



COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

ADVANCE

FALL 2022

MAGAZINE

THE UNIQUE VALUE OF

CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The History of Religious
Freedom in Education
p. 20

Conversations of Hope
in a Culture of Crisis
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That's Truly Strategic
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FROM THE PRESIDENT | **SHIRLEY V. HOOGSTRA**



A Mission Worth Fighting For

IN SEPTEMBER, THE CCCU filed two amicus briefs — one with the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division, the other at the U.S. Supreme Court — in support of Yeshiva University's efforts to uphold its longstanding religious mission and values. We did so because of our shared interest in protecting the ability to carry out religious mission, but I wanted to reflect on it here because this case highlights some of the challenges and opportunities for Christian higher education.

Some backstory: Yeshiva, in keeping with its religious values, declined to officially recognize an LGBTQ student group because of the university's understanding of the Torah. The student group sued to compel Yeshiva for recognition. The Supreme Court of New York County sided with the students in June, ruling that Yeshiva is not a religious corporation under city law and that it must immediately grant the group full privileges given to all student groups. In August, the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division denied Yeshiva's request to block enforcement of the order while it appeals the decision.

Yeshiva turned to the Supreme Court to request a stay, but the Court denied it by a 5-4 vote on Sept. 14, stating that Yeshiva hasn't yet exhausted its options in the state court system and that it could bring its case back to the Court once it has done so. Writing for the dissent, Justice Samuel Alito said, "A State's imposition of its own mandatory interpretation of scripture is a shocking development that calls out for review. The Free Exercise Clause protects the ability of religious schools to educate in accordance with their faith." He then concluded by saying, "Yeshiva would likely win if its case came before us."

In this decision, the majority of the court gave a technical answer hoping that it could be resolved at the state court level. The minority of the court went to the heart of a First Amendment argument and was willing to rule in favor of Yeshiva, even if the outcome would have been unpopular.

When did the principles of religious education become "unpopular"? In his essay on religious higher education (page 32), Peter Wehner writes, "Religion was central to the core identity of the world's earliest universities. And, in colonial America, a student enrolling at Yale, Princeton, or Columbia ... wasn't there to do scientific research or get credentialed for professional school. He was there to shape his soul."

This is why the CCCU engages so extensively in speaking to the U.S. courts: We believe it is imperative to remind both government and culture that religious education has the best opportunity to form human beings who bless the world. There is no longer an overwhelming consensus that religion is a positive force in culture. Yet, that does not mean that those who believe in and promote religious education recede from the public square. The CCCU engages the courts because they are an amphitheater of dialogue between conflicting worldviews. The respect for the rule of law must be part of the educational content of Christian higher education. As the World Justice Project describes it, "No matter who we are or where we live, the rule of law affects us all. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace — underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Research shows that rule of law correlates to higher economic growth, greater peace, less inequality, improved health outcomes, and more education."

This issue of *Advance* outlines the history of religious freedom jurisprudence (page 20) and how to create conversations that generate hope, refine and deepen our convictions, and promote mutual understanding, even if they do not necessarily generate agreement (page 38). I believe that we must always be pairing the "tools" of persuasion (for instance, through briefs filed in courts) with the "how" of persuasion — our words and posture as we engage with people with whom we disagree. In our classrooms, we must practice this art of winsome persuasion because of our convictions of God's sovereignty over all creation and in the fact that it is not our work to complete; rather, it is God who completes the good work he has begun.

Wehner, an outsider to Christian higher education, sums up our mission well (page 36): "At their best, Christian higher education institutions appreciate the fundamental purpose of education, which is to shape the human soul, to pursue the moral good, to love the right things. It is a deeply integrative view. Christian colleges are almost alone today in intentionally developing students who, in the words of the Hebrew prophet Micah, 'act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with [their] God.'"

Like Yeshiva University, Christian colleges and universities seek to shape the souls of their students in accordance with their stated religious beliefs. It is a cause worth fighting for. 🙏

Corey Nolen

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THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (CCCU) is a higher education association of more than 185 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@cccuc.org.

ADVERTISING

Advance accepts advertising from organizations that serve the students, faculty, or administration of our campuses. For more information and/or to receive a CCCU Media Kit, please email advertising@cccuc.org.

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Cultivating Communities of Curiosity



WHEN IT COMES TO THE VALUE of Christian higher education, there are a lot of things that we can (and at the CCCU, we often do) promote. Robust academic engagement in the classroom. Deep dialogue on the role of faith in vocation throughout a student’s time on campus. The campus community’s wholehearted commitment to raising the next generation of leaders dedicated to serving Jesus Christ, wherever they are called.

For my own experience — having completed both bachelor’s and master’s degrees at CCCU institutions — perhaps the greatest benefit of Christian higher education is the opportunity to experience what it is to live in a faith-rooted community of curiosity. I recently heard a discussion about the value of communities of curiosity on an episode of *The Holy Post* podcast (specifically the Sept. 30 episode), where journalist and cultural commentator David French described what a community of inquisitive people looks like:

The goal is to create a value orientation toward curiosity. ... When you have a community that’s value proposition is toward curiosity and inquisitiveness, what are you? You’re welcoming. ... Because there is no bubble, people are always having their ideas tested by someone of goodwill on the other side.

