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ASBURY theological SEMINARY
THE WHOLE BIBLE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD
AUSTRALIA IS SIMPLY A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. Though it can take 24 hours to arrive on its beautiful shores when you’re travelling from the other side of the world, it is worth the effort. Rainforests, uncrowded beaches, and new and thriving cities are reasons enough to visit Australia, but the five private institutions of Christian higher education associated with the CCCU (Alpharcsic College, Avondale College of Higher Education, Christian Heritage College, Eastern College of Australia, and Excelsia College) made my recent trip to Australia remarkable.

These institutions are doing pioneering work and making an impact on the culture and thought life of Australia – no easy task, given the Britsh-based system of education that favors the 40-plus state-supported universities. Unlike the United States, financial aid is not generally given directly to students in Australia; instead, state financial support goes only to institutions that have achieved a particular academic status based on criteria that heavily weighs the research produced by the university. While an institution can apply for university status, the odds are stacked against the 1000-plus non-university institutions – after all, you need money to undertake research, and those institutions can’t get research accomplished without financial support. There is also not a well-developed history of philanthropic giving from the general public to higher education institutions.

But these challenges have not stopped the intrepid and visionary leadership, faculty, and staff of those five CCCU institutions that are determined to survive and thrive, just as the U.S.-based CCCU institutions did decades ago when they, too, faced challenges in building their faculty, their academic programs, and their reputations.

In these situations, a key way to survive and thrive is to band together as an association of institutions, and that’s what these Australian institutions have done; in addition to their membership with the CCCU, they have worked with other Christian institutions and created the Australian Christian Higher Education Alliance (ACHEA). Eighteen months ago, I was invited to speak at ACHEA’s research symposium. This symposium helped the faculty from these institutions present and publish on the theory, practice, and distinctive of Christian higher education in the Australian context; after attending this event, I know that the book that will be published from the symposium will have relevance for all of us in Christian higher education.

Why is all this effort these institutions are going through worth it? Why bother with persisting in this cause of Christian higher education? Here is what I say when people ask me these questions: Our world needs Christians what I say when people ask me these questions: Our world needs Christians who can you count on? But being a wise Christian who makes a difference in the world doesn’t magically happen. Being wise happens through study, mentoring, and practice – the kind of study, mentoring, and practice that happens at Christian colleges and universities. There, students study the Bible and apply biblical principles to the questions in their disciplines. In studying the Bible, students learn that wisdom comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through prayer and community practice, the Spirit is discerned.

At Christian colleges and universities, students form mentoring relationships with older, wiser, more mature men and women of faith. The class discussions; the conversations around a thesis project; the model of faculty, staff, and other classmates and alumni serving and living out their faith – all of these examples provide students the exemplars for living out Christ-centered, prudent, service-filled, sacrificial lives. These characteristics gird up the model of faculty, staff, and other classmates and alumni who practice what they preach, and then they themselves have opportunities in community to practice what’s been taught.

Your alumni represent hundreds of thousands of examples of wise, remarkable, Christ-loving, community-serving individuals. We’ll be highlighting just a few of these stories throughout October on social media as part of our celebration of Christian Higher Education Month. These individuals exemplify why Christian higher education is worth it. We who are working day in and day out on the sometimes mundane, sometimes glorious aspects of life in our institutions have the privilege to join our students and alumni in making a difference for Christ. Now that’s worth it.

Being a wise Christian who makes a difference in the world doesn’t magically happen. It happens through study, mentoring, and practice – the kind of study, mentoring, and practice that happens in Christian colleges and universities.

It’s Worth It
RESPONDING TO A NEW REALITY
Student needs and demographics are changing. How are CCCU leaders adapting?
By Morgan Feddes Satre

WHY ADVOCACY WORK IS ESSENTIAL
Campus leaders share how to engage in advocacy... and how to do it well.
By Jay Barnes, Mark D. Kahler, Ryan Spear, and Carla E. Gross

FROM THE EDITOR
By Morgan Feddes Satre

AROUND THE COUNCIL
News from the CCCU

ON DIVERSITY
Brenda Salt McNeil

ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
Interview with Kimberly Battle-Walters Denu

INNOVATION
Reflections That Transform
By Chloe Buckler

THE LAST WORD
By Sho Baraka

THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (CCCU) is a higher education association of more than 180 Christian institutions around the world. With campuses across the globe, including more than 150 in the U.S. and Canada and more than 30 from an additional 18 countries, CCCU institutions are accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith. Most also have curricula rooted in the arts and sciences.

THE MISSION OF THE CCCU is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform the lives of students by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.

DISTRIBUTION
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PREPARING FOR GEN Z
The next generation of students is coming to campus, and it’s unlike any generation before.
By Morgan Feddes Satre

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS
Knowing when and how to help can be difficult. Here are some guidelines.
By Irene Kraegel

MORE THAN JUST A MEAL
Students increasingly face food insecurity, leaving them hungry for more than just knowledge.
By Shannon Que

HEED THE CALL
By Claude O. Pressnell Jr.

CLIMBING THE SECOND MOUNTAIN
By Kay Larrison

WHY ADVOCACY WORK IS ESSENTIAL
Campus leaders share how to engage in advocacy... and how to do it well.
By Jay Barnes, Mark D. Kahler, Ryan Spear, and Carla E. Gross

TECHNOLOGY AND THE HUMAN FUTURE
Why Christian higher education is uniquely positioned to shape how we engage revolutionary technology.
A conversation with John Bucher and Craig Gay

ON THE SHELF

ADVANCE  |  FALL 2019
FROM THE EDITOR | MORGAN FEDDES SATRE

One of the most difficult aspects of being interested and involved in journalism is the fact that the majority of what is covered in U.S. news is overall negative in its tone—“wars and rumors of wars” is the biblical phrase that comes to mind. Thanks to current technology, we now have the ability to hear about bad news from literally every corner of the globe. Frankly, it’s not hard for even an optimist like myself to become a pessimist in the onslaught of negative news.

Perhaps that’s why I was so surprised by how much hope I gleaned from a summer seminar class on systematic theology with a special emphasis on eschatology. On its surface, an in-depth exploration of “the last things” doesn’t sound like much cause for a sunny, positive study, especially when many headlines scream about the planet’s imminent doom due to natural disasters, conflict, and general human life.

Yet Christianity is unique in its theology of hope rooted in an act of destruction—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—and in his subsequent physical resurrection from the dead. The work of the Church in the light of the resurrection and in anticipation of the final return of Christ is anchored in this hope of the cross—a hope that, as Paul reminded the Corinthians, “is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.” As one of my classmates astutely pointed out, the human perspective of the world is only able to see the decay of physical things—the fires that wipe out huge swaths of life, the diseases that ravage communities, or the destruction wrought by powerful storms, to name but a few.

That is why the Christian eschatological message is such a powerful counter to this decay. It promises that all things will be made whole and renewed, and it also provides us with hope and purpose even as we wait in anticipation for that day. “A light in the darkness” isn’t just a trite phrase for us to repeat; it’s what Jesus provides us in the midst of the darkness of decay around us. And that is why Christian higher education is such a profoundly hopeful endeavor. We aren’t just equipping students with the skills they need to succeed in their careers and live fulfilling, productive lives; we’re modeling what it looks like to use God-given talents, opportunities, and gifts to shine that light of hope out into a world that so often only sees the dark, rank, devastating effects of decay.

This isn’t to say that Christian colleges and universities aren’t without their problems; as this issue highlights, there is an increasing number of students who struggle with emotional or mental distress on top of all the normal stressors that come with college life. The decay of the world touches us all, and our campuses are no exception. But thanks be to God that we have a Savior who doesn’t leave us in that sin; instead, he not only redeems us but calls us to be a reflection of his light in the world. And that is hopeful news, indeed.

Do you have comments about stories in this issue or ideas for stories in a future issue? Email us at media@cccu.org.

P.S.—By the time you’re reading this, I will be on maternity leave with our first child, a daughter. So while I might not be able to respond personally to any questions or feedback for a while, never fear—the rest of the Advance team will gladly take your questions, comments, or ideas (and will even consider requests for adorable baby photos as well). ☺

Morgan Feddes Satre is the CCCU’s communications specialist and managing editor of Advance. She is an alumna of both Whitworth University and BestSemester’s L.A. Film Studies Center and is currently pursuing her M.Div. at Fuller Seminary.

Around the Council

NEW INSTITUTIONS

In July 2019, the CCCU Board of Directors approved the applications of new members:

- Baekseok University
  South Korea
  Ann Arbor

- Concordia University
  Ann Arbor, Michigan
  Scott W. Sungquist, July 2019

- Concordia University
  Mequon, Wisconsin
  Paul Ferguson, June 2019

- Ozark Christian College
  Joplin, Missouri
  Kevin J. Brown, July 2019

PRESIDENTIAL CHANGES

The following institutions have experienced presidential transitions since our last published list (Fall 2018). Campuses that currently have interim presidents are not included.

- Asbury University (KY)
  Kevin J. Brown, July 2019

- Azusa Pacific University (CA)
  Paul Ferguson, June 2019

- Carson-Newman University (TN)
  Charles Fowler, July 2019

- Christ’s College Taipei
  Benjamin Wu, November 2018

- Eastern Nazarene College (MA)
  Jack Connell, November 2018

- Hope International University (CA)
  Scott W. Sungquist, July 2019

- Hope International University (CA)
  Paul H. Alexander, August 2019

- Howard Payne University (TX)
  Cory Hines, April 2019

- Judson College (AL)
  W. Mark Tew, March 2019

- Life Pacific University (CA)
  Angela Richey, August 2019

- Moody Bible Institute (IL)
  Mark Jobe, January 2019

- Pepperdine University (CA)
  Jim Gash, August 2019

- Trinity International University (IL)
  Nicholas Perrin, June 2019

- Trinity Western University (British Columbia, Canada)
  Mark Husbands, July 2019

INSTITUTIONAL NAME CHANGES

- Bethel College
  Mishawaka, Indiana, is now Bethel University
  Angela Richey, August 2019

- Calvin College
  Grand Rapids, Michigan, is now Calvin University
  Scott W. Sungquist, July 2019

- Dordt College
  Sioux Center, Iowa, is now Dordt University
  Mark Jobe, January 2019

- Life Pacific College
  San Dimas, California, is now Life Pacific University
THE LATEST UPDATES FROM CAPITOL HILL

THE CCCU'S ADVOCACY WORK promotes and protects its institutions’ unique position as Christ-centered, nonprofit institutions of higher education that are often in the crosshairs of a variety of issues affecting higher education and nonprofit organizations, and challenges to religious character and convictions.

Over the last several months, this advocacy work has included:

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization | Though the congressional committees responsible for the HEA reauthoriza-

tion worked tirelessly to complete this work by August, that did not happen. We have worked and will continue to work to get a definition of religious mission codified in the reauthorization and create an administrative remedy to ad-

dress any adverse accreditation action that fails to respect an institution’s religious mission.

