

# Statement of Educational Effectiveness

## Academic Year 2018-19

### EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The processes for evaluation of educational effectiveness at McCormick Theological Seminary involves several related events. First, artifacts are collected based upon student selection of material that best represents their learning throughout their seminary career. The faculty meets on a selected day to review its degree programs and analyze how well students meet the learning outcomes that McCormick established for each degree program based upon a selection of student artifacts. In addition, compiled student retention, graduation and placement data for the institution form part of this assessment. The Seminary's Academic Programs Committee oversees this review, which is then discussed by the Faculty and reported to the Board of Trustees.

In 2017 we were reaccredited by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and by The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for a period of ten years. HLC will conduct a mid-term review in 2021. ATS noted "our thoughtful and effective educational assessment process that stimulates faculty curiosity and positively impacts curricular and educational practices."

### LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR MASTERS LEVEL DEGREE PROGRAMS

The faculty established several learning outcomes for the masters level degree programs. These learning outcomes were outlined as part of the Curriculum Review process conducted in the academic year 2014-15.

Four of the core learning outcomes are shared by all Masters level degree programs:

1. Think critically
2. Construct theological meaning using biblical and Christian traditions
3. Communicate effectively
4. Exhibit growth in cross-cultural engagement

Additional unique MDiv Learning Outcomes:

5. Exhibit pastoral imagination
6. Lead just and sustainable communities

Additional unique MAM Learning Outcome:

7. Serve effectively in congregational ministries

Additional unique MTS Learning Outcome:

8. Engage in theological research and analysis based upon an argument and construct a theological essay or thesis article.

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR MASTERS LEVEL DEGREE PROGRAMS**

### **Three-year Cycle**

In order to evaluate educational effectiveness in depth, the faculty chooses two or three learning outcomes to be assessed each year. In the course of three years, all masters level learning outcomes are assessed. The first cycle began in the academic year 2015-16. In 2015-16, learning outcomes 2 and 4 (core outcomes) were evaluated. In 2016-17, learning outcomes 1, 3 (core outcomes) and 6 (MDiv additional outcome) were evaluated. And in 2017-18, learning outcomes 5 (MDiv additional outcome), 7 (MAM additional outcome) and 8 (MTS additional outcome) were evaluated. In this academic year 2018-19, we restarted the cycle with the evaluation of learning outcomes 2 and 4 (core outcomes).

### **Senior Portfolios**

The learning outcomes are assessed based on artifacts submitted in the Senior Portfolios, part of the Senior Review process of graduating students. Each graduating student is required to create a Senior Portfolio in which they submit artifacts reflecting their work toward each of the learning outcomes in their degree program. Graduating students submit their portfolios to the Coordinator for the Office of Student Academics, their faculty advisor and another faculty member designated by the Dean to conduct a review of the portfolio. Artifacts related to the learning outcomes under review for that year are then selected from the portfolios. All identifying marks are removed from the selected artifacts and placed in binders for faculty review prior to Assessment Day.

### **Assessment Day**

Members of the faculty and designated experiential education supervisors read and evaluate these binders prior to Assessment Day held in April of each academic year. The artifacts are assessed based on rubrics developed by the Faculty and scored on a nine-point scale:

- Inadequate (Score 0)
- Beginner (Score 3, 2, 1)
- Competent (Score 6, 5, 4)
- Proficient (Score 9, 8, 7)

The rubrics for assessment of each learning outcome are available in the Office of Student Academics.