Over and over again, this has been my experience with Christian higher education, both as a student and as an employee at the CCCU. I have had countless conversations — with fellow students, with faculty, with administrators, even with lunchroom staff — and have been able to express, test, revise, and refine my ideas through these talks with people who sharply disagree with me but who also care deeply about me, are interested in what I have to say about the topic, and generally want to see me succeed. As an undergraduate, that was especially transformational, and God used that to set me on my current career path in ways I could never have imagined at the time.

But it wasn’t until after I finished undergrad and moved to Washington, D.C. that I realized how rare and valuable such an environment really is. This was in part because my move to D.C. came just a few years before the 2016 election and, more specifically, the marked turn our public discourse took in the latter half of the 2010s — a turn away from inquisitiveness toward the isolation of the political echo chamber. A turn away from the belief that engaging people who disagree with us is valuable not only in attempting to persuade people our view is the right one, but also in helping us better understand their views — and, more often than not, recognizing that maybe our own views aren’t as infallible as we first thought.

But that has only further reinforced for me just how valuable Christian colleges and universities are for our public discourse. And, frankly, it’s one of the reasons I have so enjoyed putting together *Advance* over these years. Not only do we strive to provide content that is of use to you, no matter your role in advancing the cause of Christian higher education, but we also hope to provide reminders of how unique and significant Christian campus communities of curiosity are for the world.

To be clear, no Christian campus models this perfectly; like everything else in life, our own human fallenness prevents us from reaching the full God-given potential we’ve been created with. But time and again, I’m reminded that the spirit of inquisitiveness and welcoming is alive and well on CCCU campuses. That’s the spirit — the work of the Spirit — that we need in the world. 🙏

MORGAN FEDDES SATRE is the CCCU’s communications specialist and managing editor of *Advance*. She is an alumna of Whitworth University (Spokane, Washington) and Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, California).

Around *the* Council

PRESIDENTIAL CHANGES

The following institutions have experienced presidential transitions since September 2021. Campuses that currently have interim presidents are not included.

Azusa Pacific University (Azusa, CA) Adam J. Morris, July 2022	Grace College & Seminary (Winona Lake, IN) Drew Flamm, July 2022	Southwest Baptist University (Bolivar, MO) Richard J. Nelson, September 2021
Bethel University (Mishawaka, IN) Barbara K. Bellefeuille, March 2022	Harding University (Searcy, AR) Michael D. Williams, June 2022	Tunghai University (Taichung City, Taiwan) Kuo-En Chang, January 2022
Booth University College (Winnipeg, MB, Canada) Susan van Duinen, October 2021	Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN) Jonathan Kulaga, August 2022	University of Northwestern – St. Paul (St. Paul, MN) Corbin Hoornbeek, August 2022
Calvin University (Grand Rapids, MI) Wiebe Boer, August 2022	Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (Budapest, Hungary) László Trócsányi, February 2022	Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) Scott McQuilkin, February 2022
Campbellsville University (Campbellsville, KY) Joseph Hopkins, February 2022	Malone University (Canton, OH) Gregory J. Miller, July 2022	
College of the Ozarks (Point Lookout, MO) Brad Johnson, June 2022	Multnomah University (Portland, OR) Eric Anthony Joseph, March 2022	
Christ’s College Taipei (New Taipei City, Taiwan) Homer C. Wu, February 2022	Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (Seoul, South Korea) Unyong Kim, October 2021	
Erskine Theological Seminary (Due West, SC) Steven C. Adamson, November 2021	Redeemer University (Hamilton, ON, Canada) David Zietsma, March 2022	
Faulkner University (Montgomery, AL) Dennis Mitchell Henry, May 2022	San Diego Christian College (Spring Valley, CA) Bill Crawford, July 2022	
Fresno Pacific University (Fresno, CA) André Stephens, July 2022	Southern Wesleyan University (Central, SC) William Barker, July 2022	

INSTITUTIONAL NAME CHANGES

- Houghton College** in Houghton, New York, is now **Houghton University**.
- Houston Baptist University** (Houston, TX) is now **Houston Christian University**.
- Nyack College** in New York, New York, is now **Alliance University**.
- Roberts Wesleyan College** (Rochester, NY) is now **Roberts Wesleyan University**.



COMMENTS


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

THE LATEST UPDATES FROM CAPITOL HILL

THE CCCU’S ADVOCACY WORK promotes and protects CCCU members’ 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 faith-based organizations, as well as challenges to religious character and convictions. In the last fiscal year, the CCCU signed onto 55 letters and 11 amicus briefs supporting our major advocacy issues. Other highlights of our recent advocacy work include:



Borrower Defense to Repayment Regulations (BDTR) | In July, the Department of Education published a notice of proposed rulemaking with proposed revisions to its regulations governing student loan discharge standards and processes under Title IV, including BDTR. The CCCU submitted a comment letter offering suggestions for changes or clarifications on several topics, including potential liability to institutions and the effect such liabilities have on persons exercising substantial control of an institution, delineating what constitutes “aggressive and deceptive recruiting,” and addressing issues connected to an institution’s closing. Additionally, the CCCU joined the American Council on Education and other higher education organizations on a comment letter noting that we are broadly supportive of the Department’s goals for the proposed changes — to enhance protections available to borrowers — and that clarity is needed to ensure the changes work as intended. The letter also noted our preference for legislative action to comprehensively address the holistic changes needed to the federal student loan repayment system and minimize the chances of major policy reversals between each change of administration.

