Are You Ready to Faithfully Engage with Culture?

We have the opportunity to use our words and our voices for the common good.

How might we love God and our neighbors through the task of writing? This book offers a vision for expressing one’s faith through writing and for understanding writing itself as a spiritual practice that cultivates virtue. Drawing on authors and artists throughout the church’s history, we learn how we might embrace writing as an act of discipleship for today.

“When Christians compose with the aim of enacting charity, they listen with humility, they respond to others as fellow children of God, and they demonstrate the discipline required by the metanoic process of writing. Gibson and Beitler offer fresh and worthy models for writers as they seek to embody the law of love.”

ELIZABETH VANDER LEI, Calvin University

In the midst of a divisive culture, public intellectuals speaking from an evangelical perspective have a critical role to play—within the church and beyond. Contributors Miroslav Volf, Amos Yong, Linda A. Livingstone, Heather Templeton Dill, Katelyn Beaty, Emmanuel Katongole, John M. Perkins, and David Wright cast a vision for intellectuals who promote human flourishing.

“We have the opportunity to use our words and our voices for the common good.”

SUSAN VANZANTEN, Valparaiso University
Building the Future

Embedding Innovation in Your Campus Identity

THE WORD “INNOVATION” conjures up images of a new and better future. The pandemic allowed us to witness innovation firsthand, whether in vaccines created in record time or in shifting our own campuses’ ability to be online, in-person (while still meeting pandemic guidelines), or a hybrid of both. Disruption caused by disease, emergencies, or disasters often fuels innovation and invention. Experiencing hardship also spurs human beings to utilize adversity for positive change.

We admire and celebrate innovation. We know it when we see it. But creating a new future is hard work. That’s why I want to explore types of innovation — and obstacles to achieving it — before laying out a road map for creating and maintaining an innovative culture that I think will be vitally necessary for Christian higher education.

LOOKING TO THE PAST FOR INSPIRATION

On its website, the History Channel has an article exploring 11 of the greatest innovations that changed the world. Here are just a few:

• The printing press.
• Antibiotics.
• Steel, which fueled the industrial revolution and built modern cities.
• The electric light. All it takes is a power outage for us to remember a less workable, bygone era. The innovation of wires to power early light bulbs led to electrical wiring paving the way for all other electrical innovations.
• Antibiotics. This changed medicine forever. Imagine a world without antibiotics is easier in this moment because of the pandemic. Clearly, the ability to fight infections has improved the human condition without measure.

“We can do it,” I think as I read this list. But it also makes me wonder: What will be some of the innovations of the future that our students need to be prepared for through their time studying at our colleges and universities? For that, I found the insights from Honeywell to be helpful. You might recognize the Honeywell name from your thermostat, but it is also a premier innovation laboratory. The leaders at Honeywell recently predicted that the innovations of tomorrow will include air taxis, quantum computing through an open cloud system, robotic cargo unloading, real-time data making work more efficient, a new generation of control system technology, 3D-printed engine parts, and machine learning to fight cyber-attacks. What opportunities are open for our students!

WHAT DEFINES INNOVATION?

Innovation is happening all around us, including on our campuses. How do we keep up the momentum and implementation to make innovation our culture of the future? The Center for Creative Leadership has drawn a helpful distinction between creativity and innovation: “Creativity is the ability to generate novel and useful ideas, while innovation is a successful implementation of creative ideas.”

Is all innovation the same? In 2018, People Matters identified three different kinds of innovation: incremental, adjacent, and transformational. Incremental innovation is improving something we already do — certainly important to pursue. Adjacent innovation is adding something new to something we do that is already core to our business — like online education in addition to on-campus education. Transformational innovation can be disruptive and involves the creation of entirely new businesses that cater to new markets. For example, think of Amazon’s creation of Amazon Web Services (AWS), its cloud server, which was outside its original business model of selling books and other products.

In higher education, our institutions have been successful at incremental and adjacent innovations that will lead or have created new revenue or efficiencies. Take a moment with your senior campus leaders to mark your success so far. Ask and record the answers to this question: Since the pandemic, what incremental or adjacent innovations has our institution adopted that have generated new revenue, new efficiencies, or the potential for both? You will be encouraged.

FACING THE INHIBITORS OF INNOVATION

While innovations occurred in the midst of the pandemic’s disruption, an innovation culture must continue and grow. Higher education will continue to feel disruption even after the pandemic finally ends, and that disruption must be used to fuel further innovation. As the People Matters article suggested, organizations need to go from “grazing” around innovation to creating an intentional, integrated, and optimized culture for innovation. How do we make innovation the DNA of Christian higher education?

Harvard Business Review identified 10 common innovation inhibitors that I suggest would be valuable to review with your leadership teams, deans, and department chairs. For each one, think about the extent to which it applies to your campus (never? some- times? often?):

1. Our focus on short-term results drives out ideas that take longer to mature.
2. Fear of cannibalizing current business prevents investment in new areas.
3. Most of our resources are devoted to day-to-day business so that few remain for innovative pursuits.
4. Incremental is someone else’s job and not part of everyone’s responsibilities.
5. Our efficiency focus eliminates free time for fresh thinking.
6. We do not have a standard process to nurture the development of new ideas.
7. Incentives are geared towards maximizing today’s business and reducing risk.
8. Managers are not trained to be innovation leaders.
9. Managers immediately look for flaws in new ideas rather than tease out their potential.
10. We look at opportunities through internal lenses rather than starting with customers’ needs and problems.

How did you score? Is there is room for improvement? What are practical next steps?

BUILDING A LASTING CULTURE OF INNOVATION

The statements themselves create the guide to new behavior. Create within each department, or within the university, a team whose focus is developing long-term strategic ideas to implement. Do not allow fear of undermining current ways of doing things to prevent the surfacing of new ideas. Reward people who develop and implement an innovative idea. Plan regular retreat time for groups to shift from an “efficiency focus” of daily routines to a “fresh thinking” focus.

Do not allow critique and criticism to dominate idea sessions. One idea is to create a process where red cards and green cards are used during meetings. Anyone in a meeting can good-naturedly raise a red card on another team member who names the flaws in a new idea before naming the potential. Raise the green cards to affirm suggested ideas.

Get your students involved. Create student innovation task forces. Ask your students for their ideas as their loyal, engaged, and self-interested “customers.” Form small groups of innovative students who will regularly be an advisory group to departments and administrative leaders. Ask students to think about how their needs could be met better by the university.

Finally, look outside your campus. Identify the most innovative companies in your immediate locale or from your board of trustees and do informational interviews on how they have created innovative cultures in their organizations. Perhaps imbed some of your leaders into business environments to influence habits and future thinking.

The future of Christian higher education depends on the attitude “We can do it.” We have done it, and with God’s guidance and grace, we will.”  

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THE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19
How the CCCU’s international members have adapted to the pandemic’s challenges.

By Bob Andringa

CHARITABLE GIVING & HIGHER EDUCATION
In a time of economic upheaval for CCCU institutions, advocating for tax deductions for charitable giving is more important than ever.

By Sara Helms McCarty and Terry Hartle

IMPROVING BOARD PERFORMANCE
Training and supporting these key leaders is vital for institutional success.

By Emmanuel L. McNeely

RESTORING A BROKEN NATION
How CCCU institutions can help heal a deeply divided society.

An interview with David French

BECOMING BRAVE
WITNESSES

By Sandra Mayo

HELPING FACULTY PURSUE VOCATION

An interview with Christina Bieber Lake

THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (CCCU) is a higher education association of more than 180 Christian institutions around the world. Since 1976, the CCCU has served as the leading national voice of Christian higher education. With campuses across the globe, including more than 150 in the U.S. and Canada and more than 30 from an additional 19 countries, CCCU institutions are accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith.

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
Advance is published each year in the fall and spring and is mailed to members, affiliates, and friends of the CCCU. It is also available online at www.cccu.org/magazine. Direct questions and letters to the editor to editor@cccu.org.

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Around the Council

CCCU AND SCIO RECEIVE $2.1 MILLION TO SUPPORT STEM RESEARCH

THE CCCU AND SCHOLARSHIP & CHRISTIANITY IN OXFORD (SCIO), the CCCU’s U.K. subsidiary, have received a $2.1 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to launch Supporting Structures, a project designed to support and enhance STEM research among faculty and students on CCCU campuses. An additional $256,000 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust expands the reach of the project, enabling the project to offer awards to a total of nine CCCU institutions, who will be selected later this spring.

This multi-faceted project will incorporate training, support, and events for faculty members, students, senior administrators, and the communities that feed into and support these institutions. It will expand research opportunities among existing, pre-tenure faculty members in the STEM fields and offer training to deepen their understanding of and engagement with issues pertaining to science, religion, and society. Additionally, the project has a specific fund dedicated to help participating campuses enhance diversity among their STEM faculty.

The project will also bolster unique partnerships between CCCU institutions and major research institutions and provide funding for campuses to establish student clubs and support undergraduate student researchers in STEM fields, as well as provide opportunities for administrators and other campus-connected communities to engage science, religion, and society issues.

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Supporting Structures is a new project designed to support and enhance STEM research among both faculty and students on CCCU campuses.

LEARN MORE
For more information, visit www.scio-uk.org/research/supporting-stem/.
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/or challenges to religious character and convictions. In 2020, the CCCU signed onto 109 letters and nine amicus briefs supporting our major advocacy issues. As of February 15, 2021, we have signed on to 10 letters and one amicus brief. Other highlights of our recent advocacy work include:

COVID Relief | The COVID-19 stimulus and omnibus bill passed by Congress in December 2020 included three major policy victories as well as about $23 billion in funding to higher education. The bill included new FAFSA simplification measures, allowing students to more easily obtain federal financial aid. It also lifted the 26-year-old ban on Pell grants for incarcerated individuals. The CCCU has been a longtime advocate for better access to education and opportunity for those in our prison systems. The bill also included an extension of the $300 universal charitable giving deduction through the end of 2021, as well as an increase of up to $600 deduction to married couples.

As of late February, the House Committee on Labor and Education had released a COVID-19 relief bill that would appropriate nearly $40 billion to public and private higher education institutions alike. The CCCU continues to advocate on behalf of Christian colleges and universities in order to ensure equitable treatment between public and private institutions of higher education.

Immigration | President Joe Biden issued an executive order preserving protections for Dreamers under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals guidance within his first days in office. This order reinforces the temporary status given to undocumented immigrants brought as children and calls the Department of Homeland Security to “preserve and fortify” actions consistent with the law. Senators Dick Durbin and Lindsey Graham also reintroduced the Dream Act, championing the push for immigration reform in Congress. We continue to advocate for policies that recognize the dignity with which God has endowed all people, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or place of origin. We believe a bipartisan, permanent legislative solution for Dreamers from Congress is the best means to provide a long-term solution for these young people and their communities.

Title IX | The Department of Education released new Title IX regulations in November 2020, which include “controlled by” language that would affect the religious freedoms of our institutions. The language determines if an institution is “controlled by” a religious organization. The regulation promotes free speech at institutions, ensures equal treatment of religious student groups, and revises discretionary grant programs to specifically include religious institutions.

Judiciary | The CCCU filed an amicus brief in the case of Fulton v the City of Philadelphia. This case involves Catholic Social Services, a faith-based agency that has been serving vulnerable kids for 200 years. But the city of Philadelphia stopped placing kids with foster parents that partner with Catholic Social Services, demanding that the agency change its religious practices or close. We ask the Court to protect the freedom of faith-affirming foster agencies nationwide to maintain their deeply held beliefs while serving those most in need.

LEARN MORE | For more information about the CCCU’s advocacy work, visit www.cccu.org/advocacy.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION SPOTLIGHT: KENYA

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Africa International University (AIU) was founded in 1983 by the Association of Evangelicals in Africa in Karen, a suburb on the outskirts of Nairobi. Known as the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, its goal was to provide training beyond the basic certificate and diploma levels for pastors in the region. Over time, it expanded its program offerings and received a university charter from the Kenyan government in 2011.

Today, AIU continues in its mission to educate Christ-centered leaders for the transformation of God’s people and the world through innovative programs, research, and community engagement. It offers undergraduate, master’s, and doctorate degrees in a variety of fields, including biblical studies, theology, missions, business, finance, psychology and counseling, linguistics, interreligious studies, and education.

AFRICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1994 by the Church of the Nazarene, Africa Nazarene University (ANU) was the first Nazarene university established outside North America and offered undergraduate courses in theology and business, as well as a master’s in religion; a year later, it also offered a bachelor in computer science. ANU has continued to expand its program offerings and received its university charter from the Kenyan government in 2002.

Today, ANU offers 26 academic programs, serving 4,000 students from diverse geographical and economic backgrounds. With over a decade of experience in remote and distance learning, ANU conducted its first fully online semester in May 2020 amid the pandemic. About half of the student body is currently enrolled in online learning, which will be a defining element of education delivery at ANU going forward. In September 2020, ANU signed a partnership with Coursera that further expanded its online education offerings, providing students with a transformative online learning experience.
THE CCCU AND INTERFAITH YOUTH CORE (IFYC) have awarded nearly $20,000 in grants to 16 CCCU campuses to integrate a newly developed online curriculum, “Christian Leadership in a Multifaith World,” into existing coursework and student leadership development programs.

Together, the CCCU and IFYC are committed to elevating the importance of religious literacy and bridge-building. Through generous support from The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the CCCU and IFYC developed an online curriculum to explore the foundation for interfaith engagement, build students’ religious literacy, and equip students to lead bridge-building activities in their communities. Individual $1,000 grants were awarded to faculty and staff on CCCU campuses to use the pilot curriculum with their students and offer feedback to the CCCU and IFYC on ways to strengthen the activities for future use.

