Training and Mentoring at Denver Seminary
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**Introduction: A History of Training and Mentoring at Denver Seminary**

The 1980s and 1990s were decades of intense scrutiny for seminary education across the United States. A 1994 study funded by the Murdock Charitable Trust “surveyed about 800 laypeople, pastors, and seminary professors and discovered dramatic disagreements about the abilities that seminary graduates should have in order to minister effectively in churches” (Christianity Today, Oct. 24, 1994: 74). Overall, it was concluded that seminaries did a wonderful job of helping people grow in their biblical and theological abilities; yet, the skills, character, and spiritual maturity needed for effective and faithful ministry received little significant attention. Sadly, stories abound of seminary graduates who performed well academically but headed into ministry with little meaningful ministry experience, unaddressed character flaws, and underdeveloped spiritual lives. Even more tragically, many of these graduates found themselves facing complex and stressful ministry demands without the resources to “live faithfully and lead wisely for a lifetime.”

In 1996, God brought to Denver Seminary Dr. Clyde McDowell as the fifth president. Dr. McDowell had a rich background in pastoral ministry and a vision for a more integrated model of theological education, built on several key convictions.

- Seminary education must address the whole person: “head, hand, and heart”.
- Seminaries alone cannot effectively train people for ministry. Preparation for ministry must take place in close working partnerships with local churches and other ministry organizations.
- Effective preparation for ministry must involve hands-on ministry experience, intentional development of character and spiritual maturity, and personal mentoring relationships with mature, experienced people from the ministry community.
- Some of the vital functions of ministry and mature Christian character cannot be developed in a classroom setting. Growth in these areas demands a personalized, relational, non-formal approach.
- In order for significant work to be done in these areas as part of a seminary education, the work must be valued by both the seminary and the students. Thus, the curriculum must include this non-traditional work and offer appropriate academic credit for it.

In 1997, Dr. Randy MacFarland came to Denver Seminary from the Seminary of the East to take the newly created position of Vice President of Training and Mentoring. A team of mentoring directors was hired to work directly with students to help them engage mentoring relationships and design personalized learning experiences that address significant areas of character and competence related to ministry. Each mentoring director worked with students headed in a variety of directions for their future ministries.
The T/M process has strengthened Denver Seminary’s relationship with the ministry community along the Colorado Front Range. Mentors from church and parachurch settings have become a vital aspect of the seminary experience. Faculty have interacted with mentors whom they would never have met otherwise and who have been part of students’ lives beyond what the classroom typically allows.

Through key relationships with mentors and creative, personalized approaches to learning, God has used the T/M process to profoundly transform hundreds of lives. This is true not only for students but also for countless mentors whose faith and ministry God has refreshed by regular mentoring interaction.
Chapter I: Training and Mentoring at Denver Seminary

Denver Seminary prepares men and women to engage the needs of the world with the redemptive power of the gospel and the life-changing truth of Scripture.

Each year God brings together at Denver Seminary a diverse and fascinating group of people. Students have come from around the corner and around the world. Some have just completed their undergraduate studies, some are in their retirement years, and some are in-between. Representing over forty denominations, and with backgrounds ranging from interior decorating to electrical engineering to music education, students come to prepare for a wide array of ministry roles: counselor, pastor, intercultural mission, parachurch leadership, teaching, student ministry, ministry within the “marketplace,” and on and on. In every ministry context or role, engaging the needs of the world with the redemptive power of the gospel demands spiritual depth, strength of character, and growing capabilities to serve well. None of these traits come easily or naturally.

Denver Seminary is committed to an educational process that intentionally addresses the developmental needs of the whole person. Integrated with a strong academic program and vigorous scholarship, the Training and Mentoring process involves experiences, relationships, and resources to pursue the profile described in Psalm 78:72, which notes that David shepherded Israel “with integrity of heart” and “with skillful hands.”

Purpose, Vision, Values

Well-intentioned and highly educated Christians may still struggle and flounder in ministry. Why? The reasons can be complex and varied, but some recurring causes are identifiable.

First, if our preparation for ministry addresses only one domain of our lives, we run the risk of reducing people and their needs to that one dimension of our expertise, resulting in frustration and ineffectiveness. For example, if our education addresses or values only the cognitive domain, we may tend to see all of life’s challenges as analytical or informational problems. Likewise, if our training values only the pragmatic or “how to” aspects of ministry, we may experience a superficial ministry and a growing disconnection between our theology and our actual practice. Failure to address the affective or “heart” arena places us in peril of drying up in our relationship with God and others under the demands of ministry.

At Denver Seminary, Training and Mentoring (T/M) exists to facilitate holistic growth. Through intentional mentoring relationships in both individual and group settings and learning contracts designed with development of the whole person in mind, you will have the opportunity and resources to grow in vital areas such as Christlike maturity, healthy relationships, passion for ministry, sensitivity to human diversity, personal and ministry identity, and a variety of key ministry skill sets. We encourage you to engage your academic work as a spiritual act of worship as you also interact with questions of personal identity and ministry calling.
Our educational model is designed to prepare you for faithful, sustainable, and effective ministry in whatever ministry role or arena God places before you. This model requires vigorous work in the classical disciplines of Bible, theology, and church history, and in specific professional disciplines. It demands deliberate nurture of our relationship with God and courageous attention to the character traits necessary for weathering the demands of ministry. It calls for engagement at the intersections of belief and unbelief and “getting your hands dirty” in the brokenness of people’s lives. These experiences will help you discover or clarify, then sharpen your gifts for ministry. Yet, formation for faithful, sustainable, effective ministry involves more than merely working in each of these arenas. Each of these areas; content, character, and competence, must be integrated so that they shape each other.

Theological Foundations for Mentoring

The word “Mentoring” captures much of what we see taking place in significant, formative relationships throughout Scripture: Moses with Joshua, Elijah with Elisha, Naomi with Ruth, Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos, Paul with Timothy, and of course, Jesus with the Twelve. The word can be used quite broadly to describe a variety of ways in which we intentionally invest our lives in others for the sake of their growth. Within Christian contexts, “mentoring” encompasses biblical functions such as discipling, nurturing, teaching, training, and equipping. The Apostle Paul places these expressions of mentoring at the heart of ministry in 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-8 and 2 Timothy 2:2.

“Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.” 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-8 (TNIV)

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 Timothy 2:2 (TNIV)

In The Mentor’s Guide (p. xviii) Lois J. Zachary states that mentoring is a powerful growth experience, a process of engagement, and a reflective practice which focuses on the learners, the learning process, and the learning.

Here at Denver Seminary, we consider mentoring to be a relational process by which a group of people help facilitate the development of another person toward spiritual maturity and effective ministry.