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



Title IX | In September, the CCCU submitted a detailed comment letter and another joint letter regarding the newly proposed Title IX regulations. Notably, the CCCU recommended the Department of Education add a statement to the proposed definition of Federal Financial Assistance to clarify that tax-exempt status does not constitute Federal Financial Assistance. We acknowledged that the Department continues to uphold the religious exemption in accordance with previous regulations and shared our appreciation for the Department’s confirmation of the established method for applying the statutory religious exemption to religious institutions. We also urged the Department to continue this established approach.



Yeshiva University v. YU Pride Alliance | In early September, the CCCU filed two amicus briefs — one in the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division and one at the U.S. Supreme Court — on behalf of Yeshiva University. In keeping with Yeshiva’s longstanding religious values, the school declined to recognize an LGBTQ student group, and YU Pride Alliance sued to compel Yeshiva to recognize the group. The Supreme Court of New York County ruled that Yeshiva University is not a religious corporation under city law. (In August, the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division denied Yeshiva’s request to block enforcement of the lower court’s order). In our amicus briefs, we urged the courts to protect the rights of the country’s oldest Jewish university to operate according to its sincerely held beliefs. The U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the state court’s decision for now by a 5-4 vote on Sept. 14, stating that Yeshiva has not yet exhausted its options in the state court system. “If applicants seek and receive neither expedited review nor interim relief from the New York courts, they may return to this Court,” the ruling stated. We look forward to continuing to support Yeshiva in this process.

CCCU NAMES NEW SENIOR FELLOWS

The CCCU has a number of individuals who serve as Senior Fellows, appointed volunteers who assist the CCCU on special issues and projects. They work directly with CCCU President Shirley V. Hoogstra. Two recently appointed fellows include:




DR. TODD C. REAM
Senior Fellow for Public Engagement

Ream will assist on projects related to faith and scholarship in the public sphere. He serves on the higher education and honors guild faculties at Taylor University, as the publisher for *Christian Scholars Review*, and as a senior fellow with Lumen Research Institute.



REV. DR. LENA CROUSO
Senior Advisor and Fellow for Diversity

Crouso will consult on a wide variety of diversity, equity, and inclusion projects. She serves at Southern Nazarene University as vice president for intercultural learning and engagement, chief diversity officer, and professor.

 **LEARN MORE**
A full list of the CCCU’s senior fellows is available on the CCCU website.

CCCU EXPANDS LEADERSHIP TEAM

The CCCU has added new members to its leadership team in recent months, including:

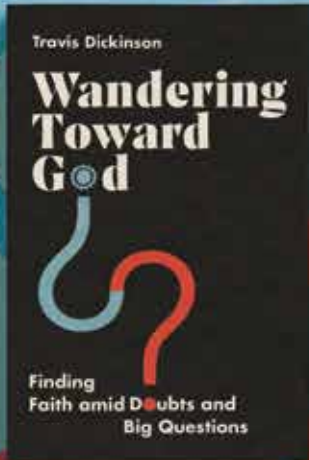


DR. AMANDA STAGGENBORG as Chief Communications Officer. She previously served at George Fox University (Newberg, OR) and Missouri Baptist University (St. Louis, MO) and is known as a strategic and established public relations professional.



DR. DOUG KOOPMAN as Director in Residence of the American Studies Program. He previously served at Calvin University (Grand Rapids, MI) and in national politics on Capitol Hill, and he brings a unique combination of teaching, writing, and working in politics and government.

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—J. P. MORELAND,
Talbot School of Theology



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FIRST-RATE EDUCATION WITH A SECOND CHANCE PELL

By Amanda Staggenborg



TOP LEFT: A group shot of the representatives from the U.S. Department of Education, the CCCU, the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI), and the Michigan state legislature during a visit to CPI's program at the Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. **TOP RIGHT:** Aya Takai, policy advisor to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, speaks with CPI students. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Michigan State Rep. Rachel Hood (center) visits with CPI students and graduates. **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** James Kvaal, U.S. Department of Education Under Secretary (center front), talks with students who recently graduated from CPI. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A CPI student shows a class project to Wiebe Boer, Calvin University's president.

“IF I HAD LEARNED to love learning before, I would be on the other side of this tour today,” stated a 17-year inmate at the Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. He held out a compilation of essays — with his name displayed proudly on the front — that other inmates used for studying. “When I figured out how to love learning, I figured out how to love life.”

Another inmate serving a life sentence quoted Aristotle. Through tears, he described a love for education and the value it brings to his family. His dedication inspired his daughters to commit to higher education, and they now envision their own futures as college graduates.

