



DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## ***The Agape Project: Developing a Habit for the Great Commandments***

*Quality Enhancement Plan of Dallas Theological Seminary*

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### Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) was submitted in spring 2014 as part of the Seminary's reaffirmation of accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The QEP for the Seminary is entitled *The Agape Project: Developing a Habit for the Great Commandments*. It presents a plan for implementing service projects into the Master of Theology (ThM) degree program, the Seminary's flagship, four-year master's program. *Agape Project* assignments are designed to give a foundation for students as they integrate biblical and theological instruction and contact with real individual needs in local communities. The *Agape Project* is the natural outgrowth of the Seminary's mission to glorify God by equipping godly servant-leaders for the proclamation of His Word and the building up of the body of Christ worldwide.

The parameters of the plan include the requirement that the program not increase the credit hours of the ThM program nor increase the net workload of ThM students. Part of the purpose for this requirement is that it will force the projects to be integrated into the curriculum and thereby assist in combining the learning done through service with the learning done in the classroom. Faculty will assign limited-length projects as options in courses on subjects where service is an appropriate course outcome. ThM students will need to avail themselves of two of these options to meet the new requirements for the ThM program. The Seminary piloted *Agape Project* assignments voluntarily during the first year of the program. *Agape Project* assignments will be phased in to the ThM curriculum as requirements in fall 2015.

*Agape Project* assignments require students to engage in an approved ministry setting in the community. Students will be required to participate in the ministry for approximately 15 hours over the term of the course (about one hour per week). A final reflection paper will be written, and direct feedback on the student's progress will be provided, both from the DTS campus (*Agape Project* Director and faculty) and from the off-campus site supervisors. Additionally, a modified version of the *Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale* will be administered. Assessment for the *Agape Project* will take place at the beginning of the student's ThM program and again at the end. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are assessed with the aid of a matrix that maps each SLO to its corresponding course.

Four SLOs were identified that pertain to providing compassionate service to others. Each student will work toward: 1) identifying personal strengths and weaknesses affecting one's ability to provide compassionate service to others, 2) growth in awareness and appreciation of the need for serving with compassion, 3) modeling compassion in his or her service setting, and 4) demonstrating theological reflection and integration of course instruction with learning through service.

The initial year of the implementation plan includes faculty training, developing class assignments requiring service projects, and implementing and announcing curricular revisions that include projects and their assessment. The second and third years will apply the new service-learning requirements to two entering ThM classes at the Dallas and Houston campuses (the only two campuses where the ThM is awarded) and will make program adjustments based on two years' experience with the program. By the fourth and fifth year of its execution, the plan will substantially integrate the *Agape Project* into the Seminary curriculum and culture, possibly applying the project to MA programs as well.