

I. The Purposes and Methods of this Study

Auburn Theological Seminary and Hartford Seminary are theological institutions that have taken continuing education for ministry and research on theological education and church life as their mission. Both institutions have sponsored studies of continuing education programs and issues. In 1980 Hartford conducted and published an extensive study of various features of its own Doctor of Ministry program [see Theological Education 16, 1980, Summer]. In 1982, Auburn and Hartford together conducted an informal, comparative evaluation of Hartford's D.Min. program and one at New York Theological Seminary. In the course of that study it became evident that there was very little information available about the D.Min., as it was then offered in more than 75 programs, that could provide a basis for comparison for individual institutions trying to evaluate their own programs. Since the tenth anniversary of the approval of the D.Min. degree had just passed, and since there was still much discussion of the program's growth, merits and future, it seemed to research staff members at Auburn and Hartford a good time to begin a study of D.Min. programs in the United States and Canada.

A planning grant from the Booth Ferris Foundation supported the initial design of the study. The late Marvin Taylor, Associate Director of the Association of Theological Schools, was of particular assistance in the process of design. (Although this study has been conducted independently of ATS, and none of the raw data have been shared with staff members of the Association, officers and staff of ATS have given their cooperation and assistance at many points.) After the study design was complete, grants were made by the Booth Ferris Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for the support of the major part of the study. In addition, the Lilly Endowment, Inc., made a grant to support special financial studies.

Before this effort there had been no major study of D.Min. programs since the degree's inception in 1970. (There had been a few dissertations of various aspects of the degree and several symposia of papers on the D.Min., most of which are cited at various points in our report). The first aim of this study, then, was to document the growth of the degree and to learn more about how it is conducted in the considerable number of schools currently offering it. The description, we reasoned, of the most common patterns and practices for offering the degree and of the variations developed at different sites would be of considerable use to institutions as they work to develop and improve their own programs. The second purpose was to learn more about the impact of D.Min. programs on the institutions that sponsor them: Do they enrich the educational environment or detract from it? Have the seminaries that offer such programs become financially dependent on them? A third purpose was to gauge the impact of the programs on the clergy who enroll in them and complete them, and on the congregations and other church agencies those clergy serve: Is the D.Min. more

Purposes and Methods

effective, as advanced preparation for ministry, than other forms of continuing education? Is it worth the considerable investment of funds and especially time that it requires clergy to expend? Last, we hope to be able to address some of the persistent questions and suspicions voiced about the D.Min.: Are some D.Min. programs of poor quality? Is the degree too easy to earn? Is the major motive of seminaries giving the degree to "make money"? Do clergy enter D.Min. programs hoping that the degree will help them get a better job? In addition to these major objectives, we hoped that the study might also yield information that would be useful more broadly, to those interested in advanced learning for the other professions. The D.Min. is an unusual form of continuing professional education, and thus an account of its early development might be of some interest and help to those planning programs in other sectors of higher education.

It was evident from the beginning that some topics would have to be excluded, even from an extensive study. The following topics and items were omitted from our plan, for the reasons given:

- o Because in-sequence D.Min programs had almost disappeared by the time we began our study, we decided to exclude them and to focus all our attention on in-ministry programs. In the course of our work it became evident that the history of the development and subsequent failure of the in-sequence model is a fascinating episode in theological education from which a good deal could be learned. We could not, however, expand our study to include it.
- o We excluded from the study specialized D.Min. programs in the areas of pastoral care and marriage and family counseling. These programs function in a complex environment of clinical training, supervision and certification and would require the attention of researchers knowledgeable about the many programs and institutions that offered such training and certification.
- o We chose to study only accredited programs. Because information in ATS publications was confusing, we twice included non-accredited programs, by mistake, in our tabulations. Our intent, however, was to exclude unaccredited programs. One reason for this was the difficulty of obtaining information about the full range of such programs. More important, however, was the fact that accredited institutions, through their common membership in the Association of Theological Schools, have a mechanism for acting in concert to make changes in D.Min. programs. Unaccredited programs are not bound together in the same way. We wanted to focus our report upon and address it to those institutions capable of acting together if they judge our findings to be compelling.
- o Several D.Min. programs have program groups or satellite centers at sites outside the United States and Canada. These long-distance programs have been the target of much criticism and special scrutiny from ATS visiting teams. Though we agree that

such practices raise major and important questions, we could not, within the limits of our time frame and budget, gather information that would shed new light on the merits or problems of D.Min. programs at sites in other parts of the world, and thus we have omitted the topic from this report.