These two stories are a glimpse of all the powerful stories the students and graduates of the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) shared with members of the Department of Education, including Under Secretary James Kvaal, during their visit to the program on August 30. They made the visit because

they were interested in the impact of the Second Chance Pell grants, especially with the reinstatement of Pell eligibility for incarcerated individuals beginning July 2023.

“We expect to see new colleges and universities across the country creating new programs to serve incarcerated students, so we want to be in a position where we are visiting, we’re listening, and we’re connecting people so that we make the most out of these new investments and opportunities for students everywhere,” said Kvaal. He added that the Second Chance Pell program has “strong bipartisan support, and we’re really excited to open it up to every college and university that is interested.”

Accompanying Kvaal’s team were representatives from the Michigan Department of Corrections, Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, and members of the state legislature and the CCCU. The day included a tour of the classrooms, facilities, and vocational village, as well as a

90-minute roundtable discussion with CPI graduates. Kvaal noted this was his first visit to a prison, and he called it a “special opportunity” after conducting listening sessions with incarcerated students and those who maintain the programs.

Reverence for education was in the air during the entire tour. Each inmate, whether quoting classic literature, building a baby crib, or training therapy puppies, took his calling seriously while mastering new skills. Afterward, Kvaal reflected on the uniqueness of the CPI program. “[CPI has] a strong sense of mission and it really has touched people’s lives — changed their lives — and I think that is an incredible opportunity for these students.”

The Calvin Prison Initiative project provides inmates an opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree in faith and community leadership. Incarcerated students in the five-year program take the same classes as traditional Calvin students, like “Fundamental Questions of Philosophy” or “Oral Rhetoric.”

Kvaal stated that permanent Pell funding was necessary for programs like the CPI because it provides stability and will reduce skepticism by providing financial support to show longevity and commitment to the community. Research from

the RAND Corporation shows how much of a difference these kinds of education programs can make in reducing recidivism and lowering incarceration costs. Inmates participating in educational programs are 43% less likely to recidivate when they are released, and every dollar invested in prison education reduces incarceration costs.

Calvin’s program is one of 21 prison education programs currently in the CCCU that provide hundreds of incarcerated students the opportunity to engage in quality Christian liberal arts education that encourages development of both education and faith in ways that transform lives.

“We believe God is redeeming even the darkest places of society,” the CPI website notes. “There is no corner of creation that cannot be touched by the power of the gospel. By attempting to transform prison culture, we hope to not only restore peace and shalom within prisons, but also within our local neighborhoods and communities.”

AMANDA STAGGENBORG is the CCCU’s chief communications officer. She holds an Ed.D. from Missouri Baptist University, and her master’s and bachelor’s from Webster University in Missouri.

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All photos courtesy of Calvin University



New GlobalEd Summer Programs

AS THE STUDY ABROAD sector continues to rebuild after the pandemic, the number of students looking for short-term programs and experiences off-campus continues to grow. We already saw this trend before the pandemic — 64.6% of all U.S. college students who studied abroad in 2017-18 did so on short-term programs of less than eight weeks. This trend seems to be continuing post pandemic. Though research shows that longer-term programs provide stronger outcomes for cross-cultural understanding and personal growth, short-term programs do offer benefits such as a higher rate of satisfaction with the overall college experience, as well as general awareness and appreciation of other cultures. Given these trends, the CCCU has been exploring how we can better serve your students during the summer.

Our Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford (SCIO) summer program has a long tradition of offering students the opportunity to study away each summer. So to add to that, we will be launching two exciting new opportunities next summer (2023) in both Jordan and Washington, D.C. Together, these summer programs offer your students a full range of options to fit their interests:

- The Middle East Studies Program (MESP) will offer a four-credit course from May 13 to June 4 based in Amman, Jordan: *The Middle East: The Crossroads of Religion, Culture, and History*. This course will explore the many dimensions of Islam as a living religion in the context of the diverse mosaic of Middle Eastern culture in Jordan. Students will have a hands-on, immersive experience as they interact with local hosts in ways that broaden learning, enrich friendships, and foster mutual understanding and respect. Travel excursions will enhance their learning, as students will experience some of the most amazing historical, archaeological, cultural, and geographic sites in Jordan: the Citadel and Roman theater of Amman; Petra; the Dead Sea; Wadi Mujib; Jerash; Wadi Dana; Wadi Rum; and Aqaba.

- The American Studies Program (ASP) will offer a one-week, one-credit seminar in late May (exact dates TBD) in Washington, D.C.: *Best Practices in Encouraging Healthy and Diverse Dialogue on College Campuses*. This seminar will explore best professional practices for student government and student groups, especially in addressing controversies and disagreements that become public. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences (including what has worked for them and what hasn't), learn from their peers from other campuses, and connect to D.C.-based professionals and resources that address these issues in a variety of public spaces. The student leaders and student life professionals who come for the seminar will take back to their campuses new ideas, new friends, and a larger network of allies and peers.
- The SCIO program will continue to offer students the opportunity to take two classes (six credits total) from June 16 to July 17. Courses available to students explore such topics as Jane Austen, C.S. Lewis, and Science and the Christian Tradition.

