

PRE-SEMINARY CURRICULUM RE-EVALUATION:
HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE NON-BIBLICAL
LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

BY
MICAH J. PLOCHER

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PROF. JOHN HARTWIG, ADVISOR
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
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ABSTRACT

In a changing world, the WELS must constantly reassess the system by which it trains men for the public ministry. Over the course of more than 150 years, the pre-seminary curriculum has adapted to changing times, circumstances, and needs, all while holding onto the core values it has had since its founding. This thesis identifies lessons from the past to develop principles for pre-seminary curriculum change. It then compares the input of current pastors and pre-seminary students to the historical principles to determine whether an adjustment to the non-biblical language component of the pre-seminary curriculum would be beneficial for the system and the synod.

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INTRODUCTION

In its pastor training system, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has something special. For over 150 years, it has operated institutions on the prep, college, and seminary level with a singular purpose: to prepare well-rounded young men with servants' hearts and ministry skills for pastoral service in its congregations. For over 150 years, those institutions have consistently fulfilled their purpose – an enormous, gracious blessing from our God!

With over 150 years of history, the WELS pastor training system has by necessity changed and developed with the world in which it operates. At the same time, however, it retains its roots in the history of the Wisconsin Synod and its ministry. Today, even as it operates with a modern look, the entire system draws on values, principles, and customs that reach back to its inception and beyond. By the time its students graduate – if not at their enrollment – they have become aware that they are part of something bigger. Through the education and experiences they have received, and through the ministry they go forth to carry out, they are tied to people and ideas that extend beyond themselves and beyond their own time.

This history is important to know and cherish, but it is also important to learn from. Over the years, WELS pastoral education has shifted and changed to adapt to the world in which its graduates do ministry. Such changes are beneficial and necessary. They are a signal that our church body cares about the young men it trains and the people they will reach with the gospel. In order to determine whether the preparation we provide for future ministers of the gospel is as good as it can be, our ministerial education system undergoes regular self-assessments.

Such a self-assessment provided the spark from which this paper grew. In February 2017, Martin Luther College (MLC) published a strategic plan which would institute, among other things, an “ongoing, intentional, systematic, and comprehensive program review of each undergraduate and graduate program of study.”¹ MLC’s initiative would, of course, involve an evaluation of the current pre-seminary course, the second tier of the WELS pastor training system. One question that evaluation would have to wrestle with is this: which element or elements of the pre-seminary curriculum could or should be revised to better prepare young men to minister in today’s world?

One aspect of the pre-seminary program that often comes under scrutiny is the heavy language emphasis. The roots of that part of the curriculum reach back to the inception of WELS ministerial education, and its prominence within the program is one factor that sets it apart from many pastor training systems across the world. However, it has also been known to be the cause of frustration and uncertainty for parents, students, and empathic faculty alike. Fears are sometimes raised that language expectations deter or discourage students who otherwise have a desire to pursue the pastoral ministry.

The place of Greek and Hebrew study in our pastoral training system should never be questioned. These languages are the “sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained,”² to use one of the pictures that Luther did, and it is an enormous blessing that every pastor in our church body has a working knowledge of them.

¹ Martin Luther College, “Equipped to Do God’s Will: A Strategic Plan for Martin Luther College (2017-2023)” (Martin Luther College, 2017), 4.

² Martin Luther, “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” in vol. 45 of *Luther’s Works*, American Edition (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 360.

The place of the non-biblical languages (i.e., Latin, German, Spanish, and Mandarin) and the part they play in 21st century pastor training, however, is less defined. These languages relate to Scripture and God's gospel message less directly and are less essential to pastor training. The pre-seminary curriculum indicates an acknowledgement of this already by allowing its students to specialize in only one of them. Perhaps this is an area of the pre-seminary curriculum that could benefit from further review and reevaluation.

In order to contribute to the discussion at hand, I conducted a series of surveys. The first sought the input of pastors concerning the ministry benefits they received from studying non-biblical languages in college. The second collected the reflections of current pre-seminary students on the program at MLC, again with an emphasis on the non-biblical language component. By synthesizing the responses of both pastors and students, I have attempted to weigh the benefits of the current non-biblical language program against any negative effects it could have on student morale and motivation.

In the interest of presenting balanced and well-informed observations, I also sought to draw lessons from the history of the pre-seminary curriculum, especially of the non-biblical language component. I traced the history of the program from its inception to the present day, taking note especially of the changes that took place and the factors that prompted them. Such historical review allowed me to place the responses of contemporary pastors and students into the wider context of historical WELS pastor training.

That history is the best place to begin a consideration of the non-biblical language component of the pre-seminary program. Against the backdrop it provides, the survey data that come later will be more fully understood and more carefully interpreted.

OUR PRE-SEMINARY EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE

The Need for Pre-Seminary Education

In the mid-1800s, the newly-formed First Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin faced many of the common hurdles that stood before young church bodies. Nearly every new organization of Christian pastors and congregations must go through periods of tension and struggle, because it is in those times that a church body shapes and comes to terms with its identity. Changes of leadership, economic developments, societal policies, and more can have a profound effect on the mindset and actions of young synods, and the same was true for the Wisconsin Synod. One factor that had an especially profound impact on the identity and development of this small group of German Lutherans in the Upper Midwest was a drastic shortage of pastors.

The Wisconsin Synod had formed on December 8, 1849 when three German-American pastors, John Muehlhaeuser, John Weinmann, and William Wrede, met at Grace Church, Milwaukee. These three men became the first officers of the new synod: Muehlhaeuser was elected as president, Weinmann as secretary, and Wrede as treasurer. The first regular meeting of the synod took place just over six months later, on May 26, 1850 at Salem Church in Granville, Wisconsin.

At that meeting, five pastors (including the three elected officers) were in attendance, representing nine congregations and preaching stations. Over the following ten years, the number of Wisconsin Synod pastors would quadruple to twenty, with each pastor bringing his congregations and preaching stations with him. The number of locations that needed to be

served, however, grew much faster than the clergy roster of the synod. By 1862, the synod had more than ninety locations that needed preachers (more than sixty of which were full-fledged congregations) and only thirty-two pastors. With such arrangements, thirty-one locations were less-than-fully served, and thirteen were fully vacant.

The shortage of pastors was not a new issue for the attendees of the 1862 synod convention. Since the mid-1850s, the synod had been wrestling, not only with how best to acquire *enough* pastors for its congregations, but also with how to get enough *well-trained* men for the positions. The problem came to the forefront of synod consciousness after 1857, when a special paragraph was added to the synod constitution which committed the church body to supplying pastors and teachers to its member congregations.³

In following years, the church body explored several options for providing the pastors its constituents needed, including partnerships with the Illinois and Pennsylvania Synods. None of these attempts proved to be a lasting solution for the synod's problem. It seemed that the only truly satisfactory solution would be to establish a seminary of its own.

The 1862 convention resolved to do just that. President John Bading, elected in 1860 after Muehlhaeuser had stepped down, spoke to the delegates and impressed on them the importance of "dig[ging] a well in our own country."⁴ He included in his ideal for the Wisconsin Synod's "well" not only the founding of a seminary, but also the creation of a pre-seminary educational institution to feed it. In response, the convention authorized the Wisconsin Synod's legal incorporation, enabling the church body to purchase land for the planned seminary.

³ *Das Evangelische Lutherische Seminar zu Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1903), 3.

⁴ "Wir müssen in unserem Lande, in unserer Synode eine Quelle graben, woraus uns die Arbeiter zufließen." Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1862, 14.

The following year, the synod decided to establish their ministerial education system in Watertown and called Edward Friedrich Moldehnke to be the new seminary's first president and instructor. That first year began with one student enrolled, but he was dismissed from the seminary in October because he was unprepared to handle the required work. Another more qualified student enrolled in November to replace him, and after several years of near one-on-one tutoring from Moldehnke, he eventually became the seminary's first graduate.

The next school year, fourteen students enrolled in the seminary, but, again, three were dismissed after a few weeks because they were unprepared for the academic rigors of a seminary education. Of the eleven who remained, only two were ready for full seminary training. The others had varying levels of education, some having only completed eighth grade. They needed to catch up before they could continue into the seminary, and their varying backgrounds meant that Moldehnke ended up teaching them on a near-individual basis. They were dubbed the "second division" of the seminary. Throughout the seminary's first seven years (the entire time it was located on the Watertown campus), similar issues persisted. Low enrollment and unprepared students continually provided a difficult environment for Moldehnke to carry out his job of preparing pastors.

An American University

At the synod convention in 1864, Moldehnke reported on the situation in Watertown. Already at that time, the delegates were looking for an opportunity to add an institution to provide better-qualified candidates to the seminary, and he spoke to their intentions. He recounted several conversations he had had with prominent Watertown citizens who thought that a college based on the German *Gymnasium* model (in which many of the most educated Wisconsin Synod men

studied in Europe) would not succeed in their city. According to the people of Watertown, if an institution of higher education were going to fit in their community, it would have to follow the American model exemplified by the prominent east-coast universities like Harvard and Yale.

In response, the delegates voted to call another instructor to the Watertown campus to start a pre-seminary college in the American style. The position remained unfilled for a full year, however, as they looked for a qualified candidate to start the new synod college. Finally, in the summer of 1865, they found their man.

In 1865, the synod called Adam Martin to be the first president of the “college department” in Watertown. His duties were primarily to take over what had been known as the “second division” and fill in the educational gaps that kept students out of the seminary proper. Martin, however, saw an opportunity to reach for a much more prestigious goal. He saw in the small Watertown institution the potential to be a major American university. Reflecting his ambition, he routinely referred to the fledgling school as Wisconsin University during his first year as president.

That year, enrollment spiked to 66 students in the spring semester. The school added additional faculty to handle the increased teaching responsibilities and the wide variety of classes that Martin included in his program. At the 1866 synod convention, to avoid confusion with the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the synod renamed the Watertown school “Northwestern University” (keeping the “University” designation at Martin’s behest). During the same convention, Martin laid out his vision for the institution:

“A college in the American sense of the word is an institution for a so-called higher education. It is neither a European university nor a German *Gymnasium*, but a peculiarly American scholastic institution that partakes somewhat of both of them but concerns itself with the needs of practical life, in that it aims at a higher education that is closely fitted to the local conditions in our land, including all that which this requires, and excluding all that which is foreign to it.... The church has always had the say in

educational matters, and in this country, too, that denomination of the church will become best known, and put its peculiar stamp on the life of the people, that does most in the way of educating the prominent men of the land.”⁵

Seemingly as an afterthought, he also added the following: “However, the highest and holiest interest of our church in the possession of a college lies in the need of servants of the Gospel.”⁶ At its beginning, Northwestern was not the focused ministry college it would one day become.

The curriculum of the school reflected that different – some would say “lack of” – focus. The previous school year, Martin had set about developing a collegiate course of study, but despite his lofty aims, college classes wouldn’t be conducted on the Watertown campus at all during the first two years of his presidency. Many of the school’s students were not looking for a college education at all. They were locals who wanted a basic high school education not yet offered by the public system. Martin met their needs with an “Academy” curriculum structured much the way he envisioned his future college department: entirely elective. Class choices ranged from trigonometry to Greek to geography.

At that time, classes were taught almost entirely in English, according to “American practical sense,” with the exception of subjects where a German teaching medium “applied.”⁷ While this aligned very nicely with Martin’s view of a modern American college, the language issue, perhaps more than any other, contributed to discontent and tension between Northwestern’s president and board of trustees on one hand and the constituency of the Wisconsin Synod on the other.

⁵ Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1866, 22.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 1864), 4.

Most members of the synod's churches were German speakers, many of them German immigrants to America and at most one generation removed. German was the primary spoken language in their congregations and in their homes, the *Muttersprache* they taught to their children. As a result, many Wisconsin Synod members had only minimal knowledge of English.

A college that taught its classes in English did not inspire such people's support. It seemed to them that Northwestern served a "foreign," English-speaking American clientele,⁸ not the German-speaking constituents of the Wisconsin Synod. The place of the institution as a "well" of church workers also came into question: if students were being trained to work in English (and were allowed to have an entirely elective course load), how would their education prepare them to serve German-speaking members? Since they saw Northwestern providing little to no benefit for themselves, very few Wisconsin Synod members sent either their students or their money to support the school.

Steps Toward a *Gymnasium*

At the 1867 convention, in response to the synod's discontent, delegates decided to take steps to improve Northwestern's appeal to its own members by "foster[ing] its German character."⁹ Their first action was to call Dr. August Ernst Theodor Meumann as the new Latin and Greek instructor. Meumann was a native German speaker who had come to America only six years earlier, in 1861. He had been university trained in Halle and Berlin, and as such was very familiar with the European system of higher education which many purists insisted was vastly superior to the American system. His appointment was a nod to the synod's desire for

⁸ Thomas I. Ziebell, "Establishing an Educational Subculture: The 19th-Century German Gymnasium Arrangement of Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin to 1915" (University of Wisconsin, 1994), 74.

⁹ Ibid.

Northwestern to better reflect its members' German-ness. The board of trustees next addressed the impression that Northwestern did not fulfill its purpose as a pre-seminary institution by restricting the unlimited elective freedom of Martin's curriculum. For the first time in 1867-68, religion, world history, geography, German, and English grammar classes were required for all students.¹⁰

Northwestern's gradual move toward a more German-European model of education continued to pick up steam in the following year, when the board made German the teaching language of the whole classics department. This move, backed by Meumann and supported by seminary President Adolf Hoenecke, effectively cut Martin out of Northwestern's classics program. The board's decision displeased Martin intensely and no doubt contributed to his 1869 resignation. Martin's discontent with the synod had been growing for several years, especially due to the church body's solidifying confessional position. When the Wisconsin Synod withdrew from the General Council and separated from the European mission societies, it ended relationships Martin valued highly. The president became more and more disillusioned with the new direction of the school and the synod, and before the end of the 1868-69 school year, Northwestern cut all ties with Martin.¹¹ At that time, his ideal of a prestigious American college was all but left behind.

The Wisconsin Synod's separation from the General Council and the mission societies sprang from a growing confessionalism and a blossoming relationship with the Missouri Synod. When its association with the General Council was officially over, Wisconsin began to work together with Missouri in many areas of ministry, including ministerial education. In 1870, the

¹⁰ Erwin E. Kowalke, "Excerpts from the Minutes of the Board of Control of Northwestern College 1864-1961," 8.

¹¹ Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1869, 9.

