain individuals and groups) is a danger to the future of the degree. This danger exists whether or not doubts and suspicions about programs are justified, because degree programs depend heavily on the trust of the public to accomplish their goal of signifying

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competence at a certain level. A degree program, even if it is in fact irreproachably conducted, will have a bleak future unless the public believes in its integrity. Therefore, in addition to immediately tightening any slipshod practices that actually exist, the community of theological schools must deal directly with the strongly-held beliefs in some quarters that D.Min. programs, or at least certain kinds of D.Min. programs, are of poor quality. As we note elsewhere, we believe that this involves reforming the accrediting in Standards and enforcing them in ways that make clear that programs that are poorly designed or conducted are not being accredited.

Third, and equally unsettling, we note a considerable discrepancy in some groups between what they believe the D.Min. should be and what it actually is. Some of the difference can be discounted as the clash between ideal and reality that attends practically any program, especially a relatively new one. Even so, however, it is evident that many persons and groups would like a degree somewhat different from the one their institution and most other institutions now offer. We are, quite frankly, puzzled that although virtually all our seminary-based respondents want the D.Min. to be a "mark of distinction" with selective and rigorous standards, the Standards are not weighted in this direction. Especially in the 1984 revision, most language suggesting selectivity has been removed, and there are few provisions that appear to prod schools in the direction of rigor in the conduct of their programs. Chief executives, directors and faculty members (as well as, to a lesser extent, D.Min. students and graduates) are clear, however, in calling for D.Min. programs to be rigorous and selective. Since the ATS is a representative body, we are led to wonder why the members, who strongly indicate that they prefer a distinctive degree, call for no more "bite" or toughness in the Standards. In fact, the 1984 revision seems to us to represent a steep slide in the other direction. In any event, we believe that the Standards need considerable overhaul, in the variety of ways suggested in this report, if they are to enable the degree to become the mark of distinction so strongly preferred but inadequately realized.

The lack of adequate standards is only partly responsible, of course, for the failure of programs to be rigorous. There is little to prevent an institution from closing the ideal/real gap on its own and putting in place a program that is highly selective and rigorous. To be sure, a school that does so will have to face competition from programs that are broader in selectivity and less demanding. That, perhaps, bolsters the argument of those who want to alter the name of the toughest and most distinctive programs to something other than the D.Min., a move that a few schools are considering. Still, administrators and faculties are not limited to the lowest common standard, but have the capacity to tighten their own institution's approach to the degree. Given the possibility of such self-initiated change, we are disturbed by the level of cynicism we found in some institutions. Some administrators and faculty members are so negative about the degree that we cannot understand why they continue to offer it.