We encourage your students interested in one of these opportunities to visit the CCCU's GlobalEd website (www.cccuglobaled.org) for additional information. Application deadline for Summer 2023 programs is May 1. 🌐

DON DEGRAAF is the CCCU's senior director of educational programs.

Given trends, the CCCU has been exploring how we can better serve your students during the summer.



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Mission Fit?

Researchers, Undergrads, and the Common Good



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH (UR) has become an important form of pedagogy and formation for our students (long identified as a high-impact practice by AAC&U). The norm expected for UR posits we provide guidance to our students in those areas where we ourselves have advanced research competence. That can be challenging for smaller liberal arts institutions that have typically 75-120 full-time faculty covering a wide range of disciplines. Partnerships with others and engaging in coalitions with other similar institutions for advising support can mitigate that challenge (and I hope to address this challenge in the future). But that is not really the point of this discussion. The current UR model offers the strength of close mentoring relationships and focused training so that we can confer to students what we know best. But the model has a potential flaw and weakness: It can be tempting to train our students to research in the ways we learned to carry it out, toward the purposes we learned, and perhaps with the narrowness of focus that we have mastered.

Many of us have experienced a relatively singular career path. We entered undergraduate studies, moved on to graduate school (perhaps with a stop or two in between), then sought careers in academia. We entered and followed this relatively singular path with passion, with vision, with commitment, with delight. Some found their way by other means, but by and large, the professoriate is still defined substantially by faculty who chose and trod this path from relatively early on. Many of us learned a primary approach to research that we then used for years before developing new and more varied sets of research skills. Should the narrower focus, representing the training

in our day, be the only path toward research skills for our students as undergraduates?

It is unlikely that this will continue to be the normal path. We already see many alternatives among the current professorial ranks with more varied experiences and broader arrays of training. This will continue and expand. We know higher education is struggling on so many fronts, and the current economic model is not sustainable. This will certainly affect the future of the professoriate. Hence, we should not expect our students to pursue their professorial paths in a similar fashion to ours. Likely, they will experience far more change and variety. Their paths will appear to meander. Agility, insight, and determination, among other things, will be key qualities they need to flourish. So do we devise research opportunities that structurally expect them to apply the benefits of their training and transferable skills to other endeavours outside research and aside from professional scholarship?

Giving students research skills that are transferable and flexible to new situations will be a valuable offering for them as well as for your program. How is your institution and how are your faculty shaping the curriculum and the experience to aid and form such qualities? Is this on the agenda, the syllabus, as a key output and benefit?

I recently came across (thanks to a colleague at Dordt University) a valuable *Eos* article from April


2021 titled, “Reimagining STEM Workforce Development as a Braided River.” It can be applied to any discipline. The article suggests moving away from a traditional “pipeline” model to that of a “braided river.” “A braided river,” the authors note, “is a wide, shallow system comprising numerous interwoven and changeable channels separated by small islands.” What makes this model particularly valuable is that instead of a single main entry point, like a pipeline, it allows for multiple ways to enter into a particular field. This approach offers practical insight and direction and is worthy of our consideration. To take such an approach seriously may also require us to adapt our pedagogy and, in particular, adapt the ways we form students as researchers.

I also believe there is an aspect to forming young researchers, shaped by the braided river motif, that is profoundly missional for our institutions. Training students to be skilled in research holds rich prospects of contributing to our goals of enriching both our students’ lives and — beyond that — their communities. It can have a multiplier effect.

For example, developing both an appreciation for and skill in research offers a tool to help us better form students who are savvy about digital connections and media but not discerning about the quality of digital information they engage. Students trained in research, one can reasonably hope, will be better able to sift political rhetoric, to test ideas, and to contribute to their communities by representing and contributing to others’ enhanced prudence, judgment, and common sense. A key point, then, is not to create researchers for the sake of accomplishing research, though that is clearly a beneficial outcome, but to create well-formed students who will be citizens informed by the lessons and methods that go with learning research skills. This commitment to research can offer new pathways to develop impact.

As pedagogues committed to the Kingdom of God, and shaped by the likes of the late Charles Malik’s *Two Tasks* (forming the mind among the faithful and forming faith among the scholars), this is a valuable contribution toward advancing our mission of Christ-centered higher education, helping our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth. 🙏

STANLEY P. ROSENBERG is the CCCU’s vice president for research and scholarship and the executive director of SCIO: Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford, the CCCU’s U.K. subsidiary.




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HUMANITIES DEGREES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

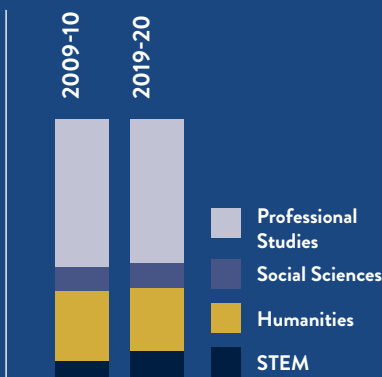
CHANGE IN HUMANITIES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

The charts below show the changing numbers of degrees awarded in the humanities over the last decade (left) and of degrees in all categories broadly (right).