Watertown seminary closed, and the Wisconsin Synod began to send all of its pastoral students to St. Louis for their seminary training. Northwestern then opened its program to pre-ministerial students from the Missouri Synod. To support this shared mission, Missouri provided funding and a professor to Northwestern. It also clarified the direction which the school's curriculum development would take. No longer would Northwestern mimic the American universities on the East Coast. Instead, President Bading declared in 1869, Northwestern would take the example of Missouri's Concordia system and follow the German model to become "a flourishing and influential *Gymnasium*."¹²

The goal of a *Gymnasium*, however, did not mean that the Wisconsin Synod wanted to create in Watertown a carbon copy of the Concordia system. The faculty at Northwestern saw some weaknesses in Missouri's system that they wished to avoid, especially in the foreign language program.

"Their poor assessment of [Concordia] Fort Wayne's curriculum came in part from the restricted value which some Missouri pastors placed on language study – an attitude developed when they had been college students and reinforced by several of C.F.W. Walther's offhand statements about that work. He liked to describe such preseminary training in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as the "court of the Gentiles," meaning those subjects were crucial for properly understanding Scripture. Many seminarians, though, misinterpreted Walther's remarks to imply their *Gymnasium* courses served no other purpose than to enable them to read the Bible or the early church fathers."¹³

Most of Northwestern's faculty flatly rejected that idea, instead holding that the value of the ancient languages was universal, no matter what career they might pursue. August Ernst was at this time an instructor at Northwestern who would be instrumental in Northwestern's transition to a *Gymnasium* and would become president of the school. Years after the *Gymnasium* was

¹² Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1869, 13-14.

¹³ Ziebell, "Educational Subculture," 157.

implemented, Ernst said that Northwestern's system now provided "a thorough general education that will fit [students] for the pursuit of the highest professions," in part through thorough instruction in the ancient languages, "the exponents and conveyors of the highest culture of the human mind."¹⁴ With the broader utility of the languages in mind, then, Northwestern began developing its own nuanced version of a *Gymnasium* suited for training pastors.

Beginning in the fall of 1869, the board of trustees required all students to study the German language alongside English, showing its intent to make Northwestern a more welcoming place for German-speaking members of the Wisconsin Synod. The board also did away with any influence Adam Martin may have had on the pre-seminary course of study by entirely eliminating electives and prescribing a fixed set of courses for its students. The most influential development of that year, however, took place in November when the board asked the three professors in the "German Department" (the men who taught their classes in German) to draw up a complete course of study for Northwestern based as much as possible on the *Gymnasium* model.¹⁵

A True *Gymnasium*

The German *Gymnasium* is an educational system that is entirely different from the American system that was still developing in the mid-to-late 1800s. An American post-grade-school education would come to consist of four high school years followed by four years of college as an undergraduate. After obtaining a bachelor's degree, a student could then choose to continue his or her education in a master's or doctoral program. In Germany, the *Gymnasium* functioned

¹⁴ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* 49, no. 16 (August 15, 1914), 249.

¹⁵ Kowalke, "Excerpts from Minutes," 14.

differently. After several years in *Vorschulen* (primary schools), students enrolled at a *Gymnasium* at the age of nine. The *Gymnasium* program then generally lasted nine years as students progressed through six “grades” (three of which took two years to complete) of highly regimented and disciplined training. These nine years carried a heavy emphasis on the classical languages, history, and literature, which German educators insisted were the foundation of any worthwhile education. When students finally graduated from the *Gymnasium* at age 18, they were deemed suitable candidates for German universities.

Led by August Ernst, the “German department” professors presented their proposed curriculum changes to the board of trustees just before a special synod convention on January 5-6, 1870. The committee proposed a seven-year¹⁶ *Gymnasium* program that reflected to a great extent their own education in the overseas German *Gymnasien*. At that time, the Prussian *Gymnasium Lehrplan* was the model for similar educational systems across the German-speaking world, and *Lehrpläne* from other territories leaned heavily on the Prussians’ curriculum and structure. It makes sense, therefore, that – whether directly intended or not – the program that the “German department” professors proposed for Northwestern would closely resemble the Prussian *Lehrplan*.

The chart that follows is a representation of the Prussian *Lehrplan* of 1856 which would have been the basis for the *Gymnasium* education that the Northwestern “German department” professors received. Their proposition to the Board must have looked very similar. The most notable difference would have been exchanging the study of French in the Prussian *Lehrplan* for English classes, a change that only made sense given the American setting of Northwestern. In

¹⁶ The system implemented at Northwestern had six classes or grades, like the German *Gymnasium*, but it only split the final class into two years, thus allowing students to finish the program in seven years instead of nine.

the chart, the number of class hours listed denotes the amount of class time per week devoted to individual subjects during the six “grades” of the *Gymnasium*:¹⁷

The Prussian *Gymnasium Lehrplan* - 1856¹⁸

	<i>Sexta</i>	<i>Quinta</i>	<i>Quarta</i>	<i>Tertia</i>	<i>Secunda</i>	<i>Prima</i>	(Total)
Religion	3	3	2	2	2	2	(14)
German	2	2	2	2	2	3	(13)
Latin	10	10	10	10	10	8	(58)
Greek	-	-	6	6	6	6	(24)
French	-	3	2	2	2	2	(11)
History/Geography	2	2	3	3	3	3	(16)
Mathematics	4	3	3	3	4	4	(21)
Physics	-	-	-	-	1	2	(3)
Natural Science	2	2	-	2	-	-	(6)
Drawing	2	2	2	-	-	-	(6)
Penmanship	3	3	-	-	-	-	(6)
Hebrew	-	-	-	-	(2)	(2)	[4] ¹⁹
Total:	28	30	30	30	30	30	178

The board approved the curriculum proposed by the committee and presented it to the special synod convention. The synod approved the new system along with a resolution to essentially separate the English Academy program (high school) from the new *Gymnasium*. After receiving the green light, Northwestern wasted no time and implemented the *Gymnasium* beginning already the next fall for the 1870-71 school year.

Northwestern’s *Gymnasium* system differed slightly from its Prussian model in the number of hours devoted to certain subject areas each week, but the substance of its schedule

¹⁷ The *Gymnasium* used Latin class names. The students in the first class were *Sextaners*, six levels removed from finishing the program. Those in the final stage of their *Gymnasium* education were *Primaners*, only one completed level away from graduation.

¹⁸ Karl Schmidt, *Gymnasial-Pädagogik: Die Naturgesetze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts in humanistischen und realistischen gelehrten Schulen* (Köthen: Druck und Verlag von Paul Schettler, 1857), 257.

¹⁹ Hebrew was provided for pre-theology students and as an elective for others, but it was not required of all *Gymnasiasts*.

was the same. The 1872 catalog shows a curriculum with the same basic structure, but with significantly more religion and living languages (German and English) than its Prussian counterpart. It made up for those increased emphases by decreasing requirements in Latin and social studies. In this early period, though, Northwestern's program was still developing, and by 1874 it had been "revised and deepened"²⁰ to resemble the Prussian system even more closely. Here is a comparison in total class hour demands by subject between the 1856 Prussian *Lehrplan* and the 1874-75 Northwestern Schedule:²¹

	Prussian <i>Lehrplan</i> (1856)	Northwestern's Schedule (1874-75) ²²
Religion	14	18
German	13	18
Latin	58	47
Greek	24	25
French	11	-
English	-	24
History/Geography	16	17
Mathematics	21	23
Physics	3	3
Natural Science	6	7
Drawing	6	3
Penmanship	6	5
Hebrew	4	4
Total:	182	194

After the revisions of 1874, most of Northwestern's requirements met or exceeded the Prussian *Lehrplan*. The only subject that lagged behind significantly in total class hours was Latin. However, Latin classes still made up almost 25% of the program, and Latin was used "informally" by instructors in religion, German, Greek, history, and Hebrew classes. Ziebell is of

²⁰ Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1874, 45.

²¹ Ziebell, "Educational Subculture," 196.

²² Jahresbericht von Northwestern University für das Schüljahr 1874-1875, 11-15.

the opinion that any “class hour shortcomings in Northwestern’s regular Latin course vis-à-vis the European system... seem to have been satisfactorily dealt with through the rest of the curriculum.”²³

From 1874 forward, Northwestern became synonymous with its *Gymnasium* program, and the system endured basically unchanged for more than forty-five years. As time wore on, the little college²⁴ and the Wisconsin Synod which supported it became very proud of the education offered on its campus. In the 1890s, Northwestern still marketed its program as being “modeled on the plan of the German Gymnasium” and thus offering “more thorough courses than any school of its kind in the United States.”²⁵ Twenty years later, the same attitude toward the curriculum persevered. Its promoters declared that even in 1915, Northwestern’s *Gymnasium* offered students the opportunity to “drink at the inexhaustible fountain of German scholarship and learning.”²⁶

From 1871 until the mid-1910s, no major adjustments were made to Northwestern’s *Gymnasium* curriculum. The changes that were proposed during that time were either rejected from the outset (like a 1907 push to add a practical seminary to the college campus) or proved to be only temporary (e.g. the addition of a *Septima* class to bridge the gap between grade school and the *Gymnasium*, which lasted from 1902 until 1916). Under the watchful eye of August Ernst – called as president of Northwestern shortly after the *Gymnasium* was established – the European system continued to provide “rigorous intellectual training” for future pastors and

²³ Ziebell, “Educational Subculture,” 197.

²⁴ Northwestern University was renamed Northwestern College in 1911.

²⁵ Elmer Carl Kiessling, *Centennial Memoir* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), 11.

²⁶ Arthur Hörmann, *Soli Deo Gloria – Our Northwestern College – The Story of its Origin and Growth – 1865-1915*, 91.

laymen alike. The synod, too, saw no need to change its pre-seminary program. Ziebell notes that the lack of amendments was not only from “simple nostalgia,” but because “the church body firmly regarded this arrangement as the best possible education for anyone on either side of the Atlantic to undergo.”²⁷

Northwestern’s *Übergang ins Englische*

From the time of its foundation into the twentieth century, the primary language of the Wisconsin Synod was German. In the Midwestern states where most of its members lived, German was spoken commonly.²⁸ Especially on farms owned and operated by German immigrants and their children, *die Muttersprache* was part of everyday life. Even more, the German language was part of Wisconsin Synod church life. It was the language of the liturgy, the language of hymns, the language of official church records, and the language of the Lutheran Confessions. German’s prime position in the church body (among other factors) led to the adoption of a German system, the *Gymnasium*, for its pre-seminary education efforts. That system remained virtually unchanged for nearly half a century, but with the dawn of World War I, Northwestern College would face the first major change to its system since the beginning of the *Gymnasium*.

There had been rumblings of a changing linguistic culture both within the synod and on Northwestern’s campus since the early 1900s. As generations of synod membership got farther and farther removed from their immigrant origins, English crept more and more into everyday life. Especially for children who attended public schools taught in English, that language began

²⁷ Ziebell, “Educational Subculture,” 214–15.

²⁸ Benjamin E. Frey, “Toward a General Theory of Language Shift: A Case Study in Wisconsin German and North Carolina Cherokee,” (University of Wisconsin, 2013), 115-116.

making a move to supplant German as their most used and useful language. In proportion to English's rise, German's stock slowly began to fall. By 1907, an editorial appeared in the school newspaper, *The Black and Red*, that bemoaned the near total loss of German as the primary conversational language among students.²⁹

The decline of German proficiency posed a problem for students who applied to attend Northwestern's *Gymnasium*. Across the seven years of enrollment at Northwestern, between roughly 50-70% of classes for any given year were taught in German,³⁰ including all classics department classes, religion courses, and German courses themselves. The addition in 1902 of a *Septima* class to the *Gymnasium* was due at least in part to the recognition of this declining level of ability in German among Northwestern's incoming students. The goal of that additional year, positioned before the *Sexta* year, was to prepare youngsters for the work of the *Gymnasium* proper. Much of that instruction focused on German.³¹ At that point, the response to a less-than-ideal knowledge of German was to teach better German, not to change the system.

When war in Europe broke out in 1914, however, Northwestern faced a new obstacle to its continued use of German as the language of instruction. Up until that time, the school had used classics textbooks printed in Germany. Now, with Germany at war, it became much more difficult to obtain the German-language printed resources its students and professors needed. In 1917, when the United States entered the war, commerce between Germany and the U.S. halted, and it became impossible for Northwestern to acquire their customary books.

²⁹ *The Black and Red*, (Watertown, Wisconsin) 11, no. 6 (November, 1907), 130.

³⁰ Ziebell, "Educational Subculture," 177-78.

³¹ Ziebell, 226-227.

The time had come to begin the *Übergang ins Englische*, the transition to English, at Northwestern. German retained its privileged place on campus until the retirement of President Ernst in 1919, but lower-level Latin and German courses began to be taught entirely in English at the beginning of the next school year. By 1923, German as an instructional medium had been phased out of the entire prep department (the first four years on campus, *Sexta* through *Tertia*). The 1923-24 school catalogue stated that a knowledge of German was desirable for enrollees, but was no longer required for admission.³² The *Obergymnasium* held on to German-taught classes for fifteen more years. Finally, in 1938, Hebrew, philosophy, and New Testament Greek courses made the switch to English,³³ and the *Übergang* was complete.

Post-German Changes

After President Ernst stepped down from the presidency and the German language began its decline, Northwestern's *Gymnasium* began to take on a different character. As the era of German's primacy on campus became more and more distant, the more American the school began to look.

Right away in 1919, the school added an eighth year to its program, to be held after *Ober Prima* (the previous final year of the *Gymnasium*). This was done in order to make the program align more closely with the American educational system which called for four years of high school and four years of college. Years *Sexta* through *Tertia* became the "Prep Department" and *Secunda*, *Unter Prima*, and *Ober Prima*, together with the newly added fourth year, became

³² *Catalogue of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin for 1923-24* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1924), 20.

³³ Erwin Ernest Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College 1865-1965* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1965), 176.

known as the “College Department.” After this structural change, the Latin class names began to fall out of use and be replaced by the American “Freshman-Sophomore-Junior-Senior” at both levels.

The first curricular adjustments were changes to the foreign and classical language programs. First, when German was phased out of the Prep Department in 1923, German began to be taught as a foreign language. Where, initially, supposedly German-speaking students took German grammar and literature in their first two years in the *Gymnasium*, the study of German as a foreign language was moved to the *Quarta* (Junior) year. This was in part to ease students into the study of foreign languages and partly to keep the emphasis of language study in the first years on Latin. Under the previously-held assumption that students could already communicate and work in German and English, Latin had been the only foreign language that students tackled in their first years on campus. Moving post *Übergang* German classes to the Junior year allowed it to retain that emphasis.