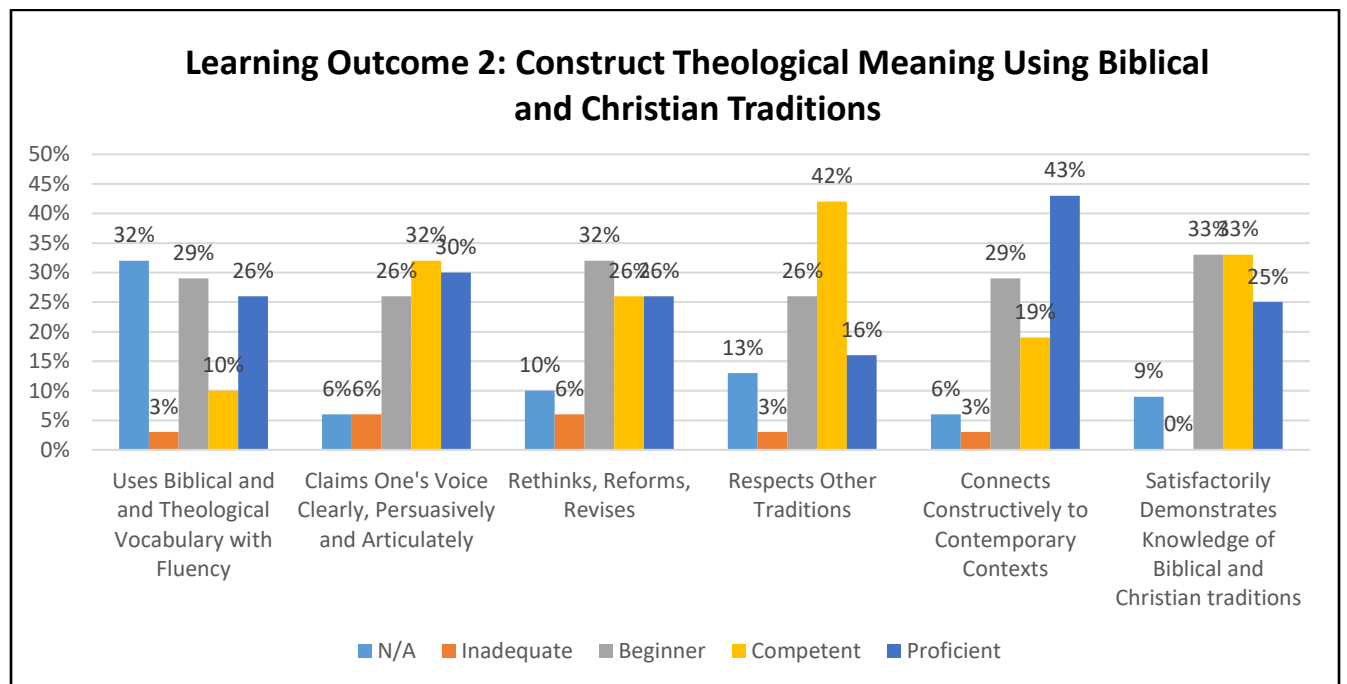
On Assessment Day, faculty and designated experiential education supervisors discuss and evaluate student success in meeting the learning outcomes under review and ways and means to enhance educational effectiveness in those areas. Score sheets are collected and compiled to

determine the percentage of students who have performed at the various levels of the nine-point scale.

**ASSESSMENT FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-19**

**Learning Outcome 2: Construct Theological Meaning Using Biblical and Christian Traditions**

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 2 are: a.) Satisfactorily Demonstrates Knowledge of Biblical and Christian Traditions, b.) Connects Constructively to Contemporary Contexts, c.) Respects Other Traditions, d.) Rethinks, Reforms, Revises, e.) Claims One’s Voice Clearly, Persuasively, & Articulately, f.) Uses Biblical and Theological Vocabulary with Fluency. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the rubrics.