A new curriculum developed by CCCU and Interfaith Youth Core aims to build students’ religious literacy and equip them to lead bridge-building activities in their communities.

For more information, visit ifyc.org/grants/cccu.
How do students on CCCU campuses rate their institution’s pandemic response? As part of the CCCU’s Collaborative Assessment Project, CCCU campuses administered the “Thriving Quotient” survey in Fall 2020 to more than 4,800 students across the U.S. and Canada, focusing on the support, protection, and communication students felt they received from their institution in the midst of COVID-19.

**STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

**CAMPUS RESPONSES TO COVID-19**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

*Overall, my instructors have shown care and concern for me as they respond to COVID-19.*

- **78%** Agree or Strongly Agree
- **15%** Somewhat Agree
- **4%** Somewhat Disagree
- **3%** Disagree or Strongly Disagree

*The staff and administration at this institution have done a good job protecting students from the negative health consequences of COVID-19.*

- **72%** Agree or Strongly Agree
- **17%** Somewhat Agree
- **5%** Somewhat Disagree
- **6%** Disagree or Strongly Disagree

*I feel stressed about the potential consequences of COVID-19.*

- **36%** Agree or Strongly Agree
- **19%** Somewhat Agree
- **14%** Somewhat Disagree
- **31%** Disagree or Strongly Disagree

**SUPPORT AND INFORMATION**

*The support you are getting from this institution to help you navigate the challenges of this pandemic.*

- **64%** Very Satisfied or Satisfied
- **19%** Somewhat Satisfied
- **8%** Somewhat Dissatisfied
- **9%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

*The information you are getting from this institution about its ongoing response to this pandemic.*

- **64%** Very Satisfied or Satisfied
- **17%** Somewhat Satisfied
- **9%** Somewhat Dissatisfied
- **10%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

*The support you are getting from this institution to help you navigate the challenges of this pandemic.*

- **78%** Very Satisfied or Satisfied
- **18%** Somewhat Satisfied
- **8%** Somewhat Dissatisfied
- **9%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

**THE COMMUNICATION YOU ARE GETTING FROM THIS INSTITUTION ABOUT ITS ONGOING RESPONSE TO THIS PANDEMIC.**

- **64%** Very Satisfied or Satisfied
- **17%** Somewhat Satisfied
- **9%** Somewhat Dissatisfied
- **10%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

**STUDENTS WORRY ABOUT:**

**DOING WELL IN COLLEGE**

- **24%** Always/Most of the time
- **20%** Sometimes
- **22%** Rarely/ Never
- **34%** A little more than/About half the time

**PAYING BILLS**

- **20%** Always/Most of the time
- **22%** Sometimes
- **28%** A little more than/About half the time
- **32%** Rarely/ Never

**SECURE HOUSING**

- **5%** Always/Most of the time
- **6%** Sometimes
- **78%** Rarely/ Never
- **11%** A little more than/About half the time

**ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

- **15%** Always/Most of the time
- **16%** Sometimes
- **29%** A little more than/About half the time
- **59%** Rarely/ Never

**FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

- **15%** Always/Most of the time
- **16%** Sometimes
- **28%** A little more than/About half the time
- **22%** Rarely/ Never

**ACCESSING AND USING THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED FOR CLASSES**

- **20%** Always/Most of the time
- **16%** Sometimes
- **16%** A little more than/About half the time
- **48%** Rarely/ Never
Theological Exclusivity in a Multifaith World

What’s Love Got to Do with It?

It turns out that learning and engaging in interfaith work is not only good for society but can also reinforce a student’s Christian faith.

As Christian educators and leaders, not only can we help reinforce our students’ Christian faith and make them more professionally marketable, but interfaith work reinforces their own religious values. In addition, the Association of American Colleges & Universities found that college graduates who engaged in interfaith work are not only better prepared to engage a multifaith and diverse society, but interfaith work reinforced their own religious values. In addition, the Association of American Colleges & Universities found that college graduates who engaged in interfaith work are not only better prepared to engage a multifaith and diverse society, but interfaith work reinforced their own religious values.

So what does this have to do with Christian higher education, and specifically CCCU campuses? Well it turns our learning and engaging in interfaith work is not only good for society but can also reinforce a student’s Christian faith. According to the 2020 Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), students who engaged in interfaith work were not only better prepared to engage a multifaith and diverse society, but interfaith work reinforced their own religious values. In addition, the Association of American Colleges & Universities found that college graduates who have the ability to understand and work with people who are different from themselves are more marketable to employers because employers want to hire culturally competent staff.

As difficult as this Scripture-based fact is to swallow, everyone is still my neighbor, and I am called to share God’s love with them. For Christians, loving our neighbors as ourselves is not simply a biblical suggestion or a humanitarian nicety but rather a clear commandment and evidence that one is a Christian. So the answer to Tina Turner’s hit song “What’s love got to do with it?” is “everything!”

ON JANUARY 6, 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans and others around the world watched in shock and horror as a group of domestic terrorists hijacked the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to overturn the U.S. election results and harm members of Congress. Emboldened by conspiracy theories, hate-filled rhetoric, and repeated lies, they sought to take back “their” America from politicians and people who did not look like them, vote like them, or believe like them.

What was particularly alarming to many was the fact that these self-identified “patriots” flew signs that read “Jesus Saves” alongside hanging nooses, swastikas, and other symbols of hate for “others” who they perceived as adding to the demise of “their” country. Never once did they seem to stop to look at themselves and the irony of their actions in relationship to their professed commitment to law and order. As an African American woman, devout Christian, and self-identified peacemaker, I pondered in that moment how the name of Christ had been both dirtied by the stains of venom and hatred and showcased to non-Christians in a way that violently misrepresented Scripture.

As I reflect on that infamous day, I think about the importance of the work that the CCCU does in bringing people from different backgrounds and perspectives together. Recently, the CCCU was invited to collaborate with Interfaith Youth Core on a grant called “Christian Leadership in a Multifaith World.” As an ordained minister, I first pondered if this would be in contradiction to my faith. Would working on a project promoting religious diversity be equated with promoting theological universalism and the notion that all roads lead to heaven? Or could this project invite my theological exclusivity to sit at the table? I was pleasantly surprised that, with cultural humility and a healthy dose of curiosity (at least on my part), we accepted. The dinner conversation that ensued was all about how this Muslim friend used to sneak to church when she was younger, and had at some point prayed the sinner’s prayer, yet stopped going when her devout Muslim mother discovered her secret and forbade her to ever go again. Imagine our surprise when she wanted to talk about Jesus the remainder of the evening!

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The first response limits opportunities and perhaps undermines enrollment. The second response — if the CCCU faculty is not part of the research — means students may not witness much research and work alongside deeply engaged Christians doing top-tier research. The third strategy limits the quality of the experience. It can imply a type of mediocrity, not because the faculty are mediocre but because they are advising outside of their area of competence. Institutionally, we are not setting them up to succeed. All three responses may also convey that the students cannot expect significantly informed research guidance from their faculty. This can be profoundly discouraging for faculty morale, unduly limiting to students, and damaging to long-term institutional health.

Thinking like a system provides a solution. Online tools present the medium for sharing resources by harnessing faculty from across CCCU membership to advise undergraduate researchers within their areas of competence. For example, a student at College A wishes to engage in research for which the faculty in the department lack particular competence. Acting within a broad CCCU system, a faculty member with the specific scholarly competence from College B can step in to offer additional, limited, informal research advising online (with the student’s college providing needed oversight, faculty of record, etc.).

Developing such a response requires an expansive view from faculty and administrators to recognize the availability of academic expertise outside their institution, a willingness to draw upon outside advisors, and enabling one’s own faculty to serve others. We can build a system for communicating and “trading” faculty competencies and student research needs.

This isn’t merely a hypothetical example. A group of honors program directors and deans along with Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford (SCIO), the CCCU’s Oxford-based subsidiary, have ongoing discussions developing a project — URN, Undergraduate Research Network — that seeks to offer a way to fairly balance concerns and resources.

Open Access, Information Specialists, and a Library System

Open Access publishing from payment at point of use (e.g., buying journal subscriptions) to payment at the point of submission by the author (known as subventions, i.e., required payments, typically ranging between $500–$2,000, but as much as $31,000). Originating in Europe but now emerging in North America, this approach might work for large institutions (though that is an open question), but it endangers smaller colleges’ ability to attract bright, young scholars if they lack funding for subventions.

There are systemic approaches that could assist in solving this challenge, such as developing a central matching fund for subventions. But for the moment, let me point to academic-created opportunity. Open Access publishing has expanded to meet access needs for students by making many pay-to-use works freely available. Thus, a vast quantity of freely available, serious research material is accessible electronically.

However, navigating Open Access — both publishing and using it — is complex: too complex, in fact, that major university libraries have dedicated library staff with specialist knowledge in order to support faculty and students engaging Open Access. Many small institutions cannot do this alone, but by sharing library staff expertise across multiple campuses, they might accomplish more. Online meetings make this approach viable.

Some may recall Carl Henry’s vision in the 1950s to create a major Christian university. His efforts did not pan out. But we can now do something on a larger scale with the tools, technology, and an institution — the CCCU itself — that he lacked. We can provide the impact and benefits a major Christian university might offer by breaking down silos and working together as a system. In doing so, we can profoundly enrich our institutions’ research cultures and expand our range of offerings and impact.
Far We Have Come; Further We Must Go

THE BOSTON COMMON is the most familiar parcel of America to me. For 20 years, I walked across this park thousands of times for my commute to work. I sat on its benches for lunches, and I watched its trees cycle through their beautiful array of colors. This place was home. Then, one day, someone yelled a racial slur at me.

Suddenly, I was a stranger in a strange land. What could this happen in America? Many factors complicate the assessment of that day, but the challenges of race are involved. We have certainly come a long way in our national journey toward justice; instead of the Chinese Exclusion Act, for example, we have the Civil Rights Act. Yet the presence of white supremacist groups and the pictures of nooses show there is a long way yet to go. The shocking juxtaposition of waving Confederate and “Jesus Saves” flags shows scars off national wounds that had never properly healed.

Many discussions about race begin with our equality before God as bearers of his image (Gen 1:26-27). But the image of God is more than a premise. It is a prophetic challenge to power. In the cultural context of antiquity, the notion of a god’s image was not democratically applied but rather royally exploited. The king alone bore the image of God, as we read in a statement about the Neo-Assyrian King Esarhaddon (7th century BC): “A free man is as the shadow of God, the slave is as the shadow of the free man; but the king, he is like unto the very image of God” (emphasis mine). The king concentrated power by conflating religion and royal ideology in literature, monuments, and cultural symbols. Scripture challenges this potent system of image in -

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what is viewed as the human ideal and can subsequently shape social equality and applies the royal language of image to everyone.

What occurred in ancient Mesopotamia recurs throughout human history. The dominance of a group can produce an imbalance in what is viewed as the human ideal and can subsequently shape social institutions and cultural practices. Such values are often extremely powerful because they are implicitly embraced and reinforced. Race has become a defining feature of normativity, whether it is idealized beauty, intelligence, or productivity.

We see this in our own history as well. As America marched tow ard the Civil War, Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Ste phens delivered his “Cornerstone” speech on March 21, 1861. In his justification of secession, Stephens repudiated the idea that African slavery was “wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically.” He argued with vigor to the contrary:

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordinatio -

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Visit the CCCU's new database of Racial & Ethnic Diversity Resources for the Christian higher education community.

Interested in learning more?

WALTER KIM is president of the National Association of Evangelicals and pastor for leadership at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. His Ph.D. from Harvard University was in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

The labors of racial justice and reconciliation persist, and will always persist, as long as we live in a fallen world. But this work has a conclusion, where distinctions are preserved but divisions resolved: “And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9-10).

Christian education plays a vital role in the earthly outworking of that heavenly vision. College campuses increasingly draw people from many racial and ethnic backgrounds and provide rich opportunities for relational proximity. Here is a living laboratory to work out the relational dimension of the Gospel — in crossing racial boundaries, in promoting a biblical vision for justice and reconciliation, and in developing the solidarity necessary for racial healing. But this work must be inten -

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A look at how campuses have met the needs of their students amidst a global pandemic.

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has continued on for more than a year, a new rhythm of campus life has developed. Administrators, faculty, and staff at Christian colleges and universities rose to the challenge of adapting life on a college campus to a new reality. In a far-from-typical year, CCCU institutions’ innovative responses allowed them to help their students successfully and safely complete their coursework and other activities. The following is a collection of reflections from campus leaders across the country on the innovations they used to live out their campus missions in a unique time.
COVID-19 TESTING

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 has been key to keeping campuses open and safe. Here’s how some CCCU institutions have tackled testing.

Belhaven University (Jackson, MS)

**BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY** built an on-campus COVID-19 testing center in order to track asymptomatic students, faculty, and staff. Opened in early 2021, the center utilizes the expertise of the university’s professors in the chemistry and biology departments, who expanded their roles in order to coordinate, test, and conduct labs on thousands of people each week.

Belhaven was the only university in Mississippi to build a dedicated testing center. Using saliva samples, the center is able to test hundreds of people daily and have results back in just a few hours. This has better enabled the entire campus community to have in-person classes or participate in other in-person work and activities.

In addition to testing, Belhaven also utilizes contact tracing and quarantining practices to limit the spread of the virus. The university plans to continue its rigorous testing regimen through the remainder of the academic year.

