

SPECIAL NEEDS PROCESSProcedures and Criteria

More broadly than specific preparation for professional church service, Garrett-Evangelical holds the responsibility of determining a person's fitness for graduation from a seminary institution. It reserves the right, through the special needs process, to determine whether the student may continue to pursue studies leading toward graduation or whether corrective action should be undertaken to enable the student to continue matriculation.

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The identification of "a special need" of a seminary student obliges faculty and students to follow the special needs process described below. A "special need" refers to any situation in a student's relation to his/her theological education which appears to make necessary consultation and action potentially beyond the teacher-student and/or advisor-advisee relationship.

The special needs document outlines procedures to be followed in matters of a student's potential professional qualifications as well as his/her functioning within the Garrett-Evangelical community. It also describes the regulated procedures for both student and institution in questions of dismissal or suspension of a student's tenure.

Although Garrett-Evangelical as a seminary of The United Methodist Church shares responsibility with the ordaining and commissioning agencies of the church for the determination of person's fitness for professional church service, we serve a larger constituency. The special needs process is in part the exercise of this responsibility.

The special needs procedure and criteria are based on the seminary faculty's interpretation of the nature of professional function in The United Methodist Church and in the wider community as expressed in the various Garrett-Evangelical degree curricula.

Garrett-Evangelical students, including those of other religious traditions, agree by their enrollment to accept these procedures and criteria as part of their theological education and to be bound by them.

- 2. OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE** (The dean may be directly involved in leading all steps of special needs process except appeal to president and board.)

a) ADVISOR-ADVISEE CONSULTATION

A special need is identified by the student himself/herself, the advisor, a member of the faculty or administration, or by other students, and communicated to the student's advisor. This leads to consultation of the advisor with the student and to a course of action by student and advisor which defines and deals with the special need.

b) EXPANDED ADVISOR-ADVISEE CONSULTATION WITH DEAN

If A. does not deal with the special need to the satisfaction of the student or the advisor or the faculty member who identified the special need, the advisor or faculty member includes in the conversations with the advisee, the dean, and any one or several of the following persons: VP for student affairs, other faculty members (or their delegate[s]). The dean works with the advisor and student seeking a course of action which defines and deals with the special need.

c) SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE

- i)** If B. does not meet the special need to the satisfaction of those involved, the dean asks the chair of the special needs committee to convene the special needs committee (annually appointed by the president) within seven business days.
- ii)** The convener describes to the committee the special need, reviews the steps taken, and presents any documentation which is considered relevant. The committee elects a chairperson for the committee's work with that student. The dean is informed of their recommendations and the dean's office keeps the report. The dean communicates to other administrative offices when that information is relevant to services to the student.
- iii)** The special needs committee meets with the student's advisor and, together with the VP for student affairs, meets the student. The student may invite a faculty/staff member or a seminary student to accompany him/her. If the student chooses to do so, the name of that person must be communicated three days in advance to the chairperson. The student shall have the privilege of presenting to the committee anyone with knowledge of pertinent facts or of presenting pertinent materials, subject to prior approval of the committee. The committee may, but is not required to, accord the student the privilege of asking questions of the persons with pertinent facts.
- iv)** If the student (and invitee) fail to appear at the stipulated time and place, the special needs committee may nevertheless proceed.
- v)** If the special needs committee makes a recommendation not affecting the student's tenure, it shall initiate processes of consultation and/or action, which it considers appropriate to meet the student's need. When in the judgment of the committee the process has met the student's need, no further action is needed but a report is made to the dean and enclosed in the student's file, and destroyed at graduation.
- vi)** The chair of the special needs committee communicates the final action to the student and the dean in writing and informs the student of the right to appeal (D. below). The dean may meet with the chair and student to define procedures to address the committee action.
- vii)** If the special needs committee makes a recommendation affecting the student's tenure, that is, recommends dismissal, the dean shall give at the following faculty meeting as full a report as is needed to inform the faculty of the case. The faculty accepts the report unless new substantial information is presented. In that case, the recommendation may be returned to the committee for further consideration and resubmission. Under circumstances in which the nature of the case permits or demands immediate faculty action, the faculty may opt for another disposition of the case.

d) APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT

- i)** The student may appeal in writing the faculty's action (C.7) to the president within two weeks after the dean's communication of it to the student.
- ii)** The president, after consultation with the special needs committee, shall also consult, with or without persons of his/her choosing, with the student, who may be accompanied by a faculty/staff member or seminary student of his/her choosing. The name of that person must be communicated to the president three days in advance.