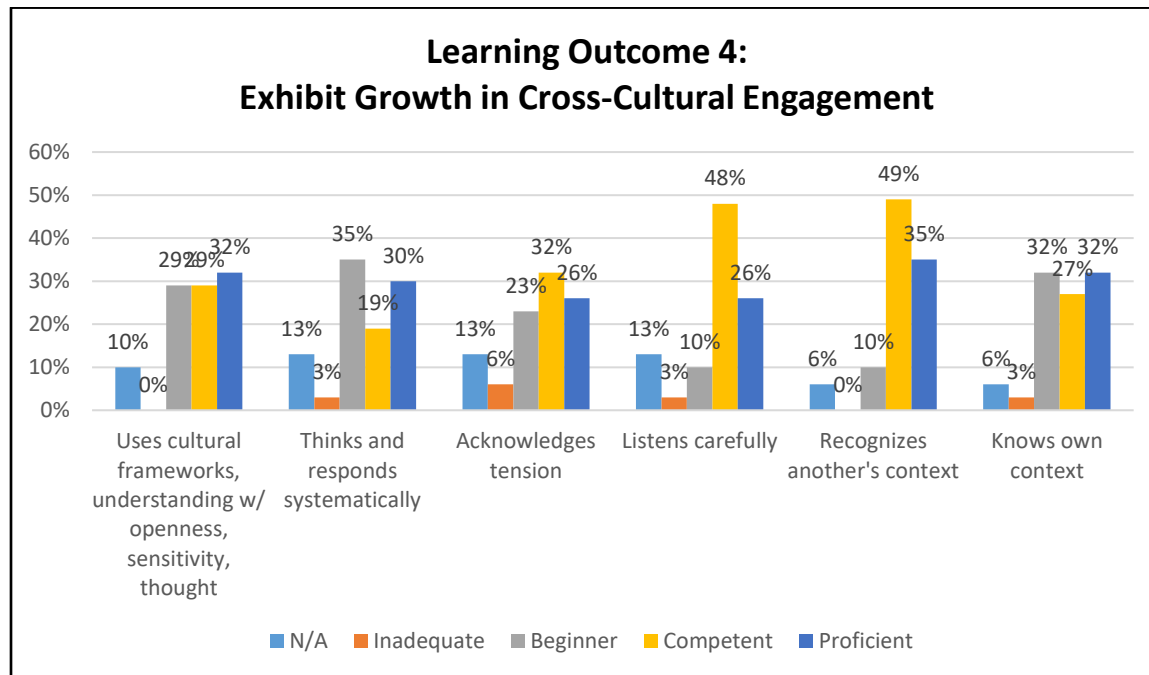


As the chart shows, the majority of students performed at the Competent (Score 6, 5, 4) and Proficient (Score 7, 8, 9) levels. To further quantify this, an average of 55% of students performed at these two levels across the standards described in the rubrics. This means that 55% of students are meeting or exceeding expectations for Learning Outcome 2.

An average of 29% scored at the Beginner (Score 3, 2, 1) level and an average of 3.5% scored at the Inadequate (0) level. An average of 12% of artifacts submitted were considered not applicable to the standards described in the rubrics.

## Learning outcome 4: Exhibit Growth in Cross-Cultural Engagement

The rubrics established by the faculty to assess aspects of learning for Learning Outcome 4, are: a.) Knows Own Context, b.) Recognizes Another’s Context, c.) Listens Carefully, d.) Acknowledges Tension, e.) Thinks and Responds Systematically, f.) Uses Cultural frameworks, Understanding Differences w/ Openness, Sensitivity and Insight. The following chart describes student success rates for each of the rubrics.



As the chart shows, the majority of students performed at the Competent (Score 6, 5, 4) or Proficient (Score 7, 8, 9) levels. To further quantify this, an average of 63% of students performed at these two levels across the standards described in the rubrics. This means that 63% of students are meeting or exceeding expectations for Learning Outcome 4.

An average of 23% of students scored at the Beginner (Score 3, 2, 1) level and an average of 2.5% scored at the Inadequate (0) level. An average of 10% of artifacts submitted were considered not applicable to the standards described in the rubrics.

## Assessment of Learning Outcomes 2 and 4

McCormick’s goal is for 90% or more of students to be scored at the level of Competent (Score 6, 5, 4) and Proficient (9, 8, 7). The charts above show that the average performance for the majority of McCormick students ranges at these levels with 55% and 63% of students meeting or exceeding the expectations of Learning Outcomes 2 and 4. Though less than our 90% objective, the statistics also indicate great potential for growth with an average of 29% and 23% of students scoring at the Beginner level and only 2.5-3.5% at the Inadequate level across both learning outcomes.

Several gaps were identified between the rubrics for the learning outcomes, the broad description of the outcomes, and the actual artifacts being evaluated. These statistical results reflect the application of the rubrics as written to the artifacts and do not indicate the places where artifacts did not reflect the general ethos as expressed in the description of the outcome and not fully captured by the specific rubrics. In some instances artifacts of cross-cultural engagement raised examples of inter-Christian encounters or movements across different economic classes. For the most part the artifacts demonstrate the capacity for good listening (48% competent) and recognition (49% competent) with much lower demonstrable skills in more constructive proficiencies such as systematic response (19% competent) and acknowledgement of tension (32% competent). These results indicate the need for a closer review of the rubrics to create a stronger alignment with the broad description of the outcome. In addition, the statistics hint at the need for a stronger integration that flows from the degree outcome to the drafting and description of assignments to ensure greater emphasis on constructivist skills.