Greenville University (Greenville, IL)

**GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY**

**THANKS TO THEIR TESTING regimen,** Greenville University was not only able to successfully welcome students back for an in-person fall semester; they were able to allow students who wanted to return for the final two weeks after Thanksgiving to do so as well.

A partnership with the University of Illinois Systems SHIELD program enabled GU to test all students, faculty, and staff every week — and even twice a week if needed — using rapid-response saliva testing. Frequent testing on the campus revealed more positive cases in an age category that is largely asymptomatic. More than 20,000 such tests were administered over the course of the fall semester, by the beginning of December, the university had logged 94 total unique positive cases, with 36 of those cases being asymptomatic.

In addition to testing, GU also utilized contact tracing and quarantining practices to limit the spread of the virus. The university plans to continue its rigorous testing regimen through the remainder of the academic year.

Greenville University administered more than 20,000 rapid-response saliva tests over the fall 2020 semester, enabling students to stay in person the entire semester, including after Thanksgiving break.

Samford University (Birmingham, AL)

**IN DEVELOPING THEIR testing plan for the academic year,** Samford University was able to utilize a resource already on campus: the faculty and students at the university’s McWhorter School of Pharmacy.

To assist its work in tracking the spread of the virus, the university launched a clinic to conduct focused testing by identifying common factors among positive cases, such as an event or location, and then identifying others who might share that common factor and testing them for COVID-19.

The program is under the leadership of the dean of Samford’s pharmacy school, and the tests are overseen by two faculty members who are supported by Doctor of Pharmacy students. Thus, the students gain valuable experience in lab procedure and conducting tests, as well as experiencing firsthand the connection between their studies in the pharmaceutical program and the broader work of public health — even as they help keep the Samford community healthy and safe.
When the COVID-19 pandemic rocked higher education, Baylor University recognized that student retention and success are everyone’s responsibility, especially in a pandemic. Even as national trends at private institutions showed student retention declining, the retention rate among all Baylor undergraduates (from fall 2019 to fall 2020) jumped nearly one full point to 92.5%, the highest ever for the university.

We correlate some of our success to the fact that a large group of our students had consistent, individualized outreach every week through Baylor’s highly successful Bear Care program. Bear Care was key to our success, and our student life and student success teams can now leverage new ways to support and encourage our very top students.

Because of the Bear Care program’s success, our student life and student success teams can now leverage new ways to effectively support students, including a successful approach to identify students in need and the knowledge that we can call on other staff when needed. In a time of great stress, this program allowed Baylor to live out its mission to educate leaders “by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community” in a meaningful and effective way.

Key to Success:
Mission-Driven Support

Importantly to the program’s overall success was the support of the faculty and staff, especially those 390 employees who became volunteers and dedicated the time to go through training and engage meaningfully with students in their care. It was so affirming to know that I was surrounded by colleagues who all shared the same mission. This employee commitment to mission is an excellent tool to leverage in supporting students.

Also important was the fact that the Bear Care program had executive-level support from its inception. As other campuses consider student retention and success initiatives, having that support and encouragement from the very top is critical.

When the COVID-19 forced LPU to send students home for an extended spring break in March 2020, our staff and faculty turned to our founder’s legacy for inspiration as we transitioned the entire on-campus experience online in just under two weeks. We were able to bring back on campus courses had been moved online, a team of success coaches was paired with every student, and the 500-seat Seminon Chapel had been converted into a temporary digital media studio for streaming chapels and classes and for recording webinars, podcasts, and events.

The reward was seeing the LPU community interacting with each other (virtually) as if they were all together in one room. Students and guests joined via Zoom or YouTube Live, and speakers had the ability to see their faces and engage with them through a chat feature thanks to larger monitors that are visible from the stage. This opportunity for two-way engagement was fundamental for producing high-quality virtual events in an attempt to mirror the connection that is found in person.

Reflecting on the dramatic, sudden shift into a digital experience, I believe that the changes made will help LPU reach more people all over the world for decades to come. We’ve all become more flexible, adaptable, and aware of the hurdles our students must overcome in order to be successful. We’ve invested in emerging technologies and listened to the needs of our students, communities, and churches. Through this investment, we’ve seen community built and students persevere through the hardest of challenges. May the lessons learned help us learn into innovation and creativity in order to equip more students who will make a positive difference in the world.

To this end, and to continue to develop leaders equipped to tackle the new technological realities of business and ministry emerging from the crisis, the university recently announced the “Media Campaign for Student Success,” designed to provide students with access to the technologies and resources necessary for leadership success in the modern marketplace. The campaign includes the creation of the Aimee Semple McPherson (ASM) Digital Media Center, an expansion of the temporary studio assembled to meet needs during the pandemic. As digital communication is clearly the language of the future, this focus allows LPU students to continue to collaborate with the media marketplace throughout Southern California, across the nation, and around the globe, writing the next chapter in LPU’s legacy of developing leaders who serve God in the Church, the workplace, and the world.

Angie Richey
President of Life Pacific University

Sharra Hynes, Ph.D., is associate vice president and dean of students in the Division of student life at Baylor University (Waco, Texas).

Using a Rich Tradition of Technology to Shape a Promising Future

By Angie Richey
Life Pacific University

As COVID-19 continues to reshape everyday life, industries around the world are finding themselves at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, which can be a perilous tightrope. For Life Pacific University, this has been an opportunity to write the next chapter of our nearly 100-year legacy of innovation.

Founded by Aimee Semple McPherson in 1925, the university has reinvented itself multiple times over the past century on its journey from being a Bible training institute to the international university system it is today. The first president was an innovator who developed a global audience through her use of emerging radio and film technologies. She was the first female evangelist on the radio, using a station that she owned, and she purposely integrated film and theatrical elements into her sermons because she knew that dramatic media was the language of the future. She used any and every technology available to her in order to keep the Gospel accessible in any situation.

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To help its students succeed in a difficult year, Baylor University’s student life and student success teams utilized a network of support from across campus to assist them in their work.
event calendar filled up quickly despite interest this generated from recruiting jobs, but we were surprised by how much would be helpful for students looking for scholarships and employment. We knew this share information for potential internships would provide employers and students in a safe and creative way. Our team decided an outdoor tent space Indiana Wesleyan University utilized career connection event isn’t possible social distancing limits mean a tradition-cal career fair setting indoors. We did move these events to a socially distanced indoor setup when the weather wasn’t ideal, but the successful experiment of the tent event taught our team the importance of adaptability and addressing the core need of both employers and students: a human connection.

Our team also utilized technology to help students, offering Zoom appointments for life coaching, resume reviews, and LinkedIn tutorials. New student orientation sessions on StrengthsFinder results were moved into an interactive online format featuring discussion groups for students to learn more about their top strengths. Most employers have adapted to remote working arrangements and are offering remote internships for IWU students. Our team maintained a steady marketing campaign to promote resume reviews over Zoom meetings, and appointments are nearly back to their pre-pandemic numbers.

As the pandemic continues to necessitate adjustments to how we do our work, the Life Calling and Career team continues to search for new and creative ways to build relationships with employers and deliver our services effectively to students so they can be equipped and empowered to fulfill their God-given purpose in the world. online job fair helped our traditional campus in Marion, Indiana, collaborate with our online school, IWU National & Global, to serve both groups of students and give them a chance to engage a national mix of employers.

Even with economic difficulties hitting multiple fields across the country, our office has seen a steady growth of employment opportunities in health care, education, communications, logistics, and accounting during this time. In fact, some industries have benefited from the needs of the pandemic, so we are helping our students shift their target to the fields that are in demand. Most employers have adapted to remote working arrangements and are offering

OVER THE PAST six months, Dordt University Campus Pastor Sam Ashmore has spent hours on the phone with Dordt students in quarantine and isolation. Being alone for days can be difficult for many, so Ashmore makes sure to check up on how students are doing emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

“I ask, ‘How are classes? How’s your heart? How’s your mind?’” says Ashmore. “But the main purpose behind the call is to pray with the student. We stop right there on the phone and pray for whatever the student needs at that moment, whether that be, ‘Man, studies are really hard in quarantine,’ or, ‘I’m really bored and lonely.’

Since the beginning of the fall semester, Dordt’s campus ministries team has worked hard to provide pastoral support to students who are in quarantine or isolation because of COVID-19. In addition to making regular phone calls to students, the team developed a “Quarantine and Isolation Resources” page that Ashmore sends to every student who starts quarantine or isolation. The page contains many resources, including tips for defending well-being during quarantine and isolation, as well as a link to RightNow Media, the biggest Bible study library in the world.

“We also have a resource that deals with identity — a reminder to students that God calls them his son or daughter. There’s a form where students can submit prayer requests, too,” says Ashmore. Every week, each campus ministries team member has a standing Zoom call where students in isolation or quarantine can hop on if they want; this includes a Zoom prayer time on Monday, a virtual hangout on Tuesday, a Zoom Bible study on Wednesday, and a virtual lunch on Thursday. Not all students take advantage of the Zoom calls, but they tell Ashmore that they appreciate having the option to log on if they want.

“Even if they don’t log onto the Zoom calls, it’s nice to know that someone is there for them — that someone cares,” he says.

In addition to providing pastoral care, Dordt’s campus ministries team has found a way to provide peer support to students in quarantine and isolation by hiring Carolyn Shunkwiler, a junior psychology and social work major. She hand-writes letters of encouragement. Typically, she writes five to 10 letters a day, but at one point she wrote 20 to 40 letters a day. She has also baked chocolate chip cookies that she drops off for students. “This work study job has provided an opportunity for me to serve in a tangible way,” says Shunkwiler. “I think it’s important to have someone reach out and recognize that going through quarantine is hard and that we see them — that they are still part of Dordt.”

Ashmore has noticed that students often want their peers to help carry their burdens and provide a listening ear. “There is a lot of healing, growth, and creativity that takes place through peer-to-peer support and encouragement. Looking forward, I wonder if there’s a more intentional way for campus ministries to take part in peer-to-peer encouragement, truth-telling, counseling, or the like. I see students craving to be known for their authentic selves with their peers, and campus ministries can foster and facilitate this even more.”

Doing ministry during COVID-19 has also shown Ashmore that Gen Z students are quite comfortable with discussing their thoughts and feelings online and through text. “I wonder if there is a place for text-driven pastoral care on Dordt’s campus,” he says. “Not to replace face-to-face interaction, but as a doorway to it. Will students be more engaged if we reach out to them through text initially? That’s something I want to ponder and think through.”

Sam Ashmore, campus pastor at Dordt University, checks in on a student who has been quarantined. This has been an important part of his work in ministering to Dordt students during the pandemic. Sarah Moss is the director of communication and marketing at Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa.

INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
BY CAROL BROWN
SOCIAL DISTANCING
CONNECTIONS WHILE
CREATING CAREER

FACED WITH THE challenge of connecting employers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic — where social distancing limits mean a traditional career connection event isn’t possible — our Life Calling and Career team at Indiana Wesleyan University utilized our critical thinking skills to address the challenge of connecting employers and students in a safe and creative way. Our team decided an outdoor tent space would provide employers and students with a safer environment to meet and share information for potential internships and employment. We knew this would be helpful for students looking for jobs, but we were surprised by how much interest this generated from recruiting employers. The registrations for the “tent event” calendar filled up quickly despite the pandemic, as many employers were thrilled to have an outdoor recruiting option.

Employers found the outdoor tent to be a festive and fun pop-up style recruiting option, while students seemed less intimidated to meet with employers at the outdoor courtyard tents than in a typical career fair setting indoors. We did move these events to a socially distanced indoor setup when the weather wasn’t ideal, but the successful experiment of the tent event taught our team the importance of adaptability and addressing the core need of both employers and students: a human connection.

Our team also utilized technology to help students, offering Zoom appointments for life coaching, resume reviews, and LinkedIn tutorials. New student orientation sessions on StrengthsFinder results were moved into an interactive online format featuring discussion groups for students to learn more about their top strengths. Most employers have adapted to remote working arrangements and are offering remote internships for IWU students. Our team maintained a steady marketing campaign to promote resume reviews over Zoom meetings, and appointments are nearly back to their pre-pandemic numbers.

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As the pandemic continues to necessitate adjustments to how we do our work, the Life Calling and Career team continues to search for new and creative ways to build relationships with employers and deliver our services effectively to students so they can be equipped and empowered to fulfill their God-given purpose in the world.
LAST SUMMER, every headline about higher education in every major news outlet told the same story: The pandemic had created a looming enrollment crisis.

But for years, Anderson University (Anderson, South Carolina) has been one of the fastest-growing private institutions of higher learning in the U.S., even in the face of numerous challenges. So our headline was different: “Despite COVID-19 Pandemic, Anderson University Sets New Record for Student Enrollment.”

In fall 2020, we enrolled almost 3,900 students, a jump of nearly 500 from the year before. Anderson enrolled the largest freshman class in its history; had freshmen to sophomore orientation sessions for first-year students; had freshmen to sophomore increases in both enrollment and retention during the pandemic.

That’s why Anderson University President Evans Whitaker shared a new vision to move forward with in-person space for social distancing, among other protocols. But it proved to be a crucial step in connecting with students and their families, and we were successfully able to remain free of COVID-19 throughout the summer.

Risk Avoidance vs. Risk Management
We also had to embrace the reality that no organization can fully eliminate risk. Clearly, the stakes are higher amid this public health crisis; failure, in this case, is not inconsequential. Like most universities, we suspended in-person operations last spring. But as soon as the last of our students left campus, we shifted our focus to fall 2020 and the overarching question: How can we safely bring our family back together next semester? The discussion was led by our task force — a collection of faculty and staff professionals with experience in public health, emergency management, crisis communication, and executive leadership. With their insight and the guidance of almighty God, we decided the best course of action was to manage risk rather than try to avoid it.

