Field Education

Purpose
The Field Education Program at VTS is designed to provide experiential, contextual learning opportunities to assist seminarians with:

- Integrating their study of Christian tradition and their practice of Christian ministry;
- Developing their liturgical and leadership abilities;
- Enhancing their personal and professional growth, and
- Promoting lifelong theological reflection on the practice of ministry.

Learning in field education, which is concurrent with academic courses, is achieved at several levels. Most obvious are the practical skills of ministry — the "how to" of learning. Growth in personal and professional identity is crucial — the deeper discovery of "who I am" as a person, a Christian, and, for some, as clergy. The integration of the study of the Christian tradition and the practice of ministry occurs as the seminarian develops the habit of reflecting theologically on events in ministry by asking such questions as "Where is God in all of this?" "What might the reign of God look like?" "How might God be calling me to participate in God's work at this site?" Our hope is that the integration of study, practice and theological reflection will produce leaders who read, enter and leave their context well and who pray and think theologically about their ministry.

Requirements
Field Education is required for all M.Div. students, including non-ordination track students. Anglican Studies students may participate in Field Education with permission from the Director. All students are encouraged to consult with the Director during the site selection process.

The requirement for M.Div. students is satisfactory completion of nine (9) credit hours of Field Education. Seminarians generally begin Field Education in the first semester of their Middler year, and each seminarian is expected to devote twelve (12) hours per week to Field Education. This includes travel and preparation as well as meetings with his/her Field Education Supervisor and Seminarian Lay Committee.

Although most seminarians experience deeper involvement and learning by remaining in the same placement for two years, many continue at their sites in an "unofficial" (i.e., not for credit) capacity in the fourth or final semester. Nevertheless, the covenant between a supervisor and seminarian is negotiated annually, and seminarians are encouraged to seek the site and supervisor that best provide experience and reflection related to their learning goals.

Hybrid Field Education
Although most seminarians complete their Field Education requirements by taking three, consecutive, twelve-hour-per-week semesters of Field Education, beginning in the Fall semester of their Middler year (i.e., Traditional Field Education), the Field Education Program offers two additional options for those who wish to gain a more intensive, day-to-day, administrative and pastoral experience in a Field Ed. parish:
1. Instead of limiting one’s Field Ed. experiences to Sundays, include one weekday. Attend to liturgical, pastoral and other leadership activities on three consecutive Sundays, and, with the supervisor’s permission, shadow him/her on a weekday in lieu of the fourth Sunday, and/or

2. Elect to fulfill three (3) of the nine (9) credit hours by engaging in one of the following:
   a. An intensive, forty-hour per week, four-week January term at their current Field Education site or at a non-parish site;
   b. An intensive, forty-hour per week, four-week Summer term at their current Field Education site or at a non-parish site, or
   c. An intensive, forty-hour per week, eight-week Summer term at a church other than their current Field Education parish.

Field Education in the January or Summer term must be preregistered and approved by the Director of Field Education. Tuition charges may apply.

The Ministry Resident Program (MRP)
The Ministry Resident Program is an alternative to traditional and hybrid Field Education. In 2009 Virginia Theological Seminary entered into an agreement with six churches in the Washington Metropolitan Area to explore a new model of seminary education. Sponsored by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the MRP consists of two years of intensive academic study (Junior and Middler years), one year of intensive (thirty hours per week), cohort-based, field education in their MRP parishes combined with academic study at VTS (Senior year) and a fourth year of a full-time, paid internship in one of the MRP parishes. The goals of the MRP are:

- To form reflective practitioners through an integrated program
- To provide foundational knowledge for faithful, effective leadership
- To shape pastoral identity through mentoring and a habit of learning
- To engage in theological education as a contextual enterprise

All M.Div. Juniors are introduced to the Ministry Resident Program during the Field Education and CPE Orientation in the August term. A separate orientation with the MRP Director, a supervisor from one of the MRP parishes, the Field Ed. Director and other VTS faculty is held in the early Fall. All Juniors are invited to apply, and six MRP students are selected and notified by the end of the Fall semester of their junior year. MRP students are expected to take a Congregational Study course at VTS in their Middler year in preparation for their entry into their MRP congregations, which begins in the summer following their Middler year.

Process for Traditional and Hybrid Field Education
During the junior year, seminarians are encouraged to visit a variety of churches among the approximately 130 available field education parishes in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. Experienced, trained supervisors, who minister out of a diversity of liturgical and theological traditions, serve in a variety of church settings, including urban, suburban, rural, church-plants, emergent, multi-cultural congregations, historic churches, no staff and multi-staff. Positions in non-Episcopal churches may be considered, if feasible.
Seminarians who are interested in serving as chaplains are encouraged to visit relevant sites, including Episcopal schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, hospices, and retirement communities in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

Through a process of reflecting on the visits with the Director and interviewing with supervisors, seminarians negotiate a field education site and stipend.