The other striking revelation of these statistics and the general discussion revealed the need for a shift in pedagogy. The conversation identified two areas of focus. First, consolidating student's critical appreciation of the foundational knowledge of the topic. The work of seniors indicate a less than robust application of reading material and insights that are parts of the standard literature on some topics. This gap resulted in students relying more upon previously acquired knowledge prior to seminary in their work. Additionally, helping students to access reliably sources of knowledge outside of the formal library context would help to close this gap. The recognition that students entering seminary do so with less of the foundational critical alignment to theological education requires greater focus on these issues in introductory courses. Secondly, offering class sessions and opportunities for students to apply their insights to their work in ministry contexts. Artifacts also revealed a somewhat uncritical reading of context as well as the uncritical reading of the potential for knowledge gained in seminary to transform those contexts.

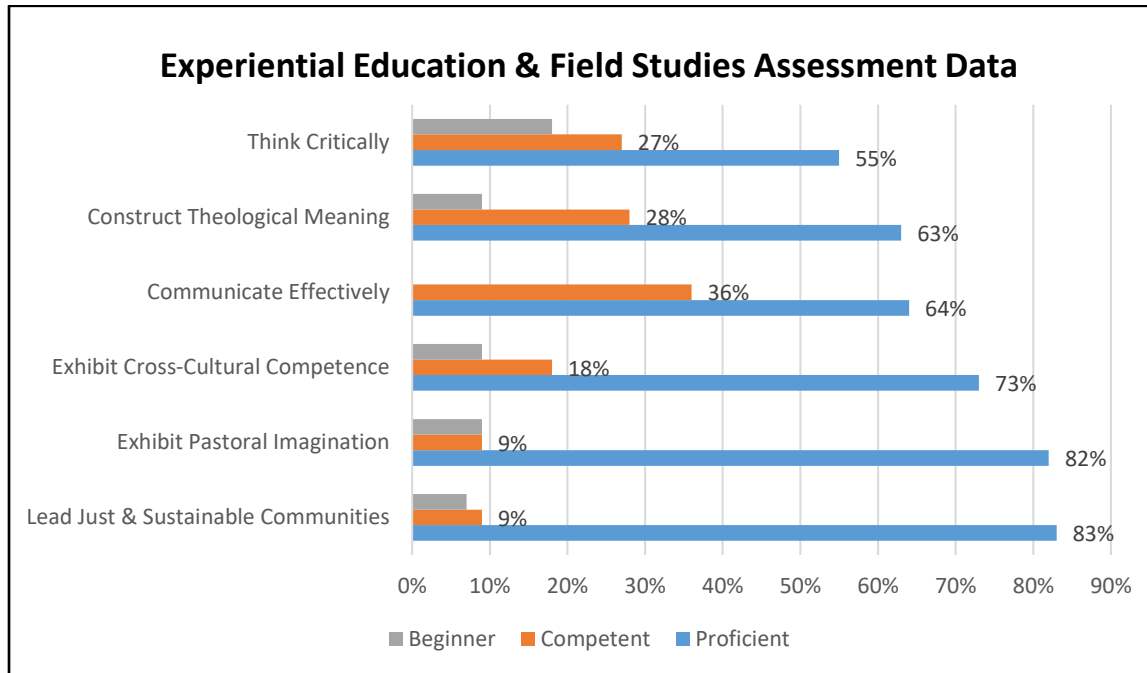
## **EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND FIELD STUDIES ASSESSMENT**

Students in the MDiv and MAM degree programs are placed in experiential education sites in congregations and agencies for one academic year. Supervisors evaluate them twice in an academic year, specifically at the end of each semester. Students are assessed based on the MDiv program learning outcomes and the EEFS program goals. The evaluation forms define the six MDiv (4 core and 2 additional) learning outcomes and four to seven standards related to each. MAM students are also assessed based on the six MDiv learning outcomes with the understanding that the two additional MDiv learning outcomes namely, "Exhibit pastoral imagination" and "Lead Just and Sustainable Communities," essentially cover the one additional MAM learning outcome: "Serve effectively in congregational ministries." Supervisors score students under each of the standards related to the outcomes on a three-part scale.