Less than a decade later, however, a structural overhaul of the whole language program took place. Before the 1931-32 school year, the board of trustees reported that “instruction in Latin shall be changed from eight to six years, and instruction in Greek from six to four years. According to this plan, more time will be won for other subjects, especially for instruction in German. Instruction in Latin will begin in the *Sexta* year; Greek will begin in the first year of college.”³⁴ The same concern that prompted German’s move from *Sexta* to *Quarta* was the impetus for this restructuring: the faculty had observed that students suffered when they were forced to begin instruction in two different languages in the same year. Under the new system, Latin would begin in the Prep Freshman year, German in the Prep Junior year, Greek in the

³⁴ Northwestern College Board of Trustees Report, 1931.

College Freshman year, and Hebrew in the College Junior year. In the same spirit, remedial courses meant to get college applicants from other high schools “up to speed” on Latin, German, and Greek were also added, resulting in a five-year program for those who needed it.

Major Shifts

After the 1931 language department restructuring, Northwestern mostly held its course for the next thirty years. It still provided a repackaged *Gymnasium* education designed to fill students’ time with class, drill, and study. Students still had class schedules of between 26 and 30 credit-hours per week, with, of course, a major emphasis on language and literature. The education in the classics measured up to some of the best in the country. Reflecting on those years, President Carleton Toppe wrote, “In the 1950s it was possible for Northwestern graduates to enter national competition in classical Greek studies and to walk away with prizes. They had been obliged to carry classical Greek courses five days a week for four years (40 credit hours).”³⁵ In English literature, Toppe recalled “five or six” required semesters of British masterpieces over the course of his time at Northwestern. In all, through the ‘50s, students were required to achieve 211 credits before graduating from the program. In subsequent decades, however, the curriculum changed dramatically.

In 1961, the faculty of Northwestern implemented the first major overhaul of the curriculum since the 1870 introduction of the *Gymnasium*. The credit requirement for graduation was slashed from 211 to 157, which left students with 20 credit-hour weekly schedules. In order to keep the same range of material available at Northwestern, some formerly required classes

³⁵ Carleton A. Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1990), 33.

were converted to electives (a feature missing from the pre-seminary curriculum since 1869). Following the curriculum revision, electives composed 18 of the 157 required credits for graduation and encompassed material formerly taught in English Literature, advanced Greek, advanced German, and advanced Latin classes. As a result of so many upper-level language courses being deemed electives, the total foreign language credit requirement for graduation dropped from 106 to 75.³⁶ Percentage-wise, however, language courses continued to make up around 50% of the entire pre-seminary program.

The drastic reduction in required credits showed that an adjustment in educational philosophy was beginning to take place. The *Gymnasium* system had been designed with stereotypical German discipline and efficiency. Nearly every moment of a student's day was mapped out for him in order to cement the fundamentals of each subject area in his mind. Class time was maximized so that professors could drill the students repeatedly in vocabulary, grammar, arithmetic, and whatever else was considered foundational for a good understanding of the subject matter. The *Gymnasium's* goal was not to cultivate independence or free thinking within its walls; it rather strove to give students the best possible foundation for future independent study and critical thinking.

After the 1961 system overhaul, students had much more time to do more independent work on Northwestern's campus. It freed up time for larger projects and papers to be prepared outside of class and forced students into the library to do their own research. In general, it allowed both instructors and students to do more college-level work, rather than just passing on or receiving pre-packaged course material that "covered the subject matter." Toppe, who to some extent bemoans the decrease in class time devoted especially to language study, nevertheless

³⁶ Toppe, 29.

acknowledges that the time won for study outside of class was an important and worthwhile gain for Northwestern's faculty and student body.³⁷

The 1961 curriculum revision set the tone for further changes over the following decades. In 1970, Northwestern's credit requirement dropped from 157 to 153, due in large part to the continued de-emphasis of German (it lost eight required credit hours at that time). As the number of required credits dropped, the number of elective credits rose, in 1970 from 18 to 30.³⁸ In 1980, in connection with Northwestern's attempt at accreditation, the total requirement was cut to 149 (English and music courses took most of that hit), but elective credits stayed steady. As time went on, more and more time was opened up for higher-level out-of-class work, and the system looked less and less like the *Gymnasium* that was once considered "the best possible education for anyone."

Curriculum and Accreditation

The faculty and board of Northwestern had entertained thoughts of accreditation at multiple times in the college's history, reaching back all the way to the early 1900s, but they took no action until the 1970s. Generally, Northwestern held the position that as a church-run college that served a church-driven purpose, it should not allow a secular institution to influence its direction, structure, or priorities, no matter how insignificant that influence should appear. The faculty and board had a healthy apprehension toward any involvement in governmental or secular affairs, lest the unique purpose of Northwestern be threatened. As a result, the institution remained unaccredited for more than a century.

³⁷ Toppe, 34.

³⁸ Toppe, 29.

In the 1970s, though, pressures arose from several sources to nudge Northwestern toward accreditation. The first was the Veterans' Association (VA). In 1973, students who had served in the armed forces faced the loss of financial assistance from the VA if Northwestern did not meet certain standards. The second was the University of Wisconsin System. Many Northwestern students who decided not to continue in Watertown chose to transfer their credits to a UW school. Many Northwestern graduates elected to pursue graduate degrees at the University of Wisconsin. In 1973, UW decided that credits from unaccredited non-UW schools would no longer be accepted after 1975 unless that school had by then begun the accreditation process. Combined, these pressures were enough to convince Northwestern that the accreditation process was worth pursuing.

In 1975 and 1976, Northwestern officially began the accreditation process. Visitors to the campus from the North Central Association noted both strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations based on their observations. Concerning the curriculum, they encouraged the college to continue the trend that had started in 1961: decrease in-class learning to enable more self-directed study, and create more balance by introducing philosophy and science courses and cutting back language courses.

Multiple visitations occurred throughout the second half of the '70s, and Northwestern took steps to comply with the North Central Association's recommendations. It planned the aforementioned 1980 curriculum revision that dropped the program credit requirement to 149, as well as addressing concerns about faculty higher education, administrative structure, and campus facilities. By 1979, the college was told it could expect its accreditation to be approved by 1981. It was, and after lengthy discussion at the 1982 Synod Convention, Northwestern accepted the NCA's accreditation.

Looking back on Northwestern's accreditation chapter, Carleton Toppe, the school's president at that time, downplayed the effect of the process on Northwestern's curriculum. He wrote, "NWC had not been obliged to compromise its purpose, nor had it lost control of its unique curriculum... Our synod membership and educational entities exerted more sustained pressure to reduce the foreign language component of the Northwestern course of studies than North Central had."³⁹ Northwestern emerged from the accreditation issue fully conscious of the special purpose and process it carried out on its campus. If nothing else, the college became even more aware of its own identity and the importance of constant review that would keep them true to that identity in a changing world.

A Look at Non-Biblical Languages

President Toppe noted that, in the 1970s and early '80s, Northwestern received pressure from within the Wisconsin Synod to lessen its language requirements. Students had known for years that Northwestern's freshman year was difficult, to say the least. At that time, they moved up to the next level of Latin and German classes while simultaneously beginning their study of Greek, an undertaking already difficult on its own. The dean of students heard many reports of suffering morale in freshmen due to language struggles and, along with other faculty members, held concerns about the wisdom of keeping the current arrangement. In 1980, the board of control also addressed the issue. They objected to the perceived overload of language in the freshman year and resolved to recommend "to the faculty that it continue to study the curriculum in the freshman year with a view to lessen the impact of the required language courses."⁴⁰

³⁹ Toppe, 89.

⁴⁰ Toppe, 30.

At that time, however, the way was not clear for Northwestern to adjust their non-biblical language curriculum. Both Latin and German were still required by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) for all students pursuing further theological studies. The faculties of WLS and Northwestern had agreed that in order to develop an acceptable level of aptitude in both languages, students should have had two college semesters of Latin and four of German (in addition to four high school years of Latin and two of German) before stepping onto the seminary's campus. In order for Northwestern to lessen its requirements, the seminary would have to do so first.

In 1983, it made the necessary change. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary informed Northwestern that from that point on, it would require students to have a working knowledge of *either* Latin or German for use in theological research. This paved the way for a major overhaul of Northwestern's non-biblical language requirements to be included in the curriculum revision that took effect in 1986.

Northwestern's Academic Affairs Committee indicated the purpose of this revision in a statement published in 1985. In addition to language-based concerns, they also planned to use this revision to address the weaknesses pointed out in their recently completed accreditation process:

Both the program of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and the work of the parish ministry require extensive reading and writing. Students and pastors read the Scriptures so that they may hear and believe God's message of salvation. In addition, they must read and analyze critically a great deal of literature about the Scriptures and on religious topics generally. They also need to commit their thoughts to writing, both to achieve clarity in their own thinking and for the sake of a clear and logical presentation of the truth to other hearers and readers. The objectives of this proposed revision of the Northwestern curriculum follow:

- I. To reduce the number of credit hours required for graduation in order to increase requirements in reading and writing.

- II. To accomplish the reduction of credit hours while maintaining Northwestern's purpose of preparing students for admission to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in the framework of a selective liberal arts curriculum.
- III. To fit the liberal arts segment of the curriculum more closely to the present-day needs of the ministry.⁴¹

To accomplish these objectives, Northwestern dropped the credit requirement for graduation from 149 to 134, with 38 of those credits now coming from elective courses. The foreign language requirement was lessened significantly by implementing a two-track system. In this system, per the seminary's new requirements, freshmen could elect to take either two more required semesters of Latin or three of German. The board of control reported to the synod at the 1987 convention to describe the changes' effect on students:

The curriculum revisions affect seniors the least and freshmen the most. The freshmen, who have had no experience with the NWC curriculum, simply accept what is required of them. They become aware of one important difference: they are not required to take both Latin and German while they are beginning their study of Greek. If either Latin or German proved difficult for them in high school, they can begin their college studies with a better attitude toward language study because they are not burdened by a course that has frustrated them.⁴²

As students continued at Northwestern with a more positive approach toward language study and more time to devote to the single non-biblical language of their choice, the board and faculty hoped that more students would achieve a higher level of competence in either Latin or German.

The 1986 revision also saw the introduction of a new language to Northwestern's campus and curriculum. Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) and Martin Luther Preparatory School (MLPS) had been teaching their students the Spanish language for several years, but for the young men from those schools who chose to pursue the pastoral ministry at Northwestern, there was no opportunity to continue their studies. Now, the Board for World Missions (BWM) and

⁴¹ *A Proposed Revision of the Northwestern Curriculum – 1985.*

⁴² *Reports and Memorials, 1987, 18.*

the Board for Home Missions (BHM) urged Northwestern to add Spanish to its curriculum. The BHM had noted the large influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants into the United States and the ministry areas of WELS congregations. The BWM had its eyes on mission fields in Latin America. Northwestern complied and began offering a two-year elective program in Spanish for upperclassmen, to be taken in addition to either Latin or German.

Post-Amalgamation

In the years after Northwestern received accreditation, and after the major language program restructuring of 1986, the faculty continued to conduct curriculum reviews and self-assessments. In 1994, Northwestern was due to have its accreditation reaffirmed by the North Central Association, so it undertook another round of self-studies. The self-study published for that purpose in October 1993 noted areas of the curriculum that were under review at the time: the amount of English required for graduation, the amount of Latin or German required for admission, and the place of classical vs. *koine* Greek as the basis for the study of elementary Greek. At the earliest, any changes that stemmed from that round of reviews would be implemented in the 1994-95 school year.⁴³

All plans to adjust the curriculum were put on hold, however, when the synod in convention voted to amalgamate Northwestern College with Doctor Martin Luther College (DMLC) in New Ulm, Minnesota and create a new college on the New Ulm campus. This process had begun already in 1985, when the WELS Board for Ministerial Education (BME) had initiated a study of the need for three preparatory schools. At that time, the synod ran

⁴³ “Self-Study Report for the Reaffirmation of the Accreditation of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin,” Self Study (Watertown, WI: Northwestern College, October 1993), 46–47.

Northwestern Preparatory School (NPS) on Northwestern College's Watertown campus, Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien, WI, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, MI. In 1989, the commission created to study the prep school issue recommended that any amalgamation of prep schools should not be done independently of the amalgamation of the two synod colleges. The 1991 synod convention decided that the synod's long-range plan would include the amalgamation of NPS and MLPS on the Watertown campus and Northwestern and DMLC on the New Ulm campus. A 1993 report to that year's synod convention declared the amalgamations to be feasible, and the delegates voted to carry out the plan to amalgamate the schools in question, with the new institutions, Luther Preparatory School (LPS) and Martin Luther College (MLC), opening on July 1, 1995.

The new Martin Luther College incorporated both the synod's pastor-training and teacher-training colleges into one institution, a new WELS college of ministry. MLC attempted to keep the existing curriculum for each "track" intact, but combined general education classes whenever possible. This resulted in some minor changes, such as pre-seminary students requiring nine science credits rather than the previous eight.⁴⁴ Over the first years of the new institution's existence, the combination of curricula created some tensions between faculty, alumni, and students, but no truly impactful changes to the pre-seminary curriculum occurred for several years.

In September 1999, the presidents of the four WELS ministerial education schools (WLS, MLC, LPS, and MLS) and the chairman of the BME met to discuss, among other things, the coordination of curricula on the various levels of the WELS ministerial education system. They

⁴⁴ "Self-Study Report of Martin Luther College, 1999," Self-Study (New Ulm, MN: Martin Luther College, 1999), 102.

proposed the formation of a committee that would review the curricula across the system and recommend changes with an eye toward greater coordination between prep schools, college, and seminary. After the four schools' boards of control approved the concept of this committee, the BME formally approved the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee (MECC) on October 16, 1999.⁴⁵

A year later, on October 12, 2000, the MECC finalized its report. On October 14, it was adopted by the boards of control for all four synod schools. The BME adopted it on October 15.⁴⁶ At the 2001 synod convention, the BME appended the MECC report to its own and informed delegates that it and the schools intended to implement the MECC's recommendations beginning with the 2001-02 school year.