2009-10 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED

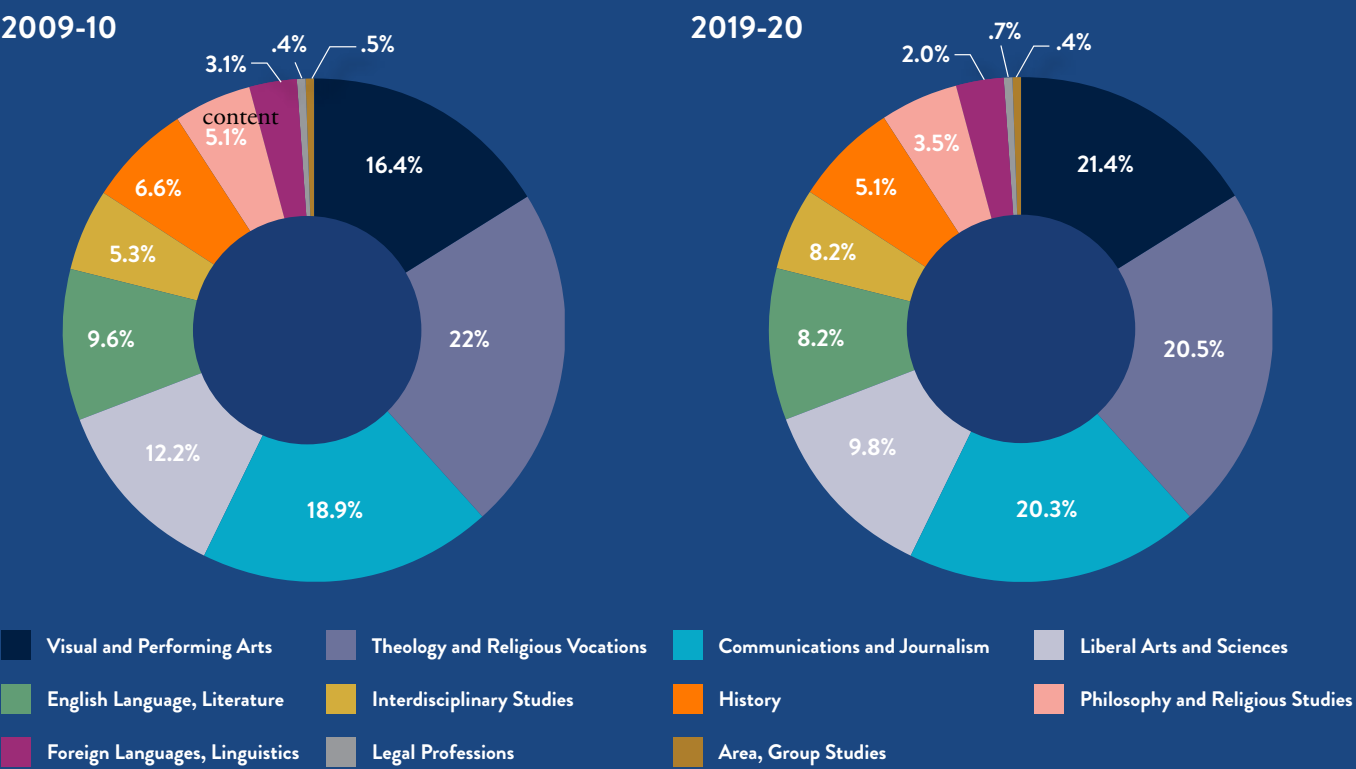


2019-20 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED



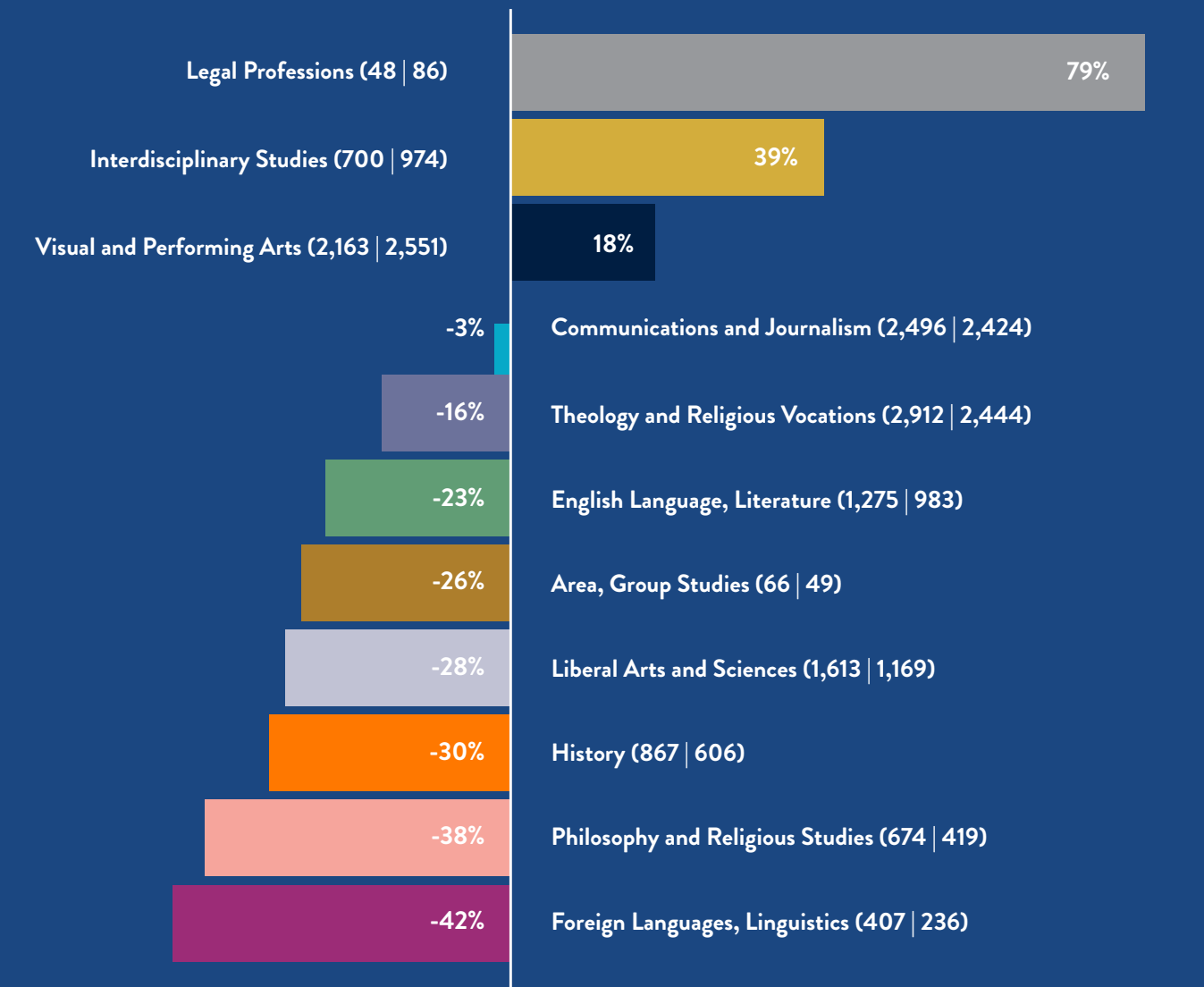
DISTRIBUTION OF HUMANITIES DEGREES AWARDED BY CATEGORY

Just as the overall number of humanities degrees has shifted over the last decade, so too has the distribution of the particular majors students have completed.



PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN NUMBER OF DEGREES AWARDED BY CATEGORY

Given the overall changes in humanities degrees awarded over the last 10 years, as well as the changes in which humanities majors students are pursuing, this graph highlights the percentage of change in each major from 2009-10 to 2019-20. (Specific numbers for each degree are given in the parentheses, first from 2009-10 and then from 2019-20.)



The data in this report was compiled using a list of 120 CCCU Governing Member and Collaborative Partner institutions as of September 2021. More comprehensive reports with information on campus diversity and STEM are available at www.scio-uk.org/research/supporting-stem. Information on the state of STEM programs at CCCU institutions is available at https://www.cccu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/21_Fall-Advance_Research_p37-1.pdf. For a complete list of the CCCU's research reports and data, visit <https://www.cccu.org/programs-services/research/>.

Compiled by Jeff Clawson, Pete Jordan, and Stan Rosenberg. All data is from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF LEARNING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Reflections on the history and impact of
the CCCU's Middle East Studies Program

AN INTERVIEW WITH DOUG AND PATTI MAGNUSON