Proficient (Score 9)

Competent (Score 6)  
Beginner (Score 3)

In the academic year 2018-19, 14 students engaged in experiential education sites were assessed. The following chart is based on student success rates for each of the learning outcomes.



As the chart shows, the majority of students performed at the Competent (Score 6) and Proficient (Score 9) levels. To further quantify this, an average of 91% of students performed at these two levels across the standards described in the rubrics. This means that 91% of students are meeting or exceeding expectations. Less than two students scored at the Beginner (Score 3) level across the rubrics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on data gathered in the academic year 2018-19 and feedback from faculty and some of our experiential education supervisors on our Annual Day of Assessment, the following projects to improve teaching and learning in academic year 2018-19 were recommended to the faculty:

1. Update and streamline the rubrics for the learning outcomes of each degree program to ensure relevance, appropriateness and standardized use in course syllabi.
2. Utilize the rubrics for degree learning outcomes when designing assignments and clearly indicate in course syllabi which learning outcome the assignment satisfies.
3. Integrate learning outcomes and use backward syllabus design techniques (starting from the anticipated end point) to achieve desired results in students.

4. Encourage students to include a broader range of artifacts in their Senior Portfolios (e.g. written, audiovisual etc.) and to ensure appropriateness of the artifact submitted to the learning outcome it is designated to satisfy.
5. Ensure greater attention to pedagogies and assignments that teach and encourage higher level skills of constructing theological meaning. This should be attended to in the crafting of appropriate course learning outcomes.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR DMIN PROGRAMS**

McCormick offers three options for its DMin program: the McCormick DMin, Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) DMin in Preaching (offered in conjunction with five other institutions), and Ecumenical DMin (offered in conjunction with two other schools). McCormick's faculty established five learning outcomes for its DMin degree and for its students in the ACTS DMin in Preaching. The Seminary intends that students who graduate from McCormick with a DMin degree will be able to do the following:

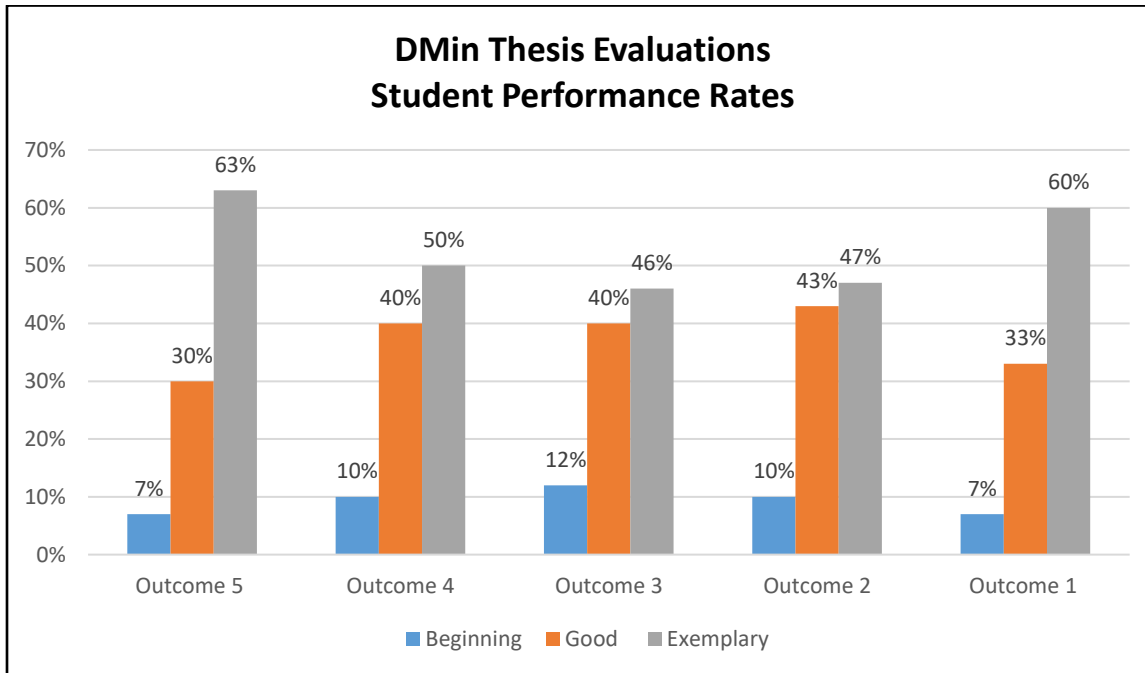
1. Analyze social and cultural factors impacting society in general and her or his own specific setting of ministry.
2. Use and integrate a variety of biblical, theological, and historical resources into her or his own specific practices of ministry.
3. Form clear objectives and strategies to address challenges and opportunities in her or his own specific settings.
4. Implement evaluative methods that encourage ongoing critical reflection on the practice of ministry in her or his own specific settings.
5. Nurture collegial relationships that strengthen her or his own vocational sense of identity and the practice of ministry in her or his own settings.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR MCCORMICK DMIN AND ACTS DMIN PROGRAMS**

