

What is the Future of Evangelical Education?  
Oikonomia Faculty Retreat  
January 2017

## 1. Some Contextual Comments about Evangelical Theological Education

### 1.1 Evangelical seminaries are linked to Evangelical Protestantism:

- they grow as it grows—almost 100 institutions since World War II
- but they can also decline if it declines
- and some evidence suggests that growth has slowed or plateaued, and in some areas, begun to decline

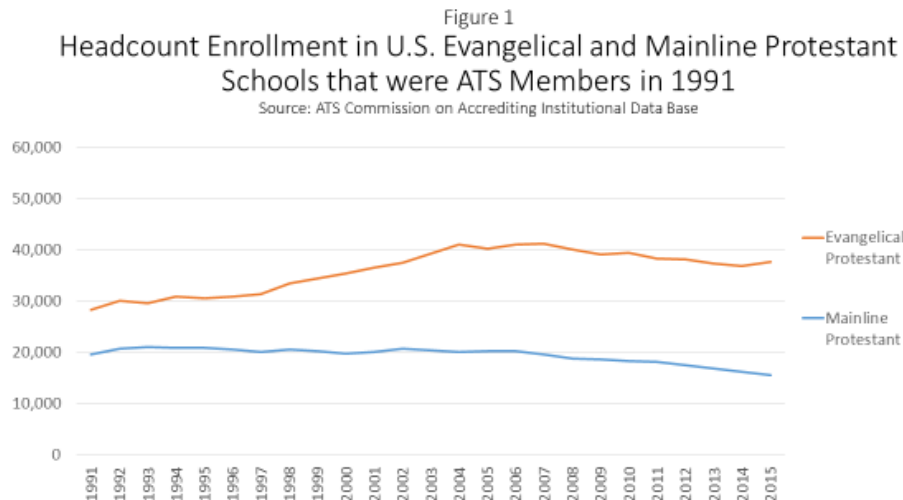
### 1.2 Evangelical Protestantism has been the most creative and inventive form of Protestant life across the past fifty years and the seminaries reflect that inventiveness

- Extension and Distance Education Pioneers
- Major programs in counseling in preparation for state licensure
- Experimenting with the MDiv program

## 2. Four Current Realities that Will Constitute Drivers as Schools Move into the Future

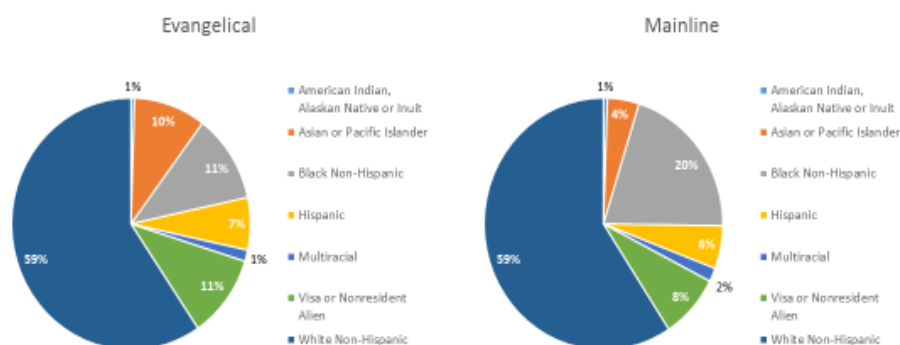
“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”—William Faulkner