Second Chance Pell | We have been advocating alongside Prison Fellowship for an increase in prison education and Pell Grant accessibility for incarcerated persons, and we are encouraged to see progress in this area both from the Department Education, expanding the Second Chance Pell Experiment, and the Senate, working on expanding education to incarcerated persons through the Restoring Education and Learning (REAL) Act of 2019. In July, we hosted leaders from 17 CCCU institutions who currently have or are interested in creating prison education programs for a time of networking and learning.

Support in Legal Cases | When court case outcomes have the potential to impact Christian higher education, the CCCU often files or joins amicus briefs. The CCCU served as the lead institution on an amicus brief addressing three Title IV cases (Bastock v. Clayton County, Georgia; R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EOEC; and Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda) being heard by the Supreme Court. The brief explains how faith-based institutions have religious employment standards that are key to our fulfillment of the mission of our colleges and universities, and how a change in the definition of sex would bring about confusion for these religious standards.

AROUND THE COUNCIL

Financial Items | We continue to push for the repeal of the “parking tax” on churches and nonprofits and are hopeful that the Economic Mobility Act of 2019, which includes such a repeal, will be passed. We submitted comments to the Department of Labor (DOL) regarding their overtime proposal and highlighted a number of points, including suggestions that DOL should update the salary threshold based on cost of living for different regions, prorate the threshold for part-time employees, and continue to consider the implications for colleges and universities.

Immigration | Along with our partners at the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT), we have been supporting Dreamers and ensuring their access to education. This year, the House passed the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, though the legislation did not go anywhere in the Senate.

DOES SCIENCE UNDERMINE faith? What do scientists think about re-

ligion, and what do religious people think about science? What can Christian institu-
tions do to foster support for science? These were some of the questions that a group of senior leaders and faculty from more than a dozen CCCU institutions and an additional seven non-CCCU institu-
tions discussed during a presidents’ round-
table hosted in July 2019. The roundtable came at the conclusion of Bridging the Two Cultures of Science and the Humanities II, a two-year seminar hosted by Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford (SCIO), the CCCU’s U.K. subsidiary.

The seminar, made possible thanks to support from the Templeton Religion Trust and the Blankenmeyer Foundation, provided 24 faculty scholars the opportunity to de-

velop interdisciplinary skills in science and religion over the last two years, including two month-long events in 2018 and 2019 at SCIO’s facilities in Oxford. The schol-

ars came from a wide variety of academic fields in both the sciences and humanities, including chemistry, biology, physics, psy-

chology, mathematics, history, theology, reconciliation studies, and English.

As part of the seminar’s benefits, each scholar received support for their research in addition to their time at Oxford, en-
abling the cohort to produce 50 publica-
tions in the last year. There was also fund-
ing for student research assistants, a tuition reduction for those students to study at SCIO, and a substantial fund to create and run science and religion clubs on campuses; these clubs hosted more than 100 events during the 2018-19 academic year. This fall, the play Mr. Darwin’s Tree will travel to 12 campuses, where the clubs will help host its staging.

To wrap up the seminar, this closing presidents’ roundtable convened the par-
ticipants with their presidents and other senior campus leaders for a time of dialogue on how to engage questions regarding the intersection of science and religion issues. Attendees had the opportunity to engage the questions above through keynote lec-
tures by Elaine Ecklund, director of the re-

ligion and public life program and professor of sociology at Rice University, and Jona-

than Hill, associate professor of sociology at Calvin University. They also discussed the vision for science and the humanities at their institutions, and each group shared what they wished the other group knew about their perspectives on the work of sci-
ence and religion on their campuses.

Though the Bridging the Two Cultures seminar is officially over, the Templeton Re-

ligion Trust announced a new grant opportu-

nity for participants of both this cohort (which ran from 2018-19) and the first cohort (which ran from 2015-16). Alumni from these events can apply for grants of up to $234,000 each for one to three years in duration.

“SCIO is delighted to have been able to host the faculty and substantive con-

versations on such a major subject impact-
ing so many areas of life and study,” says Stan Rosenberg, SCIO founding director and CCCU vice president for research and scholarship. “The level of trust and part-
nership expressed between the two groups demonstrates the ability these campuses have to engage in serious and difficult con-

versations with integrity, commitment, good will, and vision.”

IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS HOSTED LEADERS FROM 17 CCCU INSTITUTIONS WHO CURRENTLY HAVE OR ARE INTERESTED IN CREATING PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR A TIME OF NETWORKING AND LEARNING.

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LEARN MORE

For more information about the CCCU’s advocacy work, visit www.cccu.org/advocacy.
INTRODUCING NEW INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDY OPPORTUNITY FOR CCCU STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Starting in the spring of 2020, the CCCU’s Australia Studies Centre will offer a reimagined semester abroad opportunity, utilizing its strategic location to offer students the opportunity to explore the many facets of working in international business.

THE WORLD OF STUDY ABROAD is changing. Participants are becoming more diverse and are demanding more major-specific options to study away from campus. In addition, they want more opportunities to learn by doing in internships, practicums, site visits, and independent studies. A recent CCCU survey of more than 3,000 students found that the top five things CCCU students look for in an off-campus program are:

• Adventure and fun (79%)
• Beautiful/specific geographical location (63%)
• Travel opportunities (60%)
• Multicultural experiences (59%)
• Academic excellence (54%)

Additionally, data from the Institute for International Education’s 2018 Open Doors Report indicates that over 20% of U.S. students studying abroad are business and management majors. With this data in hand, the CCCU’s Australia Studies Centre (ASC) has been adapting its program to provide deep, active learning experiences to students studying abroad in either a for-profit or nonprofit organization.

Lessons learned from this pilot semester will be used to ensure that ASC’s program best meets the needs of CCCU students and their home institutions in the years to come, says ASC program director Don DeGraaf. “We hope to create an experience that will open students’ eyes to a variety of new and different paths of using business for the common good,” he says. “These experiences will ask students to cut across disciplines and swirl together academics, travels, hands-on experiences, site visits, internships, community living, and digging deeply wherever God places us. What we hope they will get in return is an experience map all their own— one that demonstrates God’s faithfulness and points them to a life of consequence.”

As a part of this process, the ASC is developing an advisory committee to assist in the creation and evaluation of curriculum that will develop the competencies required for international business majors, preparing them to thrive in today’s competitive global economy. If you are interested in getting more information related to this advisory committee, please contact Don DeGraaf at ddegraaf@bestsemester.com.

To learn more about the Australia Studies Centre, visit www.bestsemester.com/australia.

UNDERSTANDING CCCU FACULTY

IN 2016-17, 24 CCCU INSTITUTIONS and over 1,300 faculty participated in the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey as part of the CCCU’s Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP). The survey provides a comprehensive, research-based picture of key aspects of the faculty experience and is designed to provide institutions actionable information on important and timely issues. It includes topics such as: pedagogical practices; faculty goals and expectations for students; research and service activities; sources of stress and satisfaction; and the connection between learning in the classroom and practices in the local and global community. Results from the HERI Faculty Survey have been used in strategic planning, faculty recruitment and retention, faculty development activities, assessment and accreditation, and discussions relating pedagogy to student learning experiences.

Here are some important aspects of faculty life we learned from the 2016-17 administration of the HERI Faculty Survey:

FACULTY COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Affirmed that it is essential/very important to enhance students’ knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCCU Faculty</th>
<th>Faculty at Private Institutions</th>
<th>Faculty at All Institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
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FACULTY COMMITMENT TO CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Affirmed that developing a sense of community among students and faculty is the highest/high priority

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<th>CCCU Faculty</th>
<th>Faculty at Private Institutions</th>
<th>Faculty at All Institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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FACULTY COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

Affirmed that service is essential/very important

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<th>CCCU Faculty</th>
<th>Faculty at Private Institutions</th>
<th>Faculty at All Institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

Strongly or somewhat agreed that administrators consider faculty concerns when making policy

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<th>CCCU Faculty</th>
<th>Faculty at Private Institutions</th>
<th>Faculty at All Institutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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To learn more about the Australia Studies Centre, visit www.bestsemester.com/australia.

To learn more about the HERI Faculty Survey, 2016-17 visit www.cccu.org/cap.

CAP will offer the HERI Faculty Survey in Spring 2020 as part of its regular cycle of surveys. For more information on how you can join CAP to administer this survey to your faculty, please visit our website at www.cccu.org/cap.
Walking the Path of Reconciliation

[Multicultural directors] need to be strengthened if they’re going to stay on this journey. They constantly bear the burden of reconciliation. There’s an emotional, physical, and spiritual toll placed on them to keep embodying this value for us.

I'm in the NBA, but I get put on a team that does not know how to use my skills. I find myself sitting on the bench most of the time, and then I get traded because I'm not a good fit, or they're not collaborative – then they find themselves not knowing what to do next. I have a friend who was a multicultural director. They need to be strengthened if they're going to stay on this journey. They are constantly bearing the burden of reconciliation on our campuses. There's an emotional, physical, and spiritual toll placed on them to keep embodying this value for us.

In my experience, these leaders are experts, but they have never been trained to lead systemic change concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion in Christian college or university settings. They are folks who have a heart for reconciliation; they're generally people of color, and they have, throughout their college career, demonstrated that they care about this topic. But the unfortunate thing is that they are struggling to bring systemic change. When working at Christian institutions and organizations, they find themselves feeling – to use the analogy one leader gave me – like "washed-up NBA players." She described it like this:

I'm in the NBA, but I get put on a team that does not know how to use my skills. I find myself sitting on the bench most of the time, and then I get traded because I'm not a good fit, or they're not collaborative – then they find themselves not knowing what to do next.

I am here to advocate for these multicultural directors. They need to be strengthened if they're going to stay on this journey. They are constantly bearing the burden of reconciliation on our campuses. There's an emotional, physical, and spiritual toll placed on them to keep embodying this value for us.

In short, we need a new way to understand the importance of that person who plays that role on your college campus. I believe that Jesus is right when he says this in Mark 2:21-22:

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.

I believe that this text is an urgent, biblical call for a major paradigm shift in the way we're doing business regarding diversity on our college campuses. When it comes to diversity on our college campuses, we need to think about an old problem in a new way.

I want to propose a new paradigm for us to consider as we move forward: 1) Reconciliation happens by repairing broken systems; 2) Reconciliation happens by engaging power; 3) Reconciliation is not just focusing on relationships and feelings.

Daniel Hill, author of White Awake and a dear friend of mine and son in ministry, says the problem we have is that we've equated diversity with race. Diversity is that which we talk about in Revelation 7:9: All tribes, all nations, all people gathered together. God created diversity, and in the end, we will reflect the multi-faceted people of God. But God did not create race. Human beings created race to justify slavery and the dehumanization of people, and to take the indigenous people's land and commit genocide.