- o Because of the small number of Roman Catholic programs and Roman Catholic clergy enrolled in Protestant programs we have not been able to offer any separate analysis of the D.Min. in Roman Catholic settings. For most purposes, we have included Roman Catholics in our "mainline" classification where a mainline/evangelical division has been made. For the same reason, we have not been able to offer any separate analysis of Canadian programs and Canadian clergy. Early in our study we had hoped that there would be a separate effort, coordinated with ours, to study the D.Min. in Canada, but this did not materialize.

Despite these exclusions, our plan was a complex one. We needed information from seminaries about program emphases and requirements, teaching and administrative arrangements, and finances. We were interested, further, in attitudes toward the D.Min. within seminaries and in the perceptions of seminary personnel of the effects of D.Min. education on students and graduates. To gather so much information and to have the benefit of several different perspectives, we would, we realized, have to survey a number of faculty members and administrators in each institution. Further, we needed information from graduates and students, and from those who had begun D.Min. programs but dropped out of them. To gain a better sense of the characteristics of D.Min. students, we needed information from a group of clergy not involved in any way with the D.Min. for purposes of comparison. We hoped to obtain some information from persons who were members of the congregations of D.Min. students and graduates. Finally, we thought we should survey seminaries that do not grant the D.Min. degree to ascertain whether they think they will do so in the future.

We were able in the final study design to incorporate most of these activities. During the planning stage, we had distributed a brief fact sheet survey to all D.Min.-granting schools to gather basic numerical information about D.Min. programs, and we requested at that time program descriptions, D.Min. student handbooks and other material that would help us to gain a better sense of the range and variety of program activities in different institutions. The full project design included the following activities:

- o Visits to nine institutions that offer different kinds of D.Min. programs. These visits included interviews with administrators, faculty members, current students and graduates, as well as attendance when possible at some D.Min. courses, and time spent reading project reports and dissertations. Narrative reports were prepared about each visit. By agreement with the schools that consented to be visited, we have not listed the names of these institutions in our report.

Purposes and Methods

- o Use of the Presbyterian Panel to gather views about continuing education and the D.Min. degree from clergy and laity. We were invited by the Vocation Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to assist in the preparation of a questionnaire to be sent to members of the Presbyterian Panel. The Panel is an on-going survey conducted by the Research Unit of the Presbyterian Church that samples the opinions of lay members (including lay elders), pastors of congregations, and clergy in specialized (non-congregational) ministries. Since Presbyterian clergy constitute the largest denominational group of D.Min. graduates, we knew that the Panel questionnaire would reach some clergy involved in and some laity familiar with the D.Min. Thus this survey had two special benefits: It allowed us to test with clergy a variety of questions that might be used in our later, broader survey; and it permitted us access to a number of lay respondents who had some knowledge of the D.Min. [A copy of the Presbyterian Panel questionnaire is found, along with copies of all questionnaires used in our study, in the Appendix to the research report. The Presbyterian Panel responses and response rates are shown on that copy of the questionnaire.]

- o Surveys of administrators and faculty members of D.Min.-granting seminaries. In January, 1985, a packet of questionnaires was mailed to the chief executives of D.Min.-granting institutions. The packets contained questionnaires for the chief executive, the D.Min. program director, and the business officer; and six questionnaires for faculty members. The chief executive was directed to choose a representative group of faculty, representing both "classical" and practical teaching areas, and different levels of involvement in the institution's D.Min. program. The institution's academic dean was to be included in such a distribution, and one questionnaire was to be given to an adjunct faculty member if the program used adjunct faculty as teachers. Of the 77 institutions surveyed, three notified us that they could not participate and three others did not return any questionnaires. Response rates for various groups in the participating schools are shown on Table I. By agreement with the participating schools, individual programs are not evaluated or identified in our report.

TABLE I Return Rates for Questionnaires

	<u>Number Sent</u>	<u>Number Returned</u>	<u>Percentage Returned</u>
Chief Executives	77	67	87%
D.Min. Directors	77	68	88
Business Officers	77	54	70
Faculty Members	462	349	76
D.Min. Graduates	1649	858	52
D.Min. Students	1683	769	46
D.Min. Dropouts	484	120	25
Non-D.Min. Clergy	2171	769	35
Chief Executives of Non-D.Min. Granting Schools	84	80	95

