

## Lutheran Educational Conference Implementing Initiatives with Grant from Thrivent Financial

**SIOUX FALLS, S.D.** (September 29, 2008) – The Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) was awarded a three-year, \$1.2 million grant entitled “Connecting Colleges and Congregational Ministry” from its member institutions and from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, based in Appleton, Wis., and Minneapolis, Minn. The first distributions were received in 2007, and LECNA has used the funds to revamp its current communications with high school students and congregations across the nation. The development of a grassroots marketing campaign that will connect advocates of a Lutheran higher education with prospective students is underway.

President of LECNA Ralph Wagoner said, “We’re incredibly grateful for Thrivent’s continued support and interest in seeing all 42 of our member institutions thrive. The monies they’ve committed will substantially increase our reach, helping us to better communicate the value of a Lutheran higher education experience.”

For decades Thrivent and its predecessor organizations have provided financial support to LECNA, providing assistance to sustain the organization’s nationwide series of college fairs and financial aid workshops, enrollment efforts at national youth gatherings, dissemination of research promoting the unique values of Lutheran higher education, and development and maintenance of a central website – [www.lutherancolleges.org](http://www.lutherancolleges.org).

In addition to supporting ongoing efforts, Thrivent’s most recent grant award will provide the funds necessary for new outreach to pastors, youth ministers and congregation members, creating a “Network of Champions” to support enrollment efforts at Lutheran colleges and universities across North America. By building a broad and active network of supporters of Lutheran higher education LECNA hopes to play a more significant role in helping its member institutions meet their admissions goals.

Wagoner continued, “There are hundreds of people – pastors, youth ministers and congregation members – across the nation who have a deep appreciation for the schools that we represent. Because many of these people are also well-positioned to mentor high school students in their college decisions, we want to provide them with the tools they need to better inform teens across the nation of the value of a Lutheran higher education. Thrivent’s award will provide the funding to make this happen.”

Karen Coonen, executive director of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation, said, “Lutheran institutions make a difference in the well-being of society. We are pleased to assist LECNA through this grant in its efforts to reach out, inform and lift up the value of Lutheran higher education to future generations of leaders.”

LECNA has established numerical goals for growth in college fair attendance, website visits and e-mail contacts as steps towards increasing the enrollment of students who resonate with a faith-based education at its member institutions. In addition, 500 Champions will be trained to serve as informal advisors to students for the collective group of schools. LECNA will also expand and enhance communication to the over 16,000 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod congregations across the country.

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The Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) was formed in 1910 to encourage, assist and promote cooperation among Lutheran colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. The oldest existing inter-Lutheran organization in North America, LECNA supports the missions of 28 colleges and universities affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the 10 affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and four other Lutheran institutions. For more information about LECNA or its member institutions visit [www.lutherancolleges.org](http://www.lutherancolleges.org).

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