This thing called "diversity" is from God; this thing called "race" is evil! But we keep putting the two together. Let's celebrate diversity, but the problem we're having is race – that's what needs to be reconciled.

Since we don't have a common definition of "reconciliation," I developed one in my book Roadmap to Reconciliation: "Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process – I believe it begins with God – involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice, that transforms broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish."

I believe that God's vision for us. After I wrote the book, I developed an implementation guide that was tested in churches and on college campuses in the United States and Canada. Through that process, I learned some things – because I'm still on the journey, too – that caused me to update two parts of the project. The first is a restoration phase; that goes back to what I said earlier, that people who champion this value need opportunities to be restored.

The second is an update to what I mean by "activation" phase. Originally, I wrote that this phase meant actively working for reconciliation, but I realized that activation is better understood as repairing broken systems together. I think about what Bryan Stevenson said when someone asked him whether he supported reparations – a scary word for most of us. He said this: "Of course I do. But anybody can write a check! Real reparations would be to repair what was actually broken."

Looking over my 30 years of experience now, I know one thing for sure: Multicultural directors need to be respected as professionals in the field of diversity. And to do this, they need access to resources that strengthen and enhance their professional development. This is my life's work; I've been called to equip the next generation of Christian leaders to be practitioners of reconciliation in their spheres of influence.

But to CCCU leaders, I believe that this is now in your hands. I believe that change has come from the top. Whether or not racial reconciliation becomes a systemic reality at your institution depends on you.

Brenda Salter McNeil, Ph.D., serves as associate professor of reconciliation studies at Seattle Pacific University, where she also directs the reconciliation studies program. She is the author of several books, including Roadmap to Reconciliation.

Watch Brenda Salter McNeil’s entire presentation online at www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo
Dr. Kimberly Battle-Walters Denu is the CCCU’s new vice president for educational programs; she will be responsible for creating and implementing the CCCU’s vision for the global education of students and the professional development of faculty and staff on CCCU campuses. We recently sat down with Dr. Denu to discuss what brought her to the CCCU, her passion for Christian higher education, and her vision for her role.

You have many years of experience working in Christian higher education. What drew you to consider this particular role with the CCCU?

I was drawn to this position for several reasons. First, I greatly respect President Shirley Hoogstra and her leadership and the tremendous work that the CCCU team does through professional development, advocacy work, and study abroad. The opportunity to work with such high-caliber leaders was very appealing.

Second, I have a passion for and commitment to Christian higher education. Our campuses do important work that supports excellence in scholarship and the furtherance of the Gospel around the world. Because of my love for the church and the academy, I want to do all that I can to support Christian higher education in a greater capacity.

Third, the vice president for educational programs (VPEP) position is a compilation of things that I have experience with and love to do. Having spent more than two decades in Christian higher education, I have worked as a full-time professor/scholar, a student development staff member, and an academic administrator. The VPEP position is the perfect blend of my experience with my passions.

Finally, and most importantly, I felt led by the Lord to apply for the position as an act of service to Christ, Christian higher education, and the broader Christian community.

You’ve traveled extensively and have been awarded Fulbright grants to study and work in other countries. How would you describe the value of faith-based experiential education experiences for undergraduate students?

I think experiential education is one of the best educations a Christian college student can get. The opportunity to step outside of the familiar; to see and understand from another perspective; to put theory into practice; to engage in active research in the field; and to witness faith in action in the larger community is life-changing. Faith-based experiential education helps students transfer their focus from themselves to others. Isn’t this what the Christian message is all about?

Thinking now of the work your role will do in guiding the CCCU’s professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, how have you experienced the benefit of these opportunities in your own career? What value do you see these programs providing your peers and Christian higher education broadly?

We were not born to be stagnant. Just as we grow physically, we are meant to grow spiritually, intellectually, and professionally. Prior to joining the CCCU, I worked at Azusa Pacific University, where I was not only encouraged to grow but I was mentored, sponsored, and invited to sit at the table and connect with others who helped in my professional transformation. It was during this time that I was invited to participate in various professional development opportunities through the CCCU – the Advanced and the Women’s Leadership Development Institutes, and the Diversity Conference, just to name a few. These had tremendous impact on my professional trajectory and leadership capacity.

I believe that if more university leaders would support and encourage faculty and staff to participate in these types of professional development offerings, it would not only produce more happy, healthy, high-performing employees, it would also cultivate the next generation of Christian leaders, scholars, and citizens who make an eternal and global difference.

What hopes and goals do you have stepping into this new role?

I am excited to see what God is going to do in and through our campuses this year. My primary goal this first year is to engage and support our member campuses through vital professional development resources and through the promotion of our study abroad programs. The CCCU has a commitment to and resources to support students and professionals at each of our member campuses. A secondary goal is to create diverse “glomestic” educational engagement opportunities that welcome faculty, staff, and alumni to participate as life-long learners in various parts of the world.

Finally, I hope to encourage the Christian higher education community to remember that what we do is not just for ourselves but for the kingdom. With this in mind, my hope is that Christian higher education as a whole will continue, as Scripture says, “to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our Lord.”

KIMBERLY BATTLE-WALTERS DENU is the CCCU’s vice president for educational programs.
Reflections that Transform
An AI-Enabled Mirror Is Helping Oral Roberts University Students Do More Than Get Ready
By Chloe Buckler

Imagine looking into the mirror in your dorm room, getting ready for another day of classes, and asking your mirror for the location of your next class, an update on your to-do list, and to order your Starbucks for pickup.

It might sound like something out of science fiction, but for students at Oral Roberts University (ORU) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, this type of experience can be their reality. With the help of the new MQ Mirror, designed and created at ORU, the university is revolutionizing the way in which the physical world meets the digital. Mirrors, normally used to reflect a form of worship through innovation by the desire of the mirror’s creators at ORU to glorify the ultimate Creator.

Inspired by the fitness world using mirror technology to enhance fitness experiences, Mike Mathews, ORU’s vice president of technology and innovation, and the original designer of the MQ Mirror, wanted to harness that technology for higher education. Working with ORU’s AI software designer Josepilum Wickliffe and senior programmer Larry Moss, Mathews and his team created the mirror within a month’s time earlier this year.

ORU has already received several awards for innovations like the MQ Mirror, including the 2018 EllumNation Technology Award, which recognizes higher education visionaries who are creating lasting change through technology. The mirror was a big part of Mathews being recognized as one of Industry Era’s 2019 Top 10 Technology Leaders. Additionally, after a demonstration to Houston’s mayor through Lone Star College’s Day of Innovation event, the MQ Mirror was part of the Houston Business Journal’s 2019 Innovation of the Year competition.

The technologically advanced mirror essentially has all the functions of a smart phone or other smart device – without the user having to touch anything. Not only can the mirror perform artificial intelligence functions, but it can also utilize popular applications as well for entertainment, music, self-help, and personal data analytics. By harnessing the power of all of these different pieces of technology, the MQ mirror streamlines processes for users to address their holistic needs.

Over the last few years, ORU has worked to streamline all online databases, making the MQ Mirror the perfect central hub for students, faculty and staff alike, Mathews says. For example, to address physical fitness, the mirror can sync with popular workout applications to outline daily fitness goals and stats.

The mirror was also outfitted with specific functions to address the academic needs of students. By connecting to ORU’s online academic portal, the mirror enables students to audibly ask the mirror for information relating to their grades, outstanding projects, and class information, and they can even access a personal “productivity” metric. For campus leaders like Kathaleen Reid-Martinez, ORU’s provost and chief academic officer, the mirror represents a significant step forward.

For those struggling with addiction or emotional distress, the MQ Mirror is also outfitted to connect students with campus resources in real time and can act as a confidential and approachable way for users to access appropriate assistance. Since a 2017 survey by the American College Health Association found that 63.4% of students had felt “overwhelming anxiety” and 41.9% said they “felt so depressed that it was difficult to function” at some point within the previous year, the mirror’s technology could provide a key resource to struggling students. Not only can it connect students with a counselor via video chat, but it was also programmed to enable students to access spiritual resources, including the Bible app, and features an “encourage me” function.

Perhaps most uniquely – and most importantly – the mirror’s technology puts the “human” back as the focus of the human-technology relationship. As ORU president William Wilson says, “The AI-enabled MQ Mirror has captured the attention of the education community, as it allows a fresh approach to serving students with vital educational information in both an audible and visual manner. We are proud to know this innovation has been designed right here at Oral Roberts University.”

The ultimate goal for the mirror, Mathews says, is that it reminds users of the reflection of God’s creativity and innovation within humanity. “We believe that God has created everyone to be creative and innovative through their talents and giftness,” he says. ©

Chloe Buckler is a graduate student at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, pursuing her Masters in Public Policy, and an assistant resident director on campus.
PREPARING FOR GEN Z

The next generation of students is coming to campus, and it’s unlike any generation before.

By Morgan Feddes Satre

Those are the descriptors in the subtitle of iGen, the latest book by psychologist Jean Twenge, a nationally recognized researcher on generational trends. iGen analyzes Twenge’s research on Gen Z, the generation born between the mid- to late-1990s – the generation currently arriving on campuses across the country. Twenge, who presented her research at a CCCU conference for provosts, campus ministers, and student development leaders in February, found that Gen Z has significant differences from previous generations.

One major factor creating those differences, she says? Smart phones. While Millennials had access to this technology from a young age as well, it was not as ubiquitous during key developmental years as it has been for Gen Z. In a cover story for The Atlantic, Twenge noted that smartphones have “radically changed every aspect of teenagers’ lives, from the nature of their social interactions to their mental health. … These trends appear among teens poor and rich; of every ethnic background; in cities, suburbs, and small towns.”

Recent research from the Barna Group concurred. In 2018, Barna partnered with the Impact 360 Institute to study the so-called “leading edge” of Gen Z – those between 13-18 years old – to see how this generation views the world, including faith and morality. In addition to technological use, they noted that Gen Z teens are also shaped by the fact that they have “come of age” in a post-9/11 nation reeling from the 2008 recession.

As a result, these teens are anxious about their future and are more focused on attaining financial security and professional success than Millennials were at their age and are less concerned at this point in things like starting a family or deepening their spiritual lives. They’re also the most likely to be spiritually and morally unmoored because of their strong belief in individualism and moral relativism. In fact, Barna found that Gen Z is slightly more likely than Millennials and twice as likely as Boomers to strongly agree with the statement that “what is morally right and wrong changes over time based on society.”

What does all this mean for leaders on Christian college and university campuses welcoming these students and caring for them? In our last issue, we took a look at current enrollment and finance trends and examined some unique, innovative ways CCCU institutions are engaging the challenges and opportunities they face in the current reality. But as all Christian higher education leaders know, it’s not just enough to connect with potential students, guide them through the enrollment process, and welcome them as new students. Student retention and success have always been vital components in higher education, but this new generation brings unique challenges to campuses – often in exponentially increasing numbers.

