

2018

## From the Publisher

Mark Wilhelm

*ELCA Colleges and Universities*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Wilhelm, Mark (2018) "From the Publisher," *Intersections*: Vol. 2018 : No. 47 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2018/iss47/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Intersections by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

# From the Publisher



Lynn Hunnicutt's guest editorial of this issue reminds us that the concept of vocation points students toward a life that finds room to love and serve others. I celebrate that the schools of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) have reaffirmed and enhanced efforts

to educate for these core educational outcomes that have long been part of Lutheran higher education. Across our network, curricular and co-curricular educational programs encourage students to embrace a concern for the needs and interests of others as well as themselves.

Even so, the culture of Lutheran higher education that established and sustained these educational values and outcomes is at risk. Even though the day is long past when a Lutheran educational culture could be sustained informally by a larger ecclesiastical and ethnic Lutheran culture present on our campuses, NECU schools still depend largely on individuals or cadres of individuals who informally assemble to sustain a culture of Lutheran higher education at each school. Although there is a wide recognition that it is time to institute formal, institutional practices to sustain a valued educational culture, only fledgling and partial steps have been taken. There are some bright spots. For example, a few schools have created solid programs of orientation for new faculty and staff. But, for the most part, although many at NECU schools recognize the value of the Lutheran intellectual

and educational tradition for twenty-first-century higher education, most remain uncertain about how to best articulate that value. Most are hesitant to develop institutionalized practices to maintain a culture that publicly identifies our cherished educational values and student outcomes with Lutheran higher education.

As a first important step toward addressing and repairing this situation, NECU's Board of Directors endorsed a statement on the common calling of its schools. The statement, *Rooted and Open*, affirms that the Lutheran identity of a NECU school is an *institutional* identity, not dependent upon the *individual* religious identities of faculty, administrators, and students of the school. It further affirms that NECU schools share a common calling to implement the educational values and outcomes that are vitally important over the whole course of a student's life.

Best tactics for reclaiming, transmitting, and reinterpreting the 500-year-old Lutheran intellectual and educational tradition are yet to be developed. But it is a culture worth sustaining. It is worth sustaining because it is our best bulwark against forces that would transform NECU schools into mere transmitters of knowledge instead of "transmitters" of education for vocation, for purpose, and for making a contribution to the common good. When an educational culture has frayed, it could be replaced with another that affirms such values, but it is much easier to reclaim, reinterpret, and reinvigorate the received, albeit frayed, culture. Establishing tactics for just that work still face us.

**Mark Wilhelm** is the Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.