The seminary employs direct measures to evaluate its educational effectiveness in the McCormick and ACTS DMin programs. Each graduating student is required to submit her or his own doctoral thesis and defend it before a committee that includes the advisor, a faculty or alumna/us reviewer, and a peer reviewer (another DMin student). Committee members read and evaluate the DMin thesis according to a three-point scale for each learning outcome:

- Beginning – Developing
- Good – Accomplished
- Exemplary – Excellent
- N/A

## Thesis Evaluations for DMin programs



McCormick’s goal is for 90% or more of DMin students to be rated at the level of Good – Accomplished or Exemplary – Excellent. As the charts above indicate, an average of 91% of DMin students scored at the Good and Exemplary levels.

The Ecumenical DMin program has a separate set of learning outcomes and evaluative processes for educational effectiveness, which are available from the DMin office at McCormick. There was one Ecumenical DMin graduate from McCormick in 2009, one in 2012, one in 2013, two in 2017, 0 in 2018 and 0 in 2019.

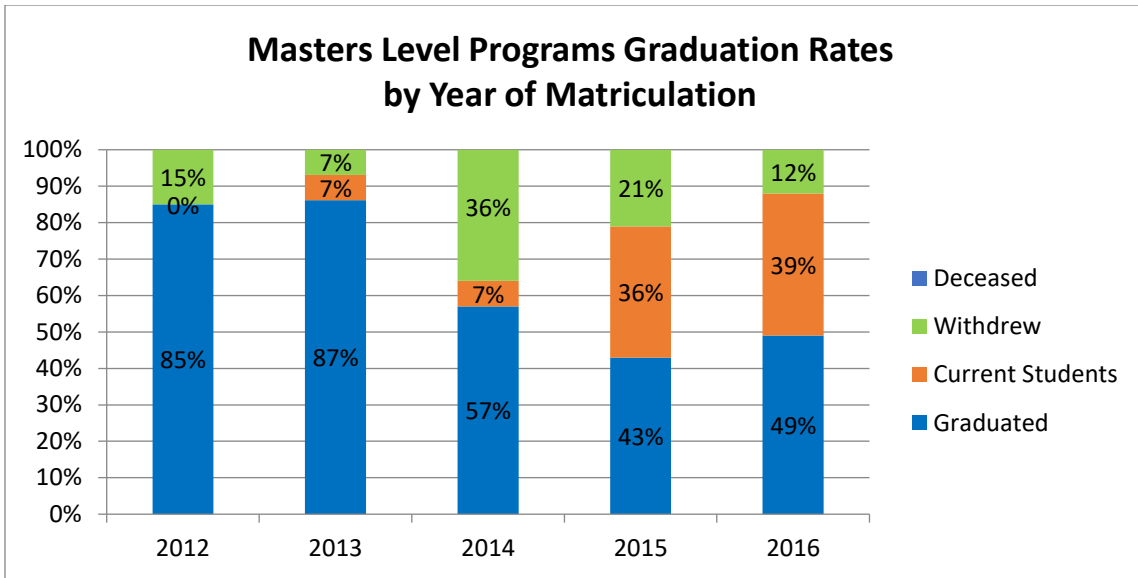
Despite these stellar statistics, an adjusted process of evaluation is needed in order to ensure that we capture actual deficiencies in the degree program. One of these would include adjusting the rating scale to reflect a more expansive range. Additionally, the rating scale may include clearer rubrics for each of the outcomes.