Hosting In-Person Orientation for First-Year Students
A key early step was proactive engagement with the Class of 2024 and integrating new students into the AU campus culture. Based on the task force’s recommendations, we made the decision to move forward with in-person orientation sessions for first-year students during the summer. It was a challenge, certainly, and involved a lot of temperature checks, health screenings, face covering requirements, and creating space for social distancing, among other protocols. But it proved to be a crucial step in connecting with students and their families, and we were successfully able to remain free of COVID-19 throughout the summer.

CAMPUS-WIDE COMMITMENT
It wasn’t just the enrollment team that was involved in this success. Communication leaders provided clear and consistent communication to our students and their families. The entire campus community displayed incredible adherence to our health and safety protocols, helping us keep our COVID-19 case count low. We hired staff whose sole responsibility was caring for students who contracted the virus — everything from contract tracing to arranging isolation housing and meal delivery. We treated our finances responsibly, ensuring no faculty or staff faced furloughs or layoffs. Ultimately, as many CCCU colleagues can attest, I think it really comes down to how our faculty, staff, and students embrace our mission. Saying Anderson University is like a family isn’t just a slogan. It’s something all of us truly believe and embrace.

Andrew J. Beckner is the executive director of public relations at Anderson University (Anderson, South Carolina). Omar Rashid is Anderson’s senior vice president for administration and brand.

MILLIGAN UNIVERSITY

IN THE MIDST of pandemic lockdowns and social distancing, walking outdoors has been a key outlet for many people. Rick Love, an art and design professor at the University of Northwestern – St. Paul and faculty president there, began attending some meetings over Zoom on his phone while he was walking outside and realized that it worked so well, he could turn it into a classroom opportunity.

For his art history class, Love spent some class sessions walking around sites in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, with the help of a friend who filmed him, and engaged with students about the types of art they were seeing over the Zoom meeting. The locations varied from St. Paul’s historic Union Depot station to cemeteries with graves dating back to the 1850s. It allowed students to consider why certain types of art would be located in that part of Minnesota and bring their history studies to a new light.

“It really helped when everyone was nervous [about COVID-19 protocols] in the fall,” Love says. “We know the masks, the social distancing, the protocols all work now, but we didn’t then. … This felt like face-to-face classroom engagement.”

Love was also able to utilize recordings of himself doing demos for his printmaking classes, making it easier for students to learn new techniques in an “ups-dark” format while maintaining safe distances. Overall, Love says, the feedback he received from his students was positive, and he plans to continue utilizing the format in his coursework in the future, even after the pandemic ends. He also hopes, once restrictions ease and they feel more comfortable going out to new places, that it will encourage his students to go and explore the sites around them as well.

SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

ONE OF THE BIGGEST pandemic challenges for parents has been to find ways to both support their children with their modified schoolwork and focus on their own work. At the same time, education students have not been able to gain the same class-time practice because of school closures. At Southeastern University (Lakeland, FL), the College of Education developed a program that could tackle both problems for students and employees at the university during the fall 2020 semester.

Known as RISE (Remote Instruction for Students of Employees), the program gave school-age children of Southeastern’s faculty and staff a safe and secure place to complete online coursework during the fall while their parents worked. Thirty-five students from the College of Education supervised the children, assisted with homework, and answered questions, providing them with field study hours for their degree.

Though the program is not currently running, RISE is ready to open again if needed. The program is directed by Cindy Campbell, assistant professor of education, who coordinated with multiple departments across campus to make sure the program could be run safely and effectively.

SHIFTS IN TEACHING

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHWESTERN - ST. PAUL (ST. PAUL, MN)

UNIVERSITY STAFF responsible for cleaning and maintaining facilities have been essential to keeping campus communities safe during the pandemic. At Milligan University, a unique partnership between the housekeeping staff and a freshmen engineering class produced a useful tool that helps protect the housekeeping staff in their important work.

Carrie Floyd, Milligan’s service manager for housekeeping, wanted to find some sort of tool for her staff that could help them safely open and shut doors and drawers, push elevator buttons, and flip light switches — reducing the amount of direct contact they had with high-touch surfaces while cleaning — while also being small enough to fit on a key ring or in a pocket. Landon Holbrook, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, gave the challenge to his students in the Introduction to Engineering course. They used CAD software and a 3D printer to design several options for the housekeeping staff to test and offer feedback.

After a series of revisions to the design based on the feedback, the class produced the final design that the housekeeping staff deemed their favorite. The experience provided a hands-on opportunity both to learn about the entire process of engineering a product for customers and to help the members of the Milligan community.

Photo courtesy of Anderson University (SC)
The International Impact of COVID-19

How the CCCU’s international members have adapted to the pandemic’s challenges.

THE CCCU is an international community, with 48 members located in 20 countries outside the United States. While we have long valued and shared our global fellowship as institutions of Christian higher education, never before has there been a crisis that has truly impacted the entirety of our global membership at the same time. The following essays, written by the leaders of six international institutions around the world, offer a glimpse of how the pandemic has impacted their campuses — and how our shared faith in Jesus Christ has helped their communities endure the challenges, uncertainties, and opportunities that have arisen as a result.
Faith, Hope, and Resilience Keep Us Going

Emmaus University

INSTABILITY. VULNERABILITY. UNPREDICTABILITY. Inadequacy. Unpreparedness. Humanitarian crisis. Fearfulness. These are among the terms often used to describe our situation in Haiti in a normal year. Each year, we brace for natural and human-made disasters. Our faithful tropical storms never fail to make a visit. Even since the earthquake took its 30 seconds to dance with us and shake us to the core in 2010, it has regularly been sending us waves to let us know it does not leave nor forsake us. Nowadays, political unrest has become the most lucrative industry in Haiti and is occurring more and more often as Haiti’s cash flow depletes.

We are used to these types of disruptions. We know how to navigate them with little or no resources at all. They have become part of our everyday life. But COVID-19 has been a different ball game.

In early 2020, we looked in consternation at what COVID-19 was doing to our mighty friends across the Western Hemisphere. Logically, our fate was sealed. How could we in Haiti face such a monstrous disease that brings the best global health systems to their knees? How can we economically withstand such a beast that almost eats up the strongest economy in the world? How can we survive such a villain that shares the lifestyle of the most established societies of our time? Without any doubt, we could see an unprecedented humanitarian crisis rushing toward us like a lightning bolt.

Like everyone everywhere in the world, we at Emmaus University in Cercaville, Haiti, were deeply affected.力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力力

So what has kept us going? Faith, hope, and resilience. Faith in the Triune God. As a community of faith, we prayed and fasted that God would protect us from the wrath of COVID-19. And God answered us. As of this writing in February, 11 months after COVID-19 landed on our soil, it has only claimed 243 lives. This is 22 persons per month, 0.73 person per day. Hunger is deadlier than COVID-19 in Haiti.

Along with faith, hope has been the second attitude that kept us going. We cultivated the same mindset when natural and human-made disasters hit us. We remained optimistic that things would get better with time. Our faith and our hope have prepared us to be more resilient than ever before. We chose not to give up living. We chose not to give up learning.

In March 2020, halfway through our spring semester, we had to close our campus. Most of our students do not have electricity in their homes, let alone a personal computer and internet. We asked them to use their phones to complete their work for the semester. Then we realized that more than one-third of them do not have a smart phone. Those with no smart phones had to borrow one from a relative or a neighbor. They handled their assignments, took pictures of them, and texted them to their professors. It was not easy, but we did it. We completed the spring 2020 semester. By August 2020, we felt confident and safe enough to be back to campus.

Today, our campus is full of life. Our student body is exponentially growing. Our dorms, especially our female dorm, are overcrowded. Our dining space is becoming too small. Our student body owns a personal computer.

Károli Gáspár University

LOOKING BACK AT the previous year, the COVID-19 pandemic put digital education into the frontline in the life of our university. In the face of the pandemic’s challenges, we set up an array of health and safety measures as well as introduced new teaching and examination methods. Though the situation in Hungary was and is mostly under control, and the rate of infections and deaths is lower compared to several other countries, we Hungarians also feel the daily consequences of this enduring virus in every aspect of our lives.

As a university, the health and safety of our students, professors, and staff members has been our top priority. Since we have over 8,200 students and about 800 employees on seven campuses located in three cities, this has been a formidable task. In March 2020, at the beginning of the first wave of the pandemic in Hungary, we closed our buildings and switched to online education within 48 hours. At the same time, we asked the vast majority of our students living in dormitories to move out and to go home. Special exemptions were made on a case-by-case basis for those who had no proper home to return to or, as was the case for our international students, those who simply could not travel home. As a result, about 30 international students from three continents and 20 countries remained in the dormitory. We had to take similar actions during the middle of the fall semester, when the second wave of the pandemic reached Hungary. Given the extraordinary circumstances, the university did not charge a dormitory fee for two weeks so as to help these students’ financial burdens.

Thanks to these quick and robust measures, we managed to avoid the spread of the virus within our campuses. As was likely the case of other CCCU institutions, we put much emphasis on the mental well-being of our professors, staff, and students, Hungarian and international alike. A new campus pastor and a team of mental health advisers are now available for our university citizens at all times. Those advisers who speak English are also at the disposal of our international students whom we deem particularly vulnerable during times of lockdown.

As elsewhere, our international mobility programs greatly suffered from the travel restrictions. Here we try to walk on a narrow path: While observing every pandemic-related regulation, we keep our hearts and doors open to those international students who endeavor to travel to Hungary to study for a semester or to seek a degree at Károli Gáspár University. Though international mobility has decreased, we still have a fair number of incoming students from several countries. Some of them have been granted the Károli Christian Scholarship, which we founded in 2019 to help young Christians living in discriminated minority communities from countries in the Middle East and Africa.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of our online courses will have some advantages for the long run, as both professors and students learn to use new technologies and tools that may be useful even after the pandemic is over. Nevertheless, we also learned in the past year that no matter how advanced the technologies you use, nothing can replace personal contact amongst students, professors, and staff.

As the biggest Protestant university in Europe, we hold fast to our commitment to represent not only our Christian values but our genuine faith that God does not let us down — even in the midst of a global hardship unlike any our current generation has ever known.
Preparing for Any Season

AT THE ONSET of COVID-19, Africa International Uni-

versity (AIU) closed its campus in March 2020, sending most of

the students and staff home as per the Kenyan government’s
directive. However, our international students and their fami-
lies remained on campus, so the AIU community, international
partners, and friends joined hands to support them in meet-
ing their basic needs while on campus. Students were allocated
small gardens to enable them grow their own vegetables for
consumption, reducing their contact with the outside world.

AIU continued to provide spiritual and moral support to our
students at home through online chapel services, virtual Christ-
ian Union meetings, and Bible study, as well as counsel-
ling and psychology webinars. We transitioned over 65% of our
students to online and remote learning, except for those who
could not get internet connectivity due to their geographical
locations, and we were able to administer exams through an
online platform as well.

As the year continued, AIU took steps to ensure that the
university could continue to be operational during the pan-
demic. We put up warning signage, added hand-washing
points, and provided hand-sanitizer dispensers in our build-
ings within the campus and hostels. Cleaning schedules and
processes were revised and strengthened. Staff who work from
offices receive a new face mask every day. Both the university
health clinic and the counseling team have also remained open
throughout to provide support to anyone who needs it.

The university’s finances were adversely affected because en-
rollments across the schools dropped tremendously this year.
The pandemic’s effect on the church in Africa has particularly impacted the enrollment in our School of Theology, which ex-
perienced its lowest enrollment ever. Our prayer is to attract
more scholarships for theological courses so that we can ensure
the core mandate of the university — to educate Christ-cen-
tered leaders in Africa for the transformation of God’s people

2020 HAS BEEN the year of vision and re-vision. Australia’s
experience through the COVID-19 pandemic is distinct from
that of the U.S. and other countries. By the third week of March
2020, our international borders closed and all our higher educa-
tion institutions went online (after only three weeks of on-cam-
pus instruction for the semester), with varying degrees of effective
adaptation. The institutions in the Australian Christian Higher
Education Alliance (Alphacrucis College, Avondale University
College, Christian Heritage College, Eastern Australia College,
Excelsia College, Morling College, Sheridan College, and Tabor
College) managed the transition well. Many institutions across
the country, reliant on international students, suffered a large
decline in revenue and, by the end of the year, many made sig-
ificant reductions in their workforce. International education
is a key contributor to Australia’s economy. Over the course of
the year, various state borders were closed as well. Some colleges
and universities had to stay online the whole year because of COV-
ID-19 restrictions. (At the time of writing this, Australia’s borders
are still closed to international travel.)

In July (the start of Semester 2, which is equivalent to the
American spring semester that begins in January), CHC re-
turned to on-campus classes or hybrid classes with strict CO-
VID-19-safe plans. Students were appreciative of the option to
study in-person or online. Many expressed that they missed the
joy of community when studying online. Everyone adjusted
accordingly, and we completed the year without a single CO-
VID-19 case in our community.

It has been a joy to embrace the opportunities presented
through this season — faculty and students were surprised
that they adapted well to online learning. We have progressed
in strengthening online programs and finding new ways to
connect with students and staff during lockdown. We started
cross-disciplinary “Connect” groups for students online — in
one of these sessions, we had students from across Brisbane
and other Australian states, and one from Africa. We also held
online staff devotions and daily prayer times, which were well
attended. These were points of connection during lockdown,
and we continue to hold some of these prayer times in person
as well as online.