**Stipends**
The Field Education Department recommends to Field Education sites a range of stipends for seminarians based primarily on the geographical distance of each site from the seminary. During or prior to each Field Education interview, Field Education supervisors are expected to:
1. Inform seminarians of the amount that his/her site will offer the seminarian;
2. Whether or not that amount is open for negotiation, and
3. The approximate date each semester on which the check will be mailed or given to the seminarian.

Upon acceptance of a call to serve as a seminarian at a particular site, seminarians may renegotiate the stipend with their supervisor (if the supervisor has indicated that the amount is open for negotiation).

The Field Education Director will serve as a resource for seminarians in negotiating their stipends with their Field Education sites, and the director will serve as a resource and/or advocate, if necessary, for seminarians if there are issues that arise with their Field Education supervisors/sites regarding their Field Education stipends.

Once an amount is agreed upon, the seminarian is asked to send an e-mail to the Field Education Department with the following information:
1. Supervisor’s name
2. Site
3. Annual stipend
4. Payment date(s)

The seminarian is asked to copy his/her supervisor on the e-mail as this will be a helpful record for the Field Education Director in case any issues arise at a later point.

**Seminarian Learning Covenant**
In consultation with the Field Education Director and his/her Field Education Supervisor, each seminarian formulates at least three Field Education goals. Seminarians are required to formulate and complete a **Leadership Project** during their tenure at their Field Education site. Goals may be revised or updated each semester.

**Supervisors**
During their tenure at their Field Education sites, all seminarians are expected to engage in weekly individual or group supervision with their Field Education supervisor. Supervisors are
expected to participate in a three-year, supervisors training program, which is facilitated by the director and an experienced clergy or lay person.

**Lay Committees**
Seminarians also are expected to participate in monthly, group meetings with their Seminarian Lay Committee. This committee is comprised of members of the Field Education institution {whether a parish setting or an institutional (i.e. school, hospital, etc.) setting} who are committed to assisting the seminarian in his/her formation. The gift of a Seminarian Lay Committee that offers support and challenge is an invaluable chapter in the formation of well-rounded leaders. To facilitate their ministry to VTS seminarians, all committee members are invited to participate in annual Seminarian Lay Committee Orientation and Assessment workshops, which are facilitated by the director and an experienced Lay Committee Convener.

**Colloquy**
Colloquy is a weekly, peer, small group reflection seminar designed to assist seminarians in developing a lifelong habit of theological reflection. To facilitate this process, accounts of actual events in which the seminarian has been involved provide the basis for integrating their study of Christian tradition and their practice of Christian ministry.

Six or seven seminarians meet with two mentors from the second through the fourth quarter of the Middler year. One mentor is an experienced priest, lay person or faculty member, while the other usually is a senior seminarian.

**Grading**
Written reports by the seminarian and evaluations from his/her Field Education supervisor at the end of each semester become the basis of a grade (Satisfactory, Conditional, Unsatisfactory) assigned by the Director of Field Education. These must be completed by the due dates for grades each semester.

**Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)**
Although Clinical Pastoral Education is not required for the M.Div. degree, most dioceses require or recommend it. Students are urged to confer with their dioceses about such requirements or recommendations.

CPE, which generally is taken during the summer between the Junior and Middler years in a hospital or retirement community, provides seminarians with opportunities to develop and enhance skills in pastoral care. Students are responsible for the application process and all fees or other expenses associated with CPE. Upon satisfactory completion and receipt of the final signed evaluation by the Field Education Office, three (3) credit hours are recorded on the seminarian’s transcript as transfer credit.

VTS supports CPE experiences by providing:
1. An orientation to CPE;
2. Assistance with finding a CPE site, and
3. **CPE Segue**, a post-CPE opportunity which provides:
In consultation with the director, CPE may be elected as a 3 credit hour course during the academic year.

**The Second Three Years Program (S3YP)**
The Second Three Years Program (S3YP) offers three years of institutional support to M.Div. and Anglican Studies graduates of Virginia Theological Seminary through a combination of on-campus residencies, mentor support, institutional site visits and funds to underwrite a first continuing education experience. Upon graduation, participants will begin monthly meetings with an experienced lay or clergy mentor who will provide guidance and encouragement throughout the first three years of ordained ministry. Participants will be invited to three, week-long summer residencies on campus in their second, third and fourth years of active ministry. By providing continuing support for our graduates in these crucial apprenticeship years, the program will help ensure that the newly ordained will remain active in ministry for the long haul.