## GRADUATION AND RETENTION RATES

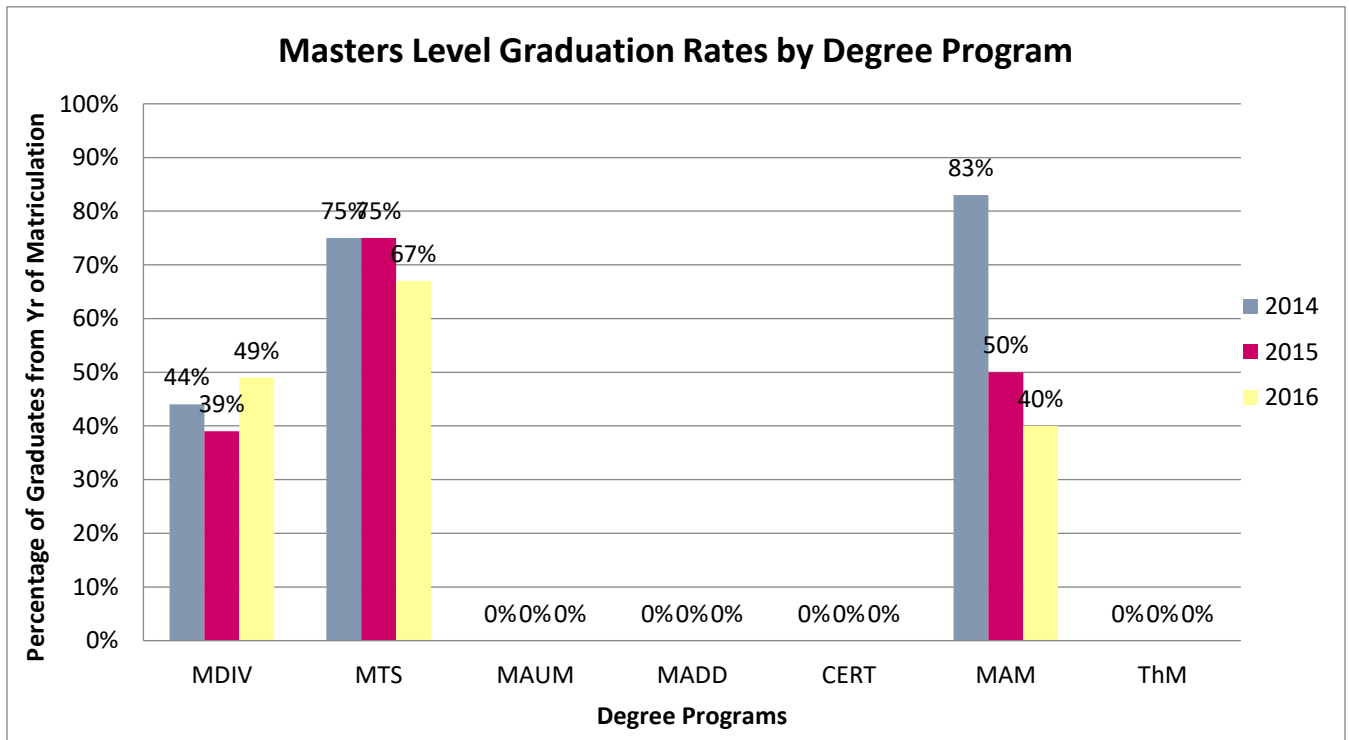
### Masters Level Programs

McCormick assesses the graduation and retention rates of the student body by assessing the current percentage of Masters level students who have since graduated, continue as students or have withdrawn or deceased. Graduation rates from cohorts who matriculated into any Masters level program at the Seminary from 2012-2016 are found on the chart below:





