



ALLLM 2024 Annual Report

Annual Meeting

March 11, 2025

Meeting agenda:

12:00pm EST - Welcome and Introductions - Helen Blier, President

12:10pm EST - Report from President - Helen Blier

12:25pm EST - Reports from Board

- State of the finances - Veva Mumaw
- Membership updates - Jess Williams
- Partnerships, Grants, and other ALLLM Activities - ALLLM Board

12:45pm EST - Other Business

1:00pm EST - Adjournment

Highlights

The ALLLM Executive Board continued the work begun in 2023 to review and update the communications systems, membership processes, and support for lifelong learning leaders. Among our 2024 accomplishments (discussed in further detail below):

- First meeting supported by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning grant (Feb. 2024; second held Jan. 2025)
- Regular webinars with authors from the Theological Education Between the Times series
- Receipt of a \$20,000 grant from the Carpenter Foundation
- Launch of research into the landscape of lifelong learning
- Regular newsletter launched
- Hiring of Communications staff support
- Renewal of relationship with the Religious Education Association (REA) as a “related learning organization”
- Strategic planning session for the exec team

- Decision by exec to suspend bylaws until next annual meeting to pursue sustainability strategies for organization

Executive Team transitions:

Vice President Jessica Williams had to resign from membership on the executive board and was ably replaced by Jennifer Sanborn, who was already a member of the exec.

Valerie Andrews had to resign as well, due to work; the executive board welcomed Darryl Stephens of Lancaster Theological Seminary to complete her term.

Activities and Partnerships Highlights:

Many of your ALLLM Exec members have been busy doing work on behalf of ALLLM and lifelong learning:

- ALLLM members Darryl Stephens, Helen Blier, and Aaron Stauffer secured a \$20,000 grant from the Carpenter Foundation in support of an edited volume on lifelong learning and research into the landscape of lifelong learning.
- Helen Blier has advocated for the importance of lifelong learning with the In Trust Center and represented ALLLM on an advisory team for The American Association for the Advancement of Science's Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion. Through this, she helped adjudicate a first round of Lilly-funded grants for lifelong learning at the intersection of science and religion.
- She also serves on the advisory team for CHURCHx as they grow their educational outreach.
- Sarah Erickson provided coordination of the ATS Pathways Coach Cohorts offered in 2024. A total of 12 leaders of lifelong learning were involved in two cohorts ERickson also served as coach for one of the cohorts.
- We held four webinars with Theological Education Between the Times authors: Willie James Jennings, Elizabeth Conde Frazier, Amos Yong, and Dan Aleshire. The board held its own meeting with Ted Smith in early 2024.
 - o All recordings of webinars are available on the Members only side of the website. This was a trial run of member only content: feedback welcome!

Wabash-ALLLM Partnership

The primary goal of this three-year project has been to cultivate a community of practice for lifelong learning leaders. The first gathering in February 2024 convened members of the ALLLM exec and other lifelong learning leaders by invitation to identify the distinctives of lifelong learning in ministry and faith-based contexts. Participants came from denominational, theological school, and independent lifelong learning organizations. The consultation not only

produced valuable collective insight into our shared work; it also identified a key metaphor to represent the location of lifelong learning within the ecosystem of theological education: *ecotone*. An ecotone is a transitional space with its own distinct and transitional ecology, such as an estuary between saltwater and freshwater. We saw a connection to our intersectional work as directors of lifelong learning for ministry, frequently on the forefront of educational innovation and attuned to the needs of churches and their communities.

Strategic planning: early 2025 update

2025 began with the second of the Wabash gatherings and the first in-person gathering of the ALLLM executive board. The exec gathered for a facilitated strategic planning session with Michael Alan Tate from On the Same Page Consulting and identified key strategic activities in support of membership for 2025. Among these include increased attention to new member onboarding, opportunities for members to gather online and share work, and contributions to the academic discourse on lifelong learning.

We rearticulated our core mission as follows:

To provide resources, education, and support for leaders of lifelong learning in churches, seminaries, denominations, universities, and other lifelong learning programs that support ministers and faith-based professionals.

In doing so, we want to grow ALLLM as a **resource provider, think tank, and community of practice** for leaders of lifelong learning. We identified key projects for 2025 in service of this mission and vision, some of which are named below.

Looking Ahead

The coming year promises continued work digging into the identity and best practices of lifelong learning leadership and programs as we live into the results of our strategic planning session. Activities will include planning for the third Wabash-funded consultation at Columbia TS, continued data collection and analysis related to our research project, and the book project. The Carpenter Foundation grant will underwrite the research and the book project, a collection of essays written by lifelong learning leaders and the first such publication since the release of *A Lifelong Call to Learn* twenty years ago.

We will continue to offer occasional webinars, including online collaborative work spaces and discussions facilitated by ALLLM members on new developments and best practices in lifelong learning. We are also in the process of developing more streamlined membership processes, including onboarding of new members and easier renewal. This work necessitated the hiring of an outside communications consultant who will manage the work of communicating with membership, advertising of events, and newsletter production. In late 2024, Chassidy Goggins joined the ALLLM team and began the crucial work of streamlining all ALLLM communications.

Our renewed relationship with the Religious Education Association means that we will be offering two dedicated presentations at their annual conference, July 7-11 online. We encourage you to support membership in both organizations and be part of this collaborative conversation!

And mark your calendars for January 2026, when we will be opening up our third Wabash-funded gathering to all ALLLM members. The meeting will address best practices in lifelong learning program design and delivery, and there will be no cost to participate in the event. We have discovered the value of gathering in person as a guild and believe that the benefits should be extended to interested members.

In sum, the past year has been one of vigorous building and rebuilding, shoring up the identity and mission of the organization and what it means to do this work with an all-volunteer board and funding from membership dues. As we work to discern the best path forward for the sustainability and growth of the organization, we are exploring options that include the possibility of ALLLM becoming a nested institute with administrative support provided by a larger organization. Your member dues are crucial in supporting this work as we further define and advocate for the distinctiveness of lifelong learning for ministry. We can't do this without you.

Foregrounding these efforts, of course, is our commitment to our mission, as articulated above: to provide resources, education, and support for leaders of lifelong learning in churches, seminaries, denominations, universities, and other lifelong learning programs that support ministers and faith-based professionals.

Submitted with gratitude on behalf of the Executive Board,

Helen Blier, Ph.D.

President, ALLLM