A continuing challenge that has been observed across our
sector is in student engagement. Faculty found students less
likely to engage compared to previous years and had to find
a variety of ways to connect. As a commuter college without
residential facilities, most of our students work at least part time
(including the traditional age students). A number of them lost
their jobs during this time, and keeping them in their studies
was challenging. Additionally, practicums were suspended for
a semester, so in the second semester, catching up was an is-
sue for some. Our faculty and staff worked hard with organiza-
tions and students to get them through. Mental health issues
have impacted student engagement as well. However, Christian
institutions like ours offer a distinctive as we minister to our
students and help them grow in faith and develop resilience.

We were granted an opportunity to grow and demonstrate
resilience in 2020 — everyone at CHC had to learn to do
things differently, to adapt, and to innovate. Coming together as
a Christ-centered academic community helped us navigate
uncharted waters. COVID-19 provided a catalyst for change
in higher education, we are learning to think outside the box
and create value, especially in offering microcredentials.

In the midst of an unprecedented crisis, we have learned to
draw strength from our faith in Christ and from one another,
and to refocus on our mission and purpose. I see an even stronger
case for Christian higher education not just in Australia, but across
the globe. What do we need to do in 2021? Continue to innovate
in Christian higher education, develop sustainable models, and
keep focusing on adding value to the student experience.

Christie Trudel is president of Christian Heritage
College, Brisbane, Australia. She is also the chair of Aus-
tralian Christian Higher Education Alliance (ACHEA).

Christian Heritage College is in
Carindale, a suburb of Brisbane in
Queensland, Australia.

A View of COVID-19 from Australia

and the world — is not affected. Even in the face of these chal-
lenges, we were able to hold a virtual graduation ceremony for
our graduates — the first such event in AIU’s history. We give
honor to our Lord in addressing this success.

The experience has reminded us that we must be prepared
in all seasons. The story of Joseph and the great famine in Gen-
esis 47:13-27 has been an apt analogy for the whole world, but
especially for the body of Christ and for Christian institutions
of higher learning. AIU was in a stressful financial position
because of our dependence on students that come in every se-
mester. We are now seriously reviewing our business model to
not only meet the current financial gap but to ensure financial
stability in all seasons the Lord will place us in.

Through it all, I have been encouraged by our faculty mem-
bers. Their quick action and innovation in academic delivery
meant we could seamlessly transition from face-to-face teach-
ing to online teaching in order to ensure that our academic
calendar was not adversely affected by the changes brought by
COVID-19. Staff tackled these challenges and carried out
their responsibilities with passion and commitment. Some
started working from home; others changed their leave sched-
ules as needed, while still others had extended leave periods in
order to adapt and align to the needs of the university and to
the pandemic protocols from the Ministry of Health.

But above all, our ultimate encouragement and hope is in
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who ordains and con-
trols all things, for with him we are assured that all things are
possible.

John F. Nasiima is chancellor of Africa International
University in Nairobi, Kenya.

Africa International University is located
in Karen, a suburb on the outskirts of
Nairobi, Kenya.

Photos courtesy of Africa International University

DANKIT NASSIIMA
is vice chancellor
of Africa International
University in Nairobi, Kenya.
Changing Format, Maintaining Ethos

Jerusalem University COLLEGE entered the world of online education for the first time during the fall 2020 semester. For us, it has been a purposeful though seismic shift. Since its founding in 1957, JUC has been dedicated to creating learning environments at the graduate and undergraduate levels that enhance — rather than duplicate — traditional courses in biblical studies and the modern Middle East. Our educational model takes full advantage of the rich venue of hands-on learning resources in Jerusalem. These include local faculty who represent a cross-section of the voices of the land, as well as in-field access to historic and modern sites and to the living communities of Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and Jordan. For this reason, JUC’s curriculum is more analogous to laboratory or residency courses than it is to traditional classroom settings.

So when facing the need to offer only online courses this year, the most immediate question was: How effectively can the JUC ethos be transferred to online learning experiences? The short answer is, while the complexion of our curriculum cannot be replicated online exactly, it can be fairly represented in online formats, at least for some of our classes.

From the start, it was obvious that we should not offer everything that we normally do, but rather choose parts of our curriculum that were less dependent on in-field learning. For example, this fall we did not offer our flagship course on the in-field component for that course so that it can be offered in the spring. We have also created virtual in-field components for several other classes, whether of video or enhanced PowerPoint platforms. Still, to a person, our instructors have said, “We miss being in the field.”

We are committed to offering only synchronous courses, on the basis that while our students do not have direct contact with the physical resources of the land, they should at least have personal access to our instructors. The challenge here is temporal: Jerusalem is seven to 10 hours ahead of North America, and an equal number of hours behind our students in East Asia. This narrows the window in which courses can be offered to 6.5 hours per day (3:00-9:30 p.m. Israel Standard Time). Even then, some students start class at 5:00 a.m. or end their day at 3:30 a.m. But kudos to everyone who enrolled! Very few nodded off in class, and the vast majority — and certainly all of our faculty — were gallant in their efforts to maintain the essence of what JUC is.

For the fall semester, we offered courses only for our continuing and incoming master’s students and our alumni. This spring, we are also enrolling undergrads from our 70-member strong Consortium of Associated Schools (many of which are also CCCLU schools), at reduced tuition. Our alumni, the vast majority of whom are auditing, are excited for the opportunity. Students taking courses for academic credit, on the other hand, prefer to be in Jerusalem. We understand, and we embrace this as an endorsement of our ethos.

As we look down the road, it appears that online course offerings will remain a part of JUC even when all travel restrictions lift. This is encouraging, not so much because it bodes well for JUC, but because it confirms our mission to meet the ongoing interest among believers in Jesus to become better grounded in the realities of the world of the Bible, and hence more effective in Christian ministry worldwide.

BRUCE FAWCETT is president and vice chancellor of Crandall University in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

PAUL WRIGHT is president of Jerusalem University College in Jerusalem, Israel.

As I worked from home after returning to New Brunswick, our COVID-19 Working Group recommended that we severely restrict campus access, cancel all events, and transition instruction to an online model immediately. We determined that, with a combination of some diminished expenses and increased fundraising, we could avoid layoffs and end the year in the black, a combination of some diminished expenses and increased fundraising worked heading into our June 30 fiscal year end, but our overarching fundraising theme for 2020-2021 is “Momentum in the Midst.” This fall, our messaging prioritized celebrating God’s financial provision, our new faculty appointments, new strategic initiatives, and the university’s growing enrollment. This shift in tone creates donor confidence in the university’s ability to adapt to new circumstances and find ways to advance the mission in spite of the obstacles.

Employee morale is key. In the fall, we provided what was probably the largest salary increase to our employees in the history of the university thanks to the generosity of a major donor. We also gave our employees extra days off during the summer and a grocery store gift certificate to fund a summer picnic or barbecue. We prayed together online through the spring and summer. Supervisors kept in close touch with their teams. Ongoing strategic planning is important. Early on, I decided to have our provost take the lead on managing the day-to-day response to the pandemic through the COVID-19 Working Group. This way, I could focus on leading our plans for future growth and expansion, as we have plans to continue to grow our enrollment significantly as we emerge from the limitations imposed on us by the pandemic. I remain optimistic in spite of our short-term challenges. The Crandall University community has demonstrated its resiliency, and God continues to bless my alma mater. We may be weary, but I believe that our students and our employees will be better leaders as a result of the coping skills we are all developing. If this pandemic is a testing fire that we are passing through, then our future momentum is being forged in the midst of it.

IN EARLY MARCH 2020, I was camped out in a Florida hospital room providing support to my mother, who had broken her hip during our family vacation. That was the week we learned that COVID-19 had reached North America. As I spent many hours each day on the phone trying to get a sense of the rapidly changing landscape at home, it became clear that a pandemic of the likes of which we had not witnessed in our lifet ime was going to affect everything.

As the summer progressed, our province issued clear operational guidelines for post-secondary educational institutions: Classes could include no more than 50 people and students had to sit six feet apart from one another. By virtue of being a small university with smaller classes, and by creating a few additional classroom settings, we were the one university in our province which we thankfully did through God’s grace and provision.

To advance the mission in spite of the obstacles.

So far in our COVID-19 journey we have learned several key lessons:

Keep communicating with the board. In times of crisis, the president needs to regularly update and reassure the board. I found that it was also important for me to talk frequently with the board chair so that an off-campus yet knowledgeable voice could speak into our development of policy and procedure.

The tone of fundraising messages is crucial. Crisis-based fundraising worked heading into our June 30 fiscal year end, but our overarching fundraising theme for 2020-2021 is “Momentum in the Midst.” This fall, our messaging prioritized celebrating God’s financial provision, our new faculty appointments, new strategic initiatives, and the university’s growing enrollment. This shift in tone creates donor confidence in the university’s ability to adapt to new circumstances and find ways to advance the mission in spite of the obstacles.

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Students are struggling but aren’t seeking help in traditional ways. How are campuses navigating that reality?

By Abby Perry

IT’S A RESULT that most faculty and staff would have expected after watching their students endure the disruption of COVID-19.

“Due to the long-lasting pandemic situation and onerous measures such as lockdown and stay-at-home orders, the COVID-19 pandemic brings negative impacts on higher education. The findings of our study highlight the urgent need to develop interventions and preventative strategies to address the mental health of college students.”

That was the finding of an interview survey study published in September 2020 in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. It likely comes as no surprise to most higher education professionals. Even for students whose families did not face illness, death, or job loss directly, the changes in routine and surroundings alone would be enough to have a deep impact.
SPRING 2021
IN A BASEMENT, "says Todd Monger, executive director of student development at North Central University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "No windows, no social cues — even their movies they watch are streamed, so they are never interrupted by the 10:00 p.m. news cueing them it might be time for bed. Students are losing track of time, sleep schedules, eating schedules, and the list goes on. They are socially 'weightless' or numb because they have lost their rhythms not of assumption and reaction, but of observation and response."

"Caring, consistency, and constancy," says Tamela Turner, campus counselor at Judson College in Marion, Alabama. Turner emphasizes the value of reaching out to students on a regular basis, demonstrating clear availability and openness to listening. "We didn't stop [offering counseling sessions] when students were on break," she says. "We knew they were coming back, so we told them, 'we're still here.'"

Turner places the priority not on predicting how students feel or will feel in the months to come, but on creating spaces and opportunities for them to communicate, process, and seek counsel. Irene Kraegel, director of the Center for Counseling and Wellness at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, takes a similar stance. She notes that it isn't just mental health services seeing lower participation at Calvin; engagement in student activities is lower now than it was during pre-pandemic times.

"I think time will tell," she says. "[decreased enrollment in student mental health services] because students are suffering in silence and it feels like too much of a barrier to meet virtually? Some students are feeling like they're in living situations where they don't have the privacy they need for something like virtual therapy. We do offer in-person rooms that students can use for their virtual sessions at our center because students who aren't living in town — they're studying remotely. So I think there's a lot that goes into this, especially since we know that it isn't just mental health services that are experiencing this participation." The key, many are finding, is cultivating intentional connection amongst peers. At Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California, the university's counseling center has launched an Online Peer Educator program. Lori Lacy, the counseling center's director, says that six undergraduate students serving as interns for the program. The students receive academic internship credit in exchange for working 2,000 hours a year providing outreach to the APU student community.

"They can get through [to their fellow students] in a way that professionals can't always do," Lacy explains. Kraegel at Calvin University has found the same to be true. "Being able to switch to a virtual service model has been really important," she says. "Most of what we've done in the past we've been able to continue to do in a virtual format. We did, this year, bring in a new peer support tool — an app that students could use to support each other virtually.... It's been an opportunity for students to digitally reach out to each other and show support. That's something we've been working toward for a long time, but I think the timing did end up working out well."

"There have been a lot of students talking and posting about loneliness, anxiety, and depression," says Andy Storms, vice president of student affairs and the residence director of Strong Hall at Ozark Christian College. "But I know that, going into November, our counseling numbers were down. I think everyone was talking about [mental health] but they didn't seek professional help...which could be a recipe for disaster...or it could be that, sort of by the acceptance of talking about it, [students are] getting the care they need and at least that's what it seems. Peer-to-peer connection seems particularly effective at helping students combat isolation because of the simple fact that the student volunteers are in the same position as their peers—facing a complete shift in what they expect their college experience to entail. While it doesn't replace the need for professional mental health services, it does provide a unique and meaningful way to share fears and anxieties."

These peer-led collaborations aren't the only way connections seem to be making a difference in student overall well-being. Campuses across the country have found that, especially now, embracing the theology of bearing another's burdens cannot be overstated.

"We give faculty language to use," Lacy says. "[Statements like] 'I feel how hard this is for you. I've felt that way before. I've found that it's helpful to go talk to someone about it.'"

In this season of tremendous isolation, distance, and uncertainty, counselors and activities directors on many Christian campuses know that community-building is still possible. It's difficult, and perhaps the mechanisms aren't ideal, but staff efforts are bearing fruit. Of the more than 4,800 CCCU institutions across the U.S. and Canada who responded to the "ThriveQuotient" survey in the fall, 78% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Overall, my instructors have shown care and concern for me as they respond to COVID-19." For more on this, see page 12. Peer-led initiatives are further normalizing conversations around anxiety, depression, and other health issues. Perhaps these efforts and their results encapsulate one of the great opportunities on college campuses today: the chance to acknowledge the difficulties of the times, lament their losses, and mine their depths for the abundant life still promised all the while.

ABBY PERRY is a freelance writer with work in Christianity Today, Sojourners, and Texas Monthly. Find her in Texas with her husband and two sons, and on Twitter at @abbyjperry.