IN 1993, STUDENTS from Christian colleges across the U.S. gathered in Cairo, Egypt, for the very first semester of the CCCU's Middle East Studies Program (MESP). In the 30 years since, the program has relocated several times — first to Jerusalem, Israel, in 2012, then to Amman, Jordan (its present location), in 2014 — and benefitted from the leadership of four directors and countless faculty, staff, and lecturers. But what has remained consistent through the years is MESP's commitment to providing students a Christ-centered, academically rigorous experiential opportunity to listen, learn, and grow in understanding and loving Middle Eastern neighbors both inside and outside the classroom.

We asked Doug Magnuson, the current MESP program director, and his wife, Patti (who also serves as the program administrator), to reflect on MESP's necessity, impact, and history. Their comments have been edited for length. To learn more about MESP, visit www.cccuglobaled.org/mesp.

Why is it important for the CCCU to have a Christian experiential study away program in the Middle East?

Doug Magnuson: There are a lot of reasons; I'll name some, though not in any particular order. One of the greatest challenges for Christians in the world today is relating to the Muslims of the world. These are the two leading monotheistic religions and the two largest groups of religious people in the world. So we often run into Muslims, no matter where you are in the world, and it's important we know how to relate to them, how to engage and build relationships without being afraid.

Jesus says the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. That encompasses everyone around us, so the question here is, what does it mean to love our Muslim neighbor? You can't really love someone without knowing them and without relating to them. Unfortunately, often Christians and Muslims end up fighting in one way or another. But it's imperative for us as followers of Christ not to fight, but to love

and to learn how to understand and relate, how to serve, how to exist together in the world. One of the things at the heart of MESP is the opportunity for students to do that — to become comfortable in Muslim settings.