- o Financial case studies. The lowest rate of return from a group of seminary personnel was 70%, from business officers. Perusal of the questionnaires that were returned, a number of which contained very little information, led us to suspect that the low response rate may have been due to the difficulty of producing usable data about programs whose cost information is "buried" in several different sections of the institutional budget. To remedy this situation, we added to our study design another series of campus visits, this time to five institutions that agreed to share financial data with researchers who would attempt a full cost analysis of their D.Min. program. Anthony Ruger of McCormick Seminary and the late Badgett Dillard of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary conducted these visits. Their findings are integrated into this summary and our larger research report, and are also available as two separate papers.
- o Surveys of D.Min. graduates, current students, drop-outs and clergy not involved with the D.Min. In April, 1985, we mailed questionnaires to samples of D.Min. graduates and current students. Questionnaires were sent to a random 25% sample of graduates from lists supplied by the schools; and a 33% sample of current students from school-supplied lists. Schools had difficulty producing lists of drop-outs, so we sent questionnaires to all of the relatively small number of drop-outs identified for us. To provide some basis for comparison with D.Min. clergy, a sample was drawn from the total clergy lists of eight denominations. The attempt was made to include both small and large denominations as well as theological diversity. The return rates for all these groups are summarized in Table I. In Table II, we show return rates for clergy of various denominations. Return rates for some denominations are quite low, so we have not made denominational comparisons using these groups, but we have retained the replies as part of our total non-D.Min. clergy sample. Return rates for drop-outs were so low that the responses

Purposes and Methods

could not be used. Some of those receiving our questionnaire for general clergy were D.Min. students or graduates, since the lists supplied to us by denominations did not screen out those with some D.Min. involvement; therefore we asked that questionnaires not be completed by such persons, but returned to us. Of the 2396 questionnaires mailed out to the general clergy sample, 225 were returned with a notation that the person receiving the questionnaire had been involved in a D.Min. program. That left us with a base number of 2172 from which to compute the final return rate of 35%.

TABLE II Non-D.Min. Clergy Sample and Return Rate by Denomination

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Number Sent</u>	<u>Number Returned</u>	<u>Percentage Returned</u>
Christian Reformed	200	56	28%
Episcopal	396	152	38
Evangelical Free	200	63	31
Lutheran			
ALC	200	66	33
LCA	200	82	41
Presbyterian (USA)	400	141	35
Southern Baptist	400	54	13
United Methodist	400	130	32
Other/No denomination indicated		25	1
	_____	_____	_____
Totals	2396	796	32%
Less returns for those involved in D.Min programs or who are D.Min graduates	225		
	<u>2171</u>		35%

- o A survey of non-D.Min-granting institutions. Executive officers of institutions that do not grant the D.Min. degree were surveyed for information about whether their institution had ever considered granting the degree, and whether they think it likely that a D.Min. program will be established at their institution in the future.

- o Content analysis. Program descriptions submitted by the schools were read, analyzed and categorized. Our typologies of D.Min. programs are based in large part on this content analysis, though we also checked the accuracy of our program typing and our understanding of the features of particular programs by comparisons with the descriptions given by D.Min. program directors in the long survey questionnaire they completed.

Other activities appropriate for an educational policy study were included in our work. We read all published materials we could find about the D.Min., though the number of articles and dissertations available were relatively few. We gleaned and analyzed the statistical information available in the ATS Fact Book. We made a number of intermediate or preliminary reports, two of them at meetings of the Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry, and we are indebted to those who participated in our workshops for their help in shaping and interpreting the information we gathered. Finally, we have prepared this research report that outlines and comments upon much of the quantitative and qualitative information we gathered. And we have augmented this research report with a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. available separately.

Our summary and research reports are intended for policy-makers -- seminary educators, church officials, and others who can affect the future development of the D.Min. program. Thus in the interest of readability we have omitted some information that might be of interest to researchers, including the results of some significance tests. In most cases, where we report data from samples, the results of significance tests are included. Where, however, we are dealing not with a sample but a whole universe (for instance, all D.Min. programs), statistical significance is less meaningful and is not noted. Nor do we show in the text the r values for correlations. As a rule, we do not report correlations weaker than +/- .1; and we characterize correlations with an r value less than +/- .2 as "weak" or "slight." These values are statistically significant for samples the size of ours. Further, we do not record in all tables the numbers replying. Response numbers and rates are given in the attachments to this summary and are recorded on the questionnaires in the Appendix. Numbers are included on tables only if they vary greatly, for a particular question, from the overall response rate.

The Research Report on the study was written by Jackson Carroll and Barbara Wheeler; a summary, available separately, was prepared by Barbara Wheeler. Though research conducted by Badgett Dillard, Adair Lummis, David Roozen and Anthony Ruger yielded some of the most important findings of the study, these persons did not participate in the drafting of the final reports. (Two reports on the financial studies, written by Badgett Dillard and Anthony Ruger, are available separately.) Thus the interpretations, judgments, conclusions and recommendations the final reports contain are of those of Jackson Carroll and Barbara Wheeler alone.

