



## Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate  
Seton Hall University

From: Katia Passerini, Ph.D.

*Katia Passerini*

Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: Online MA in Theology  
*2021-FS-12*

Date: October 21, 2021

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The Office of the Provost received the Faculty Senate's approval of the Online MA in Theology, 2021-FS-12, on May 10, 2021. This proposal was passed at the Faculty Senate's May 7 meeting.

The Center for Diaconal Formation of Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology requested approval for an Online Masters of Arts in Theology with a concentration in Systematic Theology designed to expand the reach of the seminary beyond New Jersey. This program will exist alongside our onground MA in Theology that serves each of the four dioceses in New Jersey. Expanding our mode of academic formation for the permanent diaconate to include online is appropriate to our institutional purpose and educational goals as articulated in ICSST's Mission Statement: "to provide...a theological foundation and a pastoral and spiritual formation for men and women preparing for ministries among the People of God[.]" Both diaconate programs support the Catholic mission and goals of Seton Hall University in providing a Catholic intellectual education for its students and for the purpose of preparing men to serve the People of God as ordained ministers of the Church through ICSST. This new program is particularly exciting as this will be only one of two online academic curricula for diaconal formation in the United States.

As is appropriate, the new method of offering the degree received approval by the Dean of ICSST, the seminary's EPC, the full Theology faculty, and the APC before approval by the Faculty Senate. The Online Masters in Theology will be offered to a cohort of 15 students preparing for the permanent diaconate outside of our immediate area. The proposers participated in a project of the Permanent Diaconate Peer Group with several other ATS accredited schools where a need was identified for "exploration of distance learning opportunities" for diaconate formation. That led to market research indicating a demand for these online classes.

Notably, the program director took time with members of my office to work through how the expected revenue would balance expenditures using the financial model we have developed to nurture new programs and to ensure that they will be sustainable.

My approval is conditioned upon the program meeting various targets we have discussed, which were set with due consideration of the University mission. For example, the program will use primarily priest faculty and will not hire any new faculty or administrators at the current enrollment. It is understood that current goal is to attract a cohort every other year, but in year three, the program must have at least 22 total students; and at the conclusion of academic year must meet at least a 24% positive direct margin because this serves the mission of the church as well as the mission of our University. If any of these benchmarks are not met, then the program will be automatically sunsetted. In addition, in the event of any substantial deviations from the financial plan, I may begin an accelerated review process during the first five years to evaluate earlier action or inventions, including a possibility of suspending the program until enrollment is sustainable.

I thank the faculty and administration of the Immaculate Conception Seminary for their hard work on this program, and the Faculty Senate for its efforts.