There are both pros and cons to the fact that the majority of Gen Z has lived life primarily through their touchscreens. Today’s incoming students are less likely, for example, to have had alcohol or sex than were students of previous generations, which has helped reduce such rates as teenage pregnancies. But incoming Gen Z students are also less likely to have their own driver’s license; to have held a job; to have spent significant time engaging in any social activities without close parental supervision; or to have even spent significant time engaging with friends in face-to-face interactions outside of school and connected extracurricular activities. These are some of the traditional markers of independence among adolescents; hence why Twenge asserts that Gen Z students are more likely to be “completely unprepared for adulthood” in her book title.

Gen Z students are also more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety and to exhibit suicidal ideations. Some of this increase is likely due to increased awareness and acceptance of expressing such needs, but technology has also changed things in revolutionary ways. Technology might appear to make us more connected, but Twenge found that the more time teens spent on their screens, the more likely they reported being unhappy, especially if much of their screen time is on social media. As Barna reported, teens feel pressured to “create a personal brand by ‘manicuring’ their online presence, driven by the knowledge that they are constantly being watched, not only by their peers, but by future employers. This is an exhausting way to live, but they don’t feel they can stop.” There are also effects of online bullying: Gen Z teens report online bullying at the same rates as Millennials, suggesting that efforts to curb it have been unsuccessful.

Campuses have already been feeling the strain that comes with students’ increased anxiety and depression symptoms. In 2015, The Chronicle of Higher Education reported on the “epidemic of angst” arriving on college campuses – a third of college students had reported feeling so depressed within the previous year that they had had difficulty functioning. While (to our knowledge) no comprehensive research has been done on Christian colleges and universities as a group, word of mouth from campus leaders and studies on specific Christian colleges (such as one on small, unnamed Christian students’ Mental Health, Religion & Culture in 2018) suggest that trends on CCCU campuses don’t vary much from national trends.

One factor that could be at play is Gen Z students’ overall lack of deep understanding or engagement with Christianity. Barna found that while 58% of teens still self-identify as Christian, only 9% are “engaged Christians,” which means they have attended church in the last six months and strongly agree with four statements:

• I believe that Jesus Christ was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death.
• I engage with my church in more ways than just attending services.
• I believe that Jesus Christ was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death.

It is important to note that the overall number of “engaged Christians” Barna has found has been a relatively small segment of the population; only 14% of Boomers, for example, are considered “engaged” in their faith. But as Barna noted, today’s teens are coming of age in a post-Christian culture; not only are they more likely to be reluctant in challenging others’ beliefs, but they’re also more likely to not see the relevance of faith in day-to-day life. Even “churched” Christian teens – those who have gone to church recently but did not agree with all four statements like the engaged Christian teens did – are less likely than older generations to express confidence in their beliefs.

Thus, CCCU institutions are in a unique position to make a tremendous impact on this young generation through a number of ways as they arrive on campuses:

• Students can engage in classes that examine Christian doctrines and thus learn more about their faith;
• Faculty can openly engage students on the relationship between faith and their discipline, giving students an opportunity to witness the relevance of faith in daily life even as they pursue their vocation; and
• Thanks to a commitment to holistic education, Christian colleges and universities can help students through times of crisis in a way that meets all needs – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Of course, that does not make it any easier to engage the significant increase of student need on tight and even shrinking budgets. Thus, the following stories examine some different ways CCCU campuses of all sizes are engaging student needs in innovative ways.

GEN Z TEENS ARE MORE FOCUSED ON ATTAINING FINANCIAL SECURITY AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS THAN MILLENNIALS WERE AT THEIR AGE AND ARE LESS CONCERNED AT THIS POINT IN THINGS LIKE DEEPENING THEIR SPIRITUAL LIVES.
RESPONDING TO A NEW REALITY

Student needs and demographics are changing. How are CCCU leaders adapting?

EVERY ASPECT OF higher education has transformed over the past decade, but for campus leaders who oversee student success and retention, currently a unique convergence of trends presents a monumental challenge to determining how best to empower students to succeed in their studies and, subsequently, in their careers. Consider two factors:

Increasing mental health needs

In its 2016 survey of incoming freshmen, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA found that 13.9% of incoming freshmen anticipated a “very good chance” that they would seek personal counseling at some point in their college experience, up from just 3.5% of freshmen in 1991. In a 2017 survey by the American College Health Association, 63.4% of students reported that within the last year, they had felt “overwhelming anxiety,” and 41.9% said they “felt so depressed that it was difficult to function.” Though some of this increase is due to increasing awareness of mental health needs among students, it still results in a growing need for resources, a need of which campus leaders are well-aware. An August 2019 report from the American Council of Education (ACE) surveyed 400 college and university presidents: 80% reported that student mental health has become more of a priority over the past three years, and 72% said they had reallocated or found additional funds to address these needs.

Increasing numbers of non-traditional students

The most recent Annual Financial Aid Survey of CCCU Institutions found that in 2017-18, more than half of the 62 CCCU institutions which participated in the survey reported a decline in their traditional undergraduate enrollment. In fact, more than half of the enrollment at surveyed institutions now consists of undergraduate degree completion and graduate programs. This means that many CCCU students are attending classes online or in the evenings; they are committed to their studies, but they aren’t able to connect and engage in the same way as students have in the past. On their own, each issue would present challenges alongside the opportunities it creates for both students and institutions. But Christian colleges and universities must address these challenges, and many others, all at once — often with steadily tightening budgets that make increasing student care services difficult, if not impossible. How are CCCU institutions responding?

Addressing a Growing Mental Health Crisis

At Biola University in La Mirada, California, the journey to better understanding and meeting student needs began with a key transition in 2016: André Stephens was stepping into the role of vice president for student development. Stephens may have been new to student development, but he wasn’t new to Biola; at that point, he had been working with the enrollment team at the university, which has about 4,000 undergraduate students, for more than 20 years.

Thus he was armed with expansive institutional knowledge even as he took a deep dive into the new division he was overseeing. In his conversations with students, faculty, and staff across campus over the first year, he took note of a number of things that were significantly shaping Biola students’ experiences. One of the most noticeable was an increase in mental health challenges among students.

“It was apparent that our staff and faculty were doing an excellent job of reacting to student needs, especially when in times of high need or when a crisis arose,” Stephens says. “The challenge was that we weren’t able to do work in the areas of prevention and education to minimize the number of students who were going into those times of high need or crisis mode, and so we felt we had to take a more proactive approach.”

A key step Stephens and his team took to inform their approach was to obtain hard data to supplement the stories that they had already heard across campus. Thus, in 2018, Biola administered the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) for the first time in 15 years, and the results were telling. Not only did it confirm that Biola students were experiencing anxiety, stress, depression, and other stresses at levels on par with their peers nationally, but in some cases, the rates were even higher than the national average.

When the NCHA results came in, Stephens and his student development team were already in the midst of reassessing both their department’s structure and how they engaged their campus partners from other areas, such as the counseling center, food services, and campus safety. One result was a shift in the structure of the student development department to include three areas for promoting and supporting student wellness: spiritual development, community life, and a new student wellness area.

The new structure allows for a key component in addressing student needs, says Lisa Igram, Biola’s dean of student wellness. “The whole idea of wellness is a complex social problem. There’s not one thing that’s causing this sudden rise in student anxiety, depression, stress, or their inability to cope,” she says. “There are all kinds of things that are happening that are contributing to this, so that tells us that a complex solution is required. There’s not going to be one thing that will shift campus culture; it’s going to be multi-pronged. So that means we have to be collaborative, cohesive, and able to hit multiple levels in our approach.”

Once the NCHA data was in hand, the Biola team’s next step was to pull together a student health and wellness committee that involved all aspects of campus — 35 people ranging from administrators to staff to faculty to students from across departments and specialties. Stephens, Igram, and the committee spent the next year diving not only into the NCHA data but into national research as well with the goal of coming up with a definition for what student wellness at Biola University looks like.

To help address the rising expression of emotional distress among students, Biola University is working on a campus-wide proactive approach to help students before they reach a crisis point.

Even as CCCU institutions work to address enrollment issues, they also face a growing need to provide care for students who are already on campus to ensure their success.
It was important to take the time to do this before developing a plan of action. Ligram says, because there is no single definition of what ‘wellness’ actually means. It was also key to factor in Biola’s defining mission as a Christ-centered institution of higher education.

“If the liberal arts is designed to develop a student as a whole person and to help them be able to ask good questions in order to solve problems in culture and community, but stress and anxiety inhibit that [growth], then there’s something we need to do as an institution so they can engage in that education and be develop in mind and character to really impact the world for Jesus Christ,” she says.

At the time of writing, the committee was in the midst of utilizing the NCHA data and its year of learning and brainstorming to finalize a new strategic plan on student wellness to guide Biola leadership. Everything in the plan will work toward the goal of improving collaboration, communication, and education, Ligram says.

Though the process took time, Stephens says that doing so while keeping in mind the end goal of a definitive strategy was of vital importance – not just for Biola as an institution, but for its long-term health of its students. “We didn’t suspend any of our current work during this process – our existing resources were still in place and students could continue accessing them as needed,” he says. “But the impetus was to look [at] caring for student wellness over the long haul – not just for how we as an institution do this in the long-term, but how we can set up students to succeed and be well beyond their time at Biola. [To do that,] we took the time that was involved.”

Recognizing the need for that kind of thoughtful, deliberate collaboration to meet student needs has also inspired significant changes at North Central University (NCU) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, student success leaders recognized that, somehow, a gap had formed in their process for identifying students who were struggling. Though there was a homegrown system in place for faculty and other campus leaders to flag students who were struggling academically or emotionally, there were students who had never been flagged who were being dismissed from the institution for low grades.

“That should never happen. We can’t create a plan for success for a student that we don’t know is struggling,” says Erin White, NCU’s dean of student advocacy at the time (she recently became NCU’s director of institutional research). “So we knew we had students falling through the cracks, and we knew that if there were students who were getting academically dismissed, there were likely other students that were in the murky middle.”

Boistered by support from the administration to find a solution, White began the process of looking at different technological vendors that could help NCU meet its needs – not only to better identify those students slipping through the cracks, she says, but to do so with a system that did so efficiently, integrated well with other technologies on campus, had the flexibility to be updated by campus leaders if needed, and was sustainable for NCU’s size of 1,100 undergraduate students.

In addition to researching and engaging campuses who were using similar technologies, a key part of the discernment process, White says, was partnering with NCU’s IT team from the very beginning, as they knew the best questions to ask to make sure any new system would be able to fit well into the campus current IT structure. “A huge part of our success, I think, was having IT invested and connected from the very beginning, so we could publicly advise anyone considering an option like this to do the same,” White says. “We all know IT is so busy all the time, so making sure we had IT staff that were dedicated to this project and had time to research and advocate for it was huge.”

