

Educating Imaginative, Resilient Leaders for God's Changing World
Columbia Theological Seminary
Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement Plan of Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS), a graduate institution affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA, is titled "Educating Imaginative, Resilient Leaders for God's Changing World." The CTS community notes several important trends that the QEP seeks to address. First, the "burnout" rates of the leaders of faith communities are rapidly increasing; resilient leaders will persevere much longer in their work and will lead their communities more effectively. Second, the landscape of the Church and its relation to the broader community is changing quickly in many parts of the world. Massive ongoing cultural, environmental, economic and technological shifts will require leaders to respond with skills such as contextual analysis, adaptability, resilience and creativity.

In light of the world's various rapid changes and their effects on faith communities and the leaders of those communities, CTS seeks to equip students with (1) skills and practices to enhance their emotional and psychological resilience, (2) an increased imagination that can enable them to analyze and adapt to new and changing situations, and to lead communities in processes of adaptive change, and (3) sustainable Christian practices of renewal and creativity that promote both personal and communal well-being. Leaders thrive when they possess certain skills: positive interpersonal relationships, problem-solving skills, perceived efficacy and control, self-regulation skills, effective stress management, creativity, flexibility, self-evaluation skills, committed peer groups, and faith grounded in spiritual practices that sustains hope. Through our new required first-year course for MDiv students, CTS seeks to introduce the concept of resilience and teach elements of these various skills, including the dynamics of changing systems (such as diversity, adaptive capacity, modularity, feedback loops, and connectivity) and the qualities of translational leaders who can encourage communities in their own resilience. Through a renewal of the Contextual Education program, CTS will equip students with deeper knowledge of self, opportunities to practice the skills of resilient and imaginative leaders, and the experience of immersion within a particular context of God's changing world. And in a final-year case study experience, students will demonstrate their leadership skills through imaginative and adaptive responses to various situations involving rapid change.

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