"“PICTURE STUDENTS IN A BASEMENT,”"
LIKE MOST INSTITUTIONS of higher education, Christian colleges and universities in the U.S. were facing tough economic realities even before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. But even as institutions ramp up their donor relations outreach among alumni and the broader network of campus connections, changes to the tax code—specifically the charitable deduction—have created even more uncertainty. The following essays explore the impact changes to the charitable deduction can have to donations to Christian higher education and why it is important for all colleges and universities to be involved in advocacy for the charitable deduction.
Christian colleges are considered “secular,” changes to giving greater impact. News for your campus.

Since gifts to Christian colleges are considered “secular,” changes to giving incentives have a greater impact.

By Sara Helms McCarty

THE U.S. IS unusually charitable for a wealthy country; its citizens regularly contribute 2% of its GDP (nearly double New Zealand, next on the list). The $309 billion given by households supports a wide range of social goods. As of 2019, the top four recipients of giving are religious organizations ($128 billion), education ($64 billion), human services ($56 billion), and foundations ($53.5 billion).

But this level of giving is never a guarantee. As we will explore below, a key factor to the U.S. population’s level of giving rests in economic incentives. If those incentives change — as they have in recent years — then institutions, including Christian colleges and universities, will likely see a decline in financial donations.

EXAMINING RELIGIOSITY IN GIVING

While there has been plenty of research connected to the economics of giving, my colleague Jeremy Thornton (associate dean and professor of economics at Samford University) and I wanted to take the research on giving even further by considering household religiosity and its impact on giving behavior. We explored giving behavior by households separated by religiosity using data from the early 2000s, a time period that includes multiple tax policy changes, allowing us to see how giving changes in different situations. In our data, the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (COPPS), roughly 84.4% of individuals report a religious affiliation of Christian or Jewish. Of these, 48% attend services at least twice per month, the threshold we use to identify devoted households.

There are large differences in giving behavior across households’ devotion. We find that 82% of devoted households give, compared to 53% of the non-devoted. The giving amounts vary widely, too — on average, devoted households give $2,055 annually, while non-devoted households give $498. If individuals give out of a religious motivation, then changing the tax treatment of charitable gifts should matter less. However, for giving that is not motivated by religion, tax treatment matters much more. We find that charitable giving moves inversely to income tax rates, but the change in giving is proportionally smaller than the change in tax deductibility.

Key to understanding the impact giving changes will have for Christian colleges and universities is understanding what it means for giving to be “religious.” The COPPS design defines religious giving as “for religious purposes or spiritual development” — deliberately excluding giving to organizations like Catholic Charities or a Christian university. All other giving — no matter the source or recipient — is secular.

Since gifts to Christian colleges and universities are considered “secular,” changes to giving incentives have a greater impact. Giving directed at secular causes is more responsive to tax treatment than is giving to religious causes. When the tax-price rises, people are less likely to give a secular gift, even though it does not change their religious giving. However, the amount given across all kinds of gifts falls when the tax-price rises.

Thus, raising the tax-price will have both a negative impact on the receipt of university gifts and a stronger negative impact on the size of the gifts received. Our research found that increases in the tax-price of giving have the least impact on non-devoted household giving to religious causes (good news for your churches) and the greatest impact on non-devoted household giving to secular causes (bad news for private, non-religious institutions of higher education). The impact for CCCU institutions likely falls in the middle.

The size of a donor’s gift also affects their likelihood to give when tax incentives change. Large donors are not very responsive to changes in the tax-price of giving, even though it does not change their religious giving. However, the amount given across all kinds of gifts falls when the tax-price rises.

Since gifts to Christian colleges and universities, since many gifts to universities are in this range. In other words, reducing the tax deductibility of smaller gifts has a negative impact on any organizations that rely on donors who give these intermediate-sized gifts — such as younger donors to a university.

RECENT CHANGES TO GIVING TAX INCENTIVES

While the tax deductibility of charitable contributions remains, the dramatic increase in the standard deduction in 2018 due to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act led to a sharp reduction in the percent of households that itemize. In 2018, only 11.4% of households itemized in their tax filings, compared to 31% in 2017. Since only those who itemized in 2018 received the charitable tax incentive, this law reduced many taxpayers’ ability to claim tax deductibility for their charitable giving — thus reducing their incentive to give to secular causes, including Christian higher education.

However, in 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act changed the tax treatment of charitable deductions, now making them available even for non-itemizers. For itemizers, the amount available for deduction is up to 100% of their adjusted gross income, but even for non-itemizers the maximum allowed deduction is $300.

When the tax deductibility changed, first in 2017 and again in 2020, nonprofit organizations closely followed the policy debate. There are clear implications for private, nonprofit institutions of higher education, particularly those in the CCCU. In order to predict behavior, we can look at past changes in tax law and the resulting behavioral response for different groups.

Given the sliding level of devotion in the United States, it is likely that givers to Christian higher education span both devoted and non-devoted groups. Since giving to education is considered secular giving, it becomes more important to advocate for giving among your stakeholders.

SARA HELMS MCCARTY is professor of economics at Samford University’s Brock School of Business in Birmingham, Alabama.
The charitable contribution deduction remains a vitally important part of the tax code for all colleges and universities. 

By Terry Hartle

Even more of their own funds to fill the gap. Private institutions have worked hard to increase such resources for students who need them in the form of college and university grants, scholarships, and fellowships. Indeed, according to a 2018 study commissioned by the CCCU, for every $1 in federal grant money a student receives, CCCU institutions provide $5 in institutional financial aid. It is important to keep in mind that a significant percentage of this crucial institutional aid comes from charitable donations. This study reflects trends among private nonprofit higher education in the U.S. as a whole. Without the addition of private donations to the financial aid mix, far fewer students would be able to finance a higher education. Charitable gifts also support teaching, research, and other critical education-related investments.

It’s little wonder that colleges and universities spend so much time and effort courting donors in hopes of securing charitable contributions. For many, the donations are critical to their survival. The tax code has been expanded and revised a number of times in the decades since. But the charitable contribution deduction remains a vitally important part of the tax code for all colleges and universities. Indeed, according to the American Council on Education (ACE) believes that for many colleges and universities the single most valuable federal policy is the charitable contribution deduction.

Few independent colleges and universities receive significant amounts of state support for their operating budgets. Some states provide financial aid that helps students attend these institutions, but when state financial aid is reduced as a result of budget cuts, private colleges must use

CHARITABLE GIVING IS CRITICAL TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Colleges and universities need to make sure their voices are heard in conversations about the charitable contribution deduction.

THE MODERN ERA of public finance in America probably began in 1913 when the federal government enacted the Federal Reserve Act after the ratification of the 16th Amendment, authorizing a federal individual income tax. In 1917, Congress authorized a tax deduction for charitable contributions, a provision deemed necessary if charities were to survive World War I. The assumption was that an increase in income taxes to help finance WWI would lead the wealthy to stop making charitable contributions, especially to colleges and universities.

Enormous contributions totaling tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars generated headlines, but donations of all sizes add up. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education reported that in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, charitable contributions to colleges and universities totaled $49.5 billion (a slight decline from $49.6 billion the previous year, an all-time high for charitable giving to higher education). However, more than half of that period was before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The challenge with advocacy efforts on the charitable giving provision is to make sure that higher education’s voice is heard clearly and distinctly.

The need for advocacy from higher ed

Debates about the deductibility of charitable contributions rarely pit one set of organized interests against another. And the charitable contribution deduction is one of those rare issues that enjoys widespread bipartisanship support across a broad array of ideological positions. Few members of Congress are opposed to increasing charitable giving.

Few independent colleges and universities receive significant amounts of state support for their operating budgets. Some states provide financial aid that helps students attend these institutions, but when state financial aid is reduced as a result of budget cuts, private colleges must use

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN ERA

In 2020, Congress moved in the other direction when it enacted COVID-19 relief that included temporarily suspending limits on the deductibility of cash contributions and allowing a modest tax deduction for individuals who did not itemize their returns. The idea was that these temporary changes would boost charitable contributions in an era of significant economic dislocation. Advocacy will be critical to efforts to extend the pandemic-enacted non-itemizer charitable deduction beyond 2021, and perhaps even to expand it. The challenge with advocacy efforts on the charitable giving provision is to make sure that higher education’s voice is heard clearly and distinctly.

TERRY HARTLE is the senior vice president of government relations and public affairs at the American Council on Education (ACE), where he has served for more than 25 years. To support the ongoing work of the CCCU, use the response envelope included with this issue of Advance.
Improving Board Performance

Training and supporting these key leaders is vital for institutional success.

By Bob Andringa

THE MAJORITY OF PRIVATE college boards are under-performing for today’s challenges. Over the years, I have trained or consulted with more than 60 CCCU boards. Trustees and presidents need our prayers now more than ever. These proven best practices are critical in 2021.

TRUSTEESHIP

It is disciplined but rewarding work, not just an honor. To be effective, trustees should learn something weekly that helps in their key roles. Presidents can customize recommendations by interest and committee assignment. Most trustees want to learn more about good governance and invest more in it.

BOARD CHAIRS

Board chairs are the key to moving governance from good to great. The role takes at least five hours a week. Chairs manage the board; presidents manage the institution. The chair-president partnership is critical to improving governance. By default, presidents often lead the board if the chair doesn’t. Chairs ensure future board leaders are being recruited and developed.

BOARD PROFILE

With wonderful exceptions, Christian college boards are still too white, too male, and too old. Diversity of ethnicity, gender, and age is important. It speaks to the populations we need to attract and retain.

This year it is also wise to include a few board members with good relationships within the Democratic Party. A good trustee reflects most of these: Work, Wisdom, Wealth, Witness, and Wallop (influence).

RISK MANAGEMENT

COVID-19 was a wake-up call. Risk management is now center stage. COVID-19-related decisions will lead to survival, dissolution, or merger. Similarly, there are other external disruptions that require advance thinking and new strategies, such as online learning, the potential loss of government funding, and new regulations related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

GOVERNANCE

I like smaller boards than the current Christian college average of 20-21. Smaller boards can and should involve more non-trustees in governance. Committee clusters need to be reviewed every year and allow a minority of non-trustees on some committees. Ad hoc task forces should be used more, where external experts can be appointed for short-term, very focused study and recommendations. Other task forces could include trustees, staff, and outside friends of the institution. Advisory groups bring ongoing fresh thinking to governance and administration.

Boards develop habits and attitudes that resist change and new regulations related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Advisory groups bring ongoing fresh thinking to governance and administration.

The role takes at least five hours a week. Chairs manage the board; presidents manage the institution. The chair-president partnership is critical to improving governance. By default, presidents often lead the board if the chair doesn’t. Chairs ensure future board leaders are being recruited and developed.

Spirited discernment by a group requires intentional prayer and practice. The chair needs to lead in this, not allowing just a token nod to the spiritual calling of the institution. Jesus’ analogy of the vine in John 15:5 is the key: Our culture challenges us to be in the world but not of the world. Without board leadership to keep Christ at the center of mission, culture will eat away at what makes CCCU institutions so special — and vulnerable.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Boards spend way too much time listening to reports and drifting into administrative issues. Boards must govern well so administrators can lead well. Agendas, policy development, and reporting should be guided, and accountability clear.

BOARD POLICIES

Board Policy Manuals are common now, but to keep all ongoing policies in one organized document the manual needs attention at every meeting. Presidents should make recommendations in advance. Current policies clarify roles, keep the board focused, the administration guided, and accountability clear.

DR. BOB ANDRINGA was CCCU president from 1994 to 2006. Since 1982, he has trained or consulted with more than 500 ministry CEOs and boards. Bob and his wife, Sue, live in Scottsdale, Arizona.
Restoring a Broken Nation

How CCCU institutions can help heal a deeply divided society.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID FRENCH

THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL discourse over the past few years in the United States has reached new levels of animosity and division. Arguments on the value and role of education, religion, free speech, free expression, and moral character are but a few of the topics that dominate headlines and political debates. Because of their religious character and convictions as well as their work in higher education, Christian collegians and universities are at a unique crossroads of these conversations, and navigating them is increasingly tricky when the divisions are ever deepening.

As someone who has spent the majority of his career focusing on religious issues, and as a CCCU graduate himself (of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee), David French is very familiar with the challenges facing Christian higher education and American society more broadly. French’s professional experience includes serving at the American Center for Law and Justice, the Alliance Defending Freedom, and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), as well as working for many years as a political and cultural commentator for National Review, TIME, and The Dispatch. His newest book, Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation, was released in September 2020 and explores the threat our current division poses to the very unity of the United States.

Barry Corey, president of Biola University (La Mirada, California), talked with French about the book and what Christian college and university leaders can do to combat the current divides, particularly when it comes to training up the next generation of leaders. The conversation has been edited for length.

For the benefit of those who haven’t read the book yet, provide a quick summary.

Essentially, the whole thesis is in the first paragraph, and it makes two declarations. One is we cannot guarantee the continued unity of the United States. Why? Because there is no single truly important social, cultural, political, or religious force that is pulling Americans together more than it is pushing us apart. Whether it’s the concept of negative polarization, where we join a political party not so much because we love that party’s positions but because we despise or fear the other side, or it’s the big sort, where we are clustering into like-minded communities, when you cluster with people of like-mind, you tend to become more extreme. [In the book,] I walked through all of these big, sweeping cultural developments and showed that they’re pulling us apart to the point where our divisions and our animosity are growing so great that we are going to put strains on our union.

I think nothing illustrates the combination of animosity and division more than what happened on January 6th, which was unthinkable even as recently as January 5th. If you had said that the Capitol was going to be overrun and invaded on January 5th, someone would have said, “You’re an alarmist. You’re pearl-clutching. It’s absurd. It’s ridiculous.” What happened on January 6th was the product — and hopefully the end, but it may not be — of years of accumulated animosity and division and, often, just outright hatred.