### 2.1 Enrollment has begun to decline in Evangelical schools: what will be the extent and duration of that decline?



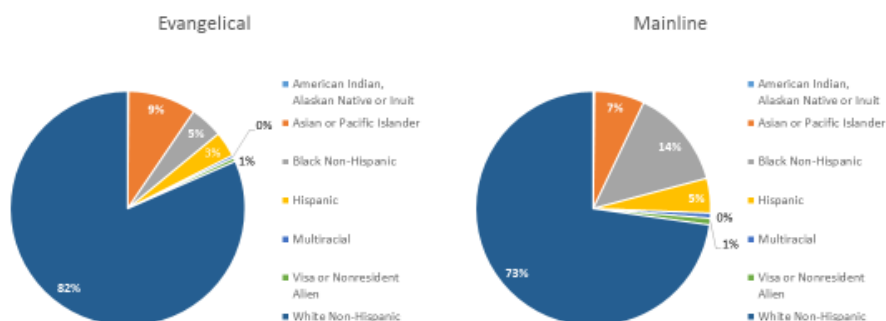
2.2 The US population will be majority persons of color by sometime in the decade of the 2040s: How will Evangelical schools prepare for this eventuality?

Figure 2  
Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity  
in U.S. Protestant Theological Schools, Fall 2015



Source: ATS Commission on Accrediting data base Note: This excludes the six historically black theological schools.

Figure 3  
Faculty by Race/Ethnicity  
in U.S. ATS Protestant Schools, Fall 2015



Source: ATS Commission on Accrediting Data Base Note: This excludes the six historically black theological schools.

2.3 Most ATS member schools are experiencing some level of financial stress. Evangelical schools are not exception, although they are experiencing less stress than Mainline Protestant schools. The future will depend on the ability of these schools to find viable and sustainable financial models

Figure 4

## Revenue Structures of Freestanding Schools

Primary Revenue Type	Percent of Schools	Prominent Ecclesial Family	Average Expenditure
Balanced	30%	Mainline	\$ 9.1 million
Tuition	30%	Evangelical	\$ 7.2 million
Gifts	20%	Evangelical	\$ 3.0 million
Endowment	10%	Mainline	\$ 11.9 million
Religious Organization	5%	Catholic/ Evangelical	\$ 3.6 million
Other sources	5%	Mainline	\$ 11.2 million

Source: COA Institutional Database

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Figure 5

## Percent of Revenue from Gross Tuition in Evangelical and Mainline Protestant ATS Member Schools

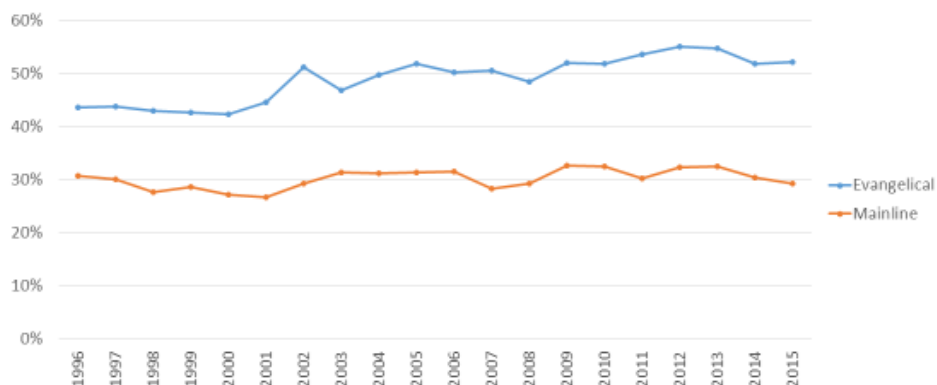


Figure 6  
Percent of Revenue from Gifts & Contributions  
in Evangelical and Mainline Protestant Schools

