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## AMBS launches Doctor of Ministry in Leadership program

By Annette Brill Bergstresser

ELKHART, Indiana (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) — [Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary](#) (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana, is now accepting applications for a new Doctor of Ministry degree — the first of its kind.

Not only is the seminary's [Doctor of Ministry in Leadership](#) (DMin) the only DMin in the United States to be deliberately developed with an Anabaptist framework, it also is the first DMin in the U.S. and Canada approved by the [Association of Theological Schools](#) (ATS) to be designed from the outset as a competency-based program. The first cohort of students will begin in January 2023.

"We know from consultations with pastors and leaders in the church, as well as from feedback from our own alumni, that the church needs leaders who continually grow in specific competencies," said [Beverly Lapp](#), EdD, Vice President and Academic Dean. "We've shaped and focused our new DMin in response to these needs. This program will enable ministry professionals to build on what they've gained from their prior studies and leadership experiences and will be an important part of our strategy to resource leadership for the church."

[Jewel Gingerich Longenecker](#), PhD, and [Dan Schrock](#), DMin, will serve as co-directors of the new program. Longenecker is Dean of Lifelong Learning at AMBS, and Schrock — is an AMBS Core Adjunct Faculty member who teaches in the field of spiritual direction.

"Jewel and Dan each bring excellent track records in program innovation and leadership development, and I am delighted they will contribute in this way as we launch this new program," said Lapp.

### A customized plan for growth

The 32-credit-hour DMin in Leadership is designed to help mid-career pastors and leaders strengthen their ministry leadership capacities by shaping their learning objectives around their needs and goals. Students can complete the program in three years, taking nine to 12 credits per academic year while based in their professional ministry or leadership context. Much of the coursework can be done online; the program also requires weeklong visits to campus each January for in-person coursework. Each student will be part of a cohort of peer learners who will have a faculty mentor and an advisory ministry group to guide their studies.

Through customized learning plans, students in the program will gain expertise in five key competencies: **Anabaptist Leadership, Intercultural Leadership, Teaching Leadership, Change Leadership and Resilient Leadership**. They'll also take core leadership courses, develop a leadership portfolio and complete a doctoral research project with the goal of generating new knowledge on a specific practice of ministry.

According to [David Boshart](#), PhD, President, the leaders who designed the new program chose the competency-based model because it aligns well with AMBS's existing educational philosophy of "knowing, doing and being."

**Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary**

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“Our DMin students will develop their own learning plan for acquiring knowledge about leadership; practice new understandings of leadership in their context of ministry; and then reflect on how what they know and what they have done can deepen their leadership identity,” he explained. “It’s a very holistic and organic approach to learning.”

### **Exploring qualities of Anabaptist leadership**

Boshart said he finds it energizing that the curriculum and context of the new DMin will invite students to think globally about what “Anabaptist” leadership means.

“We generally understand ‘Anabaptist’ leadership to include leadership in the way of Jesus; leadership as service; and strong reliance on communal discernment where vision, mission and faithfulness are concerned,” he said. “But we also want to understand more fully how competent Anabaptist leadership is being understood and practiced in Anabaptist faith communities across the globe.”

“As we launch this program, our goal is to build a community of practice that will remove the blind spots that lessen leadership effectiveness and will broaden our exposure to ways in which effective Anabaptist leadership contributes to thriving faith communities and organizations,” he added.

### **Application requirements**

AMBS’s DMin in Leadership, which received full accreditation approval from ATS in June 2022, is open to students from any Christian faith tradition. Applicants for the first cohort must be U.S. residents or hold a U.S. passport and be able to travel to the AMBS campus for the required annual weeklong residencies without a visa. Applications for the January 2023 cohort are due Nov. 1. To learn more or apply, see [ambbs.edu/dmin](https://ambbs.edu/dmin).

*Located in Elkhart, Indiana, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, offering theological education for learners both on campus and at a distance as well as a wide array of lifelong learning programs — all with the goal of educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God’s reconciling mission in the world. [ambbs.edu](https://ambbs.edu)*

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### **Image available:**

AMBS DMin classroom image 2022-06 063.jpg

Andy Brubacher Kaethler, PhD, Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Culture, teaches a graduate-level course at AMBS in June 2022. The seminary’s new Doctor of Ministry in Leadership will enable ministry professionals to build on what they have learned in their master’s-level studies. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)