- iii) The president may affirm the decision of the faculty or return it to the faculty for further consideration and resubmission. Under circumstances in which the nature of the case permits or demands immediate action, the president may choose in favor of another disposition of the case.
- iv) The president communicates his/her final decision to the student and to the faculty in writing and informs him/her of the right to appeal (E. below).

3. APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- i) The student may appeal the action (see E.4) of the president to the board of trustees within two weeks by letter to the president.
- ii) The chairperson of the board of trustees constitutes, within a reasonable period of time, a committee of trustees. The student may submit in writing a statement of reasons for his/her appeal. The committee of the board of trustees, after review of actions taken under C. , D. and E., may 1) uphold the president's decision; 2) request the president to reconsider and resubmit the case; or 3) make its own disposition of the case.
- iii) With the communication of the board's decision to the student, the appeal provisions of the special needs process are exhausted. The action of the board of trustees is final.

4. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

a) PREFACE

The introduction sets the detailed description of the criteria into the educational context of the seminary. It is followed by a general discussion of "Criteria for Evaluation of Student Tenure". Criteria and rationale in six areas are then described: 1) intellectual capacity, 2) interpersonal capabilities, 3) identity issues, 4) volitional capacities, 5) affective capacities and 6) disorders. A concluding section summarizes the description.

b) INTRODUCTION

As an institution, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary has been established for two primary purposes. These purposes are reflected in the two larger institutions with which Garrett-Evangelical is most closely associated: the United Methodist Church and Northwestern University. In connection with the United Methodist Church, Garrett-Evangelical serves as a graduate professional school for the church, thereby reflecting its purpose as a developer of professional skills. In connection with Northwestern University, Garrett-Evangelical acts as a Graduate School of Religion, thereby reflecting its purpose of academic educator.

These two purposes, at times interrelating and at times divergent, are both manifestations of Garrett-Evangelical's deeper and broader commitment to facilitating the growth and development of individuals as total human beings and as children of God. At the same time, one must recognize that these two purposes - though similar in nature - are not identical. As a Graduate School of Theology, Garrett-Evangelical's task is primarily academic: the task of imparting knowledge to students. It is important that the students comprehend and master the knowledge. Garrett-Evangelical's task is primarily developmental: the task is that of facilitating the development of an individual as a professional clergy person, educator, journalist, etc. Certainly education is involved here, but the education in this setting serves as a means to the end of professional development. It is no longer an end in itself. The individual here is involved in developing professional competencies to the point of readiness for exercising the vocation of his/her choice.

The working of these two purposes can also be seen in the nature of the degree programs which Garrett-Evangelical offers. Garrett-Evangelical's Master of Arts degree programs, the MDiv and the DMin degrees all provide academic and professional training for church service. The MTS degree is designed primarily to be an academic degree. In conjunction with Northwestern University, Garrett-Evangelical presently offers a degree program at the doctoral level. This program, as one might expect, is primarily if not exclusively academic in nature; it represents Garrett-Evangelical's recognition of and commitment to the many individuals who are interested in Christian education but not professional training.

The major concern of this document is the cluster of issues involving student tenure and appropriate functioning within a seminary community. What criteria should Garrett-Evangelical employ to determine whether or not a student may enter into a degree program? And what criteria should Garrett-Evangelical employ to decide whether to continue or to terminate a student's tenure?

It has been said that the way in which one presents a question reveals a great deal about the answer which one expects. Certainly the questions posed above presuppose several premises upon which the position of the report is grounded. Among them are

- (1) God grants each human being a unique combination of gifts and capabilities. The seminary experience, which must be demanding in order to maintain effectiveness, is not something from which every person can benefit. Each person's unique situation, i.e., his/her inclinations, abilities, stage of spiritual, intellectual and emotional development, must be considered in determining his/her fitness to enter and continue seminary.
- (2) Garrett-Evangelical has limited resources (e.g., faculty, administrators, physical plant, finances). In accepting or maintaining a student's tenure, Garrett-Evangelical allocates a portion of these resources to the student and thereby restricts the number of other individuals whom Garrett-Evangelical can accommodate.
- (3) Garrett-Evangelical has a moral obligation to work toward responsible stewardship of its limited resources.
- (4) Tenure of students is a privilege which Garrett-Evangelical may choose to grant or not to grant, to continue or to terminate.
- (5) Garrett-Evangelical has, as a part of responsible stewardship, the obligation to evaluate continually the fitness of students and potential students with regard to their role in the seminary, and to act on the basis of these evaluations.