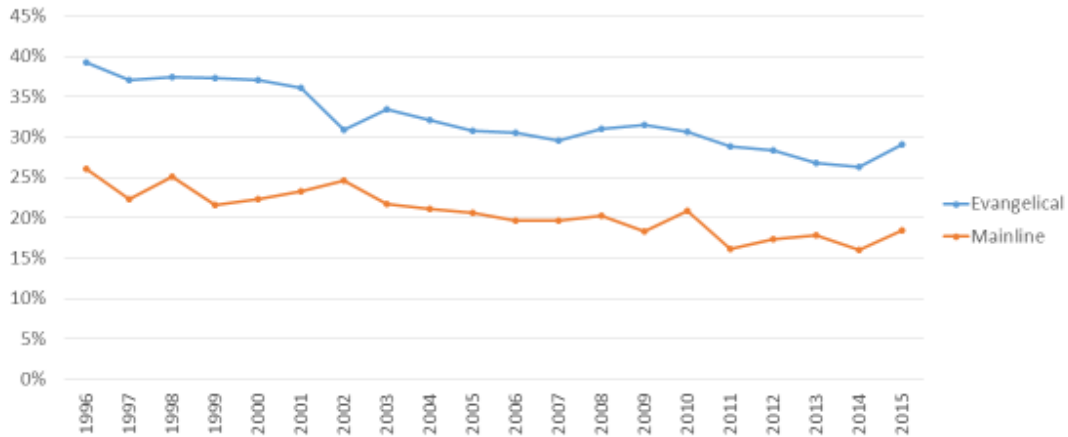
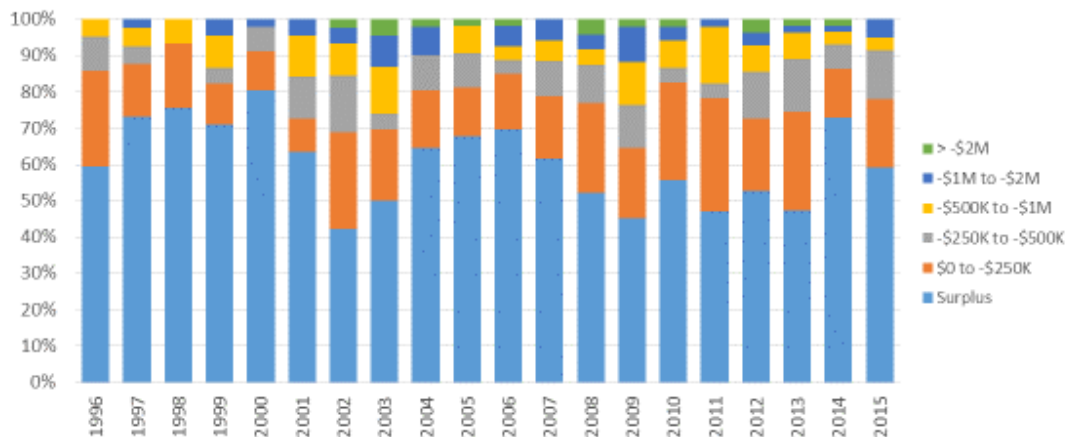


Figure 7  
Adjusted Surplus (Deficit)  
U.S. Evangelical ATS Schools



## 2.4 The Majority World will continue to be the Most Fertile Ground for the Growth and Development of Christianity

- Evangelical schools currently have better international connections than most Mainline Protestant schools.
- Majority world Christianity is both more Evangelical in character and at the same time differs from many practices of North American Evangelicals.

- How will US and Canadian Evangelical schools develop partnerships and relationships with Majority World schools?

### **3. Possible Directions in the Future of Evangelical Theological Education**

3.1 The future will involve more diversity than has characterized the most recent past.

3.2 The schools that will be most successful in the future are the ones that will have cultivated a faithful constituency of individuals and congregations that will provide needed funding, students, and places of service for graduates.

3.3 The future may entail a transition from the current “professional” model of theological education to a more “formational” model. (Evangelicals will need to give up on the agenda of changing the culture and figure out how to be faithful in an increasingly secular society)

- Cultural Reasons for this possible shift
- This transition will fit Evangelicals because they have often been suspicious of the professional model
- The goal of formational theological education will be, first and foremost, an authentic and mature spirituality
- It will require the scholarly effort to identify patterns of authentic spirituality
- It will take institutional effort to shift some of fundamental educational practices.