Having faculty members who were leaders on campus was another key step to the success of the implementation process, White says. “Make sure that those faculty who other faculty look to for leadership and advice are a part of the implementation and helping you create the messaging for implementation for both faculty and students, if your faculty are advisors.”

Once NCU had settled on a platform called Starfish and had implemented it on campus with the help of those key stakeholders, White and her colleagues realized their new system worked well – unexpectedly so. On the old system, there had been around 450 flags on student issues raised in a given academic year, in the first year of using Starfish, there were more than 4,500. “We knew with the automation process, we’d have an increase in flags – I didn’t expect to have as much of an increase as we’ve had,” White says. “It was amazing in a lot of ways because we had so much information we hadn’t had before, but the challenge was how to keep up with it.”

After the first semester of using the platform, White and her team sat down to adjust what in the workflow could be automated and to work more with faculty and other academic leaders to gather their assistance in following up with students. Even with the unexpected increased workload, White says, it quickly became apparent that NCU’s decision to utilize technology like Starfish was the right one. Not only did it centralize information about student success in one platform and encourage cross-departmental collaboration and engagement with students in need, White says it also received strong positive feedback from students who used it.

“It was actually surprised that in our first year, I received no negative feedback from students. I think a big factor is that it’s a system that is very transparent, and students today really appreciate that level of transparency,” she says. “They can see what the professor says about them, and they can see all of the various follow-ups that are in place to help them stay on track.”

While online students are generally very engaged in their coursework, it can be more difficult to engage them with other aspects of campus life. "If the liberal arts is designed to develop a student as a whole person... but stress and anxiety inhibit that [growth], then there’s something that we need to do so they can... really impact the world for Jesus Christ.”

Serving Students Who Might Not Step Foot On Campus

Proactive engagement and intentional communication are not only useful in addressing students’ mental health needs, but they are also vital for engaging students in online and non-traditional programs.

Denver Seminary knows this well. Though the seminary already had online courses, the first fully online program – the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree – launched in 2016, says Aaron Johnson, Denver Seminary’s associate dean of educational technology. The M.Div. was soon followed by additional master’s degree options in both Christian studies and biblical and theological studies. Now, more than 150 of the seminary’s 1,000 students are pursuing fully online degrees. “Our online course portal, Moodle, is one of the busiest ‘buildings’ on campus,” Johnson says. To keep student course engagement efficient, an integration between Moodle and Course Management’s CampusNexus Student enables the seminary to handle data transfers quickly and efficiently.

The journey began with a 2015 study of accepted students who did not enroll. “The most important data point [we learned] was that Denver Seminary remained their first choice, even if they enrolled at a different institution,” Johnson says. Though students had been interested in the institution’s training and mentoring experience and its relational culture, a big obstacle stopped nearly everyone they surveyed, he says: “They could not uproot and move their families or leave their jobs.”

Since Denver Seminary emphasizes the importance of relationships both in and out of the classroom, campus leaders prioritized this as part of both the online experience and the experience at its satellite locations in Amarillo, Texas, and Washington, D.C. “Spiritual development can take root anywhere we are in relationship

Photo courtesy of North Central University
ENGAGING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Given the rising expression of student anxiety, depression, and other emotional struggles, faculty and staff across campuses increasingly find themselves in supportive roles for distressed students. Dr. Irene Kraegel, director of the Center for Counseling and Wellness at Calvin University (Grand Rapids, MI), offered strategies for off-campus study leaders and new faculty at two CCCU summer events. We’ve compiled some of her guidelines as a resource for all leaders.

Levels of Emotional Distress (and What to Do)

Understanding the kind of crisis a student is experiencing can help you understand how best to meet their needs.

Level 1: Uncomfortable Emotions | A student is going through periods of sadness, anxiety, irritability, or social withdrawal, perhaps related to transitional stress, academic pressures, or relationship issues. While these fluctuations may be “normal,” they can be particularly distressing for a student with undeveloped coping skills.

What to do
- Engage in active and reflective listening, providing empathy and encouragement.
- Encourage them to seek support from peers and other campus supports.
- Make the student aware of available mental health resources.

Level 2: Intense and/or Chronic Uncomfortable Emotions | A student is experiencing strong, extended bouts of anxiety, depression, or social isolation, or they are exhibiting non-lethal self-harming behavior (such as cutting) or vague suicidal thinking (with no intent to follow through).

What to do
- Engage in active, reflective listening, and inquire about methods they use to manage their stress.
- Make note of the conversation, consult with your supervisor or department chair, and inform wellness-related staff on your campus.
- Make note of the conversation, consult with your supervisor or department chair, and inform wellness-related staff on your campus.
- Follow up with the student to express care and ongoing encouragement to seek treatment.
- Offer the next step: when making a treatment referral, start by asking what they’ve done in the past, and be sure to normalize the help-seeking experience (“I know a lot of students find it helpful to talk to a counselor when they’re feeling like this”). If they express reluctance to seek help, explore their reasons nonjudgmentally (“What would keep you from talking to a counselor about these things?”) and provide both hope and support (“Could it be worth trying just one session to see what it’s like?”) Offer to help them make the appointment, if needed.

Things to Remember
Never promise confidentiality to a student, and remain within the boundaries of your role. Always be up front and honest about your reasons for concern with a student. And remember that good listening is the most important thing you can do — it may not feel like much to you, but having authentic connection with others goes a long way for all of us during times of struggle.
IT’S A STEREOTYPICAL IMAGE

By Shannon Que

Students increasingly face food insecurity, leaving them hungry for more than just knowledge.

An informal poll that included responses from more than two dozen CCCU institutions across the U.S. found that more than half of campus leaders were aware of some level of food insecurity among their students, and nearly half reported they had seen an increase of food insecurity over the last five years. So what can be done to address this hidden but growing need?

The Importance of Asking the Right Question

At George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon, campus initiatives to address food insecurity ramped up after a conversation with a student who could not afford the cheapest meal plan on campus, says Jere Witherspoon, who serves as the coordinator of the campus’s Brunt Community Pantry (BCP).

Officially launched last year, the BCP coordinates four different initiatives: a food pantry; four hospitality tables throughout campus that provide both food and information about other opportunities for students to get access to food; outreach services connected with the spiritual life office; and a new leftovers program coordinated with Bon Appetit, George Fox’s campus dining service, that gives students access to leftover food from that day’s cafeteria meals. The numbers are already significant for a campus that serves about 2,400 undergraduate students. “In one day, we had 125 students come through the food pantry,” Witherspoon says. The leftovers program had 141 students sign up to receive services in one year. And according to a survey of the student body, the hospitality tables have quickly become one of the most prominent ways the university has put its “Be Known” promise to students in action.

Witherspoon and her colleagues at George Fox quickly recognized the need for data from their students to better understand the scope of student needs on campus, so they sent out a survey. Of the 560 students who responded, 33% said they faced food insecurity.

Campus leaders at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, also recognized the need for solid student data in this area for their campus of more than 34,000 undergraduates. So as part of their annual survey that is sent to new students every fall to assess their transition to college and to identify potential red flags that may hinder student success, Baylor added a new question starting in 2017: “Are you able to afford three meals a day?” The survey found that on Baylor’s campus, anywhere from 9 to 15% of new students face some level of food insecurity.

Given the long-term impact these kinds of effects can have on a student’s educational outcomes and subsequent career goals, food insecurity is not something to take lightly. A recent report from the Center for Law and Social Policy found that nearly a quarter of students at four-year colleges battle food insecurity.

It’s a comically perceived image of the college student. The idea is so common that it has become a comically perceived penance for obtaining a college degree. The humor, however, can hide a dangerous reality. Students increasingly struggle with food insecurity.

Food insecurity goes beyond hunger. Food insecurity can have on students, including:

- Lower GPAs because of difficulty concentrating in class and on homework assignments
- Social isolation

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as the lack of “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” due to insufficient socioeconomic resources. A 2017 USDA report noted the detrimental effects food insecurity can have on CCCU campuses.

Food insecurity is a growing concern on CCCU campuses. Campus leaders are finding ways to assist and empower them so students can focus on their studies, not on finding their next meal.

Among the resources Baylor provides students are a food pantry, known as The Store; campus fridges open for all students to use; Campus Kitchens, which provides a hot meal for students once a week, and the Texas Hunger Initiative (THI), a research initiative housed within the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work that strives to advocate on behalf of those experiencing food insecurity through policy advocacy and community and interdisciplinary collaboration. Students are taking advantage of these on-campus initiatives; in the 2018-19 academic year, for example, The Store had 4,492 student visits.

Another university that recognized the need to obtain data is Biola University in La Mirada, California. In 2018, Biola conducted a comprehensive survey of their undergraduate student’s basic needs. According to the survey, of the 717 students who responded, 68% have experienced food insecurity during their time at Biola.

The growth of such need is one result of increasing diversity within Christian higher education, says Melca Consultado, Biola’s director of student development and international development. “The increased accessibility to college has opened the door to more diverse student populations. Now, the diverse needs of those students are being seen,” Consultado says.

Like George Fox and Baylor, Biola has developed a number of initiatives to meet the needs of its students, which are overseen and created by the Biola Basic Needs Committee that Consultado chairs. Such initiatives include the Biola Shares Pop-Up Pantry, which partners with local churches who have food banks and strive to provide healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables to students; two food cabinets mostly stocked with nonperishables and sandwich ingredients; and a meal donation program, a collaboration with Bon Appetit hosting two weeks per academic year for students to donate meal swipes or money ($5 per meal). In 2018-19, 677 Biola students utilized the pantry, while 1,100 additional meals were donated.

Responding to food insecurity with healthy eating options is a priority for many CCCU leaders.
The Importance of Leadership Support

As is true of any new campus initiatives, securing the support of senior leadership on campus is key to the success of any programs connected to fighting food insecurity. “You must have the support of the president and the board of trustees if you want to sustain [initiatives],” says George Fox’s Witherspoon.

Campus collaboration is also a key component, Biola’s Consultado says. “The best way an institution can address the basic needs issue of students is by doing it together. I cannot imagine any of our initiatives thriving by just one department.”

Understanding the needs of a specific campus is also important, as every institution has a unique situation for its students. Thus, raising awareness about food insecurity research, understanding potential indicators of the issue (such as student socioeconomic class or knowing if students have one or more dependents), and listening to the students themselves via surveys or student panels can be helpful in creating a specific plan for meeting campus needs. It is also helpful to understand what external resources might exist for students, depending on their situations. Federal resources can help increase the level of sustainability for on-campus programs.

For example, some students may in fact be able to access the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a resource that Baylor is working to make more accessible for its students, Cohenour says. In its own survey of student needs, Biola found that 17% of respondents were using SNAP for assistance in getting food. While many students who attend college at least half time are generally not eligible for SNAP benefits, there are exemptions or opportunities to gain benefits for at least a couple months in certain situations, including:

- Students who are caring for and living with at least one child under the age of 6, or who are responsible for a child between 6 and 11 years old but cannot obtain adequate childcare;
- Students who also work 20 hours or more a week or are participating in a federal or state work-study program (even if they work fewer than 20 hours per week there); or
- Students who qualify for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. (Eligibility for TANF varies by state.)