Since mentoring has become such a familiar word in all kinds of settings, both secular and faith-based, we must look at mentoring theologically and ask, “What is unique about mentoring for Christians?” James M. Houston, in The Mentored Life, speaks of mentoring as the formation of persons (not merely individuals) in community so that our lives and relationships reflect our Triune God (pp. 15-22). Mentoring facilitates personal growth with relational implications; not merely growth for the sake of fulfilling individual potential or achievement. For Christians, mentoring must intentionally help people reflect the image of God in all aspects of their lives. Whatever the focus of
a mentoring relationship (character, skill, career choices, etc.), the process must be shaped by the ultimate objective of a life lived more fully for God and others.

As creatures made in God’s image, each person’s identity is relationally oriented. Self-discovery is impossible through private introspection alone. The concept of holiness (being “sanctified” or “set apart”) has relational implications as we see in the Old Testament when certain ordinary objects were set apart for special service. Even our Lord Jesus Christ sanctified himself for our sake (John 17:19).

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the definitive, real-life model of what God intended for us to be in relationship with Himself and with others (Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4). The human person is formed in community and for the sake of community so that all come to know and love God fully and others as themselves. Transformation into the image of Christ is the restoration of our own humanity in God’s image. This takes place through the influence of others – relationships intentionally aimed at fostering this type of godliness in each of us. This is mentoring at its theological and practical best.

As Houston suggests, the doctrine of the Trinity provides our theological framework for mentoring as a form of Christian ministry. God the Father calls us to a journey of knowing and delighting in Him. God the Son reconciles us to God and, through the Spirit, walks with us through the delights, detours, and dangers of the path, never leaving or forsaking us, and showing us what it means to reflect God’s glory in the world. God uses mentoring to help unfold this drama in other’s lives. What a privilege it is to be part of that eternal story!

**Theological Foundations for Personal Development**

God has created us to learn and grow. Even in creation we find strong hints that God intended for us to engage the world in ways that require constant learning (Gen. 1 and 2). With the tragic reality of sin we face additional barriers, complex and overwhelming, to the growth process. Living as the people God intended now demands the transformation of our character at the very deepest level. Sin has affected each of us at every level of our lives. Throughout our lives we depend on God’s transforming grace to reshape us into people who can be fully alive to Himself and to others. Yet, that is a constant and lifelong struggle against forces we cannot combat alone. Other people are a primary instrument of God’s grace for our growth.

Whatever label we use to describe the role of others in our growth (e.g. “mentoring”), we never outgrow the need for those who will step into our lives for the sake of pulling us further along. Whatever your starting point, background, gifts, and calling, mentoring can be an integral component of your growth as a person with only the form and focus of mentoring changing over time. Throughout our lives we all need mentors who challenge, encourage, listen, provide feedback, believe in us, and help us navigate the complex challenges we face with each stage of life and ministry. Each of us needs intentional relationship with others who are committed to our growth in Christlikeness and our pursuit of God’s call.
A mentoring relationship provides structure and focus that are necessary in order to keep us moving forward. Theologically, this connects with the fact that God is and always has been about building; making us more than we are, building His Kingdom, taking us further toward the image of Christ. Yet, structure must be seasoned by a spirit of serendipity or openness to the unexpected so that we can sense God’s gracious involvement in our growth process. Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit is essential. The Spirit of God knows where we really need to go and how best to get us there. The Spirit often works in surprising ways that we could never predict or structure. Purposeful mentoring relationships, then, provide the occasion for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and for us to be attentive/responsive to that work. Mentoring relationships are catalysts that integrate content, character, and competence, activating them in a life-giving combination so that increasingly, every facet of our lives can express God’s glory!
Chapter II: Your Mentor Team

Variety of perspective helps us understand ourselves and our experiences. Meaningful input from a variety of God’s people helps to clarify, confirm, and focus our ministry giftedness in pursuit of God’s call. A community context is vital. Mentoring is most fruitful when it involves multiple, interrelated relationships. Therefore, each student has a “mentor team.” Each mentor team consists of mentors both from within the seminary community and external to the seminary community.

Upon beginning the T/M process (T/M501ff), you will work with a mentor team comprised of the following mentors.

Who Are You Mentors at Denver Seminary?

1. Mentoring Directors

Your Mentoring Director is the faculty member who oversees your T/M experience. Your Mentoring Director is available to come alongside you in discerning God’s activity in your life, then help you think personally and creatively about the design of your learning contracts and the selection of your external mentors (see 3-5 below). Your Mentoring Director then reviews, approves, and gives the final evaluation for your learning contracts. He or she will meet with you and the other members of your mentor team every other semester for a midstream reflection on your experience, and is available to help you troubleshoot or otherwise keep your mentoring process moving in a fruitful direction. Your Mentoring Director will be assigned to you by the T/M department, as part of the T/M500 course.

Your Mentoring Director will serve as the point person for you and all members of your mentoring team. He or she will assist you in integrating content, character, and competence as you prepare for engagement with the world through your own ministry gifting and calling.
Our Mentoring Directors are:

**Don Payne**

Dr. Payne serves as Associate Dean with overall responsibility for the training and mentoring program. Don previously served as a church planter in Tennessee and then as associate pastor of adult ministries at Southern Gables Evangelical Free Church in Littleton, CO. He graduated from Tennessee Temple University (BA), Denver Seminary (MDiv), and the University of Manchester, England (PhD). Don is also Assistant Professor of Theology and Ministry and teaches in the theology department.

Email: don.payne@denverseminary.edu
Phone: 303-762-6943

**Susan Arnold**

Prof. Arnold serves as our Mentored Community Developer in the T/M office, connecting external mentors, and overseeing our formation groups. Susan has served in worship ministry in churches around the Denver metro area and including Boulder. She is an experienced worship leader, Bible teacher, and mentor. She is currently working toward her D.Min. in the Leadership in Community Spiritual Formation program at Denver Seminary.

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**Nancy Buschart**

Prof. Buschart is an experienced teacher, spiritual director, and retreat speaker. She founded and leads Vine, Vision, and Voice, a unique ministry of Christian formation that incorporates Scripture, community, and creativity. Nancy also serves as a corporate chaplain for Marketplace Ministries, Inc. She graduated from Denver Seminary (MA).

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**Laura Flanders**

Prof. Flanders served in pastoral ministry with her husband for twenty-one years, focusing on the areas of pastoral care and spiritual formation. She spent seven years managing a leadership development program for a national industry organization and has also worked as a consultant/contract employee for several businesses in the Denver area. Laura graduated from Seattle Pacific University (BA) and Denver Seminary (MA).