Fitness for the seminary experience is defined in terms of the distinction made earlier between Garrett-Evangelical's two purposes, i.e., academic preparation and formation for potential professional function.

Clearly, if a student or potential student shows evidence of not having the minimum academic potential necessary to complete the study program, then admission or continuation of tenure for the individual would be irresponsible stewardship of Garrett-Evangelical's resources. Fortunately, evaluation of this nature has long been employed at Garrett-Evangelical and the procedures are fairly clear-cut.

Professional functioning entails being able to live out one's beliefs in his/her actions and relationships. In training individuals for service, the seminary must give considerable attention to various aspects of professional development. Ethical, theological, spiritual, emotional and social development, as well as the way a student functions within the Garrett-Evangelical community are all crucial to the individual's eventual effectiveness as a professional.

The special needs committee at Garrett-Evangelical has responsibility for evaluating student tenure in light of criteria related to these concerns. The presence of the dean of the seminary on the special needs committee reflects the obvious interrelationship between academic and professional criteria, but does not grant this committee jurisdiction over primarily academic matters. The committee, in other words, deals with non-academic aspects of student development as they affect the student's tenure situation. It is the committee, then, which has the task of evaluation and action mentioned in premise 5. above. As Garrett-Evangelical's agent, the committee works to insure responsible stewardship of the seminary's resources.

A major question for the special needs committee is this: "What relationship shall we strive to maintain with the students with whom we deal? What position (theological, ethical, emotional, etc.) shall we maintain with regard to the student?" If the committee's contact - the committee's ministry - with the student is to be effective, there must be a unity of intention and position on the part of the committee members. This is not a plea for heavy-handed, lockstep uniformity, but rather for a congruence of minds and souls in which each individual takes as a starting point common concepts and purposes and then adds to them personal insight and development.

This report suggests two concepts as crucial to the committee's ministry: grace and growth. Grace suggests that the committee as a body will hold forth a redemptive (as opposed to judgmental) ministry. In the absence of clear-cut evidence to the contrary, the committee will assume the fitness of each student for the seminary experience. Further, even in the presence of seemingly substantial evidence, the committee will proceed cautiously, keeping in mind the fallibility of human judgment.

Growth suggests that the committee's intention in all such dealings will be that of nurture. The committee will work to facilitate the student's growth in all areas of special need. When questions about a student's fitness and function within the community are raised, the committee will determine whether the problem has to do with undeveloped potential or whether it concerns insufficient potential. Potential here refers to the

student's capacity to develop professional skills to a point of sufficient competence. If the problem were of the former type, the committee would examine the developmental issues with an eye toward the committee's role of stewardship: can the student develop these competencies sufficiently while remaining in seminary, or should tenure be terminated until such development takes place? If the problem were of the latter type, the committee would evaluate (keeping in mind its redemptive ministry) the student's fitness for the seminary experience.

Clearly no single category of experience will apply to all situations and no such claims are made here. This document provides guidelines and suggestions. Discretion is in the hands of the committee members, and the seminary community can contribute to the committee's effectiveness by offering support and demonstrating trust.

c) CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT TENURE

Four qualities are desirable in the criteria under discussion:

- i) They must be sufficiently concrete and specific so as to be enforceable and meaningful.
- ii) They must be sufficiently flexible so as to allow the committee some leeway and so as to prevent them from becoming unduly coercive.
- iii) They must be clearly identified with the purpose for which they were created, so that they do not become an end in themselves.
- iv) They must be constructive and uplifting wherever possible, so that everyone involved in the process can derive benefit from them.

Clearly, criteria such as these are difficult to find, more difficult to create, and impossible to get consensus agreement upon. This report will achieve its goal if the criteria mentioned serve as Tillichian "broken symbols" - pointing to but not expressing the ultimate.

A consideration crucial to the process of developing criteria: upon what areas shall the evaluation focus? What categories of development are appropriate to the scrutiny of the Special needs committee? The committee, it must be pointed out, is only one vehicle among several through which Garrett-Evangelical evaluates students. The faculty gives regular evaluations of the student's academic performance. The faculty also gives yearly evaluations of overall professional development (in the form of the ministry project at level I and the evaluation conference at level II). The field education supervisor evaluates the student's performance in that phase of development. Where does the evaluation of the special needs committee fit in?