The MECC made its recommendations only after weighing and considering the history and values of the synod's worker training system. In its report, its members noted several ideas that guided their view of pre-seminary training: "Our training in the Scriptures cannot be reduced or watered down... We must continue to teach the biblical languages well at the college level and use them at every opportunity at the seminary level. They must be foundational in our pastor-track training and never perceived as obstacles to recruitment and retention of students... In order to preserve our precious status as a confessional church, we need men in every class of the pastor track who are able to work in the confessional languages."⁴⁷ They also reaffirmed the importance of history and English courses, as well as science, communication, and mathematics, for a basic understanding of the world in which gospel ministry takes place.

⁴⁵ "Report of the Ministerial Education Curriculum Committee," October 12, 2000, 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "MECC Report," 2.

The MECC's report was based on the past and the already-existing foundation of WELS pastor training, but its job was to make recommendations with an eye toward the future. The MECC listed the following as its assumptions for the future of the pastoral ministry in WELS:

- More demands will be made on pastors to be involved in outreach/evangelism to people in their community who do not come from the same cultural background as the pastor.
- Living language skills will become more valuable for pastors.
- Pastors will use more electronic technology to deliver instruction in the classroom.
- Pastors will continue to be called on to do more and more counseling.
- Good interpersonal communication skills will continue to be highly valued by the people whom pastors serve.
- Standards of excellence demanded in worship planning and execution will continue to rise.⁴⁸

Based on its historical foundation and with an eye toward the future, the MECC's recommendations resulted in the latest major revision of the pre-seminary curriculum. Its greatest impact was again on the language program. For the first time, MLC allowed pastor-track students to begin their study of *koine* Greek already in their freshman year, bypassing the study of classical Greek that had been foundational for its whole history. After a semester-long introduction to Greek grammar and vocabulary, *koine* Greek students began studying the Gospel of Mark in the second semester of their freshman year. The MECC thought that giving less language-inclined pre-seminary students the opportunity to study theological Greek texts earlier would give them greater motivation in their continuing study of the language.

The MECC report also resulted in the so-called "Five-Option Approach" to non-biblical language study. An incoming pre-seminary student could choose between the following non-biblical language options:

- Latin – equivalent of six college semesters
- German – equivalent of six college semesters plus an immersion
- Spanish – same as German

⁴⁸ "MECC Report," 6.

- Other living language – same as Spanish or German. This instruction would take place outside of MLC, but the student’s progress would be monitored by MLC....
- Latin/German – equivalent of five college semesters in each language. This would be a challenging program for brighter students. It would waive some of the required Latin and German courses, but would allow the student to complete both⁴⁹

Generally, the committee anticipated that the required “college equivalents” would include a student’s high school background in a language as well. A student who had taken Latin in high school could take a proficiency test, and if he scored high enough, each year of his high school Latin studies would be counted equivalent to one semester of college Latin. Thus, a student who took four years of high school Latin could end up only taking two semesters of Latin at MLC. By that process, most pre-seminary students would end up beginning only one language at a time and only studying two at any given time.

The biggest shift that resulted from the MECC report was the emergence of Spanish as an alternative to Latin or German. Since 1986, it had been offered as an upper-class elective to supplement the study of the confessional languages, but in 2001, it became a program of its own. The MECC decided that, in view of the increasing prevalence of Spanish in the United States, and because it was becoming more popular on the campuses of WELS high schools, “some students need to be given the option of learning another living language [read: Spanish] in place of German while studying the confessions in English.” They foresaw that “such students could be gifts to the church in unique areas of ministry. They may be instrumental in passing on confessional Lutheranism to people who speak various other languages [especially Spanish].”⁵⁰ In order to allow students to focus on Spanish as their only non-biblical language, the seminary amended its entrance requirements to no longer require a background in Latin or German.

⁴⁹ “MECC Report,” 11.

⁵⁰ “MECC Report,” 10. Text in brackets mine.

Other adjustments to the curriculum in 2001 were rather minor. They included the addition of a new mathematics course, new science courses, a Fitness for Life course, and the requirement of a Minority Cultures course for every student without an extensive foreign immersion experience. At that time, MLC also began offering an elective course in world religions and removed any preexistent restrictions on music credits in the pre-seminary program.⁵¹ More than anything, the 2001 revision had been about the non-biblical language program, as the MECC and the WELS ministerial education system wrestled with the place of those languages within its curriculum.

In the years since 2001, any changes to the pre-seminary curriculum have been relatively minor. A comparison of the “Pre-Seminary Generic Program Plan” for the class of 2019 with the 2001 program does reveal a few differences, however. The total credit requirement for graduation has settled at 130, only a four-credit decrease since 1986. The English required courses have been restructured to include a menu of literature seminars from which students may choose. The fine arts component includes a similar menu of choices. The Western Civilization courses have been reduced by one credit each and are renamed “The Rise of the West” and “The Modern West.”⁵² Perhaps the greatest addition to the pre-seminary course took place in 2012, when in response to rapid growth in the language and increasing participation of graduates in the Friends of China program, MLC added Mandarin as another on-campus non-biblical language option.

Reviews and revisions of the pre-seminary curriculum will continue to take place as WELS ministerial education moves into the future. In 2017, an MLC faculty committee met to

⁵¹ “MECC Report,” 14–15.

⁵² “Pre-Seminary Generic Program Plan” (Martin Luther College, 2015).

do just that. It is only a responsible thing to do – proper stewardship of the resources and opportunities that God has given to our little synod. As the worker-training system moves forward, and as we consider changes and adjustments, however, we have to remember who we are, where we came from, and what the true purpose of our schools is. The 2001 MECC report summed up that purpose nicely. WELS ministerial education schools must always strive to prepare candidates for public ministry who “are committed to the Scriptures and confessions in their entirety, are intent on being life-long developers of their God-given gifts, have a basic understanding of the world in which they live, are qualified and competent to communicate the gospel in Word and sacrament to the world, and have a zeal to proclaim that gospel.”⁵³ May our leaders always ensure that, even as it adjusts for a changing world and changing needs, our pre-seminary curriculum will always retain that goal and purpose.

⁵³ “MECC Report,” 1.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HISTORY

As the MECC made its assessments and recommendations for the future of the pre-seminary curriculum in 2001, it could not do so independent of the program's nearly 150 years of history. The lessons learned and decisions made in the past, whether positive or negative, serve as the foundation for our future. Before I attempt to make assessments and recommendations of today's curriculum in the area of non-biblical languages, I must also do the same. The history of the pre-seminary curriculum reveals valuable information about the place of non-biblical languages in the program, as well as about acceptable rationale for change to the curriculum.

History Speaks to the Place of Non-Biblical Languages in the Pre-Seminary Curriculum

When Northwestern instituted the *Gymnasium* in 1870, the non-biblical language component of its curriculum was very different from what it has become today. At that time, the only truly foreign non-biblical language taught as a regular part of the program was Latin. German was taught as a native language, with classes covering grammar and literature with purposes similar to modern American English classes. English was probably more foreign to many students who entered the *Gymnasium* than German was at that time, as indicated by the higher number of credits required in English than in German (twenty-four English, as opposed to eighteen German).

Both German and English were taught as living languages that President Ernst and the faculty hoped would become students' two equally useful *Muttersprachen*. On Northwestern's

campus, students studied the grammar of both languages, but that was not the program's goal in teaching them. Instead, the grammar was a step along the way to using the languages to build a worldview. Both German and English allowed students to obtain a greater understanding and appreciation of history, literature, and culture. German allowed students to access the best scholarship of the day in European and Middle Eastern history, science, and linguistics. It was an added bonus that the historical literature of the Lutheran church happened to be written in German, too. English opened up American history and American and British literature for study. Once they moved past Northwestern's campus, students who knew both English and German would be able to use their languages in further academic research, church work, and daily life as a citizen in a multilingual country.

Latin, the original foreign non-biblical language functioned similarly in Northwestern's curriculum. Students had to spend more class time to master it since, more likely than not, they came to Watertown with little to no background in Latin. However, even though it made up roughly twenty-five percent of a student's course load over his seven years on campus, those courses were not meant purely for the development of a skill. While some faculty and many students in the Missouri Synod's Concordia system at that time considered Latin to be one member of the "court of the Gentiles" (i.e., only good to study insofar as it is helpful for studying the Bible and theology), Northwestern's faculty objected strongly to that designation. They insisted that Latin and Greek were "the exponents and conveyors of the highest culture of the human mind,"⁵⁴ and were therefore a valuable part of any education, not only a theological one. Through the study of Caesar, Vergil, Cicero, and more, students developed a knowledge of the historical, literary, and cultural background for most of Western civilization. Again, the goal of

⁵⁴ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* 49, no. 16 (August 15, 1914), 249.

Latin courses in Northwestern's *Gymnasium* was not the acquisition of Latin as a tool, but the creation of an informed worldview.

History Speaks to the Purpose of Pre-Seminary Curriculum Changes

The history recounted above follows the story of the pre-seminary curriculum through five major curriculum changes/revisions (1870, 1919, 1961, 1986, 2001) and several smaller ones. Each time that a major shift in the structure of the program occurred in history, there was pushback in some form and some intensity or another. This is understandable. The people of the Wisconsin Synod care deeply about the training of their pastors. They want the men who serve in their congregations to be as well-prepared as they can possibly be, and so they support the synod's ministerial education schools with their offerings and their prayers. However, conflict can arise between well-intentioned brothers and sisters in Christ, when one person's ideas of what ministerial education should look like are different from his neighbor's. In this portion of my paper, I have chosen not to comment on whether or not a particular change was a good idea. I will simply note patterns and precedents for curriculum change where I see them.

First, history shows that the pre-seminary curriculum has changed repeatedly to account for the changing needs of the Wisconsin Synod. The world in which we do ministry has changed – new needs have arisen and old ones have subsided – and so different things have become necessary in the training of pastors. The institution of the *Gymnasium*, only five years into Northwestern's existence, is the first example of this kind of change. Adam Martin's American university did not meet the needs of a German-speaking church body, so the system changed to be as German as the people its graduates would serve. When German began to disappear as the primary language of the Wisconsin Synod, Northwestern underwent the *Übergang ins Englische*

in order to better prepare students to serve in a changing language culture. In subsequent years, requirements in German decreased as it became less and less useful. In 1986, when the mission boards noted an increase in Spanish-speaking people within the reach of our congregations' ministries, Northwestern added a Spanish elective. In 2001, MLC made Spanish one of its full non-biblical language options in response to the same persisting need. In 2012, it added Mandarin to address the rapid growth of that language in this country and around the world. Outside of languages, the curriculum has adjusted the emphasis and application of its liberal arts component multiple times to keep up with the changing world in which we live and serve, adding in computer courses, for example.

Second, changes have been made in order to increase the scholarship of the pre-seminary curriculum. In the eyes of August Ernst and the "German department" professors, the transition to a *Gymnasium* was a transition to a better, more rounded, more truly scholarly system of education than Martin's American system. When, over time, the heavy class schedule of the *Gymnasium* fell out of favor, Northwestern made its drastic 1961 cut to class hours to free up more time for truly college-level work by students and instructors. As time went on, further revisions were made in 1970, 1980, 1986, and 2001, all of which created more time for independent study, upper-level research and projects, and use of the library.

Third, the curriculum has undergone change in order to attract and retain students. Again, the implementation of the *Gymnasium* served this function. The German educational philosophy and language appealed much more to German-speaking, German culture Wisconsin Synod members than did Martin's system, and the growth of the pre-seminary program on Northwestern's campus after 1870 is proof that the change achieved its purpose. As German began its decline at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, Northwestern did not

change its core system, but it did introduce the *Septima* year in 1902 to better equip students to handle the system. When it became clear that the decrease in German knowledge would not be reversed, the *Übergang ins Englische* changed the language of the campus to match the student body's preference and began to teach German as a truly foreign language. In 1931, Northwestern spaced out its required languages and decreased its Latin requirements in order to decrease the impact of languages on student morale. In addition, the five-year program was developed to allow students with no language background to enroll and remain at Northwestern. In 1986, the two-track system was instituted to decrease the language burden on freshmen, and Spanish was added as an elective for students who wanted to pursue it. In 2001, the *koine* Greek track was added to create greater motivation for Greek study in language-disinclined students, and the five-option system of non-biblical languages aimed to make that component of the curriculum less intimidating.

Finally, it must be noted that, though it has not been the impetus for change, curriculum revisions at the pre-seminary level have always been carried out in coordination with the requirements of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The most striking example of the seminary's requirements playing a part in pre-seminary curriculum change is, of course, the early 1980s development of Northwestern's two-track system. Already in 1980, Northwestern's board of control was calling for the reduction of language requirements, especially for freshmen. At that time, however, Northwestern was not free to excuse its students from studying Latin or German, since WLS still required its enrollees to know and use both. Only after the seminary revised its admission requirements in 1983 could Northwestern begin planning for its 1986 change to the language program. The same thing had to happen in 2001, when the MECC recommended that

WLS take German and Latin out of its admission requirements entirely to facilitate the five-option plan at MLC.

History shows that all the above criteria have factored into multiple curriculum revisions over the course of WELS pre-seminary education's history. As we move forward, it would be foolish to ignore the fact that these were considered good reasons to think about change. Should the same concerns arise again, or if they never subsided in the first place, may they be good reasons to think about further change? Whether or not that is the case will depend on the specific time and circumstances – the challenges that our church body and our ministerial education system face. As we strive to meet those challenges, whatever they may be, let us readily turn to our history to glean wisdom from the past. By reflecting on who we are and how we got here, we can better assess how to plan for and take on the future.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON NON-BIBLICAL LANGUAGES

Today, non-biblical languages are a major portion of the pre-seminary curriculum at Martin Luther College, requiring 12-19 credits before graduation (9-14% of the program). During the freshman and sophomore years, they make up 17-28% of courses. For perspective, outside of general education courses, non-biblical languages are tied for the third-largest required component of the program, after only Greek (19 or 22 credits/14-17%) and Hebrew (14 credits/11%), and tied with theology.⁵⁵

In today's non-biblical language courses, at least half of courses in each program except Latin (i.e., German, Mandarin, and Spanish) are designated expressly for the development of grammar, vocabulary, and familiarity with the language. They bear course names such as "Intermediate German I." In the Mandarin program, all 12 credits consist in such courses (Intermediate Chinese I-IV). Three of the four required Spanish courses (Intermediate Spanish I-III) fall into this category, while in the Latin program, a single "Intermediate Latin" course aims to build on a high school knowledge of Latin's structure.