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Greg Slate
Prof. Slate has worked for ten years as a hospital chaplain in Alabama, Colorado, and Texas, and started two new pastoral care programs in hospitals during this time. He completed a residency in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Baptist Health Systems in San Antonio, TX. Greg graduated from Samford University (BA) and Denver Seminary (MA).
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Brad Widstrom
Dr. Widstrom has been a member of the faculty since 1999 as associate professor of youth and family ministries. He has served as a youth pastor in New Jersey and Washington.
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Bob Woolfolk
Prof. Woolfolk leads the African American Initiative here at Denver Seminary and has a broad range of experience in urban ministry. He has effectively forged partnerships between urban and suburban ministries. Pastor Woolfolk has served as pastor of Agape Christian Church in Denver for over thirty years and is involved with numerous other ministry organizations. Bob graduated from Denver Seminary (MA).
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2. Formation Group Mentor

Your Formation Group Mentor will facilitate a group experience in which you will participate for three consecutive semesters. This group consists of a maximum of 10 students and provides an important group context for support and processing your T/M experiences. When you begin the T/M process by registering for T/M501 (after completing T/M500), part of that registration process is choosing a formation group that meets at a particular day/time slot.

3. External Mentors

External mentors are those mentors who walk alongside you as you work through your learning contracts and experience seminary life. Depending on your degree program, you will have either one or two external mentors (refer to the program specific information found later in this document). In the M.Div. and MA professional degree programs, two mentors are required in order to provide a breadth of input related to both ministry skill development and personal character formation. If you are in one of these degree programs, look for at least one mentor who has significant experience in an area of ministry that fits your interests and/or sense of ministry calling.

Important Points to Remember:

- The expectation for meeting with your external mentor(s) is one hour per week during the semester. You should begin meeting with them the first week of each semester you are enrolled in T/M501 and beyond. You are not required to meet with them during breaks or over the summer.

- You are required to meet with your external mentor(s) for a total of 15 hours over the course of each semester. If you have two external mentors, it is generally recommended that you meet with them together if at all possible. If this is impossible, you may alternate weeks with them, still for a total of 15 hours over the semester. Any other arrangements for meeting with your external mentor(s) must be discussed with and approved by your mentoring director.

- The seminary does not assign external mentors or provide mentor matching. You are responsible to locate and secure your own external mentors. If you are new to the area or for other reasons do not have a relational network in which mentors can be found, make it a priority to settle into a local church home. Your local congregation is normally the best source for mentor relationships. Speak with a member of the pastoral staff or other church leaders for recommendations about possible mentors. If you have not been able to connect with prospective mentors through a local congregation or other contacts, your Mentoring
Director may be able to provide some networking assistance. See “Finding an External Mentor” below.

- The selection of your mentors is critical to the quality of your mentoring experience. Look and pray for mentors who can draw you further along in key areas of your calling, your ministry skill, and your spiritual maturity.

- You should plan to stay with the same mentor(s) throughout your Training and Mentoring experience (three consecutive semesters for MA students, five consecutive semesters for MDiv students). Continuity and growth in relationship is essential for the growth you want in your life and ministry. Any changes in your mentor team must be discussed with and approved by your Mentoring Director.

If you are in the M.Div. or an MA Professional degree program:

- You will need a ministry context in which to implement skill-related learning contracts (see below). You are encouraged to seek opportunities for ministry and learning within ministry contexts similar to what they envision after seminary. Your Mentoring Director is a resource person who can provide guidance and resources for contextualizing your learning contracts for specific ministry contexts.

- In some circumstances it may be advantageous to periodically switch one of your mentors depending on the ministry skill development focus of each semester’s learning contract. However, at least one of your mentors should stay with you throughout the process.

The Importance of Mentors

Mentoring may take many forms and have a variety of purposes, depending on our stage in life and the growth challenges we face. Yet, we never outgrow the need for mentoring. In their book, *The Mentor Handbook*, Robert and Richard Clinton clarify some of the unique mentoring needs that we have in different seasons of our lives. While preparation for ministry is the context for mentoring at Denver Seminary, seminary students come from all age groups, walks of life, and backgrounds, to follow God’s call to ministry. What each of us needs in order to follow that call varies as much as our fingerprints, but is always connected to a common core: a relationship with God that will endure the unique demands of ministry, character that is worthy of the Gospel, and the honing of ministry gifts for serving others well. No one ever outgrows the need for mentoring.

Effective mentoring demands four key traits in mentors: intentionality, attentive discernment, vision, and responsiveness (Don J. Payne, “Mentoring: Cutting to the Chase,” in Denver Seminary Magazine [Spring 2006], 5-7). Intentionality models our God who is ever seeking to transform us. Attentive discernment involves active listening, not only to what a person says, but also to a person’s life and how God seems to be moving in that life. Vision clarifies and maintains perspective (one of the first things to go when we are under pressure!). Responsiveness manifests a mentor’s
commitment to truly see a person; taking a person seriously enough to really get to know him or her, to take risks, to challenge, and to bless.

While many mentoring relationships are one-on-one, a community context is vital. Mentoring is fruitful when it involves multiple, interrelated relationships. We are committed to mentoring in community and for community, as embodied in our mentor teams, our formation groups, and the overarching culture of mentoring that we try to nurture at Denver Seminary. Mentors have their own unique styles, strengths, and priorities. Each member of your mentoring team contributes something special and valuable to your preparation for the challenges and demands of ministry.

Mentors help us learn from our experiences. The type of knowledge gained from mentoring depends on practice, reflection, and modeling. M.I.T. social scientist Donald A. Schon contends in *The Reflective Practitioner* that we must learn to reflect on what we do in order to really learn from it. “[A]s a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he [or she] is doing” (61). Mentors can facilitate such reflection on practice by asking fresh questions and suggesting new perspectives.

Schon and other scholars emphasize that some of life’s most important, truly human activities have an inherently artistic character. That is, they defy reduction to mere technique. The journey toward Christlikeness and preparation for ministry are not exact sciences! Hence, we need mentors who will help us find our way in faithfulness, neither inventing our own ways from scratch nor thoughtlessly inheriting someone else’s methods as a manuscript for our own growth.

As you prayerfully look for a mentor, honest, informed self-reflection will help you discern who will be well suited to accompany you on this part of your journey. It is important to remember that mentoring is a two-way relationship. Both mentor and mentoree will benefit most by coming to the relationship well prepared and ready to learn and grow. As you prepare for your mentoring relationships, reflect on the traits of a healthy, growing mentoree:

**Your Role as a “Mentee”**

The most effective mentoring relationships among adults are “mentee-driven, but mentor-informed”. This means that the mentee should take initiative and manage the relationship. Here are some important factors to reflect upon and cultivate as you engage your Denver Seminary mentoring relationships.

*Clear Expectations*

- Have I clearly identified what I need from a mentoring relationship? What do I need?
- Can I respect a mentor’s boundaries?
Teachability

- Am I open to criticism, challenge, and accountability? Am I eager to learn and humble in spirit?
- Am I willing to seriously consider and make good use of my mentor’s feedback?

