



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Female Participation in United Methodist Seminaries

January 1, 2015

Mark McCormack

Director of Research and Evaluation

Joel Cummings

Research and Evaluation Associate

Introduction

To compare seminary enrollment and degree completion patterns between men and women, we compiled and analyzed data reported from 11 of the 13 United Methodist seminaries¹. These reports are submitted annually to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), as well as to the Association of Theological Schools, and include summary information related to enrollments, completions, placements, financials, and other institutional measures. Much of this information is reported separately for men and women, allowing for easy gender comparison for the purposes of the present study.

Also included in this section of the report, we compiled the same enrollment and completion figures for men and women for all 250+ institutions affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools, to better understand how women are faring in United Methodist theological schools compared to women at theological schools in the U.S. more generally.

First, to compare seminary enrollment figures between men and women, we summed the number of men and women enrolled in any degree program across the 11 United Methodist seminaries reported for 2014, including both master’s and doctoral-level degree programs. Illustrated in Table 1 below, there were slightly fewer women than men enrolled in United Methodist seminaries in 2014, at **47%** of total enrollment. Though fewer women than men were enrolled in United Methodist seminaries in 2014, their share of enrollment at these United Methodist seminaries was markedly greater than at all seminaries reported for 2014, where women comprise only **34%** of enrolled students.

Table 1. Enrollment by gender, 2014.

	No.	%
UM Seminaries - Men	2065	52.96
UM Seminaries - Women	1834	47.04
Total	3899	100
All Seminaries - Men	47715	65.92
All Seminaries - Women	24663	34.08
Total	72378	100

Next, we examined the number of students reported as completing their degree program, again comparing figures between men and women for the 2014 reporting period. If slightly fewer women than men are enrolled at United Methodist theological schools, how are they faring over the course of their education at these institutions, through to completion? As Table 2 below demonstrates, women fared better on this measure and appeared to make up some ground from enrollment, comprising half of all students who completed their degree program in 2014. This may suggest that women at United Methodist theological

¹ The 11 United Methodist seminaries reported include Boston, Claremont, Drew, Duke, Garrett, Iliff, MTSO, Perkins, St. Paul, United, and Wesley. Data from Candler and Gammon have not yet been reported to GBHEM.

schools are slightly more successful than men in completing their degree programs, with a greater share of total completions than total enrollments, though further analyses would help support such a conclusion.

As with the enrollment figures, women in United Methodist theological schools fared much better on this measure than women across all theological schools, where women comprise only 35% of students completing their degree programs.

Table 2. Completions by gender, 2014.

	No.	%
UM Seminaries - Men	540	50.47
UM Seminaries - Women	530	49.53
Total	1070	100
All Seminaries - Men	9462	64.97
All Seminaries - Women	5101	35.03
Total	14563	100

While men and women at United Methodist theological schools show nearly equal rates of both enrollment and degree completion, what might these reports reveal about the experiences of men and women within their degree programs and the ultimate benefits derived from these programs? First, we examined the length of time it reportedly took both men and women to complete their degree programs. Shown in Table 3 below, on a scale of 1 to 6, from least amount of time to greatest amount of time, women overall scored slightly higher than men in completion time, indicating a slightly longer period of time for women in completing their degree programs.

Finally, we compared vocational placement rates between men and women, to help determine ultimate benefits derived from their degree programs. Also illustrated in Table 3 below, men have a slightly higher mean score than women for vocational placement, indicating slightly higher rates of vocational placement after degree completion.

Table 3. Completion time and vocational placement by gender, 2014.

	Mean
Completion Time - Men	3.06
Completion Time - Women	3.21
Vocational Placement - Men	0.601
Vocational Placement - Women	0.584

ENTERING & GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEYS

For a more in-depth study of theological school student experiences, and a more in-depth understanding of the gender differences thereof, we next analyzed survey data collected from both entering and graduating seminary students for the 2012-2013 academic year. These surveys were disseminated and collected by the Association of Theological Schools, and survey data only for 10 of the 13 United Methodist theological schools were provided to GBHEM for this analysis (the names of the schools comprising those 10 were not provided).

The below analyses represent survey responses from those students who self-identified as United Methodist—all other students were excluded from analysis. For the survey of entering students, 307 United Methodist students were included for final analyses, including 146 men and 161 women. For the survey of graduating students, 351 United Methodist students were included for final analyses, including 169 men and 182 women.

Entering Student Survey

Looking first at entering student survey results, several statistically significant differences emerge between the responses of men and the responses of women. Women reported being significantly older than men, with a mean score of 3.79 versus 2.98 (on a scale of 1 to 8), placing women on average in the age range of 36-40 and men in the age range of 31-35.

Women also reported being significantly more theologically liberal than men, with a mean score of 3.43 versus 3.20 (on a scale of 1 to 5). Men and women did not significantly differ on all other demographic and “lifestyle” survey items.

When asked to rate the importance of a list of factors in their decision to pursue theological education, women rated the following factors significantly higher than did men:

- Promise of spiritual fulfillment
- Opportunity for study and growth
- Desire to serve others
- Desire to contribute to the cause of social justice
- To discern God’s will

Among women, the three highest rated factors in their decision to pursue theological education were: (1) Experienced a call from God; (2) Desire to serve others; and (3) Opportunity for study and growth. Among men, the three highest rated factors were: (1) Experienced a call from God; (2) Desire to make a difference in life of church; and (3) Desire to serve others.

When asked to rate the importance of a list of factors in their decision to attend their particular theological school, men and women did not significantly differ in their responses. For women, however, the most highly rated factor was “Quality of the faculty.” For men, the most highly rated factor was “Academic reputation of the school.” For both men and women, the three highest rated factors were: (1) Quality of the faculty; (2) Academic reputation of the school; and (3) Good financial aid assistance.

Graduating Student Survey

Looking, finally, at graduating student survey results, statistically significant differences between men and women emerge on a number of different items than on the entering student survey. First, demographically, women on the graduating student survey were significantly less likely to report being married, with only 53% of women reporting being married compared to the 78% of men who reported being married. Not

surprisingly, then, women also reported having significantly fewer dependents than men, with a mean score of 1.62 versus a mean score of 2.12 (on a scale of 1 to 5). These findings, coupled with the significantly older age among women reported in the entering student survey, may indicate markedly different stages of life and/or lifestyle arrangements through which men and women engage in theological education.

When asked to rate the importance of a list of sources of income for the support of their theological education, women rated "Denominational support" significantly higher than did men. Among women, the three highest rated sources of income were: (1) Scholarship/grant; (2) Off-campus work; and (3) Denominational support. Among men, the three highest rated sources of income were: (1) Scholarship/grant; (2) Off-campus work; and (3) Spouse's income.

When asked what vocational position they anticipated having after graduation, women were significantly less likely than men to indicate "Full-time parish ministry" as their post-graduation position, though this was the most frequently indicated position for both men and women. Among women, 42.3% of respondents indicated they would go into full-time parish ministry. 12.1% indicated they were "Undecided," while 9.9% and 6.6% of respondents indicated going into "Part-time parish ministry" and "Full-time Hospital or other chaplaincy", respectively.

Men much more frequently indicated "Full-time parish ministry" as their post-graduation position, at 59.8% of respondents. The next highest rated position for men was "Undecided" at 8.3%, with 4.7% and 3.6% of respondents indicating "Full-time Other" and "Part-time parish ministry", respectively.

Men and women did not significantly differ in their satisfaction ratings of their experiences in theological school.