The remainder of the required classes in the German, Latin, and Confessional Languages programs study literature in their appropriate language. German students take "Survey of

⁵⁵ These numbers consider general education courses as one "block" of 38 credits (29%). When that block of courses is broken down into subject areas, theology courses jump to the number one spot (21 credits/16%), moving non-biblical languages into fourth. That said, within the theology component, 9 credits rely heavily on the use of the Greek language, and many students think of them as Greek courses. If those courses are considered under the Greek umbrella, theology is left with 12 credits and remains tied with non-biblical languages. To reflect the perception of the students, I have chosen not to break down the general education "block" for these calculations.

Theological German” and “Luther German,” while Latin students take “Vergil’s *Aeneid*,” “Classical Latin Literature,” and “Ecclesiastical Latin.” The goal of these classes is to use the language skills built up in previous classes to gain perspectives on history, culture, and theology.

The Spanish program also has classes that look at literature and culture, but they are available only as free electives. The final required class in Spanish is “Communicating Christ in Spanish.” Its purpose is to prepare students to talk about or teach Christianity in the Spanish language, using Luther’s Small Catechism as a starting point.

In order to get contemporary perspectives on pre-seminary non-biblical language study in today’s world, I conducted two surveys. In the first, I surveyed pastors in the field with hopes of discovering the influence that their background in non-biblical language studies has had on their ministries. In the second survey, I asked current pre-seminary students at Martin Luther College about their experience with the non-biblical language program in order to determine its effectiveness and its influence on motivation and morale.

Pastors’ Reflections on Non-Biblical Language Study

Of forty-nine pastors who received this survey, twenty-nine responded. The earliest graduate of the pre-seminary program surveyed left Northwestern in 1962. The most recent graduated MLC in 2013. The pastors surveyed have served as parish pastors, tutors, teachers, principals, world missionaries, and professors in synod schools. Each district of WELS, along with WELS Canada, is represented by at least one pastor currently serving in its mission fields.

My survey asked these pastors two major questions: 1) “Have your non-biblical language studies had any practical benefits for your ministry (do you use the language(s) you learned)? If so, please describe them.” 2) “Have your non-biblical language studies had intangible benefits

for your ministry (beyond enabling you to work in that language)? If so, what do you understand them to be?”⁵⁶

Practical Benefits of Non-Biblical Languages for Ministry

Most pastors responded that their non-biblical language studies were indeed beneficial for their ministries. Except for one man who has close ties with today’s pre-seminary program,⁵⁷ every respondent who graduated before the 1986 institution of the two-track system insisted that their Latin and German background has impacted their ministry positively. Two thirds of later graduates also believed the language they chose has served them well since graduation. Upon further review of their responses, however, it seems that their practical use of the language or languages they studied was mostly very limited.

Overall, twelve of twenty-one pastors who took German reported actively using their German in ministry. Ten of twenty-three pastors with Latin background, three of four with Spanish, and the one with Mandarin also said that their languages have had practical benefits. Overall, accounting for the study of multiple languages, twenty-one of the twenty-nine respondents found some practicality in their non-biblical languages.

Six pastors who took German have used it to communicate with older members who had relapsed back into their first language. All those who reported using it for communication graduated before 1986. Later graduates do not report having occasion to speak German in their pastoral work. A few do occasional reading of German-language works, and one emphasized the

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1 for data collected from surveyed pastors.

⁵⁷ This man’s opinion seemed to come through the lens of his more recent interactions with pre-seminary students “in the program.” He noted that “we’ve lost some good men” because of the negative effects of a “pre-seminary program so heavily focused on language study” and mused about whether our current system is the best option.

greater appreciation of German church music he has been able to attain. One served at a school as a German instructor for a time. One surveyed pastor has done in-depth work in German, working together with a group of colleagues to translate previously untranslated works of Matthias Flacius.

For the rest of the respondents who took German – the majority of them by far – use of the language is merely incidental. While reading a translated work, these pastors are able to understand an untranslated or untranslatable word or phrase that remains amidst the English. They describe occasionally opening their *Concordia Triglotta* to reference the German of the Lutheran confessions when they have a question on the English translation they've already been using.

A Latin background appears to have a similar degree of practicality. Of the ten pastors who reported practical benefits, only one found himself using it intensively, in his case as a teacher. The remaining nine said their use of Latin was confined to dogmatic terms in English translations and occasional cross-references with the *Triglot* or the Latin fathers.

The sampling of pastors with Spanish and Mandarin backgrounds is very small (only five respondents between them), but as living languages spoken in America and in mission fields, pastors appear to find more consistent use for them. When the one Mandarin student served for two years in China, he used the language almost daily in conversation (though since returning to the United States, he uses it much less). Spanish-speaking pastors use their language to communicate and minister to prospects and members in their areas whenever they interact with Spanish-only-speaking people.

Eight pastors out of twenty-nine surveyed said that their non-biblical languages have had no practical benefit for their ministry. I think that most of them who took Latin and/or German

probably do use that background when the dogmatic terms and phrases come up in their English reading, even if they didn't consider it worth mentioning. The fact remains, however, that they don't use their non-biblical languages on a regular or intentional basis.

With a few exceptions, the rule seems to be that Spanish and Mandarin, as living languages with large and growing native-speaking populations, are more consistently useful in ministry, while Latin and German are only used occasionally. A few dedicated and gifted pastors use their Latin and German to do reading or translating, but most only use it in order to cross-reference materials they are already studying in English, if at all.

Since the pastor training curriculum has adjusted in the past to account for the changing needs of the Wisconsin Synod, has the time come for another adjustment? It seems that many pastors in today's American context simply do not need the skills provided by studying a non-biblical language. Whether that results from more materials becoming available in English or the prioritization of other aspects of ministry over original-language reading and research, the question of whether the time and effort spent to develop those skills is worthwhile should be considered and answered again.

Intangible Benefits of Non-Biblical Languages for Ministry

Twenty-three out of the twenty-nine surveyed pastors reported intangible benefits from their non-biblical language studies. They included sixteen of twenty-three who took Latin, eight of twenty-one who took German, three of the four who took Spanish, and the one who took Mandarin.

At least one pastor who studied each language noted that their time in their language had made them a better linguist in general. Those with a Latin background, especially, lauded its

positive effects on their understanding and use of English, as well as its importance as a basis for Greek. A few former Latin and German students recalled that studying those languages had made them more disciplined students in general. Pastors who studied living languages (German, Spanish, and Mandarin), saw much of those languages' intangible benefit in exposure to a different culture.

It seems to me that the ability of studying language to make a person a better linguist and more dedicated scholar is one of the greatest benefits of non-biblical language study for pastors. Their work is communicating God's Word to people, and anything that makes that communication more understandable and articulate is valuable.

That said, according to MLC professor Joel Fredrich, "Latin is in many ways the ideal *introduction* to Greek." Its students will do "much better in Greek if [they tackle] Latin *first*."⁵⁸ But is the benefit the same when the students "tackle" both languages simultaneously? Is it wise or effective for a student to keep studying a language from which he is intended to gain a linguistic foundation when he is already studying the language that is supposed to build on that foundation?

The formation of a linguistic character is a foundational thing. It is the groundwork on which a person builds the use of language as they go about their lives. Undoubtedly, the intangible benefits pastors list for their non-biblical language studies are important and valuable. But in the course that WELS has laid out for the training of its pastors, at what point should that foundation have been laid? It seems to me that, if the foundational benefits of non-biblical language study are the most important, the onus of developing that foundation falls on our

⁵⁸ Joel D. Fredrich, "Our College Pastoral Training Curriculum: A Channel of Blessings from Our God," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 106, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 6. Emphasis mine.

Lutheran high schools. Ideally, those benefits should be achieved before a student is required to specialize in one of the non-biblical languages at MLC. Once they enter the college pre-seminary program, their focus should be to build on whatever foundation they bring with them.

Pre-Seminary Students' Experience with Non-Biblical Language Study

The second survey went out to 174 Martin Luther College pre-seminary students. Seventy-one responded, of which two were enrolled in the Seminary Certification program and thus have no non-biblical language requirement. Among the sixty-nine remaining were representatives of every class and every on-campus non-biblical language option, including several on the five-year program and several transfers from other colleges.

The pre-seminary students were asked to comment on several aspects of their experience with the non-biblical language program at MLC. They shared the reasoning behind their choice of non-biblical language, their attitude toward their non-biblical language studies, the relationship of non-biblical language study to their biblical language study, the relationship of language studies to their commitment to study for ministry, and the benefits they hoped they would reap from their course of study. The final survey question asked them to make a judgment call: if MLC offered non-language options alongside the current non-biblical language options, would they still pursue the non-biblical language they currently study?⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See Appendix 2 for all data collected from surveyed pre-seminary students. Further references to specific data from this survey will be given in the following pages.

Pre-Seminary Students' Reasons for Choosing a Non-Biblical Language

When asked, “Why did you choose the non-biblical language(s) that you did?”⁶⁰ the most common answer among pre-seminary students was that the language they chose was the path of least resistance – the option that would require the smallest amount of additional work. That was the reason for every German-only student (five out of five), 73% of Latin students, and 65% of Spanish students. Mandarin is not taught in WELS high schools, so its students do not have the background that would make it the easiest next step. The Confessional Languages option is designed to be a more challenging course of study for gifted and interested students, so its students predictably did not list “path of least resistance” as a reason for choosing it, either. About half of Confessional students did cite previous experience and enjoyment as reasons for choosing both German and Latin.

The next most common range of answers was that students expected the language they chose to be practical in one way or another. Half of Mandarin students and 42% of Spanish students expressed excitement about studying a language they can use to communicate with people in mission fields. More than half of Confessional students indicated a desire to study theological writings in their original languages. One Latin-only student expressed the same expectation that his language classes would turn out to be practical for studying church history.

This survey shows that among the single-language non-biblical language programs, over half of all students make their choice not based on interest or a true desire to study a given language, but on whatever will require the least effort from them. Decisions based on expectation and desire to use the language studied are more prevalent in Mandarin and Spanish, as living

⁶⁰ See Appendix 2.1

languages in mission fields, and Confessional students, who are generally more interested and committed to language to begin with.

The Attitude of Pre-Seminary Students toward the Non-Biblical Language Program

The pre-seminary men surveyed were asked to rate their foreign language skills on a scale of one to five, with one being “hopeless” and five being “extremely good.”⁶¹ Predictably, almost half (46%) considered themselves to be middle-of-the-road language scholars. 31% considered themselves to be above average, with 10% claiming to be “extremely good.” Only 13% of students rated themselves below average, with only two students (3%) resigning themselves to “hopeless” status.

The men were then asked to rate their emotions toward foreign language study on the same one to five scale, with one being “hate them” and five being “they are my favorite.”⁶² Here, 61% of students rated their attitude toward language study as more positive than average, with 20% saying that language classes were their favorite classes. 30% had a more-or-less indifferent approach to non-biblical languages, but only 10% rated their language courses negatively. No one chose the “hate them” option.

Next, each student was asked to rank the importance of their non-biblical language component among the other components of the pre-seminary program.⁶³ On average, the pre-seminary student body ranked the theology component as most important, followed by biblical languages. Across all non-biblical language tracks, non-biblical languages ranked seventh, after

⁶¹ See Appendix 2.2

⁶² See Appendix 2.3

⁶³ See Appendix 2.4

the aforementioned components as well as (in order) communications, psychology/philosophy, history, and English. Its average ranking was 6.08. Its median ranking was 5.

When the ranking was broken out across the five on-campus options, it became clear that students in different programs had different ideas about the importance of the language(s) they study. Confessional students rated non-biblical languages highest, with an average rating of 3.5, good for the third most important spot. German students gave an average rating of 4.6 and the fourth spot in their ranking. Spanish students averaged a 5.8 rating, moving Spanish into a tie with history classes for the sixth spot. Mandarin students ranked Chinese at 6.3 on average, good for the seventh most important position. Latin gave the lowest average rating of 6.5, which also landed it in the seventh spot.

The survey reveals that the overall attitude of pre-seminary students toward language study in general is very positive. Even many students who don't consider themselves to be very good at language generally enjoy their language classes. That is a very good thing. The heavy load of both biblical and non-biblical languages requires students who have a positive attitude.

However, even though students say they enjoy language study in general, they rank non-biblical languages surprisingly low in importance. Especially in comparison to the prominent place non-biblical languages occupy in the curriculum, students' rankings are not proportional. Confessional students assign their non-biblical languages a higher spot, probably due to their higher level of proficiency and the higher number of classes they take. The relatively small sampling of German-only students also gives a relatively high average ranking. Latin and Spanish, however, from which by far most of the survey respondents come, show a general disconnect between priority in the curriculum and priority in the minds of their students.

The Relationship of Biblical and Non-Biblical Language Study

Of pre-seminary students who take a non-biblical language, 65% reported that their attitude toward their non-biblical language(s) is different from their approach to the biblical languages.

⁶⁴For almost all of that segment, the difference in approach showed itself in more effort and desire funneled toward the biblical languages, which were considered more important. Five Spanish students who considered Spanish to be more important or easier to enjoy were the only exception. Of the other 35% who saw no difference in attitude, most made comments such as “a class is a class” and “they’re both necessary for graduation.”

When the student body is broken down according to non-biblical language option, more nuanced responses come out. Six of ten Confessional students report no difference in attitude, since both biblical and non-biblical languages are useful, albeit in different ways. The four who do see a difference comment that they “don’t see [themselves] actively [using] Latin or German in [their] ministry.” As a result, they study “more than necessary” for biblical language classes, in contrast to doing “just what is necessary to finish homework” for Latin and German.

Seventeen of twenty-two Latin students prioritize biblical languages over non-biblical languages. They argue that Greek and Hebrew have lasting value for ministry, while Latin is only a “supplement” for their education. There seems to be a prevailing attitude that Latin is something they need “to get through...because [they] have to” “so [they] could graduate.” The same attitude toward non-biblical languages is also present in German-only students.

Eleven of twenty Spanish students also prioritize Greek and Hebrew over Spanish. Most of those students consider biblical languages more important because of their direct connection to Scripture. “Biblical language feels more like the development and simultaneous application of

⁶⁴ See Appendix 2.5

a skill – non-biblical just the development of the skill.” Some are unsure that they will have the proficiency or the desire to use that skill in ministry – they only chose Spanish because it was the “path of least resistance” for them coming into MLC. As a result, Spanish work often gets pushed aside in favor of Greek and Hebrew. For example, one student said, “If there is a test for Greek or Hebrew, it probably means that I’m barely prepared for a Spanish assignment.”