Reliability

- Am I willing to take this relationship seriously and invest in it conscientiously?
- Am I willing to follow-through with assignments and commitments in my mentoring relationship?

Initiative

- Am I willing to be proactive and take initiative in my mentoring relationship, for example, by developing discussion questions that will lead to growth and finding creative ways to learn what I need to learn?
- Am I willing to take responsibility for finding, scheduling, and protecting the time I need with my mentors?

Self-awareness

- Am I aware of and willing to address potential barriers that I bring to a mentoring relationship?
- Am I willing to engage in candid, ongoing self-assessment and respond to it?

Courtesy

- Am I prepared to let my mentor(s) know if I must be late or miss a scheduled time together?
- Am I prepared to show appropriate gratitude for my mentors’ time/investment and seek ways to build into his or her life as well?

Finding an External Mentor

One important aspect of becoming a self-directed, lifelong learner is the ability to identify the kind of mentors we need in our lives and to be able to initiate mentoring relationships with them. The importance of a good mentoring match cannot be overstated. Your choice of mentors will profoundly affect your experience in the Training and Mentoring process. We encourage you to begin praying now, seeking God’s wisdom and guidance for the process even before it formally begins. This preparation will help you navigate the process more productively.

You may already have local mentoring relationships that can be built upon and formalized for the Training and Mentoring process. Likewise, you may already have a local relational network in which you can find your mentors. The responsibility remains with you to initiate contact with a prospective mentor and explore together the possibility of mentoring relationship.
The basic mentor qualifications and specific mentor responsibilities are listed in the next section. If you would like to communicate this information to a prospective mentor in the form of a brochure, they are available for this purpose in .pdf format, on the T/M500 Moodle site.

**Initiating a Mentoring Relationship**

It can feel awkward to ask someone to be your mentor; but keep in mind that asking someone to be a mentor honors that person. Most people will be blessed even by your request. Here are some tips for navigating that conversation in a low-pressure manner.

First, develop a clear picture of the type of mentor you need. Reflect on the following questions.

- In light of God’s call on my life (as best I presently understand it) what are some of the most important ministry skills that I need to develop or sharpen?
- What particular spiritual hungers has God been cultivating in me recently? What areas of my character or my relationship with God are important for me to address while I’m in seminary?

As you think about these questions, you might be tempted to say, “everything!” However, distill your answer to a few key points. Your selection may grow out of areas where you are aware of repeated frustration or areas you know are likely to be tested by a certain ministry role or context. Some follow-up questions are:

- What style of mentoring is most helpful to me? Though mentoring styles overlap, some well-known styles are coach, cheerleader, spiritual director, consultant, teacher, sponsor, etc. (see *Connecting*, by Stanley and Clinton for explanations of these styles).
- In what areas of my life do I need to be challenged beyond my comfort zone?

Second, identify a person who is further along the journey than yourself in at least some key areas of life and ministry. No mentor will be perfect or able to interact meaningfully about every subject you want to discuss. However, a good mentor will be a person who can build a trusting relationship with you and walk alongside you as you seek to grow. Each mentor on your mentoring team can make a unique contribution.

**Traits of a Healthy, Engaging Mentor**

*Compatibility*

Is this person someone to whom I feel I can relate on a personal level?

*Integrity*

Is this person known for propriety, honesty, trustworthiness and forthrightness?
Expertise
Is this person capable of pulling me further ahead in strategic areas of my life?

Availability
Is this person able to devote the necessary time and energy to be a mentor?

Motivation
Does this person have a vision for the power of mentoring?

Growth
Is this person still challenged, hungry and growing in his or her personal life and ministry?

Vulnerability
Is this person willing to share her or his own struggles and questions?

Note: For the purposes of the Training and Mentoring experience, it is not permitted for a mentor to be another current Denver Seminary student, a spouse, or a relative. Mentors must also be local.

Next, ask the person for the opportunity to discuss the possibility of a mentoring relationship. You might consider inviting the person out for coffee or a meal. Arrange a friendly, relational setting. State that you have seen something in their life that you would like to draw from or that they have been recommended to you as someone who may be a good mentor. Clarify also that you simply want to mutually consider the possibility of a mentoring relationship by discussing what you would need and what they might have to offer. Emphasize that at this point everyone is free to say “No” for whatever reason, no questions asked.

When you meet, discuss the following issues:

• Your needs and goals (your answers to the first step above).
• The seminary’s expectations of mentors (see below).
• What you would like to contribute to a mentoring relationship.
• What the prospective mentor may have to offer in a mentoring relationship.
• Mutual assumptions and expectations about mentoring.

Unless you are both comfortable proceeding at that time, leave time for both of you to prayerfully consider a mentoring relationship.

Arrange either for a follow-up conversation, if necessary, or for an appropriate date to make a decision. You should be the one to initiate the next contact, whether for more conversation or for a decision.

Always follow-up on the conversation, whatever your decision.
• If you decide not to pursue a mentoring relationship with this individual, explain only what you need to explain, but be honest and straightforward. You might say something like, “I don’t sense a good fit for the particular kind of mentoring relationship I need, but I would still value the opportunity to call on you for input from time to time. I really appreciate you taking the time to discuss this with me.”

• If you wish to pursue the mentoring relationship, reiterate in the request that you want them to feel free to decline.

Mentors must be in place and ready to begin meeting with you the first week of classes during the semester you start the Training and Mentoring process (T/M501). You should inform your mentors that all mentors are required to participate in a mentor orientation. Information about Mentor Orientation is available at the Denver Seminary website at [http://www.denverseminary.edu/mentors/mentor-orientation](http://www.denverseminary.edu/mentors/mentor-orientation)

If a mentor has previously attended one of these modules it is not necessary to attend again.

**Beginning the Mentoring Relationship**

When a mentoring relationship begins, spend adequate time laying a solid relational foundation.

• Get to know each other.

• Revisit the issue of expectations and assumptions.

• Discuss the issue of trust and confidentiality. What will be the building blocks of trust in your relationship? What will you both do to nurture and preserve it? What will be your boundaries of confidentiality?

• Remember to stay flexible. Mentoring relationships are not static. They must be allowed to grow and change.

• Commit to pray for each other.

Note: If you are in a paid ministry position, one of your mentors may also be your supervisor. This can present tensions that you and your mentor should address early in the relationship. Obviously, there may be topics or feelings that you do not feel completely free to share with your supervisor. It would be helpful to acknowledge those limitations with your supervisor/mentor so that you both bring appropriate expectations to the relationship and you feel free to build trust within those boundaries.

**Receiving Feedback**

One essential and valuable component of a mentoring relationship is feedback. For some, feedback can be perceived as negative or threatening unless it is affirming. The tendency to resist feedback may come from experiences of abuse, previous feedback that was unfair or unnecessarily harsh, or
personal insecurities and over-sensitivity. Additionally, feedback is often equated with judgment and condemnation.