More Than Just a Meal

Regardless of a campus’s approach to helping students address food insecurity, any assistance for students is more than just a meal, says George Fox’s Witherspoon. Students who face unaddressed food insecurity can often be disheartened, she says. “They feel as though they cannot continue pursuing a higher education. [We] can really tie retention and student success to food insecurity and basic needs.”

Baylor’s Cohenour agrees: “Food insecurity is an issue that affects students as a whole. It is a basic need,” she says. “It should be framed as a student success issue because it absolutely is.”

Though campus leaders might not be able to address every need right away, Cohenour says, it’s important to do what is possible. “If we see a need, we need to meet the need. Figure it out as you go, if necessary. We need to be the hands and feet of Jesus. This is what we are called to do.”

SHANNON QUE is a graduate student at Abilene Christian University and a 2019 recipient of the Center for Public Justice’s Hatfield Prize. Que and faculty advisor Dr. Stephen Baldridge received funding to research food insecurity among college students, from which some of the research for this article originated. Que’s report is available at www.sharedjustice.org.

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WHY ADVOCACY WORK IS ESSENTIAL

Campus leaders share how to engage in advocacy…and how to do it well.

Though the CCCU is an effective and respected advocate for Christ-centered higher education, there is no more powerful advocacy than leaders and students themselves engaging their elected representatives. This face-to-face interaction gives lawmakers firsthand examples of the world-changing value of Christian higher education, which enriches the diversity of higher education nationally and internationally through institutions who educate whole persons created in God’s image.

However, knowing where to begin building these connections and how to navigate such relationships during times of political turmoil can be both challenging and intimidating. The following collection of essays by CCCU campus leaders provides examples of how advocacy work benefitted each of their institutions and offers concrete lessons to keep in mind in your own advocacy work.
It was January 2009, and I was incredibly nervous. Would we be stopped by security as we entered the buildings? What should we say when we entered the office suite? Would our member of Congress be interested in what we would say? Would we know the answers to questions she might ask?

These were the thoughts running through my head as my wife and I made our first visit to Capitol Hill during my first year as president of Bethel University. We were in D.C. as part of the CCCU Presidents Conference. Although we had been prepped with important information and given leave-behind materials at the conference, we had no idea how the meeting would actually work. As we entered Representative Betty McCollum’s office for the first time, we quickly realized that we were part of a long line of people who would be making a pitch to her that day. What would help our pitch be remembered?

When it was our turn to enter the office, we realized that Representative McCollum was human, interested in us, and committed to higher education. She often notes that she has more colleges and universities in her district than any other member. She is a graduate of one of Minnesota’s private colleges, and she knows the colleges in her district are distinct and important.

With one eye on the clock, she asked about our agenda and quipped, “I’m from the federal government, and I’m here to help!” She introduced us to her chief of staff, Bill Harper, as her legislative aide, Rebecca Taylor, took notes. It was the first of many visits we have had with her team. Little did we know how important that first contact would be.

About three years later, we received a letter from the Department of Education. It seemed ominous – and when I handed it to our CFO, I could see the color drain from her face. By mistakenly including our pension liability as a one-year obligation in our financial reliability composite score, we went from a high 2 to below 1 in one year. When we tried to address the mistake, we had no success in getting anyone in the Department of Education to pay attention to us – until we reached out to Representative McCollum. I was glad that it was not our first visit!

The fact that Representative McCollum knew me by name and knew Bethel, thanks to the previous meetings I’d had with her office, made all the difference. She arranged a meeting with the undersecretary of education, three of the undersecretary’s key staff members, the ranking member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, our auditors, our CFO, and me. Although it took more time than I wished, we eventually resolved our issue. Representative McCollum was vital to that process.

Bethel’s story proves that cultivating relationships with our elected leaders at the federal and state levels is important. You might not agree with your leaders on every issue, but you want them to know your name, to recognize you in an airport, and to know what matters to your university. Showing up for their local events is key to cultivating this kind of relationship. Finding ways to include them in your campus events can also be helpful.

Sometimes, God provides unexpected opportunities to deepen these relationships. When Al Franken was one of our senators, he and I were scheduled to take the same Delta flight to D.C. We were boarded and ready to go when Delta’s computer system crashed. We exited the plane, not knowing how much time we would be waiting. Although I had been in Franken’s office several times, I sensed our relationship would be waiting. Although I had been in Franken’s office several times, I sensed that something was different.

I was not on his radar. This seemingly inconvenient event provided an opportunity to change that dynamic. I wanted him to know about the CCCU and Bethel’s commitment to immigrants, refugees, and DACA students. So as we sat waiting for information about our travel schedule, I listened to him do a good Bernie Sanders imitation, and he listened to me talk about the part of our faith commitment that resonated with him. When we finally got to D.C. later in the week, he knew something about me and Bethel when I visited his office.

So, what are my takeaways from visiting the “hallowed halls”? First, our members of Congress are very dedicated people – and very busy people. While there may be some glamour associated with the job, they fly coach, have packed schedules, sacrifice sleep and family time, and make decisions every day that will anger some and bring joy to others.

Second, it is important that they know Christian college and university leaders. We never know when we will need their help. Building a relationship with them improves the odds of them coming to our aid.

Bethel University president Jay Barnes high-fives a Bethel student during a chapel service.

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Second, it is important that they know Christian college and university leaders. We never know when we will need their help. Building a relationship with them improves the odds of them coming to our aid.

Third, their staff members really matter. If staff members understand the issue, they are often the ones who will follow through on the details. Treating them with respect is vital.

Finally, our CCCU government affairs team does great work in preparing us for those 15-minute windows of opportunity to make our case on Capitol Hill. The relationships they have formed with key staffers open doors on the big issues that allow us to carry out our Christ-centered missions. They deserve our prayers, our encouragement, and our investment.

For those looking forward to a first visit to Capitol Hill, it’s an adventure you will enjoy. Some members are more curmudgeonly than others, but most are welcoming and eager to serve. Those of us who have been there before are glad to share what we have learned along the way. After all, no matter what campus we’re from, we’re on the same team in advancing the cause of Christ-centered higher education!

Jay Barnes is the president of Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and chair of the CCCU Board of Directors.

Photos courtesy of Bethel University

It is important that members of Congress know Christian college and university leaders. ... Building a relationship with them improves the odds of them coming to our aid.
Navigating the Illinois Map Grant Crisis

By Mark D. Kahler

Trinity International University resides in Illinois, America’s sixth-most populous state, which recently went more than two years without a budget.

To be precise, Illinois had no official, approved state budget from July 1, 2015, until Aug. 31, 2017. For those keeping score, that amounts to 793 days of limbo in a state that already had the 50th-ranked bond rating even before the budget standoff ensued.

During this time, essential services received funding on credit, while hundreds of line items deemed “nonessential” existed in crisis mode. One “nonessential” was a longstanding college financial aid program – the Monetary Award Program, more commonly known as “MAP Grants.”

A financial aid staple in Illinois since 1967, these annual awards hinge on financial need. MAP Grants only go to students enrolled at Illinois-based public and private institutions. The average award amounts to $3,300 per recipient.

Navigating the Illinois Map Grant Crisis When Free Tuition Comes Knocking

By Ryan Spear

In the 2016 election cycle, “tuition-free” or “debt-free” college plans featured prominently at the national level. While the results of that election quieted – or at least delayed – talk of “free college” at the federal level, in January 2017, the state of New York announced, somewhat unexpectedly, a “tuition-free” college plan for middle-class families at every two- and four-year state public institution. Though New York was the first to announce such a plan, it is not alone. Currently, over half of the states have enacted or are considering enacting free tuition or have extensive scholarship programs in place, according to the bi-partisan nonprofit The Campaign for Free College Tuition.

As a small private college in western New York with approximately 50 percent of our students coming from in-state, how did Houghton respond and what have been some of the lasting lessons learned?

Timing was a key factor for the first lesson. The announcement occurred with little to no advance knowledge at a key point in the admission recruitment cycle, when financial aid conversations with prospective students and families were at their height. This meant we had to respond to the proposal quickly with clear internal talking points – and not just admission counselors, but our marketing department as well.

Key to this response was improving our knowledge of strategy development and execution, as well as a willingness to experiment and view this challenge as an opportunity to learn. In the first few months after the announcement was made, we piloted a state-run aid initiative, enhanced messaging for in-state students, and launched a broad marketing campaign focused on the promises of the lasting value and impact of a Houghton College education.

In the time since that announcement was made, we’ve recognized a number of other lessons as we’ve learned, grown, and adapted to our changing recruitment landscape:

- Anticipate the direct and indirect impact. For example, directly, the new program introduced more direct competition; indirectly it contributed to shaping the overall conversation about cost/value, regardless of whether a student had been considering an in-state public option.
- Balance a data-centric approach with front-line input from key stakeholders.
- Know your messaging – externally and internally – and collect and communicate compelling outcomes. When delivering messaging, highlight core strengths that serve to indirectly challenge the state program (e.g., your graduation rates, time to completion, etc.) Also remember that leading students and parents through a “Socratic method” set of key questions they should ask themselves can be just as if not more impactful than a “compare/contrast” list (but have these answers ready for when they do ask the right questions).
- Differentiate your messaging and value proposition based on particular student segments; don’t assume all students and families will respond similarly to a particular message. Remember why different student segments choose your institution.

In the grand scheme of five-figure annual college costs, $3,300 might seem trivial. But for many low-income families, financial aid packages are tightly stacked. Though the MAP Grant funding gap never threatened TIU’s operating status, we had learned several key lessons by the end of the crisis:

- Connect with government leaders before a crisis starts. When they simply work from assumptions based on geography and perceived mission, understanding becomes elusive at best.
- Reassure students with financial need that they are valued, and that the institution has their best interests at heart. Remove all doubt from their minds early in the crisis.
- Help lawmakers understand that educating first-generation students and those from low-income families is a key component of your institution’s mission. They usually appreciate these needs but frequently fail to associate them with Christian higher education.

More crises possible in the years ahead, it pays to make connections now.

Help government leaders understand the distinctive nature of your institution’s Christ-centered mission.

Mark D. Kahler is vice president for university communication at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill. He’s also president of Trinity International University International. Ryan Spear is director of college communication at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill.
• Have a bias toward action based in analysis and gather the right people around the table. Include key stakeholders across departments and levels of responsibility who bring a diversity of perspectives and personalities.
• Don’t go it alone—work with private sector partners. A key partner for Houghton is the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York (CICU). We found this was also an opportunity to build rapport and “social capital.”
• Build relationships with policy influencers and associations before crises arise. Regularly engage with local, state, and national legislators and invite them to campus to speak and interact with students. Additionally, cultivate a network of colleagues across the entire private sector through attending annual meetings of your state private college and university association.