Great diagnostic. Let’s talk about prescription. What are some of the suggestions you offer in the book to combat these troubling trends of division?

There’s a necessity of a heart change, and there’s a necessity of some policy changes. The heart change has to proceed the policy changes. Otherwise, there’s no will for the policy changes.

So what are the heart changes? Well, one of the things that we have seen is that among hyper-partisans — those individuals who are truly driving American political discourse — there’s an increasing desire to shun accommodation in favor of domination. [Their] goal is not to just defeat somebody politically or to slowly but steadily create cultural change, but to crush, to destroy, to annihilate, and to eradicate [their opponents] from the public square.

You see some of this in cancel culture, properly understood. Now, that’s a very fraught term because cancel culture is not any criticism you receive; cancel culture is not the same as consequences for bad acts. More properly understood, cancel culture is an extremely, excessively punitive action against speech that is relatively mainstream within what is called the Overton window of American pop culture and political discourse. That kind of cancel culture mentality, properly understood, is evidence of this desire to dominate rather than accommodate.

One of the things that I try to do in the book is say, “We have to rediscover what actual tolerance is.” What is actual tolerance? There’s a person who writes under the pseudonym Scott Alexander, a psychologist living in Deep Blue America, and he writes about how he talks to his progressive friends. He says, “Are you tolerant?” They’ll say, “Yeah, absolutely tolerant. I love people regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity.” Then Scott says, “Well, what’s wrong with those people?” Their response is, “Well, nothing. Of course, nothing is wrong with them.”

Tolerance is not a synonym for affection; it is something you’re overlooking to accept somebody into the body politic. So my book is not a call for kumbaya for everybody to love each other. We have to have a basic commitment that says, “Each one of us is entitled to build our own home within this land,” and I connect it to Micah 4:4, a verse that Lin-Manuel Miranda re-popularized through George Washington [in Hamilton]. In reality, George Washington used this verse almost 50 times in his writings in describing the new nation that he was leading: “Every man shall sit under his own vine and his own fig tree, and no one shall make him afraid.” It’s a beautiful depiction of a pluralistic society that cuts against the grain of our current thinking, which seems to be, “You can’t have your own vine or fig tree unless you agree with me, unless you’re part of my tribe or my coalition.”

At Biola, I talk about living a life with what I call a firm center and soft edges. By firm center, I really mean a commitment to that which is true, and above all, God’s truth. Soft edges mean hospitality and kindness, especially towards those we don’t think like, or vote like, or believe like. So, in considering the role of the Christian college in this, and reflecting on your own formation at Lipscomb, unpack the importance of a winsome conviction — the winsomeness being the soft edges, the conviction being the firm center.

When we’re talking about how does the United States — this unique nation, this unique culture — function best and how is it designed to function, one of the things that I think is a really important concept that we don’t talk about enough is ordered liberty. This is a concept that you could write books on, but let me just oversimplify it for a minute through two Founding Fathers’ quotes. One is the famous declaration in the Declaration of Independence that we’re “endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Jefferson goes on to say, essentially, this is why governments were instituted among men; the primary role of the government is to protect this liberty. That’s like the mission statement of the United States of America. Aspirational — it was not lived up to, we know, and is still not fully lived up to. But that was the aspiration. …
But then John Adams turns around and says in a letter to the Massachusetts Militia, basically, look, this Constitution provides us with liberty that if we exercise it and if we’re libertarian with it, we would turn the United States into a miserable habitation. He has these famous words: “Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

So, when I look at my educational experience, Lipscomb possessed liberty for a purpose. The purpose was to teach citizens of this country not just obedience to Jesus Christ, but also Christian citizenship within this community. In my mind, when you look at each one of these CCCU universities as its own vine and its own fig tree, a lot of times, we think, “Well, how could we make sure that vine and fig tree is completely safe from outside attack?” That is important, but [we] also [need to ask], “What do we do within that vine, and what do we do within that fig tree?”

One of my concerns is when our rising generation of students — and this is not new — see in leaders a less-than-virtuous way of living even though [those leaders] are proclaiming virtuous truths of how they live. It’s a terrible model for other students to do reconnected with Micah 6:8: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

In this highly polarized moment, all of us get the act justly part — “I know what’s right, I know what’s right, and I’m going to pursue what is right” — but these are three interlocking obligations. We forget the love of mercy — or depending on the translation, love kindness — and we absolutely forget walking humbly. In the political context, I think what walking humbly often means is when you look at any given huge issue — abortion, racism, economic inequality, you name it — and you begin with these two statements: “This is really hard,” and, “I don’t have all the answers.” If you just begin like that, it can be quite transformational in your interactions with your fellow men.

I want to talk about the mind for a minute. It’s a goal of Christian discipleship, within the framework of the Christian academy, to learn to love the Lord with the mind. I was just recently listening to Ed Stetzer, who’s at Wheaton College [in Wheaton, Illinois], on NPR, where he said, “I think the scandal of the evangelical mind today is the gullibility that so many have been brought into conspiracy theories, false reports, what is called the ‘old-school hypocrisy’ that has plagued a lot of religious institutions — the philandering pastor, for example, or the ministry leader who commits fraud. … The fact that people were often able
and more. … If there ever should be people who care about the truth, it should be people who call themselves followers of Jesus. I think pulpits and Christian colleges and universities need to ask the question, “How are we going to disciple our people so that they engage the world around them in robust and Christ-like ways?” How would you respond to that?

The gullibility point there is tied also to two other issues: fear and anger. These issues are huge, and I think a lot of people who are intellectual Christians on Twitter are missing what is happening at the grassroots in some of the wildest and most bizarre conspiracy theories held closely to the heart by evangelicals. Also, a lot of people are missing this sense of “we have been disrespected, we have been shamed, we’ve been held in contempt, and we’re sick of it.” The fact of the matter is there have been an awful lot of people who have disrespected Christians unfairly. Absolutely, you can find that. But the problem with that is that our response should not be deep-seated anger and grievance — that is totally wiping out the “walk humbly and loving kindness” parts of Micah 6:8 …

What I’m beginning to find is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak to Christian audiences unless you first walk into the conversation and say, “You’re good people. You’re awesome people. The Left is bad. Okay. I have this niq to pick.” So there’s this sense in which you first have to meet the grievance. The difficulty with that is there needs to be some repenting from the anger and the grievance before we can break through and really dive into discipling. It’s very hard to do that, because a lot of that grief has been empowered by an awful lot of lies. It’s been empowered by a lot of people who are quite self-interested in hyping your fear, and your concern, and your anger, and your rage. It provides these other people with money. It provides them with power, and all of these lies make you vulnerable to more lies. I’ll give you a perfect example. If your belief is that, for example, the Left hates you — not that individuals on the Left hate you, but that the whole Left hates you — it is a short trip from there to believing that the Left would steal an election. So if you have this background level of anger and suspicion of hostility, the next turn of the screw is easy. Each layer of animosity breeds the next layer, and so we have a lot of work to do, because this is the product of decades of stoking anger and range, and there is just an ocean of grievance out there.

You [said] earlier that a byproduct of our polarized age is a cancel culture. We feel this tension at Christian college campuses where we want to champion viewpoint diversity from a biblically faithful perspective but also be careful of what’s being said. What would you say is the way forward on Christian college campuses as it relates to the delicate nature of what should be said and what shouldn’t be said?

I went to Lipscomb University from ‘87 to ‘91. At the time, Lipscomb was a much more socially and politically conservative place. … But I had a much healthier free speech environment at Lipscomb University than I had at Harvard Law School, where people were shouting you down if they disagreed with you. … The interesting thing about Lipscomb was that we didn’t really even have a speech code other than, “Don’t curse.” We questioned all the tenants of the faith. We had healthy robust discussions of politics, of faith, of culture — all with basically clean language. So essentially, Lipscomb welcomed viewpoint diversity even though there was still an overwhelming ideological and religious point of view.

Twenty years ago, it was much more common for free speech to be inhibited top-down. By that, I mean actual laws and regulations passed by public universities, called speech codes, that violated the Constitution. … Beginning in about 2014, 2015, the demand for censorship began to bubble from the bottom up. So what once was a dean of students saying, “You can’t say that,” became 200 students in the quad saying, “You can’t say that,” which is a very different free speech challenge. … That’s very difficult.

I think what we have to do is go back to first principles of teaching people that free speech has value. It’s not just that good speech has value; free speech has value. A lot of the efforts to censor now come from people who are hoping to protect historically marginalized communities. Yet it’s the historically marginalized communities who have led the battle for free speech. … I remember talking to Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who was one of the people who helped founded the Congressional Black Caucus, moving into the early and mid ’60s. His answer was really interesting: “Almighty God and the First Amendment.” He said, “The First Amendment gave us the ability to speak, and Almighty God softened men’s hearts.”

So one of the things that I try to do is try to teach people that free speech has value by itself. That doesn’t mean that there shouldn’t be rules against defamation, threats, or obscenity, but free speech has value. I think that Christian universities by and large should not just model the protection of speech but should model the virtuous exercise of speech. Going back to ordered liberty, that’s hand in hand: the liberty for virtuous purpose, and to model that discussion. When I go to a Christian college, I often feel more free to speak than almost anywhere else. Not because I’m a Christian there — I’m often disagreeing completely with an awful lot of people — but I think CCCU universities have done, by and large, a pretty good job at cultivating an atmosphere of real debate, disagreement, and dialogue. …

One thing real quick about that “walk humbly” aspect [of Micah 6:8]: I think if you’re in leadership, fostering an atmosphere of free speech is a manifestation of walking humbly, because what does that do? It provides a permission structure for criticizing authority. Scripture says we see through a glass darkly, we know in part. When we’re permitting a structure of free speech, it’s a very tangible way of saying, “I don’t have all the answers. I need to hear more.”
Becoming Brave Witnesses
Two new books offer important insight for biblical justice in this moment.

BY SANDRA MAYO

JUST AS HIGHER EDUCATION was adjusting to the uncertainty that had resulted from COVID-19 in 2020, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery prompted a national reckoning with racism and a global outcry. Then, on Jan. 6, 2021, the world watched as rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol with symbols of white supremacy on full display. It was another painful and visible reminder of how far we are as a society from eliminating racial injustice. In this context, Brenda Salter McNeil’s Becoming Brave: Finding the Courage to Pursue Racial Justice Now and Drew Hart’s Who Will Be A Witness? Igniting Activism for God’s Justice, Love, and Deliverance offer a prophetic call to faith-formed social activism.

McNeil’s book combines autobiographical and biblical narratives to cast a vision for courageous action in such a time as this. With humility and honesty, she describes the question, asked at the end of a multiday workshop on racial reconciliation where she spoke, that spurred her to move beyond comfortable conversations about racial reconciliation. “When are you going to start talking about justice?” as McNeil allowed this question.

In following the journey of Esther, Becoming Brave reveals how God wants us to use each of us for faithful action in the world. McNeil argues that we are all “unlikely activists,” but we are called to respond to what God is doing in the world as Christians. Becoming Brave is an encouragement to those who don’t feel ready or qualified. It is a charge to the church to be active participants in the work of justice. But McNeil doesn’t leave readers without direction; she provides a Gospel-inspired path to eradicating systemic racism that requires not only bold action but even bold hope.

At a time when such audacious hope is needed for sustained social action and change, Hart’s Who Will Be A Witness? is providential, inspiring, and instructive. It offers a call to the church to rediscover its ecclesial vocation of justice and to restore its public witness in the world. The book begins with analysis of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign, one of the most important desegregation campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement. Hart focuses on the significance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s decision to move forward and violate a state court injunction against the protests, which led to his arrest on April 12 — Good Friday. Hart draws a parallel between King’s civil disobedience on Passover and Easter weekend and Jesus’ revolutionary action on the first Good Friday. Both provided a revolutionary public witness. Both demonstrated strategic disruption against an established order that served to oppress. Both joined in God’s delivering presence and, in so doing, provided a model for discovering the ecclesial vocation of justice.

In Who Will Be A Witness? Hart is not simply calling the church to action in the public square. Living out the call of Jesus requires a complete reorientation of our lives. No longer can we carry out our faith in the cloistered safety of church walls. Nor can we participate in a “domesticated” faith that prioritizes individual salvation over a holistic journey towards God’s deliverance, justice, and shalom.

Hart asks, “Who will be a witness?” not as a rhetorical device, but as an invitation to ignite Christian activism. For Hart, direct involvement in the work of justice is a necessary part of the church’s vocation.

But to fully live into its ecclesial vocation, Hart argues, the church must also remember its “troubled history” and identify the roots of Christendom and colonialism. Hart exposes how supremacist mindsets have been woven into American Christianity and “mangled” the church’s sense of vocation. For example, he traces Christian nationalism’s origins back to Constantine the Great, the first Roman emperor to claim Christianity. During his reign, Constantine offered financial support to the church and promoted Christians into office, thereby giving the church more political power and, for the first time, conflating Christian identity with the Empire’s interests.

Who Will Be A Witness? is a call for the church to grapple with the set of myths that continue to form Christianity with power, politics, and patriotism. It is also a call for the church to follow in the way of Jesus and to fulfill the greatest commandment — to love God and one’s neighbor as yourself. In the tradition of Howard Thurman, Hart reminds readers that love is not theoretical; nor is it sentimental. For Hart, love must seek to restore full human dignity. It must also be rooted in an understanding that our liberation is bound together and that there is an inherent oneness designed in creation. If we are to love God and our neighbors, our faith must be enacted through a Jesus-shaped grassroots participation in God’s work of deliverance. This is the mission and vocation of the church.