Healthy, useful feedback is always given in a caring and sensitive manner, even when it is critical. A teachable spirit makes all the difference, regardless of age and previous experience. Openness to feedback will also affect how well you can internalize positive feedback! While it may look humble to resist affirmation or feel awkward to accept positive feedback, gracefully receiving affirmative feedback is an important component to our growth. William T. Pyle and Mary Alice Seals summarize well the importance of feedback, especially if it involves evaluation.

Many of us have a picture of who we are. This picture is often multifaceted: the person we think we are, the person we want people to think we are, and the person people think we are based on their impressions or experiences with us. One of the goals of supervision [mentoring] is to check our perception of who we think we are with other persons’ perceptions. This requires that we have a good picture of who we are as individuals, including awareness of the good, the bad, and the ugly about ourselves. This does not mean berating ourselves for our weaknesses. It does mean, however, acknowledging the not-so-pretty side of ourselves and working to improve these areas, as well as learning to accept and acknowledge the good side of ourselves – our gifts and abilities. Recognizing the events that have shaped you both negatively and positively is a part of self-awareness which is essential for self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a part of being a proactive person – taking charge of, and responsibility for, your life rather than letting others do the acting. Self-evaluation puts you at the helm of the learning experience and can increase your motivation for benefiting from the supervisory [mentoring] experience. This self-motivation can be an asset throughout your years of ministry (Experiencing Ministry Supervision, 128).

Each semester your mentors will be asked to give you a written feedback based on their observations of your engagement with the mentoring process. This feedback is then passed along to your Mentoring Director who will provide an overall evaluation for the semester. In order to make the most of your mentoring relationships and the learning opportunities they afford, keep in mind the importance of feedback for discerning your areas of giftedness and calling, for understanding how you come across to people, and for learning how to improve your approach to ministry.

The growth that God wants all of us to experience most often involves the “mirroring” effect of others. We encourage you to intentionally cultivate receptivity to evaluative feedback while seeking God’s healing for the previous experiences that might inhibit your ability to receive it.

The Mentor Team Meeting

The first semester in the T/M sequence (T/M 501 and 502) and alternating semesters thereafter, you will be responsible to schedule one session (no longer than one hour in length) in which your entire mentor team comes together: yourself, external mentor(s), formation group mentor, and mentoring director.
The mentor team meeting provides an important occasion for relationships to be built between the various members of the mentor team and mid-stream reflections on your mentoring process. New challenges and affirmations can be offered. Learning is expanded and reinforced. Encouragement and fresh perspectives facilitate the momentum and focus of the mentoring experience.

The purposes of this meeting are;

(1) to briefly review your progress on learning contracts
(2) to gain feedback from mentors on your growth and challenges
(3) to gain feedback from you and your mentors on the health and direction of the mentoring relationship
(4) to engage in theological reflection on your learning experiences during the semester
(5) to consider next steps or new directions for growth
(6) to recognize and celebrate God’s work
(7) to pray for you and your mentor team

This meeting replaces a normal weekly mentor meeting and nurtures the vital partnership between the seminary and the church in ministry training.

You should take the initiative to schedule this session by first consulting the schedules of formation group mentor and Mentoring Director, many of whom allocate certain blocks of time for these meetings.

Since the scheduling process can be challenging, you should begin coordinating their mentor’s schedules as early as possible in the semester. Time spent arranging this meeting may be counted toward the time required for one of the learning contracts.

The T/M section of MyDenSem on the seminary website will specify the deadlines for scheduling and conducting the mentor team meeting. Failure to schedule and conduct the mentor team meeting by the posted dates will result in grade deductions or an “unsatisfactory” grade for your learning contract. Your Mentoring Director will lead the meeting.

To help you prepare for the Mentor Team Meeting, here are some discussion questions that may be asked.

For the Student:

• How are your learning contracts coming along?
• Are your strategies on pace?
• Are your strategies contributing to your goal as you hoped?
• Have you sensed the need to make any adjustments?
• What frustrations have you had so far?
• How well is your mentoring relationship contributing to your learning goals?
• What have you learned about yourself as a mentoree?
• What are the unique contributions each mentor has made to your life so far?

For the Mentor(s):
• What do you see in the student so far that needs to be affirmed and called forward?
• What do you see so far in the student to which he or she will need to give some extra attention?
• How would you describe the growth phase/maturity phase the student is in right now?
• What have you learned about yourself as a mentor?

For the Mentor(s) and Student:
• Describe your mentoring relationship(s).
• Do you get enough time together for in-depth conversations?
• Would you describe your relationship as open and authentic?
• What are some of the more significant topics you have discussed?
• What might strengthen the relationship?
• How clear is everybody about roles and expectations?
• Is healthy accountability functioning in the relationship?
• How have you cultivated trust and accountability?
• What further resource or training needs have you become aware of while in this mentoring relationship?
• How has your mentoring relationship changed over time? How would you describe the phase it is in right now?
• Where has your mentoring relationship been tested so far?
• (If last meeting) How do you plan to bring closure or transition to your mentoring relationship?

For Theological Reflection
• Discuss the most challenging, troubling or otherwise significant aspect of your ministry experience during this term.
• What Scripture texts seem to be most relevant to this situation?
• What were the critical issues, questions or decisions for you in this situation?
• What difference would you expect God to make in a situation like this?
• Are there new theological questions or challenges that arise for you because of this experience?
• How has God surprised you? Why?
• Where has this challenged your understanding of who God is, how He works, what difference salvation makes, etc?
• How is your own sense of giftedness and calling being affirmed or challenged by this situation?
• What would you do differently (if anything) next time and why?
Chapter III: Learning Contracts

Learning contracts constitute the formal means of credit for the T/M experience. Each learning contract is a personalized growth plan in which you identify an important area of growth that you wish to pursue over the fifteen weeks of a semester. Each learning contract is a one-credit hour experience within your curriculum.

A learning contract utilizes key principles of adult learning such as giving ownership of and responsibility for the learning process, connecting the learning process with personal needs and motivations. In the context of T/M, learning contracts function as the means of pursuing essential areas of growth that cannot be fostered best in a traditional classroom with a standardized syllabus (e.g., character and ministry skill). Thus, learning contracts represent a different way of learning than what many have experienced in previous educational settings. These differences can be energizing and creative, but can also be challenging.

In these seminary experiences your learning process will depend heavily on your own honest and clear self-assessment. The assessment process in T/M500 as well as other assessment experiences from your past can provide valuable perspective for selecting the focus for each learning contract. This reflective process may feel confusing or overwhelming, at least at first, because most traditional educational processes begin with someone else’s assumptions about what we know and what we need to learn. The personalized nature of learning contracts allows this type of learning experience to go further and be more effective than many standardized processes, but it can also be more demanding.