In contrast, five of the twenty Spanish students prioritize Spanish over biblical languages. Most of them express the opinion that speaking and communicating God’s Word is more important than being able to translate the original languages. “I can’t tell someone about Jesus in Greek.... [Nowadays] everybody has a version [of the Bible] or can get one, and I think we should be more concerned about speaking with people...” For students who hope to serve Spanish-speaking people, they foresee themselves using Spanish “much more often” than Greek and Hebrew.

Among Mandarin students, 50% say they approach both languages with the same attitude, but give some degree of priority to biblical languages. The other half see more value in Mandarin, since its use for communication is growing so quickly.

When students were asked to consider whether and how studying non-biblical languages has affected their study of biblical languages,⁶⁵ a majority of 77% said it had some effect. Of those students, the nature of that effect was split almost equally between those who thought non-biblical language study had positively influenced their biblical languages and those who saw a negative effect.

Those who saw a positive relationship between the two language components were overwhelmingly Confessional (eight) and Latin-only students (fifteen). They credited the Latin

⁶⁵ See Appendix 2.6

language with giving them a great foundation for Greek and for teaching them how to learn a foreign language. Four Spanish students also said that they had gained a valuable linguistic mindset that improved their ability to handle Greek and Hebrew.

Twelve Spanish students (46%) said that their non-biblical language commitments had negatively affected their ability to study the biblical languages, however, along with two Confessional students, five Latin, three German, and four Mandarin. Most students who responded in this category said that their non-biblical requirements took valuable time away from Greek and Hebrew. Eight said that studying multiple languages simultaneously makes both more difficult, sometimes leading to mix-ups and confusion between the languages. Four reported high levels of stress or a feeling of being overloaded to the point that “corners need to be cut.”

The positive effects of non-biblical language study on biblical language study are foundational. They provide a framework for Greek and build linguistic character. It is not surprising that most of those who perceived this kind of benefit were those who had high school Latin experience and chose to continue studying it. For those who entered MLC with a solid language foundation, studying biblical languages alongside the non-biblical helps them to flourish in both.

The effects of studying or reviewing the basics of non-biblical languages simultaneously with biblical languages are considerably more negative. Students who began their study of Latin at MLC or who enrolled in programs with more classes focusing on grammar and language-learning (German, Mandarin, and Spanish), the largest portion of respondents indicated that their non-biblical language had negatively affected their biblical language. They don't have the time or energy to excel in either group of languages because their attention and resources are split. In

effect, these students are forced to build on a language foundation that is still under construction, causing some new material to collapse and even the foundational language to crumble.

The Relationship of Non-Biblical Languages and Student Commitment to Ministerial Studies

Across all the different non-biblical language options, the effect of the pre-seminary language requirement in general on morale and commitment seems to be split.⁶⁶ 32% of students reacted neutrally, saying that their motivation to study for the ministry is unaffected by the language requirements. The greatest portion of both Latin and Spanish students said their language has had a minimal effect on their commitment. The majority of Confessional students say that their language courses are a large part of the reason they want to study for ministry, but among the single-language options, students who noticed an effect on commitment are almost equally divided on whether they were influenced positively or negatively.

When students consider whether and how their specifically non-biblical languages have affected their motivation and commitment,⁶⁷ the number of positive responses drops and the number of negative responses rises for every track except Mandarin. One Confessional student says that his Latin and German classes can sometimes seem pointless when he looks ahead to the future. Ten Latin students find themselves unmotivated or discouraged in their studies because they foresee little benefit coming from hard work. One of them said “90% of the time [that] I felt negative about [becoming] a pastor was when I was in Latin.” Nine Spanish students fall into the same category – one calls Spanish a “necessary evil” – as well as two of five German students.

⁶⁶ See Appendix 2.7

⁶⁷ See Appendix 2.8

When asked whether difficulties with language studies had ever caused them to consider leaving the pre-seminary program, 34% of students surveyed said “yes.” One of those men said, “As someone who struggles a lot, [the heavy language emphasis] definitely makes me doubt whether I can become a pastor.” Of those who had contemplated leaving the program, ten studied Spanish, eight studied Latin, two German, two Mandarin, and one Confessional Languages.

Overall, 35% of pre-seminary students report that non-biblical languages have a negative effect on their commitment to studying for ministry. In comparison, only 26% of students called general language study a negative influence on commitment. There will always be students who struggle with languages and face some discouragement, because language study is difficult. That, in and of itself, is not reason for curriculum change. However, it seems that a perceived lack of practicality attaches more discouragement to the non-biblical languages than to the biblical. If the ideal benefits that supposedly come from non-biblical languages (i.e. the ability to use them for theological study) are not, in fact, realistic, then the prominent place of those languages in the curriculum should be reevaluated. Such a review would be in line with past reviews which aimed to benefit recruitment and retention of students.

Non-Biblical Language Benefits Hoped for by Pre-Seminary Students

Most students looked toward the future with some degree of optimism about the benefits of their non-biblical languages for their ministries.⁶⁸ Only four said they didn’t expect to reap any benefits at all, two Latin students and two Spanish.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 2.9

Most Confessional students hope that they can use their Latin and German for theological reading of historic Lutheran works, whether from the dogmaticians, Luther, or the Lutheran Confessions. Three of the five German students also looked forward to doing theological German reading. Two wanted to use German for mission work. Fewer Latin-only students expected to find practical benefits, with only five really planning to read Latin in ministry. The rest said that the benefits they expect Latin to bring in ministry are the benefits they're already experiencing now: improved language skills, a better understanding of Greek, and academic discipline. Mandarin and Spanish students (with the exception of the two pessimistic Spanish students who expected no benefits) all hoped to use their languages in some form of mission work.

The expected benefits of pre-seminary students match up fairly well with the benefits reported by pastors in the field. While using German in mission work seems a bit unlikely, pastors generally do have opportunities to access original language materials for study in Latin and German. Spanish- and Mandarin-speaking pastors do generally use their languages for communicating the gospel.

If there is a disconnect between expectations and reality, it probably lies in the frequency of practical use of Latin and German. Confessional, German, and a few Latin students seem excited to put their non-biblical language skills to use. However, if the pattern holds true, very few of them will regularly find occasion to do so. In fact, if the pattern observed in the pastors surveyed holds true, it is more likely that they will allow their German and Latin to fall completely out of use than it is that they will use it in depth with any regularity.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF NON-BIBLICAL LANGUAGE STUDY IN THE PRE-SEMINARY PROGRAM

In order to assure that it is as beneficial as possible for the training of pastors, the pre-seminary curriculum as a whole needs to be periodically reviewed and evaluated. This includes the non-biblical language portion. By researching its history, and by gathering the perspectives of pastors and students, I have attempted to assemble a multi-faceted picture of the current state of non-biblical language in the program. Based on the picture those perspectives paint, what follows is my understanding of the current non-biblical language situation.

The purpose of the non-biblical language program has changed. This is not surprising, since it has existed for almost 150 years. When the *Gymnasium* first started, both German and Latin were taught not for the sake of knowing the language, but for their usefulness in developing a well-rounded worldview. At that time, the faculty expressly rejected the notion that any language was only valuable insofar as it enabled a person to study theology or do church work. They taught languages with the goal of benefitting every area of a person's life. Over the course of years in which it has had to meet the challenges of a changing world, however, the pre-seminary non-biblical language program has mostly lost that focus.

At MLC today, the place of the non-biblical language program is closer to "the court of the Gentiles" than it is to fulfilling the function the *Gymnasium*'s founders envisioned for it. The focus of today's program seems to be the cultivation of skills in a student's chosen language for the purpose of studying theology or doing mission work. No longer is a broader liberal arts

education the primary goal. That is not to say that the goal of broadening students' worldviews is completely gone. Later classes in Latin and German, especially, (as well as electives in the other languages) aim to expose students to literature, history, culture, and theology. However, probably more because of deficiency in student ability than the nature of the classes, students spend much of their time and effort for even those classes on grappling with the basics of the language.

Since the purpose of the non-biblical language program has changed, it is important to determine whether or not the change is a positive one. Is giving students another language as a tool to use a worthwhile goal? The survey of pastors in the field suggests that it is not universally so. For those who know Spanish and Mandarin well enough to speak it, there are many and consistent opportunities to use their language backgrounds in today's mission fields. For those who know Latin and/or German, however, pastors report only occasional minor uses in the ministry. Of course, there are a few exceptions – men who do original translation, in-depth study, or foreign language teaching – but they are exceptions to the rule. Most pastors with Latin or German backgrounds do not spend any great amount of time intentionally using their non-biblical language. All of the pastor respondents who studied Spanish and Mandarin reported an ability to communicate in their languages, but there are surely some students in those programs who do not reach the desired level of proficiency. When those students reach the ministry, I imagine that their story is much the same as that of most who took Latin and German.

It seems that pre-seminary students today sense the fact that many pastors don't use their non-biblical languages very often. In responses to different questions in the survey, over 30% of students questioned the benefit of spending so much time and effort on non-biblical languages, since they "can't see the purpose" of a skill that "[has] little foreseen benefit." It is probably in

response to that probably justifiable lack of foreseen practicality that pre-seminary students rate the non-biblical language component of their program so low in importance. It is also unsurprising that students who struggle with those classes feel frustrated. If knowing a non-biblical language is not even a particularly useful skill for the pastoral ministry, why should they be forced to spend hours – one student estimates between fifteen and twenty hours per week for a three-credit course – of work to cultivate it?

Regardless of whether it is a worthy goal, if our non-biblical language classes aim to equip students with a skill, they should be evaluated in part on their success in meeting that goal. The Spanish and Mandarin options seem to do a fairly good job of equipping students to speak and converse in those languages. As they look forward, most students in those programs can see themselves using the languages taught at MLC in some sort of mission work. The final required Spanish class, “Communicating Christ in Spanish,” is especially useful in that regard. Confessional students also seem confident that their skills have developed enough to do work in German and Latin. German- and Latin-only students, however, expressed much more doubt as to whether their level of skill would prove useful for their ministries, or whether they would even want to try. A few had intentions to use Latin or German in theological reading, but the majority seemed to think their future use was less than likely. Most of the value they saw their classes lending to their ministry came in the form of improved Greek and English skills.

If students are not confident in their ability to use the skills they are trying to build at MLC, they are much less likely to seek out opportunities to do so once they get into the ministry. If they aren’t being taught how to use their non-biblical language skills before they are called into a parish or a mission field, it cannot be considered surprising if they do not use them. For

those who struggle through the entire non-biblical language program and never get past the point of wrestling with grammar and structure, it is almost not even worth beginning.

Not only is the development of non-biblical language skills not as worthwhile a goal as one would hope, but it also has a negative impact on the component of the pre-seminary program that rightly receives the greatest emphasis: biblical languages. As long as he interacts with God's Word and preaches it to his people, Greek and Hebrew will always have a place in a pastor's ministry. They are the most important skills that a pre-seminary student gains at the college level. However, almost 40% of students report that their biblical languages suffer because of the time and effort required by their non-biblical languages. Even though, when "something's gotta give," a majority of students prioritize biblical languages over non-biblical, they do not believe they are able to do their Greek and Hebrew classes justice, in some part due to non-biblical languages. This is especially true for students with lesser language skill. Only four of thirty-three students who rated themselves above average in skill level said non-biblical languages negatively affected their biblical languages. But for those who rated themselves at average or below, twenty-two of forty-three students said non-biblical language classes had a direct negative effect on biblical language study. Rather than injuring even further a student's chances to become competent at the vastly more important and useful languages of the Bible, shouldn't we try to remove an obstacle that borders on useless for many students?

When the discouragement of studying something with little practical benefit is combined with a negative impact on areas of study that indisputably *are* important, students' motivation to continue in the pre-seminary program is affected. 35% of current students report feeling more discouraged from continuing in their ministerial studies as a result of non-biblical languages. Only 26% report feeling deterred by languages when Greek and Hebrew are factored in. That

means that 9% of pre-seminary students have negative feelings about studying to be a pastor that they would not have if they weren't required to study a non-biblical language. Considering the minimal use most pastors get out of their non-biblical languages, is that added discouragement worth retaining the universal requirement of a major non-biblical language component in the pre-seminary curriculum? I do not think it is.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

I want to be clear about what I am suggesting and what I am not: I am not suggesting that non-biblical languages are useless and have no benefit for ministerial students or pastors. I am not suggesting that there is no justifiable reason to keep Latin and German in the WELS ministerial education system, or even at the college level. I am not suggesting that current and past instructors of non-biblical languages have failed to impart anything useful to their students. Rather, I am suggesting that the pre-seminary curriculum can be further tailored to better prepare modern students for a modern ministry in a modern world. I am suggesting that studying non-biblical languages is not the best use of time or energy for *every* pre-seminary student. I am suggesting that skills and interests outside of languages can and should be fostered for application to the ministry of the gospel.

Non-biblical languages should continue to be offered and studied as part of the pre-seminary program at MLC. Spanish and Mandarin will continue to be valuable tools for communicating God's grace among a rapidly globalizing population. We will always need people who know German and Latin to preserve our history and our strong confessional stance.

Even more than MLC, WELS high schools should increase their emphasis on languages, especially among young men who wish to pursue the pastoral ministry. A foundation especially in Latin is immensely beneficial for such men as they pursue the study of Greek and strive to use English well. An increase in the number of men who already have a solid linguistic foundation

and can do good work in a language at their time of enrollment in the pre-seminary program will greatly improve the value of MLC's non-biblical language department.

As non-biblical languages continue to be offered at MLC, however, they should not be required for every pre-seminary student. Many men have both a desire to be a pastor and many gifts to use in service to their Savior and his gospel. Professors and mentors stress the importance for ministry of all kinds of gifts, including people skills, musical gifts, a historical mind, a caring heart, leadership qualities, and more. The pre-seminary curriculum should speak along with them in emphasizing those gifts' value rather than giving the impression that such gifts as are less important for the ministry than language skills. Greek and Hebrew should never be de-emphasized in the pre-seminary curriculum. I believe that it would be permissible (and, for some, advisable) to de-emphasize non-biblical languages. Students who have low interest and ability in that area should not be required to take a third language.

If the universal non-biblical language requirement were lifted, the value of biblical language classes for less language-inclined students would increase. With less to distract them, those students would have more time and effort to spend on Greek and Hebrew. The non-biblical language classes would also increase in quality and benefit, since only students with a certain level of proficiency would take them. Perhaps an entrance exam with a required score for admission to the program would be in order. With less time spent reviewing and re-drilling the basics of non-biblical languages, more time could be committed to expanding the worldview of interested and able students.