Like McNeil, Hart provides a way forward for the church to live into its justice-oriented mission and vocation. It is this vision for the church that also provides important lessons for Christian higher education.
TOGETHER, THEY OFFER TIMELY GUIDANCE FOR THOSE WITHIN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION TO FIND APPLICATION FOR THEIR GOSPEL HOPE. THEIR WORDS ARE A STEADY VOICE AND NEEDED SALVE IN A TIME OF DISRUPTION AND FEAR.

Leveraging the educational benefits of activism can help us fulfill the mission of Christian higher education. The college campus provides an ideal space for students to ask difficult questions, reflect on the social conditions around them, and become spiritually critical thinkers who will make their faith active in the world. How can we help students put their education into practice? When students ask for advice or support, what does our response say about our commitment to equity and justice? As campus leaders, how might we leverage our educational mission to help students develop a holistic, active discipleship that makes explicit the connections between their inner spiritual lives and their public witness? Above all else, how might we help students establish right motives for their activism by providing tools to galvanize their faith toward shalom?

Restoring a common memory is essential to the work of reconciliation and justice. To be good stewards of the institution, where might campuses find opportunities to repent and deepen their institutional commitments to justice? What is the collective response to lessons learned? How can institutions face the past, recognizing moments where God was at work? How can this discovery process serve as a reminder of Christian higher education’s essential purpose and provide hope for the future?

Spiritual and vocational discernment are the work of equipping students for shalom. Hart and McNeil both articulate the need to cultivate a Jesus-formed discipleship that helps students understand that the larger purpose of their faith is for participation in a broken world. In this time, how must Christian colleges and universities think differently about preparing students for vocation that includes a picture of shalom? How can Christian higher education lay out a vision of biblical shalom that invites students into the work of racial equity and justice? Hart suggests a three-pronged framework:

- **Orthodoxy.** We must teach basic doctrines and practices of historic Christianity as a foundation for an activated life and faith.
- **Orthopraxy.** We must provide opportunities for students to align their everyday lives and actions so they can faithfully participate in bringing real, tangible justice on earth.
- **Orthopathy.** We must rethink our discipleship practices with an understanding that helping students move toward shalom is also about drawing their hearts to God’s heart for reconciliation and justice.

This is the picture of a holistic love that forms the essential link between Christ’s work of deliverance and the church’s vocation in the world. Both McNeil and Hart help to expand our imagination of what can be different coming out of this time. They remind us that this moment requires courageous leadership, an honest reckoning with Christian nationalism and supremacist mindsets, and restoration of the church’s true vocation. In their call to activism, McNeil and Hart provide valuable lessons for reorienting institutional life toward justice and shalom, providing a revolutionary response that bears witness to Jesus. Together, they offer timely guidance for those within Christian higher education to find application for their Gospel hope. Their words are a steady voice and needed salve in a time of disruption and fear.

**SANDRA MAYO** is vice president of inclusive excellence at Seattle Pacific University (Seattle, WA) and chair of the CCCU’s Commission on Diversity and Inclusion.
Helping Faculty Pursue Vocation

Administrators can help faculty flourish, even in a pandemic.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINA BIEBER LAKE

FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGE and university faculty who are called to train up students to be the next generation of leaders in their field, it has been a difficult season. But in many ways, the pandemic has only compounded existing stresses of academic life. Christina Bieber Lake, the Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL), hopes to help her fellow faculty rediscover their passion for their vocation and to thrive in it, no matter the season. That’s why she wrote The Flourishing Teacher: Vocational Renewal for a Sacred Profession.

Katie Dillon, the CCCU’s government relations fellow, interviewed Lake about the book and how CCCU administrators can support their faculty during the pandemic and generally as they pursue their calling. The interview has been edited for length. For more information, resources, or to connect with Lake, visit christinabieblerake.com.

Could you provide a quick summary of your book?

I wrote the book arranged around the calendar year for academics. It starts with August and it ends with July, because the seasons of a teacher’s life are very different from the seasons of many other jobs. There’s a lot of energy in the fall, so teachers have different needs and desires in this season, whereas you’re exhausted in the spring, especially March or April. The point of the book is to help teachers get encouragement and inspiration as well as ideas that fit those particular seasons of their career. It’s the book that I was hoping I could read as a younger professor that would contain practical help as well as spiritual inspiration.

Obviously, this year of teaching is a lot different than most, and I’m sure when you wrote your book, you were not expecting to be writing to a crowd reading it during a global pandemic. In this season, have you seen ways that your teaching liturgy has changed or adapted?

I have been asked this a lot because of the way that it happened right at the same time as my book was released. I think for me, the pandemic has actually been better for some things. Teaching on Zoom is not great. But it has been helpful when it comes to things like meetings. For instance, we would have our department meetings on Tuesdays at 10:30. Well, Tuesdays and Thursdays are the days that I work from home, and I need to have that time for my research. Before the pandemic, I would drive out to Wheaton for a 5-minute meeting. It is not far, but after getting dressed, driving out, and coming back, my whole morning is impacted. So I feel like the strategies I’m trying to teach in this book — about making sure that you don’t prep too much, making sure that you don’t let this job take over your life, making sure you have time to focus on your scholarly work and the things that are important to you in terms of advancing your career — are in some ways easier because of the pandemic.

Now that is offset, of course, by all the stress of the pandemic. The stress and daily anxiety make it very hard to focus on scholarly writing. But I write about this in the book — teachers need a clear sense of the need to focus and to clear away distractions.

Yes, I think the pandemic opened up a space that allows us to focus more on a rhythm of life that you talk about in the book. Do you think you have more time now to put thought into what your rituals and habits are when it comes to teaching?

Yes, I always had cleared out that space because that was a high priority to me. I’m hoping that the pandemic did that for others. In the book, I mention it is important for people to know which of Gretchen Rubin’s four personality types they are — obliger, Upholder, questioner, or rebel. Those who are obligers or upholders, they’re the ones who either do everything because they’ve been asked to do it or because they feel a strong internal and external sense to do the things that they’ve been asked to do. Faculty with these two personalities learned during the pandemic that so much of the stuff that they do is really not worth their time.

For example, I go to campus to complete some tasks because I feel like it is important for me to complete them there. I don’t actually need to be there, and I’m happier when I’m not. The “no” to the unspoken request for faculty to be at the office all the time was in a sense said for the obligers because of the pandemic, and they learned the power of that no — that they don’t need to say “yes” all the time, because it takes away from their own energy and their own centeredness. I hope those lessons will stick for people, because what if we don’t actually learn that lesson? Then we’ll just get right back on the hamster wheel. And the hamster wheel does not help you to be a better scholar or teacher, and certainly not a better person.

In the book, you speak frequently of spiritual practices that have taught you a specific lesson in a specific season. Which of those practices would you encourage CCCU faculty and administrators to focus on in the coming year?

Definitely taking the Sabbath. I have stressed it with fellow faculty, but I also spend time in class teaching students the importance of Sabbath because of what we were just talking about — the constant work. Just because you can work all the time does not mean you should. There is a false belief that more time spent working is going to make a better product in the end. Sabbath-keeping forces you to let go of the lawn mower handle, as I say in my book, and realize how loud and vibrating it is when you’re mowing the lawn. It’s only when you let go that quieter comes in. You are allowed to say to yourself, “I’m not going to do that right now, and for this 24-hour period, I’m not going to be thinking about that.” The release that provides for people once they actually try to practice it is life-changing; it is career-changing. It changes your perspective.

Right now, a lot of professors are teaching from home, the space where they would usually find rest. Are there ways that you have found helpful to separate the work and the rest, since it’s all happening in the same area now?

I have to say that I got lucky on two counts. My son is in high school and he is able to do his Zoom classes on his own, without as much help from us. In addition, we have a large enough house that I have my own study. For people who aren’t in that situation, you just have to be more intentional and more creative in separating the two, and there’s just no other way to do it. By intentional, this means you have to talk to everybody involved, primarily your spouse, and explain what you need and why you need it. “I need to have this time by myself to work, even though I’m working from home — how can we trade off to make that happen?” A little creativity and intentionality with regard to protecting those spaces goes a long way.

Christina Bieber Lake is the Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL).

Katie Dillon is the CCCU’s government relations fellow and a graduate of Pepperdine University (Malibu, CA).
Thinking more broadly, now, how do you think administrators can help faculty narrow the gap between their teaching and research responsibilities and generally help them pursue both productivity and their God-given calling at the same time?

I would say that the first thing is making sure the granting of sabbaticals is protected. It’s becoming increasingly challenging to have sabbaticals, with finances being the way they are, but sabbaticals are essential to productivity for faculty. It is a renewal.

Related to that is providing opportunities for release time for your faculty in any way that you can. I would not be the scholar that I am today if it were not for a resource provided by Wheaton College, which is giving release time to faculty members to be in faith and learning seminars with other colleagues. The release time is essential, but so is cross-disciplinary time with other colleagues about a topic that will help you to focus your research. If administrators can prioritize this in your budget, it will pay off multiple-fold, because if you want your faculty to be productive, they need to have some release from the heavy load of teaching, especially at small liberal arts colleges. We’re not at research institutions where the load is two-two, two courses per semester. Wheaton’s load is three-three, but most people have a four-four load or even more. I can’t even imagine doing scholarly work with that many classes. So you cannot expect your faculty members with a four-four load to do reasonable scholarly work and be good teachers. You have to acknowledge that release time is required, because thinking takes mental space and time; it is not always something you can measure.

That’s the thing that’s hard for the administration sometimes to understand, because thinking is not something that the faculty member can “deliver.” I spent the first three months of my sabbatical reading and thinking. I cannot “deliver” that. However, what I ended up writing was a much better book than if I had just tried to rush in and write the book right away. I’m not saying that administrators should not hold faculty accountable. Of course they should. But giving space to think, to read, to meet with other faculty in events like faith and learning seminars, or other forms of release time from teaching, is essential.
Have We Forgotten the “Least of These”?

BY EMMANUEL L. MCNEELY

IMAGINE THIS: You, a young teenager, are filled with unparalleled excitement from an acceptance letter from your dream school. You imagine your upcoming life at that dream school, where you will “find yourself,” pursue academic goals, experience new opportunities, and develop lifelong relationships, all with the hope of leaving an indelible mark on society during a complex time in history.

Now picture yourself with that enthusiasm while also arriving to a new environment where you are in the racial or ethnic minority, wondering how your experience may differ from those of majority-culture students. You walk into a sea of educational opportunities with a freedom to both express yourself and boldly exercise your faith, yet there is a strong trepidation about the lack of minority representation within your school’s student body, faculty, and leadership.

This is the reality for many underrepresented minority (URM) students attending colleges and universities around the globe. Particularly, this burden may be amplified at some Christian academic institutions. One may question, what responsibility do colleges and universities have to recruit, engage, and enhance the overall experience of URM students on their campuses? Let us pause here.

Some will criticize that any “special” attention given to URM students is wrong and that resources must be evenly applied to all students on campus. Although it is true that all students deserve a safe and equitable college experience, the dearth of racial diversity on many college campuses suggests that special attention must be brought those who are, numerically speaking, the “least of these.” Christian colleges and universities must be led by biblical principles to provide special attention to their students who may suffer microaggressions, macroaggressions, and racial tension taking place on and off campus grounds during their time as a student.

The seemingly never-ending trend of unarmed Black men being murdered by police, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on minority communities, and the lack of representation for URM students and faculty all highlight systemic racism in America. It is impossible to understand and address the issues of URM students, let alone provide solutions, without first acknowledging both the existence and detrimental effects of systemic racism.

If there is hope for creating lasting change and bolstering diversity on Christian campuses, there must be a resolve to diversify student bodies, faculty, and leadership. To achieve this goal, many colleges and universities must first attain a “critical mass.” This concept of critical mass refers to reaching a minimum threshold of URM students and faculty to effectively recruit and retain more racially diverse students. We all know that generating diversity within an organization is no small task. Yet we must consider the current lack of diversity on campuses as a threat to the educational experience of all students, whether from minority or non-minority backgrounds. Christian universities and colleges have a responsibility to help cultivate and challenge the worldview of students.

We must also acknowledge it is impossible to facilitate this process responsibly without diversity of thought, experience, and racial backgrounds. The unsettling feeling that most Americans experienced in witnessing the protests, both peaceful and violent, of 2020 and 2021 must drive us to action. Racial reconciliation and harmony are foundational pillars in our Christian faith, so they must remain priorities within our academic institutions.

But the question remains: “When will we see positive change?” Ultimately, the answer depends on when a lack of diversity will be recognized as an imminent threat to educational institutions. Moreover, if Christian colleges and universities are unable to increase the critical mass of URM students and faculty, there is a strong possibility that URM students and faculty may only experience equitable representation in non-Christian, secular academic institutions. Frankly, this is a perilous reality that all Christian educators must aggressively contend with.

In Matthew 25:40, Jesus states, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” As Christian colleges and universities, we must ask, “Who are the ‘least of these?’” Numerically speaking, the “least of these” are URM students on our campuses whose voices and perspectives are muffled due to the lack of representation. Thus, a renewed emphasis and concerted effort to implement new strategies and programs to engage, recruit, and support URMs must become the focus of Christ-centered education.

EMMANUEL L. MCNEELY is co-founder of the Dr. M.D. Project, an effort to increase the number of underrepresented minorities practicing medicine, and the 2021 CCCU Young Alumni Award winner. He is pursuing his doctorate in medicine at Florida Atlantic University’s Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine.
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