Of vital importance, have a student-centric approach and look for “win-win” opportunities rather than engaging in “us vs. them” approach. For instance, at Houghton, we collaborated with our private-sector peers to focus on student choice and to promote the value and diversity of higher education opportunities. The temptation is to fall into simply criticizing the state’s policies rather than to consistently speak positively about your own institution’s policies and core strengths and distinctions. Go for what makes your school look best and look different. For Houghton, it was a call to return to the mission—offering a high-quality Christ-centered education and producing scholars and servants for lives of lasting impact.

When faced with any disruption, we must make the conscious choice to reframe the challenge as an opportunity to refine practices and to revisit the way in which the missions of our institutions continue to serve the needs of 21st-century students. With the 2020 elections on the horizon, the concept of a “free” option for college has become, as a recent article in The Atlantic framed it, “something of a prerequisite” for at least one party, which means it will be a topic of discussion for all parties. This means we have a great opportunity to more clearly define the unique value and diversity that Christian higher education provides and the lives it changes throughout the world.

RYAN SPEAR is the director of admission at Houghton College in Houghton, New York.

PRIORITIZING ADVOCACY WITHOUT A DEDICATED STAFF POSITION

By Carla E. Gross

1. Make sure your entire team can make a compelling, data-driven case for the contributions your institution makes in your state. Through ongoing conversations with legislators, the media, and other external stakeholders, we’ve often experienced misunderstandings about what Christian colleges are—or are not. This is particularly true for those who do not share a Christian worldview. As a result, we have had to work harder with legislators, the media, and the public to break through some of these stereotypes and share the specific story of Messiah College and the contributions made by our employees, students, and alumni.

As a result, these functions (compliance with state employment and other laws, liaison with Pennsylvania Department of Education, financial aid issues, pursuing state grants, etc.) are decentralized into various positions across the institution, while our president, Dr. Kim Phipps, builds relationships with state-elected officials. This decentralization can be tricky, but we’ve figured out some strategies for making this work effectively that might be helpful for other CCCU institutions without a public affairs officer.

2. Build intentional, proactive relationships with legislators and influencers before a controversy strikes. There are a couple of ways that this can be done, depending on your institution’s structure. One is to invite state legislators and elected officials to serve on the President’s Advisory Council or another leadership advisory board, if you have one. At Messiah, President Phipps provides our government guests some time on each agenda to provide a constituent update. While they’re on campus, she also connects them with students and invites them to speak in classes. This provides mutually beneficial, two-way communication between legislators and our campus community. Another way is to leverage senior administrators’ key roles with state educational associations. For Messiah, that includes groups like the Association for Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP), which organizes annual forums with college presidents and state legislators. While AICUP doesn’t necessarily engage or prioritize religious liberty the same way that the CCCU does, it provides networking connections with state legislators so that President Phipps and other senior administrators can help inform and shape their perspectives about Messiah and these broader issues.
3. Connect and build relationships with your alumni who serve in office themselves or are in key staff positions with elected officials. Leverage the help of your development and alumni and parent relations folks—they know everybody! And don’t forget to tap your politics faculty who are following the careers of their students. You can also invite alumni to have lunch with your president, speak to students in class, or be part of a panel about careers in politics or public service.

4. Invite state legislators to your key campus events or other programs. These can include such events as presidential inaugurations, centennial or other milestone celebrations, facility dedications, and high profile concerts or lectures. You can also invite them to tour or visit some of your campus’s key educational programs. For example, we had a state senator representing our district who worked as a nurse prior to her legislative career. She was very open to coming to campus to tour our nursing labs and speak to our nursing students about their future vocation.

5. Most importantly: Involve your students. Connecting legislators with your students helps them understand what your institutional mission is truly about and the amazing character of your students and graduates.

CARLA E. GROSS is executive director of marketing and communications and special assistant to the president for communication at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.
Technology and the Human Future

Why Christian higher education is uniquely positioned to shape how we engage revolutionary technology.

A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN BUCHER AND CRAIG GAY

Heed the Call  p. 48
Climbing the Second Mountain  p. 50

Transform your leadership through relational education.

Dr. John Townsend, New York Times bestselling author, leadership consultant, psychologist, and relationship expert

Transform your leadership through relational education.

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Hear from Dr. Townsend: cui.edu/TownsendCCCU

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LL TECHNOLOGY – from the wheel to the latest smartwatch – has been billed as ways to improve life and advance human productivity. But how does technology contribute to or detract from our flourishing? In his latest book, *Modern Technology and the Human Future: A Christian Appraisal*, Craig Gay, professor of interdisciplinary studies at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada, highlights concerns about how our use of technology might be undermining our embodied experience in dangerous ways. He also argues that the Christian faith has a powerful idea of our embodiment: the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

John Bucher, co-director of the CCCU’s L.A. Film Studies Center, author of *Storytelling for Virtual Reality*, and a leading thinker on the potential theological implications of virtual reality, talked with Gay about his book and the impact Christian thought can have on our use of modern technology. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

**JOHN BUCHER:** Craig, I appreciated in the introduction to your new book, reading a little bit about your background, that you’re not someone who is anti-technology. What sparked your thinking in this field? What is your primary concern in the book?

**CRAIG GAY:** Basically, I think it’s that we ought to keep the conversation [about technology] focused on Christ and ask ourselves, “Okay. What is it about Christian faith that might offer us something useful in answering these questions?” One of the points that I make in the book is that there actually quite a lot we can say about the endorsement of ordinary, embodied human existence by virtue of the Christian understanding of Christ’s incarnation, his resurrection, and his interactions with his apostles following his resurrection.

The created order – including our existence in it and our engagement with it – has received an incredible, astonishing endorsement by virtue of the incarnation of Christ. God cares so much about the created order that he himself became one of us in a human body. This is reiterated and even amplified by the resurrection of Christ in a human body. Of course, this becomes a key aspect of Christian confession – that Christ was fully human, remains fully human, is even now fully human at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, will come again in a human body, and is the first fruits of all of those who will be resurrected in bodies.

So we have to begin with the premise that God is committed to this creation and to human beings in bodies in this creation. There’s a transhumanist thesis that maybe the next stage in human evolution is to evolve out of bodies and into a post-biological state. Whatever we use our technologies for, we ought to be using them to enhance ordinary embodied human engagement with each other and with the created world. It’s not really a question of should we use technology or not. The question is: What should we use technology for? And, of course, that question can’t be answered unless we also have some sense of who we are trying to become. Looking at the risen Christ gives us an image of who it is that God desires us to become. We’re not aspiring to become disembodied – [we’re aspiring for] a more fully embodied and engaged existence.

The problem that I have with a lot of automatic machine development is that it actually diminishes the capacities of most of the people that use those machines. Take the systems that are now being developed for medical diagnosis. I’m sometimes we come from a certain worldview very good. But it seems tragic that you would implement a system that would diminish the capacities of ordinary physi-
THE QUESTION IS: WHAT SHOULD WE USE TECHNOLOGY FOR? THAT CAN’T BE ANSWERED UNLESS WE ALSO HAVE SOME SENSE OF WHO WE ARE TRYING TO BECOME.

One of the fundamental things we Christians need to do today is simply to remember our theology so that we have a clearer sense of what the world is and what our task as human beings in the world is. Once we remember these things, it will become much easier to answer questions like: Should we do this? Or should we use that? The question boils down to whether technology is really helping us or not, and helping us to become the kinds of people God desires us to become. If it isn’t, then it’s pointless to use it; if it is, then great! Celebrate it and use it.

At the moment, we don’t seem to know who we are, we don’t know where we’re going, and we don’t know what kinds of people we want to become. So we drift along with our technology, fingers crossed, hoping that whatever happens, it will turn out okay.

Now, I want to get back to the administrators that we’re speaking to because I think one of the problems that administrators face – and I say this having been one for a while – is money pressures. Technology in our colleges and universities promises to save money so there’s a push toward this.

Online degrees are an example. They provide a way to enable students to do programs without having to move. It’s also a way for the school itself to save money – they don’t have to hire as many faculty and have an actual campus and all of the things that go along with that. So there seems to be a constant push now to mediate theological education through technology because it’s more cost-effective. And the administrators are the ones who feel that pressure most keenly, most acutely. So to those people I would say, “Look, I understand this, but don’t give up on face-to-face interaction – on the actual embodied human experience. Try wherever possible to facilitate that in the lives of our students.” Here I would recommend the work of Albert Borgmann. He argues that when we allow technology to get in between us, the result is loneliness. It’s disengagement from each other and a disengagement from the larger world. And that leaves us alone and lonely.

Let’s not do that to ourselves if we can help it. I know it’s expensive, and getting together and actually meeting together is sometimes difficult. But it’s worth it, especially for students who have been shaped by technology. I think of the work of Sherry Turkle. One of the things she stresses is that interpersonal communication is an art. It’s something we learn to do by doing. And all of the time we spend looking at our screens, we’re being shaped in a cost, right? We’re being shaped in such a way as to be destined again for isolation and loneliness.

I would also recommend Andy Crouch’s recent book, The Tech-Wise Family. I think it’s full of practical wisdom. One of the things he mentioned is the practice of technology fasting, which I think is pretty useful. We don’t really realize how addicted we are to these technologies until we’re forced to go without them for a period of time.

JOHN BUCHER: One thing I’m doing in the classroom is trying to create as many experiences as possible for students and to turn what used to be lectures into experiential moments. No one is going to be on their deathbed talking about the weekend that they binge-watched Game of Thrones. We’ll be talking about those moments that we experienced life with each other. And I think even walking students through that exercise of thinking about what will be the moments you reflect on when you lie on your deathbed – just bringing that into their consciousness is helpful.

The other thing that I try to do is change things up about every 10 to 15 minutes in the classroom in order to accommodate the attention spans of students. Research has shown that students start to disconnect and disengage the material after about 10 to 15 minutes. So if you can, in some way, even a small way, encourage some change in the classroom space, then I think you have a fighting chance of holding their attention.
Heed the Call
Os Guinness’ latest is an excellent resource on freedom.

BY CLAUDE O. PRESSNELL JR.

LAST CALL FOR LIBERTY is the result of an ongoing plea by author Os Guinness for America to take seriously the fragility and pending peril of its freedom. The title implies that this is Guinness’ final text in a series of thought-provoking works on the issue. Though this text can stand alone, I would recommend that the reader first tackle at least a couple of Guinness’ earlier works if time permits—A Free People’s Suicide and Impossible People.

As is Guinness’ practice, he doesn’t take a partisan view. Put on an additional layer of tough skin: He cites stinging examples of well-deserved criticism of every political persuasion. Guinness’ goal is to delve deeply into the heart of the issue rather than choose a political side. Retaining true freedom is too serious an issue to leave to political bickering.