This report finds two factors as crucial to the decision: 1) The committee's commitment to providing criteria for evaluation which are sufficiently concrete and specific so as to be enforceable and meaningful; and 2) the committee's commitment to evaluating tenure in terms of "insufficient potential" for development to a point of sufficient competence. These two factors indicate that the committee is operating at a different level of evaluation from the others. Specifically, the committee is to develop criteria for evaluation which insure that the student has minimum capacities, and the committee is to address itself to areas of evaluation wherein meaningful, enforceable criteria can be constructed.

Consider, by means of comparison, a student's theological development. Garrett-Evangelical allows for evaluation of the student's theological development at several levels. A professor evaluates his/her academic development (his/her mastery of course materials) during each course in theology. Two professors (in the ministry project and evaluation conference) evaluate the student's integration of his/her theological training into his/her own sense of professional development. Faculty advisors evaluate the statement of faith and continuing self-education plans of each of their level III advisees. The supervisor of the student's field work evaluates the student's integration of theological training into lifestyle and ministry. Where does the Special needs committee's evaluation fit in?

It is suggested that the committee's role is to consider whether a "baseline level" of capacity is manifest throughout the student's seminary experience. In terms of theological development, for instance (considering one aspect of development among many), the committee would consider whether the student has sufficient capacity to learn, integrate, and do theology so as to justify the seminary's continuing investment in him/her. Thus the committee would focus on criteria which evaluate the student's potential for adequate theological development; potential ability to think abstractly, to universalize from the particular, to grow intellectually, etc. It is important to realize that this is a distinctly different function from evaluating the student's progress, a task which is undertaken by other procedures. The committee's concern with regard to theological development, then, is that of insuring that the student is ultimately, potentially capable of doing theology as a

professional clergy person, educator, journalist etc. The student's progress in developing that skill is not a concern here; other means are present for doing that task.

Language which describes traits, capacities, and processes as they pertain to individuals is especially appropriate to the committee's task. In fact, such language is especially appropriate to the committee's task. In fact, such language tends to cluster and overlap in terms of professional, developmental categories. For instance, a prerequisite for theological development would be the capacity to learn from experience and to take positive steps on the basis of what one learns. Yet this is necessary to ethical and social development as well. What emerges from a consideration of most effective language for criteria and of most effective groupings of criteria is this: The criteria act as a baseline level of potential beyond which the student must operate. Language is most effective when it is sufficiently concrete that it may eventually be operationally defined. The criteria are most easily understood when grouped according to dimensions of personality rather than in terms of areas of professional development. Thus, rather than presenting repetitious elaborations of the criteria pertinent to each area of professional development, this document will present the criteria according to dimensions of personality, tying in the areas of professional development as is appropriate.

The criteria here are developed, consistent with the document's position, in terms of insufficient potential. This position is based on the premises:

- i) that criteria competencies are necessary for effective ministry and/or professional function,
- ii) that certain minimum levels of potential are prerequisite to the development of these competencies to the point of readiness for service,
- iii) that these minimum levels of potential can to varying degrees be discerned and/or measured, and
- iv) that Garrett-Evangelical (through the Special needs committee) has, in the face of clear-cut evidence of insufficient potential, the right and the obligation to recommend termination of student tenure.

These criteria have the purpose of insuring that the student's capacities are sufficiently developed (or potentially developable) so as to enable him/her to function effectively as a professional. If a student cannot or does not satisfy these requirements, his/her professional development will be substantially limited. This limitation may be sufficiently serious so as to prevent the student from developing to the point of readiness for professional functioning.

(1) Intellectual Capacities

(a) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient capacity for

- (i) Abstract thought
- (ii) Universalizing from the particular
- (iii) Particularizing from the universal
- (iv) Intellectual growth
- (v) Logical thinking
- (vi) Cogent analysis
- (vii) Intellectual honesty.

(b) Rationale

These capacities are crucial to the theological enterprise, to ethical and social development, and to the daily problem-solving routine that fills each professional's days. The student lacking a modicum of these capacities will be handicapped to the point that the committee cannot in good stewardship invest Garrett-Evangelical's resources in the training of this person for professional church service.

(2) Interpersonal Capacities

(a) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient capacity for

- (i) Achieving interdependent interpersonal relationships that are open, loving, empathic, and inclusive of a wide variety of persons
- (ii) Open expression of warmth and concern for the other
- (iii) Insight into the dynamics of human personality and group behavior
- (iv) Commitment to involvement in the Christian community for the purpose of the enhancement of the mission and ministry of the church.

(b) Rationale

These capacities are crucial to the clergy person/educator in his/her role as spiritual leader and in his/her pastoral care. The clergy person/educator communicates as much about his/her understanding of God's redemptive love in the manner of his/her relationships with others as by his/her words. A person who lacks these capacities would be unable to embody in him/her the message which he/she is to proclaim.