I do not suggest creating an "easy way out" for language-challenged students. In the place of a required non-biblical language, such students should be allowed to choose from a menu of 12-19 credit options that align more closely with their talents and interests. For

example, rather than studying German, a musically inclined student could choose to pursue an emphasis or minor in parish music and thus be prepared to use his particular gifts in a ministerial capacity. Other options could be an interpersonal communications minor, a counseling and conflict resolution minor, an apologetics minor, a leadership and administration minor, an education minor, a church history minor, and so on.⁶⁹ Some of these programs, such as education and parish music, already exist in the form of a major at MLC. Pre-seminary faculty could simply identify which classes in the programs would be beneficial for pre-seminary students to take, and the minor program could be developed with minor effort and changes. Other programs like interpersonal communications and church history exist in part, but would likely require the creation of several classes to fill them out. The remaining suggestions are only ideas of what could be useful while also aligning with the talents and interests of potential students.

One fear that arises when considering the addition of non-language options to the pre-seminary curriculum is that, before long, no one would want to take classes in the non-biblical languages, especially German and Latin. If no one studies them, no one will know them, and then we will lose our ability to interact with our history as Lutherans and Christians.

The total loss of Latin and German would be a terrible thing. As stated above, we need men who can do work in the languages of our history. However, the final item on the survey of pre-seminary students calms that fear. That question asked, “If there were a non-language minor option (such as education, counseling, parish music, communication, etc.) alongside the current non-biblical language options, would you still have chosen the non-biblical language minor that

⁶⁹ The suggestions I make here are based on the surveyed pastors’ reflections on what they felt underprepared for when they first entered the ministry, as well as on personal conversations with some of my Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary classmates.

you did?”⁷⁰ 46% of students replied that they would, and 12% more indicated that with the right encouragement, they could be moved toward studying a non-biblical language. Of those taking Latin, German, or both, 41% would stick with their language or languages, with 11% more open to being convinced.

If students were allowed to make their choice, the number of students at MLC studying non-biblical language would drop by half. However, if the quality of the program rises, more total students could graduate from MLC with the ability to use their non-biblical language. The net number of pastors who know the languages to a useful degree would rise, and the program would better fulfill its purpose.

In addition, a generation of students with a better understanding of how to use various gifts would continue on to WLS and into the ministry. As stewards of innumerable blessings from God, every Christian’s sanctified goal is to use what he has received to the best of his ability, for God’s glory. With changes like the ones I have suggested, the WELS college of ministry would improve its stewardship of the students it receives, and the students would improve their stewardship of their talents and interests.

These are worthy goals. Whether WELS strives for them by changing the non-biblical language program or not, the pre-seminary program should grapple with how to be faithful stewards of the resources, personnel, and opportunities it has been given. That is the point of curriculum review and revision: Use God’s gifts. Serve his glory. Preach the gospel.

⁷⁰ See Appendix 2.10

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY OF PASTORS

Pastors Surveyed

Confessional:	18
Latin:	4
German:	2
Spanish:	3
Latin/Spanish:	1
German/Mandarin:	1
<u>Total:</u>	<u>29</u>

Practical benefit of Non-Bib. Languages

Latin: 10/23

- Triglot: 4
- Church Fathers: 3
- Dogmatic Terms: 7
- Teach Latin: 1

German: 12/21

- German-speaking members: 6
- Teaching/tutoring: 2
- Triglot: 4
- Dogmatic Terms: 3
- *Luther Bibel* text study: 1
- Original Translation: 1
- Theological reading: 1

Spanish: 3/4

- Spanish-speaking members and prospects: 3

Mandarin: 1/1

- Missionary in China: 1

Total: 21/29

Intangible benefit of Non-Bib. Languages

Latin: 16/23

- English vocabulary/structure: 14
- Intro to Greek: 3
- Disciplined study: 3
- Culture: 1
- Linguistic character: 3

German: 8/21

- Culture: 4
- English vocabulary/structure: 4
- Disciplined study: 1

Spanish: 3/4

- Linguistic character: 1
- Culture: 2

Mandarin: 1/1

- Linguistic character: 1

Total: 23/29

Areas of ministry you think could use more preparation:

- Counseling – 14
- Communication – 2
 - Conflict management
- Administration/Leadership – 6
 - Time management
 - Working with LES faculty
- Education – 4
- Personal Devotional Habits – 1
- Apologetics – 2
- Lutheran Literature – 1
- Hermeneutics – 1

Note: For this question, many pastors offered multiple answers. Thus, the number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY OF PRE-SEMINARY STUDENTS

Students Surveyed by Non-Biblical Language:

Confessional:	10
German:	5
Latin:	22
Mandarin:	6
<u>Spanish:</u>	<u>26</u>
Total:	69

Students Surveyed by Planned Graduation Year:

2018:	17
2019:	16
2020:	20
2021:	15
<u>2022:</u>	<u>1</u>
Total:	69

Note: Students were encouraged to type out their own thoughts in answer to most of the survey questions rather than choosing from a menu. As a result, many of them gave multiple answers to various questions. When the number of responses exceeds the number of students who responded to a given question, I am simply reflecting that some students gave multiple answers or reasons.

2.1: Why did you choose the non-biblical languages that you did?

Confessional: 10

- Challenge – 1
- Tradition – 1
- Historical documents – 5
 - Confessions
 - Luther
- Enjoyment – 1
- Previous experience – 4
- Develop language skills – 1
- Want to speak German – 1
- Practicality – 2
- “Sounded cool” – 1

German: 5

- Path of least resistance – 5

Latin: 22

- Path of least resistance – 16
- Church History – 1
- Don’t have to speak/write – 2
- No other language background – 1
- Faculty advice – 1
- Enjoyment – 2
- Greek base – 2

Mandarin: 6

- Novelty – 2
- China connections – 2
- Culture – 1
- Practicality – 3
- Past experience – 1

Spanish: 26

- Practicality – 11
- Path of least resistance – 17
- Culture – 1

2.2: Student Foreign Language Skills Self-Rating:

Students rated themselves on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “No matter how much work I put in, I never seem to understand it any better” and 5 being “I’m extremely good at languages – they just make sense to me.”

Confessional:

5: 4
4: 4
3: 2
Total: 10

Mandarin:

4: 3
3: 1
2: 2
Total: 6

German:

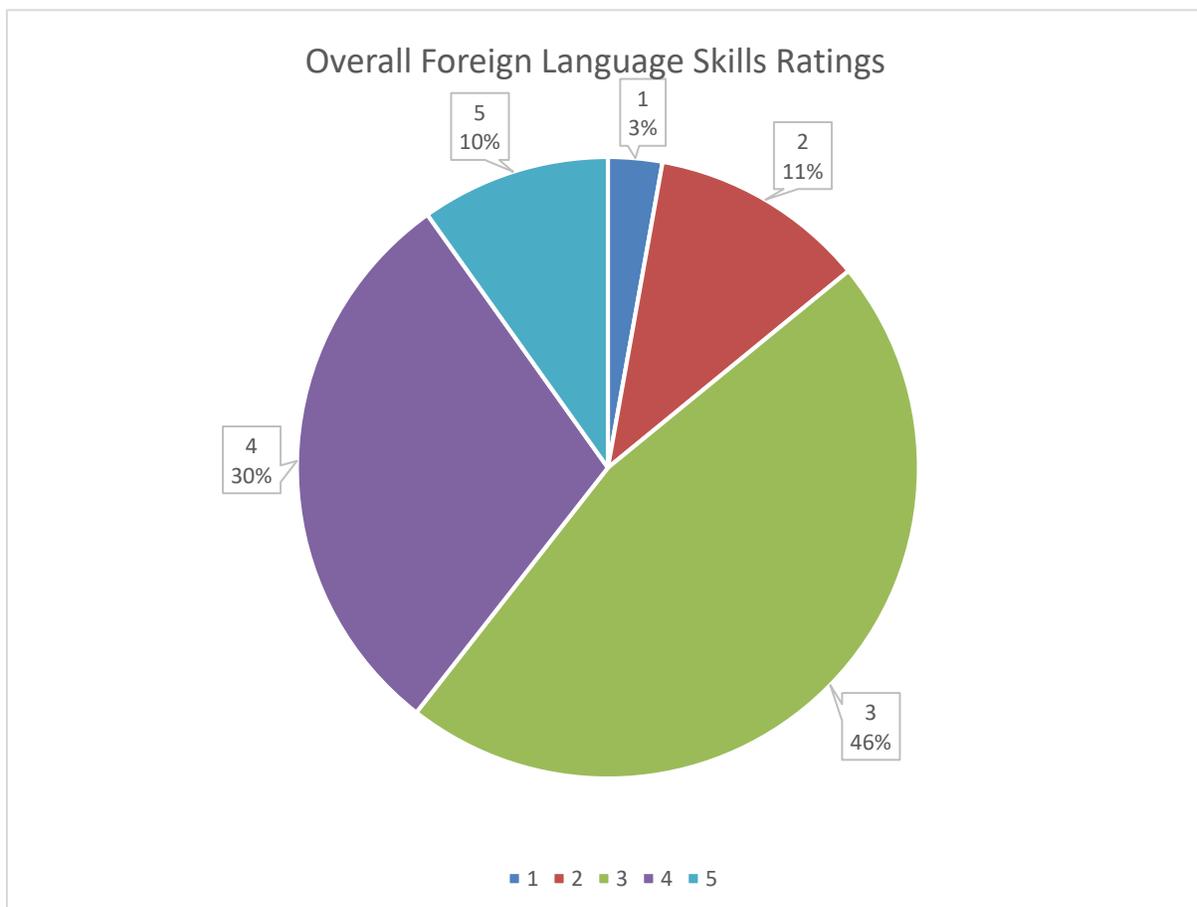
4: 1
3: 3
2: 1
Total: 5

Spanish:

5: 3
4: 6
3: 15
2: 1
1: 1
Total: 26

Latin:

4: 7
3: 11
2: 4
Total: 22



2.3: Student Foreign Language Attitude Self-Rating:

Students rated themselves on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “I hate languages and I wish I didn’t have to study any of them” and 5 being “My language classes are my favorite classes at MLC.”

Confessional:

5: 4
4: 6
 Total: 10

Mandarin:

5: 1
 4: 3
3: 2
 Total: 6

German:

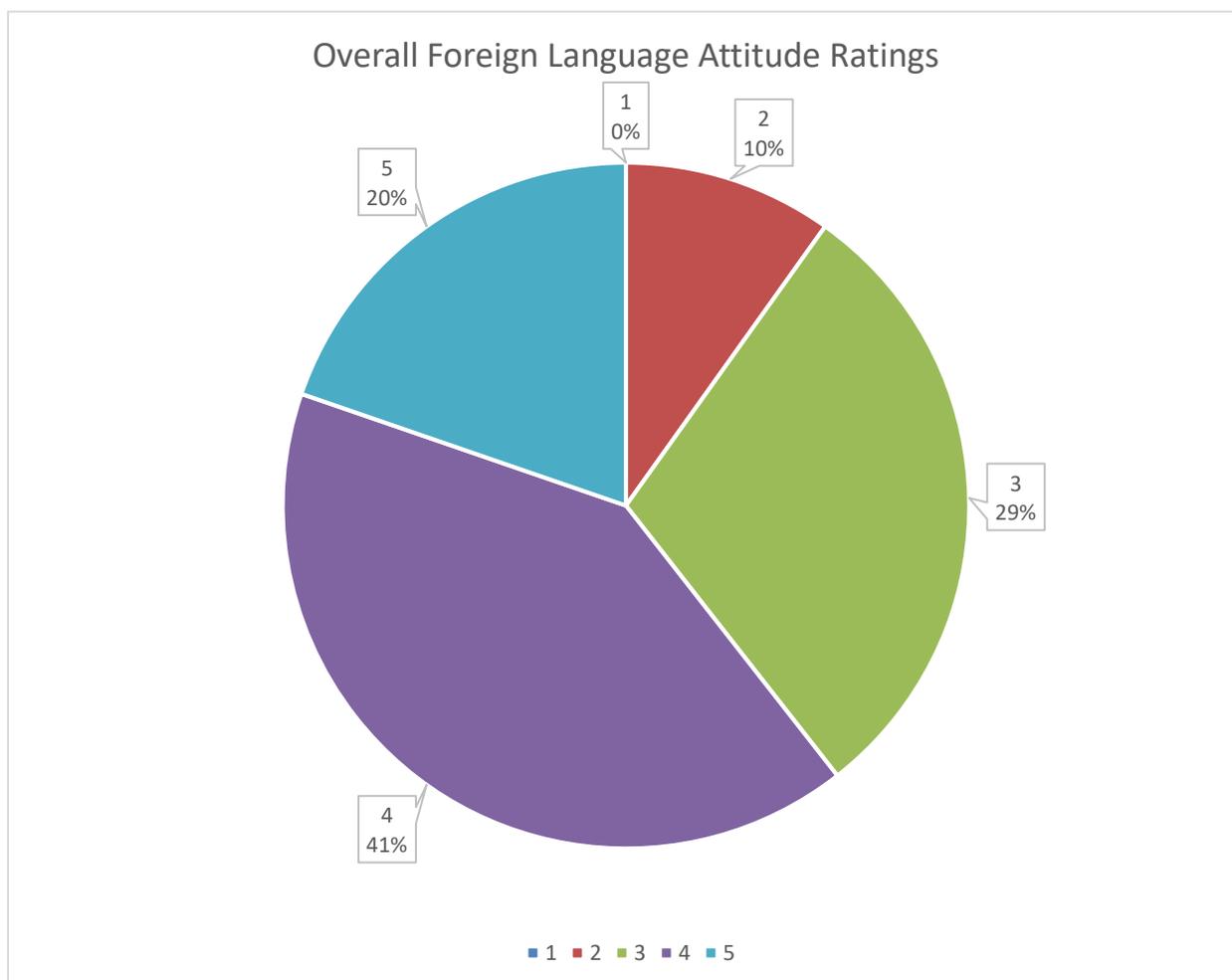
5: 1
3: 4
 Total: 5

Spanish:

5: 4
 4: 13
 3: 6
2: 3
 Total: 26

Latin:

5: 4
 4: 7
 3: 7
2: 4
 Total: 22



2.4: Students' Ranking of the Non-Biblical Language Component's Importance

Note: Students were asked to rank each component of the pre-seminary curriculum in relation to the other components. The end result of this question for each student was a list of all components of the curriculum ordered by the importance that student assigned to them. The "1" ranking is most important; "10" is least important. The data on the non-biblical language component has been pulled from that comprehensive ranking.