Additionally, learning contracts demand more self-discipline than conventional educational processes. The process must be managed without as many externally imposed deadlines and checkpoints (though there are still some; just not as many). The pressure of other responsibilities and deadlines can easily squeeze the responsibilities of learning contracts out of the picture until it’s too late! However, this type of learning involves the same type of discipline that most of us are called to have in ministry vocations where we often have more freedom and flexibility with our schedules, fewer people monitoring us, and where we must be disciplined stewards of our lives.

One of the greatest benefits of a learning contract approach is that it teaches transferable or portable learning skills that we can adapt and use long beyond our formal education. In a learning contract process you can gain new levels of aptitude and fresh understanding of your own life, challenges, strengths and gifts.

Each learning contract has a syllabus, contract template, and time-chart to provide the structure for the experience. Deadlines and other structural pieces must be taken seriously since the learning contracts are evaluated and must be completed satisfactorily in order to complete your degree. The structural pieces are also important in order for Denver Seminary to grant graduate-level credit for nontraditional learning processes.
As a credit-based educational experience, each learning contract requires sixty (60) hours of documented work, spread over the course of a semester. These sixty hours include all administrative work you do to develop, implement, and reflect on the overall mentoring experience for the semester. You must track and report your hours on the provided time chart for each learning contract.

There are two types of learning contracts in the Denver Seminary T/M process: character and skill. Students in every degree program must complete learning contracts in the character category. Character contracts are designated by the following course numbers: T/M501, 601, 611, 701, and 711. Character contracts focus on a specific area of personal growth that is important to you. A character trait must be defined both qualitatively (e.g., endurance, patience, joy, kindness, or another “fruit of the Spirit”) and specifically (e.g., kindness when I am misunderstood or insulted). Understood this way, character traits go beyond mere tasks or disciplines such as “I need to pray more.” They also push beyond slippery religious language that is well intended but does not really say much, such as “I want to feel closer to God.” The focus of a character learning contract must get underneath the level of symptoms and look at the causes or transferable character issues that we face in our relationship with God, others, and ourselves. In your degree program you will complete one character learning contract each semester you are in the T/M process.

In some degree programs (M.Div. and the MA Professional programs), students also complete a ministry skill learning contract during each semester of the T/M process. Ministry skill learning contracts identify a strategic ministry skill that you wish to develop or sharpen in light of your anticipated ministry role, passion, or context. Ministry skills are not merely ministry projects but must be defined in terms of a transferable skill. For example, “leading a high school retreat” or “starting a small group” are not ministry skills, but tasks. On the other hand, “growing in my organizational ability” might be a ministry skill that will help me lead a high school retreat. “Growing in my ability to envision and launch new ministries” may be a good skill that I can practice by starting a small group. If you will be completing ministry skill learning contracts, think in terms of ministry skill sets that are both specific and useful in a variety of ministry tasks or settings.

If you are in a degree program that requires ministry skill contracts, each of these contracts must be taken with the appropriate character contract (e.g., 501 with 502, 601 with 602, 611 with 612).

The learning contract templates will guide you through the process of writing the contract, but here are some tips and perspectives for approaching the various aspects of the contracts.

**Identifying a Growth Need**

A growth need should of personal importance to you. This may be something that the Spirit of God has been bringing to your attention repeatedly. It may be based on feedback from others who know you well. Don’t get caught in the trap of confusing spiritual disciplines for growth needs. Spiritual disciplines are only tools (what we call “strategies”). So, “praying more” or “memorizing Scripture” are not growth needs, even though they may be valuable exercises.
Identify growth needs that will involve moving beyond what you already know or have done. A true growth need will involve some fresh insight, deeper exploration, and perhaps even some creative approaches. It will demand that you allow God to stretch you beyond the familiar, the comfortable, and the predictable.

Identify a growth need that is of sufficient value to you so that you can stay motivated to pursue it even when it requires a lot of self-discipline, and leads you to uncomfortable places where you must take risks and trust God in new ways. The growth need may be the most difficult, but also the most important aspect of the learning contract experience. Don’t think about strategies, disciplines, or tasks until you have clearly and qualitatively articulated your growth need and an appropriate goal.

**Strategies**

The strategies are the practices and resources that you intentionally engage in order to pursue the goal you identify in the area of your stated growth need. You will have “knowledge” strategies that provide information or perspective for your pursuit of the goal. You will have “hand” strategies in which you actively practice new ways of being or serving, then reflect on what you do. You will have “relationship” strategies in which you keep others informed of your process and seek their support and input.

Strategies must be documentable, balanced, and aligned clearly with your stated growth need and goal. You should plan to spread your strategies out over the semester rather than “cramming” time. Give yourself time to reflect on what you do, to integrate that learning with your life and your other experiences, and to respond to God in fresh ways.

**Documentation**

The documentation for learning contracts takes several forms. First, you will keep a time chart that reports on a weekly basis where you allocated your time with various T/M activities: strategies, time with mentors and formation group, administration of the process, etc. This chart must be kept current as you go, then submitted at the end of the semester.

Second, each strategy that you identify in your learning contract(s) must have an appropriate means of documentation or reflection. A lot of variety is permitted here because not everyone processes their experiences in the same manner. For some people and some strategies, journaling or blogging will be a useful way of documenting or reflecting. Others may want to engage their aesthetic capabilities and write songs, stories, or poems. Your mentoring director can provide some other ideas for good ways of documenting and reflecting on strategies, if you need them.

Third, keep a theological reflection log in which you have at least eight entries during the semester. This will also be submitted at the end of the semester. These reflections are not the same as your journal entries. “Theological reflection” refers to the process of identifying biblical passages or theological doctrines that are relevant to your learning contract experiences, then exploring the connections between these texts or themes and your experiences. These reflections cultivate an
important habit of thinking theologically about everything in our lives. Each entry in your theological reflection log should explore the relationship, relevance, or impact of Scripture and/or theology on your life and practice of ministry.

Fourth, at the end of the semester you will write a three to five page “integrative summary” that reports on and integrates your overall learning contract experience for the semester. In the integrative summary you will describe what you actually did, any surprises that God brought your way, and what you learned from it all. This is one of the most important exercises for getting the most from your T/M experience, that is, having to distill and unpack your experience in writing.

**Evaluation**

Each learning contract will involve brief, written feedback from your formation group mentor and external mentor(s). These feedback forms can be found on MyDenSem and should be given to your mentors near the end of the semester. They should be returned to you for submission to your mentoring director with your integrative summary, theological reflection log, and time chart for each learning contract.

Your mentoring director will read your material and make a final evaluation of your learning contract(s) for the semester. A grade will be assigned on the basis of “E” (exceptional), “S” (satisfactory), “M” (marginal), or “U” (unsatisfactory). These grades do not affect your GPA, but do become part of your permanent academic record.