(3) Identity Issues

(a) Self-Concept

(i) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient potential to develop

1. Realistic, favorable self-image
2. Realistic, favorable life-goals
3. Awareness and acceptance of one's own strengths and weaknesses
4. An increasing awareness of himself/herself as a person standing in relationship with God.

(ii) Rationale

A religious professional's attitudes toward him/herself is the most immediate, the most direct manifestation of his/her faith relationship with God. Insufficient potential in this area will limit the range of spiritual development and therein spiritual leadership. The range and quality of human relationships will also be limited, thus further inhibiting effective spiritual leadership.

(b) Self-Actualization Capacities

(i) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient capacity for

1. Learning from experience
2. Tolerating ambiguity
3. Self-direction
4. Self-discipline
5. Tolerating anxiety
6. Openness toward one's own feelings and impulses
7. Openness toward feelings and impulses of others.

(ii) Rationale

These capacities are crucial to professional functioning hierarchically-structured institution. Insufficient capacity here would leave that person either over-conforming

toward or over-rebelling against the institutional church, and in either case the preoccupation would detract from effective ministry.

(4) Volitional Capacities

(a) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient capacity for

- (i) Making decisions (choices) without undue impulsiveness
- (ii) Acceptance of constructive criticism
- (iii) Taking positive and corrective steps when criticism is appropriate

(b) Rationale

Here again the effective professional needs these capacities as a means of dealing with conflicts, of being open to feedback, and of acting upon this information appropriately. The individual lacking these capacities will be unable to provide either spiritual or temporal leadership in an effective way.

(5) Affective Capacities

(a) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating an insufficient capacity for

- (i) The experience and expression of feelings
- (ii) Integrating feelings into adaptive functioning
- (iii) Distinguishing between one's own thoughts and feelings and external social reality.

(b) Rational

A crucial aspect of effective professional functions is the individual's ability to integrate his/her affective experience into his/her work in an appropriate, creative, and uplifting manner. Professional service without feeling is cold, sterile and lifeless.

(6) Disorders

(a) Criteria

A student's tenure may be terminated in the face of clear-cut evidence indicating

- (i) Cognitive disorders
- (ii) Affective disorders
- (iii) Behavior disorders
- (iv) Somatic expressions of psychological symptoms sufficient to jeopardize his/her physical health.

(b) Rationale

Professional service cannot fully be separated from the mental health of the individual who carries it out. To the extent that the individual's functioning is skewed by such disorders, to that same extent the individual's service will also be ineffective, even destructive.

4. CONCLUSION

Hopefully, the special needs committee will only rarely find itself in the position of having to terminate a student's tenure. Hopefully, when such a situation arises, the committee will much more often serve the function of nurturing the student toward adequate professional development to a point of readiness for professional service. If, however, it becomes necessary to evaluate a student's tenure situation, the criteria included in this document will act as effective guidelines in the decision-making process.

The scope of these criteria is specific. The criteria speak only to capacities, to potentials, to each person's God-given talents and gifts. In so doing - in avoiding the temptation to evaluate the student's ongoing preparation, training and development, - the committee avoids injecting itself unnecessarily into areas of evaluation for which others have been authorized already. Beyond that, the committee helps to protect the prophetic voice, the voice of dissent and of change, by keeping clear the distinction between capacity and development. In this way also the student, providing he/she does not give clear-cut evidence of lack of capacity, may feel at ease in dealing with the committee in matters of nurture, assured in the realization that he/she is not being evaluated in terms of development the same time he/she is seeking nurture on a particular developmental problem.

It is anticipated that, due to interrelationships and overlapping, rarely will a student's tenure evaluation hinge on any one single criterion. Most probably in any case that comes to the committee's attention, a cluster of criteria will be involved. At any rate, the question as to whether one criterion alone may determine tenure is in all likelihood a moot point. If such a situation arose, the committee would have to deal with the case in its specifics.

The purpose of this document is to provide the special needs committee with a starting point in the articulation of enduring criteria for evaluating student tenure in Garrett-Evangelical's degree programs. Beyond that, the committee helps to protect the prophetic voice, the voice of dissent and of change, by keeping clear the distinction between capacity and development. In this way also the student, providing he/she does not give clear-cut evidence of lack of capacity, may feel at ease in dealing with the committee in matters of nurture, assured in the realization that he/she is not being evaluated in terms of development the same time he/she is seeking nurture on a particular developmental problem.