Confessional:

2-3-3-3-3-4-4-4-5-5
3.6 average
3.5 median

Mandarin:

4-5-5-7-8-9
6.3 average
6 median

German:

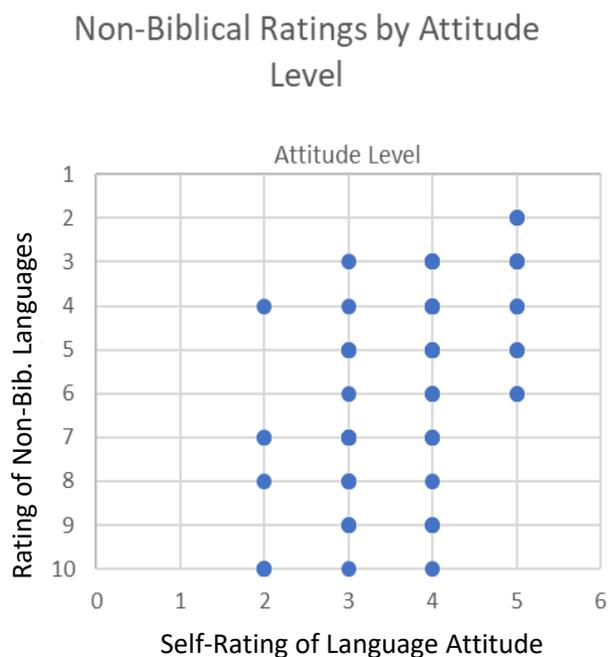
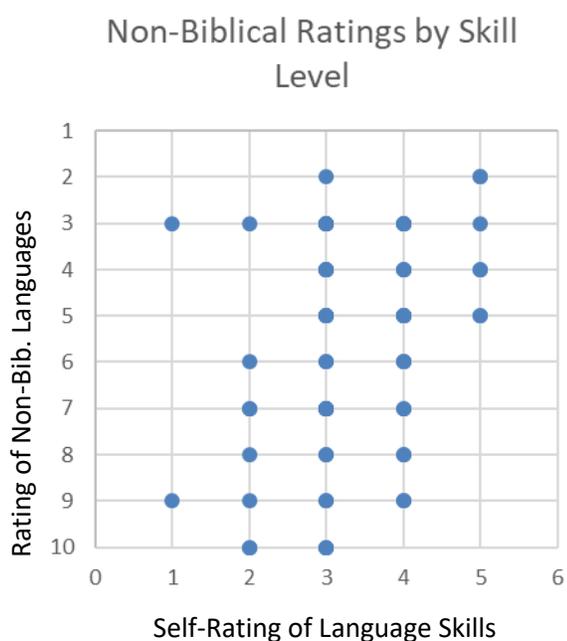
3-3-4-6-7
4.6 average
4 median

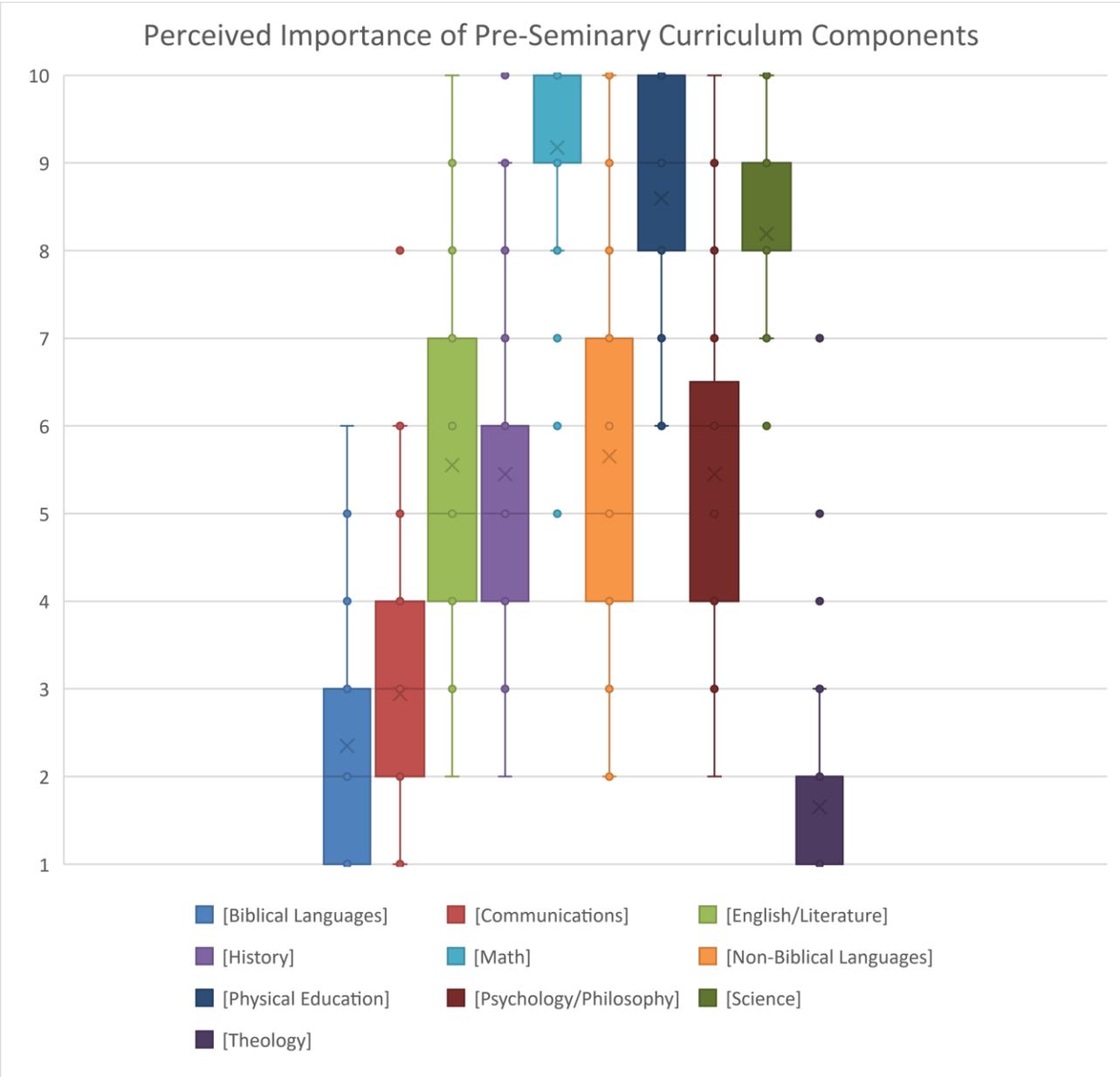
Spanish:

2-3-3-3-3-3-3-4-4-5-5-5-5-5-6-6-7-7-7
7-8-8-8-9-9-10-10
5.8 average
5.5 median

Latin:

2-4-4-4-5-5-5-5-6-6-6-7-7-7-7-7-8-9
9-10-10-10
6.5 average
6.5 median





This chart represents all the data collected on students' rankings of the various curriculum components. Each box denotes the middle 50% of responses, while the "whiskers" extending from the boxes denote the upper and lower 25%. Any data point outside the reach of the "whiskers" indicates an atypical response (an outlier) for that curriculum component.

2.5: Does your attitude toward non-biblical languages study differ from your attitude toward your classes in the biblical languages? If so, how?

Confessional:

Yes: 4

- NON Less priority, same effort – 1
- BIBLICAL more stress/pressure – 1
- NON Less priority (because they're less useful) – 1

No: 6

- They're both necessary to graduate – 1
- They're both useful – 2

German:

Yes: 1

- NON not as necessary – 1

No: 4

- “A class is a class” – 1

Latin:

Yes: 17

- BIB more motivated – 2
- NON less important – 11
 - “Actually care about biblical” – 1
 - NON are supplementary, not primary – 1
- NON less useful – 4
 - BIBLICAL will be there for your whole ministry; NON won't – 1
- BIB “cooler” – 1

No: 5

- They're both necessary to graduate – 2

Mandarin:

Yes: 3

- BIB are more difficult and aren't used for communication today – 1

No: 3

- Same approach; BIB done first – 1

Spanish:

Yes: 20

NON positive: 5

- NON more important – 4
 - Speaking is more important – 3
- NON more relaxed – 1

BIB positive: 11

- NON more labor-intensive – 2
 - For speaking – 2
- BIB more useful/important – 7
 - Translating the Bible is more important – 3
 - Not sure NON will be used – 2
- Don't like NON – 2
 - BIBLICAL more interesting – 1

Neutral: 4

- BIB and NON have different purposes – 2
 - BIB for theology, NON for “fun” – 1
- BIB takes more work – 2

No: 6

- Work hard on whatever needs hard work – 1
- Like them both – 2
- BIB and NON are both applicable – 2
 - What I need to do to be a WELS pastor – 1

2.6: How has studying a non-biblical language at MLC affected your ability to study the biblical languages?

Positive: 39% Conf: 8 Ger: 0 Lat: 15 Man: 0 Span: 4

- Non-bibs help biblical languages – 24
 - Greek background – 9
 - Language mindset – 4

Negative: 38% Conf: 2 Ger: 3 Lat: 5 Man: 4 Span: 12

- They mix and cause interference in both – 3
- Non-bibs hurt biblical languages – 15
 - Less time for bibs – 13
- Makes both more difficult – 5
- Language fatigue – 1
- “Hasn’t helped much” with biblical languages – 2
- Causes stress – 2
- “Corners need to be cut” – 1

Neutral: 23% Conf: 0 Ger: 2 Lat: 2 Man: 2 Span: 10

- None – 15
- “Different outlook” – 1

2.7: How do language studies in general relate to your "commitment to studying for the ministry" rating, if at all?

Confessional:

Positive: 9

- Creates comradery – 1
- Sense of accomplishment/good challenge – 3
- I'm interested in them – 5
- They prepare me for ministry – 1

Negative:

- [None]

Neutral: 1

- No effect - 1

German:

Positive: 2

- Top priority – 1
- "High" – 1

Negative: 1

- Lowers rating – 1

Neutral: 2

- Don't know – 1
- Don't lower rating – 1

Latin:

Positive: 7

- Strengthen commitment – 4
- Keep the ministry on my mind – 1
- Comradery – 1

Negative: 6

- Tires me out/grinds me down – 3
- Desire to learn it isn't there – 1
- Can't see a reason for studying some of them – 1
- Only reason I've ever had negative thoughts – 1

Neutral: 9

- Motivation unchanged – 4
 - Don't make me less committed – 3
 - Hard work, but worth it – 2
- Doesn't relate – 2

Mandarin:

Positive: 3

- New way of looking at God's Word – 1
- Will be practical – 2

Negative: 3

- Overwhelming/stressful – 2
- Not really necessary – 1

Neutral:

- [None]

Spanish:

Positive: 8

- Increase motivation/commitment – 3
- Look forward to using them in ministry – 3
- Exciting to use them now – 1
- Part of the reason I wanted to come to MLC – 1

Negative: 8

- Discourages – 4
- Sometimes a struggle – 1
- Multiple languages are overwhelming – 1
- "Necessary evil" – 1
- Makes me doubt whether I can become a pastor – 1

Neutral: 10

- Part of pastoral studies – 6
- Little/no effect – 2
- Get higher priority – 1

Total: 26% negative

2.8: How do specifically non-biblical language studies relate to your "commitment to studying for the ministry" rating, if at all?

Confessional:

Positive: 7 (vs. 9 overall)

- I'm interested in them – 4
- Prepare me for ministry – 2
- Useful now – 1

Negative: 1 (10%)

- Sometimes seem pointless – 1

Neutral: 2

German:

Positive: 1 (vs. 2 overall)

- "High" – 1

Negative: 2 (40%)

- Takes time away from [more important?] classes – 1
- Lowers commitment – 1

Neutral: 2

- "What you have to do" – 1

Latin:

Positive: 3 (vs. 7 overall)

- Strengthen commitment – 1
- Equip for ministry – 2

Negative: 10 (45%)

- Too much work – 1
- Little foreseen benefit – 6
 - More of a burden – 1
- Discouragement – 3
 - Friend dropped out because of them – 1
 - 90% of the time I felt negative about being a pastor was when I was in Latin – 1

Neutral: 9

- Mental exercise – 1
- No effect – 7

Mandarin:

Positive: 4 (vs. 3 overall)

- Applicable – 4

Negative: 2 (33%)

- Too much work – 1
- Not as important – 1

Neutral:

- [None]

Spanish:

Positive: 6 (vs. 8 overall)

- Increases commitment – 6
 - Useful
 - Inspires toward goals

Negative: 9 (35%)

- Makes it tough/frustrating – 3
- Don't enjoy or want to take it – 2
- Deters/discourages me – 3
 - No application to my goals
 - Not where my strengths are
- "Necessary evil" – 1

Neutral: 11

- No discouragement – 2
- Little/no effect – 5
- What I have to do – 2
- Teaches you to prioritize – 1

Total: 35% negative

9% more than general language study

2.9: How do you hope that your non-biblical language studies will benefit you in the pastoral ministry?

Confessional: 10

- Help with Greek – 2
- Church History – 3
 - Reformation texts – 2
 - Confessions – 1
 - WELS history – 1
- Theological reading – 7
- Academic reading – 1

German: 5

- Mission work – 2
- Theological Reading – 3
 - Luther – 2
 - Reformation texts – 1

Latin: 22

- Improve English – 3
- Theological reading – 4
 - Church Fathers – 3
- Improve general language skills – 3
 - Romance languages – 1
- Historical background – 4
- Disciplined study – 2
- Basis for Greek – 7
- None – 2

Mandarin: 6 (plus 1 elective)

- Mission work – 7

Spanish: 26

- Mission work – 24
- None – 2

2.10: If there were a non-language minor option (such as education, counseling, parish music, communication, etc.) alongside the current non-biblical language options, would you still have chosen the non-biblical language minor that you did?

“I would study the same language”

Confessional:	7/10	70%
German:	1/5	20%
Latin:	10/22	45%
Mandarin:	4/6	66%
<u>Spanish:</u>	<u>10/26</u>	<u>38%</u>
Total:	32/69	46%