The foundational framework for Last Call is to understand the idea of “freedom” through the lenses of two revolutions: 1776 (the American Revolution) and 1786 (the French Revolution). Guinness argues that the two revolutions sought “freedom” from fundamentally different ideological underpinnings and had strikingly different results.

The American Revolution of 1776 was primarily motivated by a faith-informed view of the human experience. It was a revolution based on a freedom from governmental oppression by Britain, and it moved toward civility and excellence. The founders, although far from perfect, drafted what Guinness calls “a promissory note for individual freedom for all.” This is a covenantal freedom based on human dignity, truth, and morality that honestly acknowledges and protects itself from the “crooked timber of humanity” while placing checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power.

Guinness argues that the French Revolution of 1789 primarily sought a freedom that was deeply rooted in acquisition of power and progressive acclimation. It was characterized by moral fluidity that sought to loosen itself of religious moral confinements, propelled by the idea that humans are fundamentally good and therefore should be free to do as they please. Guinness uses questions to contrast these radically differing revolutionary views, such as:

• Which view does justice to answering freedom’s central paradox: that freedom is the greatest enemy of freedom?
• Which view is more realistic in facing the difficult task of sustaining freedom?
• Which view best guarantees freedom while doing justice to today’s increasing diversity?
• Which view offers the best philosophical and moral case for justifying the vision of a free, open, and stable society? And which can achieve the necessary alliances for accomplishing this goal?

In delving deeply into these questions, Guinness asks the reader to not be distracted by the current quarrels that so easily divide us—-a task more easily said than done. He identifies some of the contemporary superfluous issues to either be avoided or given little attention. One is whether America was founded as a Christian nation. Guinness argues the founding fathers never intended a church-state; rather, though founded on Judeo-Christian principles, the government’s role is to protect diverse religious thought and experience, not to mandate it.

Guinness also advises against going down the rabbit hole of questioning whether people can be “moral and good” without God; he argues that the human experience demonstrates it is possible. The true question is whether the religious and nonreligious can reach a moral consensus. Too, Guinness asserts that focusing on the glaring hypocrisies of the founders is a straw man and should not be used to summarily dismiss the core principles of freedom. These and other issues distract us from the importance of the discussion at hand.

The true value of Guinness’ work on this subject is only realized when it’s taken into community. This is where I see the role of Christian higher education. Whether we acknowledge it or not, students are coming to our campuses with strong emotional (not so rational) responses to the current societal debates. They come largely shaped by society and less so by their churches.

C CCCU campuses embrace their mission of inculcating a Christian worldview through theory and practice. This is becoming increasingly difficult in a post-truth society. However, now—-more than ever—-we need our graduates to speak boldly, yet with civility, into our culture. The consequence of challenging our students to think deeply and engage peacefully is not only to share their faith but also to possibly save a society of true freedom where faith can flourish.

Today’s lack of civility is turning into a grab for power to be exercised over the opposing side. Tolerance has been exchanged for coercive acquiescence. Guinness attributes this to the 1789 revolution. To maintain an environment where the Christian message can continue to be proclaimed, we need to protect the revolutionary heritage of 1776, which gives room for disagreement, keeps power in check, and is based on an others-focused morality. The revolution of 1789 seeks a freedom of radical, unreserved choice; 1776 seeks a covenantal freedom to choose what is right.

The discussion set forth by Guinness needs to be taken seriously. The campus environment is the ideal place for this dialogue to flourish. Whether the book is integrated into the curriculum, the coffee shop, or the residential halls, the campus leadership should read Last Call for Liberty and give serious consideration on how to engage their communities in this timely debate.

CLAUDE O. PRESSNELL JR. is president of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) and a member of the CCCU Board of Directors.
Climbing the Second Mountain

David Brooks’ latest isn’t just a memoir; it’s a call to action.

BY KAY LLOVIO

IN HIS 2016 KEYNOTE speech at the CCCU’s 40th Anniversary Gala, David Brooks, New York Times columnist and bestselling author, noted that Christian colleges and universities “have what everybody else is desperate to have: a way of talking about and educating the human person in a way that integrates faith, emotion, and intellect.” Brooks’ latest bestsellers, The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life, explores some of those same themes, but in the context of his own journey. Devastated by the failure of his first marriage, Brooks enters a midlife crisis and emerges with a clear vision of “the prison of individualism” that had shaped his way of thinking. The metaphor of two mountains contrasts different moral worldviews, Brooks says – individualist and relationalist; ego versus heart and soul.

Climbing the first mountain requires the building up of ego and defining the self, acquiring resume values, and conquering the world by being ambitious, strategic, and independent. Reaching the pinnacle of the first mountain often lays bare its inability to truly fulfill us. Here, Brooks points not merely to a different path but to an altogether different place – the journey to the second mountain. Through the valley and wilderness, we can shed our egos to become relational, intimate contributors to the second mountain. Through the valley and wilderness, we can shed our egos to become relational, intimate contributors to a greater community on the second mountain. We are not taking another empty step in self-fulfillment but embracing a worldview apart from self.

Brooks is an erudite guide through this journey, weaving his own insights with those of scholars, theologians, poets, and friends to form a rich, intricate, and complex narrative. Yet his challenge to form a second-mountain generation moves this narrative from memoir to manifesto.

In an early chapter, “The Instagram Life,” Brooks brilliantly exposes the empty promises of freedom, possibility, authenticity, and autonomy that we offer to college graduates: “From the most structured and supervised childhood in human history, [students] get spit out after graduation into the least structured young adulthood in human history.” No wonder so many climb the first mountain only to find emptiness or betrayal instead of the direction, wisdom, meaning, and values they seek.

These applications to college students form the most compelling sections of the book for those of us in Christian higher education. Do we prepare them for a fulfilled life and help them to cultivate the virtues, the kind that people share about you when you are gone? Do we help students understand the choices in a committed life of vocation, marriage, faith, and community? Or are we influenced or even intimidated by the demands of employers and parents who want marketable skills and resume values?

Second-mountain organizations “touch people at their depths and leave a permanent mark,” Brooks writes. Rather than leave persons floundering on their own, these organizations offer “a collective purpose, a shared set of rituals, a common origin story. They nurture thick relationships. They don’t merely educate; they transform.”

How do Christian colleges and universities fill this role? We encourage students to make deep and lasting commitments that are often counter-cultural and, therefore, counter-intuitive. We help students on their journey by showing them the contours on the map and pointing out the more obscure second mountain.

We cultivate their commitment to vocation, even as we help them gain skills for the job they need to pay their bills. “In the vocation mentality, you’re not living on the ego level of your consciousness – working because the job pays well or makes life convenient,” Brooks states. Commitment to vocation requires attention to moments of curiosity and wonder, and learning from a mentor how to be what we have not yet become in order to master that to which we are called.

A commitment to marriage may be even more difficult to develop in our current culture. Do we help our students to know the stages of intimacy; to discern between hormones and genuine interest; to deal with their own and another’s imperfections so that marriage can last?

In my favorite section, Brooks argues for a commitment to a philosophical or religious faith, to a connection beyond self or another. He challenges higher education to resist the pull of instrumentalism and retain the humanistic ideal of liberal arts education. Christian colleges are challenged even further to present biblical content as more than myth (stories of our people and our identity) or wisdom literature (tools for understanding and solving the problems of life), but as scripts to live by. For “if there are no overarching stories, then life is meaningless.” In sharing his own journey to faith, Brooks reminds us not only of the walls Christians build that keep people from faith but also the allure of the spiritual life.

Finally, Brooks illustrates how a commitment to community – of ordinary people doing extraordinary things for their neighborhood – overcomes the problem of individualism. This, then, is Brooks’ ultimate point – that we help ourselves and our students to choose the second mountain because true “joy is found on the far side of sacrificial service.” We have no greater model of this than Jesus, a “second mountain” dweller, who for the joy set before him endured the cross for all of our sakes.

KAY LLOVIO serves as vice provost for student development at William Jessup University in Rocklin, California.
THE LAST WORD

Sharing the Full Gospel Story

By starting the Gospel message with Genesis, we are reminded not only of personal redemption, but the redemption of relationship and vocation.

BY SHO BARAKA

At the 2019 Multi-Academic Conference for provosts, campus ministers, and student development professionals, Sho Baraka, artist and co-founder of The AND Campaign, offered a morning devotion on helping the current generation of students connect with and activate their Christian faith. This is the conclusion of that talk; it has been edited for length.

I BELIEVE ONE of the greatest struggles is that when we talk about the Gospel, we don’t start it in Genesis; oftentimes, we start with sin. Part of my problem with that type of evangelism is that when you come to many communities – especially communities with visible brokenness – you don’t have to convince these people that their communities are sinful and broken. They can see it. We need to convince them that God created them for a purpose, and that we were made in his image, and that we have deviated from that.

But when we start with sin for our gospel message, I think we’re not showing people what their purpose is, and how we were made for God’s glory and interaction. … [When we start with Genesis, we see] a relationship with God, a relationship with one another, and a relationship with how we work and how we cultivate. [We see that] God was the center of the story, but because of sin, now we place ourselves on the throne of the narrative. Not only do we remove God, we corrupt our personal relationship with him, and we also pervert our relationship in community. We use relationships for our own benefit.

We manipulate people for our own selfish interests …

But thanks be to God that there is a Savior who is redeeming all things, amen. Jesus has taken center stage, where he belongs, and he’s not only redeeming our personal relationship with God and making right that which was corrupted; he’s also asking us to restore right relationship with one another …

But the thing that I think we often miss is that he’s also redeeming and restoring how we create and cultivate. And so we need to challenge our students [to help them recognize] that your own personal relationship is not about your personal piety. It’s about how you operate in community and how you create. So the very thing that you study, the very major you’re pursuing – have you considered how that’s going to impact not just your own bank account, but [also] your community, your cities, your nation? Are you working for the flourishing of those things? …

[As a student,] I wanted to live a righteous lifestyle. I wanted to operate in discipleship and evangelism, and I just didn’t know how to do that in the creative world. And so I was like, “Well, maybe in order to be an effective Christian, I just need to be a campus minister,” because no one taught me how to effectively be impactful in the marketplace while being a creative …

We can no longer suggest that the primary pastime for Christian activity is solely having a quiet time or evangelism in a traditional sense. Engagement in vocation – how [Christians] work, and how they study, and how they operate – is formation of Christian identity. You don’t need to jump on a plane to be a missionary. Some of us need to start being missionaries in our dorm rooms, or in our households, or in our classes. Some of us just need to encourage the students to just get to class on time to be excellent. …

If I can be honest, I don’t really feel like this talk is just for a Generation Z audience. I think this is a useful message for adults because ultimately, you reproduce what you have. … And so, if we want to reach generations that follow us, then we, ourselves, must show the evidence of these principles in our own lives.

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