

SCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

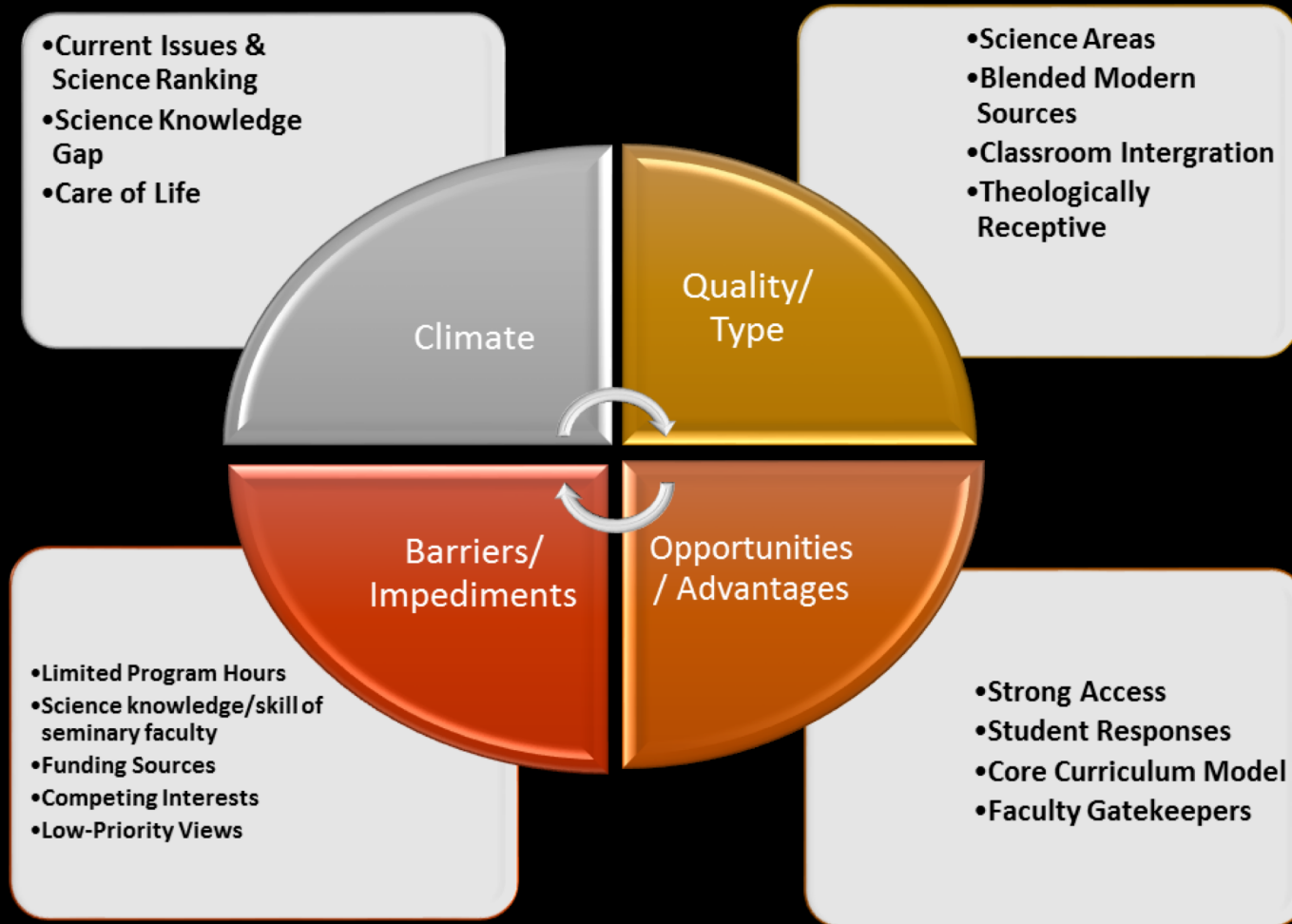
REA 2019 ANNUAL MEETING

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NOV. 3, 2019
TORONTO,

CREATING THE NEXT®

SCIENCE IN ATS SEMINARIES



CURRENT CLIMATE OF SCIENCE (AND TECHNOLOGY) IN SEMINARIES

CLIMATE – RANKING OF SCIENCE IN THEOLOGICAL CLIMATE



90% of respondents expressed that science is among the top three issues that they believe are relevant to clergy preparedness and consequently to theological education in the current climate.

The other two top ranking current issues were social justice (issues of racism, sexism, and sexual identity) and self-care (both of clergy and congregational life).

- Over 64% of interviewees identified evolution and creation care (environmental science-climate change/global warming) as among the top issue of scientific concern and engagement at their seminary.
- 57% found neuroscience and medical sciences as significant for seminary education since they address beginning of life, quality of life and end of life questions
- 36% identified digital technology as a relevant scientific area because of the role of technology in shaping how people relate, communicate, learn, and function in modern society. They found technology significant in regards to human development and identity.

The biggest issue is a profound gap ... in which we have a generation that is both technologically and scientifically informed, but we have a church and a theological world that has largely treated these as irrelevant, focusing on spirituality, focusing on other issues. I think that this gap is probably the biggest issue for seminaries.

Mark

Faculty, Canadian Seminary

QUALITY AND TYPE OF SCIENCE (AND TECHNOLOGY) IN SEMINARIES

- Common science areas engaged on seminary campuses
 - Social and behavioral sciences
 - Environmental science
 - Medical/natural science rarely engaged. Yet, presents poignant theological impacts when they are
- Science integration into seminary classrooms
 - Guest speakers (co-teaching models)
 - digital resources
 - dialogical references
 - Blended modern resources (field trips, virtual interactive curricular)

ADVANTAGES/BARRIERS TO SCIENCE (AND TECHNOLOGY) IN SEMINARIES

ADVANTAGES: STUDENT RESPONSES



- In courses where science has been incorporated, interviewees discovered positive student responses, both formally and informally, for broadening science engagement in seminaries.
- Oscar, an informant at a Lutheran seminary, based on student surveys, notes, “100 percent positive response from students. They said it was the most appreciated part of the whole course.”
- Gina admits, “It comes as a bit of a surprise, but a positive one for most.” Students initially may bring suspicions and concerns to science-integrated courses, but study participants articulate that student responses at the end of the course demonstrate the transformative effect of incorporating science into seminary education.

ADVANTAGES: ENHANCING THEOLOGICAL CURRICULUM AND SEMINARIANS SKILL SCOPE



- 57% of interviewees noted that incorporating science into core courses, whether through team teaching, faculty development, or increased funding, would be one of the best approaches for broadening science engagement.
- Faculty with scientific interests or backgrounds is a major advantage for broadening science engagement in seminary education. Forty percent of subjects in group one interview pool hold degrees in science/engineering as well as theology.
- Consortium creation is a way to enhance research agendas at the intersection of science (and technology) and theological education.

- 100% of respondents stated the key gatekeeper for determining science engagement is faculty.
- Faculty limited scientific knowledge/skills to analyze and incorporate scientific sources into theological education is another barrier to broadening science engagement in seminaries.
- Lack of research agendas and funding in the area
- Low priority for leadership and gatekeepers
- Limited degree program hours

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



- An identified need
- A rich landscape
- Resource/knowledge limitations
- Incongruences with current priorities
- Field/guild/Agenda to lead the pathway forward:
 - Next Steps
 - Be intentional
 - Build Agendas
 - Integrate experts
 - Refer to science explicitly, integrate the hard sciences, incorporate scientific assignments (source: Atwaters, Park-Hearn, and Salazar (2017))