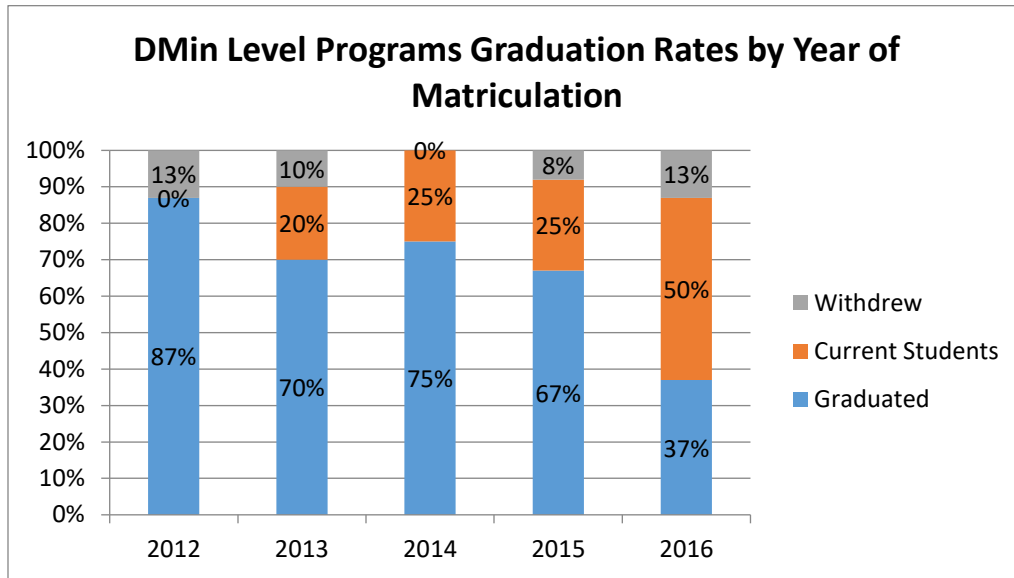
Comparative graduation rates by Masters level degree program (MDiv, MTS, MAM) for cohorts who matriculated from 2014-2016 are indicated in the chart below.



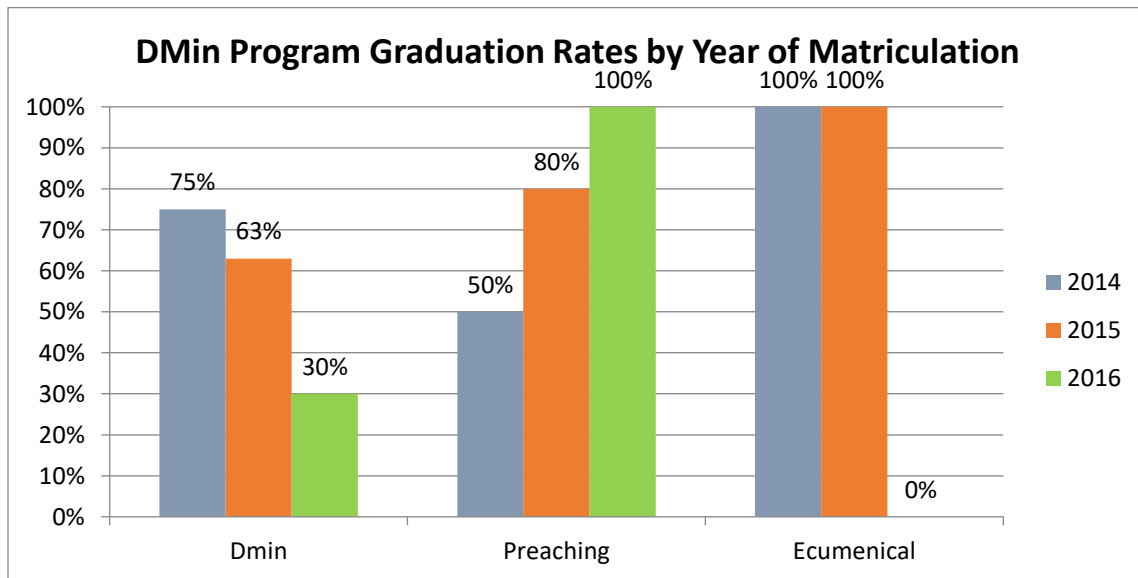
### Doctor of Ministry Programs

McCormick assesses the graduation and retention rates of the student body by assessing the current percentage of DMin students who have since graduated, continue as students or have

withdrawn. Graduation rates for cohorts who matriculated from 2012-2016 are indicated in the chart below.



Comparative Graduation rates for McCormick students in the McCormick DMin program, ACTS DMin in Preaching program and Ecumenical DMin program are represented in the chart below. The data represent findings from cohorts who matriculated from 2014-2016.



## PLACEMENT RATES

Placement rates for 2016 and 2017 graduates from all degree programs are displayed in the chart below. The data indicates that high percentages of the MDiv (75% in 2016) and DMin graduates (89% in 2016) are employed vocationally within a year of graduating from McCormick. In the MTS program, high percentages of graduates pursue further studies (67% in 2016).