Exceptional, Satisfactory, and Marginal are passing grades, though Marginal is a provisionally (or barely) passing grade. *Any second Marginal received in a subsequent semester is automatically calculated as an Unsatisfactory, resulting in the requirement that the second Marginal contract be repeated, including re-registration and payment for the additional credit hour(s).*

It is important to remember that these grades are not based on an evaluation of your character or skill level. They are based solely on your engagement and management of the T/M process as a self-directed learner.
Chapter IV: Formation Groups

A Formation Group is a mandatory group of up to ten seminary students (in some cases, along with their spouses) that meets together for a total of fifteen hours per semester, for three consecutive semesters.

The formation group is a component of each character learning contract. Time spent in this group counts toward the 60 hour requirement for a character learning contract.

It is vital that you plan to begin the T/M experience only when you know you can complete three consecutive semesters (not including January or summer terms).

When you register for T/M501, you will choose the section that suits your schedule and stay with that group for a second and third semester.

Why Formation Groups?

Seminary formation groups have distinct and strategic purposes related to formation for ministry. Growth in understanding God, others, self, and ministry that can only take place in community and directly affects both how we minister to others and our long term spiritual health. The purposes of a seminary education can only be fulfilled well if you are engaged in intentional growth experiences with others who share the unique struggles and opportunities of that journey.

T/M formation groups have the following objectives:

Integration and Theological Reflection

Your seminary education should help your theology “come alive” and have functional significance in your life and ministry. This takes place as you learn to process life and ministry through biblical and theological lenses. It is much easier to learn biblical and theological information than to internalize God’s revelation as the value system that shapes one’s decision-making instincts. It is all too easy to take our cues from other sources that we have merely inherited. The seminary formation group is a place for theological reflection on life and ministry.

The group is also a place for integrating the various aspects of your seminary experience. Here you can explore the connections between coursework, learning contracts, ministry, and life!

Relational Health in Ministry

Seminary formation groups are environments for caring for others during the challenges and stresses of the seminary experience. Sometimes the pace of seminary is difficult to maintain. For some, the additional demands of life, family, and work add to the challenge. For many, seminary introduces questions that are perplexing or threatening, even though they are necessary. In any case, the support of traveling companions is vital. What you can provide for others on this road is as important as what they might provide for you. It takes intentional, transparent community for us to grow deep over time and help others do the same. Research has shown that one of the major
factors affecting sustainability in ministry is the ability to build healthy, collaborative relationships in ministry. Since ministry roles can often tend to isolate us, the formation group provides a vital opportunity to practice and reflect upon this unique challenge along with the challenges of seminary.

*Spiritual Health in Ministry*

Many students discover that the spiritual disciplines and resources they had developed prior to seminary (and which may have served them very well) are inadequate to the additional and unique stresses that rigorous study and ministry can place on their relationship with God. Formation groups are designed to help you develop the spiritual disciplines and resources you will need for healthy, ongoing spiritual growth in ministry.

**What Do Formation Groups Actually Do?**

Each group has the freedom and latitude to decide its own path toward the three objectives described above. During the first three weeks of each semester the group will develop covenant that delineates how the group will spend its time together in pursuit of those objectives. Here are some common activities and recommendations that many groups include.

*Sharing Spiritual and Ministry Journeys*

Early in the life of a formation group, time should be spent getting acquainted with each other’s spiritual journeys, including the defining events or “markers” that have been pivotal in terms of one’s relationship with God and ministry calling.

*Prayer*

Each group session should include time to pray for each other.

*Reflective Discussion*

Each session should provide time for discussing a significant topic related to one of the group’s purposes (see above).

*Sharing Learning Contracts (optional)*

The formation group can be a place of insight and encouragement for the learning contracts each participant are pursuing. While some contracts may be related to a highly sensitive and confidential theme and, thus, be inappropriate for sharing in a group settings, most learning contracts can provide healthy opportunity for mutual prayer support and sharing of insights.

*Engaging the Needs and Brokenness of Others (optional)*

Some groups find it significant to participate in a service project together during the semester. This may be aimed at a need on campus or in the broader community.

*Having fun together!*
Some groups schedule time during the semester to share a meal or a recreational activity. This may involve getting off campus, getting to know each other's families if possible, and simply enjoying each other's company. This, too, is spiritual and spiritually forming!!

Even though the formation group experience is required, it need not be artificial or contrived. A spirit of openness and hunger for growth will allow God to nurture you and build your life through this unique type of group. Seek to move toward God and others in the group with the expectation that God will do the unexpected!

When you register for T/M501, note the dates and times of each section and make sure that you select a group that fits your schedule. Groups that have no time/day listed will decide together when they will meet. This requires flexibility. Do not register for a group like this if you cannot work together with the other members of the group toward a common meeting time. You will begin meeting the first week of that semester at the time and location listed on your course schedule. You will stay with this group and group mentor for three consecutive semesters. Toward the end of the first semester, groups will negotiate a schedule for meeting the second semester so that the group can stay together. It is the responsibility of each member of the group to find a way for the group to stay together for the second and third semesters.

Please contact your mentoring director if you have any additional questions about this process.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Code of Ethics

Denver Seminary is committed to training leaders who are fit for ministry, that is, leaders whose lives are “worthy of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:27). Thus, completion of academic requirements does not by itself guarantee graduation from Denver Seminary. The faculty and board of trustees approve each candidate for graduation based on their overall experience during seminary as indicating fitness for ministry. The Training and Mentoring experience is designed to provide opportunities to develop the character traits and ministry competencies that are vital to this fitness. In service to this goal, all participants in the Training and Mentoring process are asked to abide by the following Code of Ethics as expressing our mutual commitment to the integrity of the Gospel ministry in all its forms.

➢ I will strive at all times to exhibit the character qualities outlined for Christian leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:6-9 and the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

➢ I will conduct myself in ways that build trust in our relationship,
  • Representing myself accurately.
  • Appropriately protecting all confidential or sensitive information (see Policies and Procedures, 5.3 for guidelines to appropriate confidentiality).
  • In all communications, being measured, precise, and accurate, and avoiding exaggeration and speculation.
  • Giving others the benefit of the doubt as far as possible.
  • Seeking to resolve conflicts in a redemptive manner.
  • Exhibiting a sensitive, forthright, and constructive spirit when confronting problems.

Additionally, for mentors:

➢ I will recognize, appreciate, and develop the unique gifts of those I mentor,
  • Facilitating their maximum effectiveness and motivation in ministry.
  • Encouraging lifelong growth.
  • Delighting in God’s glory as it shows through each person’s uniqueness.

➢ I will use my influence for the benefit of students and never for unfair advantage.
  • Seeking to provide meaningful opportunities for ministry.
  • Helping them to go further than I have gone and further than they could go on their own.

