

Seattle Pacific Seminary
Report on Exit Interviews with Members of the Graduating Class of 2014
Dr. Richard B. Steele, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies
Summarized by Marcia Corner, SPS Program Coordinator
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In the spring of 2014, Dr. Richard Steele, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, conducted exit interviews with members of the Seattle Pacific Seminary graduating class of 2014. Eleven students took degrees during academic year 2013-14: 1 MDiv/MA-RIS, 5 MDiv, 1, MA-BAT, 2 MA (CSc), 2 MA (CSt). The two MA (CSc) students had actually “walked” in the 2013 commencement ceremony, and were not interviewed. These were counterbalanced by two MA (CSt) students who “walked” in 2014, even though they will not receive their degrees until AY 2014-15. In all, eight students were interviewed.

Graduates expressed their appreciation for the integration of the academy, abbey and apostolate. The students said that they felt the coursework was academically rigorous. Specific appreciation was given to the courses in reconciliation and intercultural studies, preaching and church administration. One student noted that her MDiv enabled her to “think broadly” about the Christian faith and Christian ministry. Other highlights of the curriculum included the pre-autumn intensives for first and second-year students, the Graduate Core Practicum class, the Wesleyan class meetings, and the mentoring relationships. The opportunities for community-building were also appreciated, including dinners and game nights at the Kingswood House and basketball games at First Free Methodist Church gym. One student said “this program is about life transformation...my spouse has noticed this transformation in me.” Another strength of the program included the contextual education requirement. The students who participated in contextual education during the academic year benefitted greatly from the on-campus class that meets for theological reflection, more so than the students who did contextual education during the summertime without the benefit of a classroom context (these students met one-on-one with faculty). The students are eager to discuss ministry theologically with each other—a sign of mutuality and collaboration. As students prepare for the next season post seminary, they expressed gratitude for their growth—intellectually, spiritually, and professionally. Students experienced a wide range of emotions upon graduation. Many were mentally and physically exhausted from the rigors of graduate study, sad to leave seminary but also excited and prepared for the future.