➢ I will strive to be sensitive to students’ unique mentoring needs based on their life-stage, experience, circumstances, and other personal factors.

Policies and Procedures
1. Mentors’ relationship to Denver Seminary
1.1. Mentors of Denver Seminary students are not considered to be employees of or under legal contract with Denver Seminary. “Mentor appreciation benefits” are provided gratis and should in no way be construed as remuneration for services rendered or as constituting a contractual relationship with Denver Seminary.

1.2. All mentors must participate in a mentor orientation module and give signed agreement with all policies, procedures, expectations, and the code of ethics of the Training and Mentoring program, as well as the National Association of Evangelicals statement of faith. However, such participation and agreement does not guarantee approval or participation as a mentor in the Training and Mentoring program.

1.3. Denver Seminary reserves the right to withdraw the “approved” status of any active mentor at any time.

2. Students’ relationship to Denver Seminary

2.1. Denver Seminary students are not to be considered as official representatives of Denver Seminary when serving in formal or informal ministry capacities.

2.2. Students assume responsibility to seek and engage in mentoring relationships and ministry activities that will fulfill the requirements of the Training and Mentoring program and that correspond to honest self-assessment in light of personal and professional growth needs.

2.3. Students are to give signed agreement to the Training and Mentoring code of ethics. Graduation from any Denver Seminary degree program is based on “faculty determination that the student is theologically, psychologically, spiritually, morally and academically fit as a candidate for some phase of evangelical ministry. This is based on the student’s total seminary experience” (Denver Seminary catalog). The character traits delineated in 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:6-9 are expected of all Denver Seminary students as partial indicators of this fitness. In all situations, students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner “worthy of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

3. Confidentiality and Sharing Information

Mentoring at Denver Seminary is a form of ministry that often involves sensitive, privileged communication. The integrity and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship depend on individuals maintaining the utmost trust with each other, especially when handling sensitive information.

Mentors should appropriately respect and protect all confidential or sensitive information obtained through the mentoring process except to the extent they may be responsible to share information with the Seminary as to a student’s progress, and to the extent that they may have a legal, professional or moral duty to report to others, such as when they become aware that the disclosing party is causing or about to cause injury to self or others.

A prayerful concern for the other person and the relationship must undergird the uncertainties and awkwardness of handling sensitive information. Concerns about students or mentors as well as questions
about procedure and propriety can be discussed with the student’s Mentoring Director. Thoughtful, proactive commitments in this area can contribute to the benefits realized by both mentor and student.

Mentors and students should be aware of the T/M department’s policies regarding confidentiality. Though not every possible situation can be anticipated, decisions regarding confidentiality should respect the following guidelines.

3.1. At the outset of the relationship mentors and students, as well as T/M formation groups, should discuss the parameters of appropriate confidentiality, that is, the types of information that would be appropriate to share (1) with anyone, (2) with other mentors only (3) with each other only, or (4) that may need to be shared with the seminary and/or legal authorities. All participants in the Training and Mentoring program at Denver Seminary should be aware that legal obligations attend the sharing of certain types of information. For example, pastors and all others in any type of ministry leadership position must report any form of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or instances in which there is a risk of injury or harm to the person concerned or to others. Thus, absolute confidentiality may not always be possible. When in doubt about whether information should be shared, counsel should be sought until there is clarity and certainty about how to proceed.

3.2. If an individual wishes confidentiality beyond the norm of the relationship, that should be requested and respected within legal parameters.

3.3. As stated in the Denver Seminary student handbook, students must be aware that if they discuss a personal matter with a faculty or staff member, they cannot be assured of confidentiality when the issue discussed is of such a nature that the faculty or staff person has institutional, legal or professional responsibility to report the matter to the appropriate authority.

3.4. The legal category of “clergy-penitent privilege” does not necessarily apply to conversations held in the context of the Training and Mentoring process.

3.4.1. Conversations held in a Denver Seminary mentoring relationship or formation group are not to be considered legally protected.

3.4.2. Students counseling individuals in a ministry setting should not guarantee complete confidentiality. Students cannot assume that they are protected by “clergy-penitent privilege” simply because they are serving in a ministry setting, are working under the supervision of an ordained minister, or because they are preparing for ordained or other vocational ministry. Students should be up-front with those to whom they minister about their ministerial status and any limitations that may apply to their role, especially when those persons may assume that the student is a clergy person.

3.4.3. Any participant who has reason to believe that another participant poses a threat to the physical or emotional well-being of others should communicate those concerns to a representative of the T/M department.
3.4.3.1. Students are required to provide mentors with certain forms of information (e.g. integrative summaries) as stated in the T/M manual. Once these and other documents become part of a student’s T/M file, they are treated as educational records and protected under the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Except for faculty or staff of Denver Seminary with a need to know, or as may be otherwise allowed or required by law or regulation, information in a student’s file is not available except with the student’s written permission.

3.4.3.2. Each semester all Mentoring Directors report to the Denver Seminary faculty regarding students about whom there are concerns for their potential fitness for ministry. The faculty is committed to a preemptive and redemptive approach to such concerns so as to provide all reasonable possibility for students to successfully complete their courses of study at Denver Seminary and engage in credible, effective ministry within the evangelical community. Students and mentors should be familiar with the seminary’s criteria for “fitness for ministry,” (see the Code of Ethics) upon which final approval for graduation from Denver Seminary depends. Mentors should be accurate, concrete, and constructive when giving evaluations on student progress. Input from the Training and Mentoring program may be sought in order to inform the faculty's assessment of student fitness for ministry. However, apart from legal obligations, mentors are not required to give to Denver Seminary any input regarding a student unless they wish to do so.

3.4.3.3. Mentors who have concerns about a student’s potential or fitness for ministry may first address those concerns directly with the student. The mentor may also choose to go first to the student’s Mentoring Director, the Associate Dean responsible for the Training and Mentoring program, or the Vice President/Dean of the seminary. Mentors should understand that any area of discussion or interaction can have an impact on the assessment of whether the student is fit for ministry.

3.4.3.4. Students who have concerns about a mentoring relationship or formation group may likewise discuss those concerns first with the individual or individuals involved, but are not required to do so. If the concern is of such a nature that the student needs counsel prior to addressing the individual(s) involved, such concerns may first be discussed with the appropriate Mentoring Director. The student may also follow the grievance process provided for in the Student Handbook as applicable to the situation at hand.

3.4.3.5 All communication about another participant in the Training and Mentoring process should be as accurate and precise as possible, and exaggeration or speculation avoided.

3.4.3.6. Each student’s learning contract documents are destroyed after graduation, unless there have been specific reasons for retaining them.
Appendix B: NAE Statement of Faith

The National Association of Evangelicals takes its stand on the changeless Word of God as expressed in the following Statement of Faith:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.