So for example, within the first few days that students are in Jordan, we usually meet with some of our Muslim Jordanian friends in a local mosque. And for many students, it's the first time they've ever been in a mosque and had a chance to observe prayer. Afterward, we sit in a circle on the floor in the mosque and these friends of ours share their journey of faith and practice. It's a disarming event for our students because it makes them realize, "We're meeting other human beings who are real people like us, and I didn't know that they might have this kind of experience."

Another reason to have a program here is that the Middle East is in the news a lot, but often Americans don't have a full understanding of what is going on. So having MESP here gives

Over the years, student groups in the Middle East Studies Program have been able to visit sites rich in historical, cultural, and religious significance, such as the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt (top left), the Wailing Wall and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (top right), the Mount of Olives (bottom left), and the Mosque of Muhammad Ali in Cairo (bottom right).



All photos courtesy of Doug Magnuson

students a chance to come and understand this complex and important region, whether it's some of the conflicts in Egypt or Afghanistan or Iraq, or whether it's the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also gives students the chance to enter a situation where there's difference and polarization and try to understand different perspectives.

For example, with the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, we'll discuss Jesus' statement, "Blessed are the peacemakers." What does it mean for us to be peacemakers in a situation of conflict so that we don't add to the conflict but instead start to relate to those in the conflict and to the situation?

Patti Magnuson: One of the ways we do that is that our students usually take a trip to Israel and do homestays with both Palestinian and Orthodox Israeli families. So they are literally living with these different narratives — it's not just reading and studying them. We actually go in and are with these families.

DM: Generally, when you look at the news and talk to people, people aren't engaging with those who are different from them very well right now. There's a desperate need for people who have the ability to engage with differences in a more positive way. The Middle East is one of the most complex and difficult to understand regions in the world — there's nowhere that's a better testing ground for becoming a peacemaker. Every student who comes, even if they have better understanding of the region, finds their opinions and experiences and understanding shifting quite a bit as they actually engage with the people of the Middle East.

How do you see students growing in their faith in Jesus throughout a semester at MESP?

DM: Well, as we discussed before, we talk a lot about what it means when Jesus says, "Love God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself," and what it means to be a peacemaker. So engaging those two things throughout the semester has a real significant impact on students.

Another thing that happens is that we end up engaging the question of how Muslims perceive us as Christians. How does our self-awareness become informed by other people's awareness of us? What is some of the baggage — whether it's historical, social, cultural — that comes when Muslims learn we are Christians? When people hear us talk about Christians or Christianity, what do they hear? And if that creates barriers, how can we relate to people? I think about it like this — Jesus is the Good News, but sometimes we who have the name "Christian" are not perceived as "good news" by other people who are different than us.



A top experience for MESP students is visiting Wadi Rum, the largest wadi in Jordan (left, middle right). Top right: A view of Istanbul, Turkey, another location MESP students can visit. Bottom right: Students regularly meet with the calligraphic artist Hussein Alazaat, who shares his knowledge of art in the region and creates beautiful calligraphic pieces with the students' names.

Every student is at a different place in their faith when they come into the program, so everybody will process these things differently. But regardless, there's generally a lot of impact on how they think about themselves as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, about who Jesus is to them.

PM: I have had so many students that have shared that they feel they've never examined their own faith in such deep ways as they have when they've met with Muslims, with followers of a very historical and long faith. Those moments challenge a lot of their misconceptions about what they think that Muslims believe, but they are also challenged by how they see Muslims and Christians here understanding things like sovereignty and God's will. Those moments can cause students to go back to the Bible and go deeper into scripture to answer some of these things, and also maybe to broaden their perspective on the awesomeness of God and who he is because of meeting believers who see those traits so strongly.

Our students also come with a lot of questions, and they end up asking even more throughout the semester as they're exposed to these discussions. It's exciting to realize how big our God is. God's not afraid of any of their questions, even the hard ones.



I think sometimes students are fearful of questioning some things, and it's an incredibly powerful experience to be studying something difficult and to realize there's nothing to be afraid of — God is bigger than these questions. It helps things become centered in a much deeper way than they've experienced before in their lives.

Broadly speaking, how has the program made a direct impact on some of the alumni of the program in their vocation and calling?

DM: MESP students have a wide range of vocational interests — some come interested in working in the foreign service or in long-term ministry in the Middle East or in a Muslim context. Some come with an interest in NGO work or relief and development. Some come not quite knowing what they want to do and end up getting direction throughout their time here.

Afterward, some might find their trajectory strengthened and continue on in that career path they were planning on. And then some take their experience back home in unique ways, even if they weren't planning on it. We have one couple, both MESP alumni, who got married and settled back in Canada, where they were from, and a large family group of Syrian refugees arrived there. Because this couple had been in the Middle East, they were basically the local experts to help this family get settled. They realized they needed a bit more Arabic training, so they

came back to Jordan for a time to learn more Arabic and then returned home to continue working with refugees and refugee resettlement. All of that from their one semester at MESP.

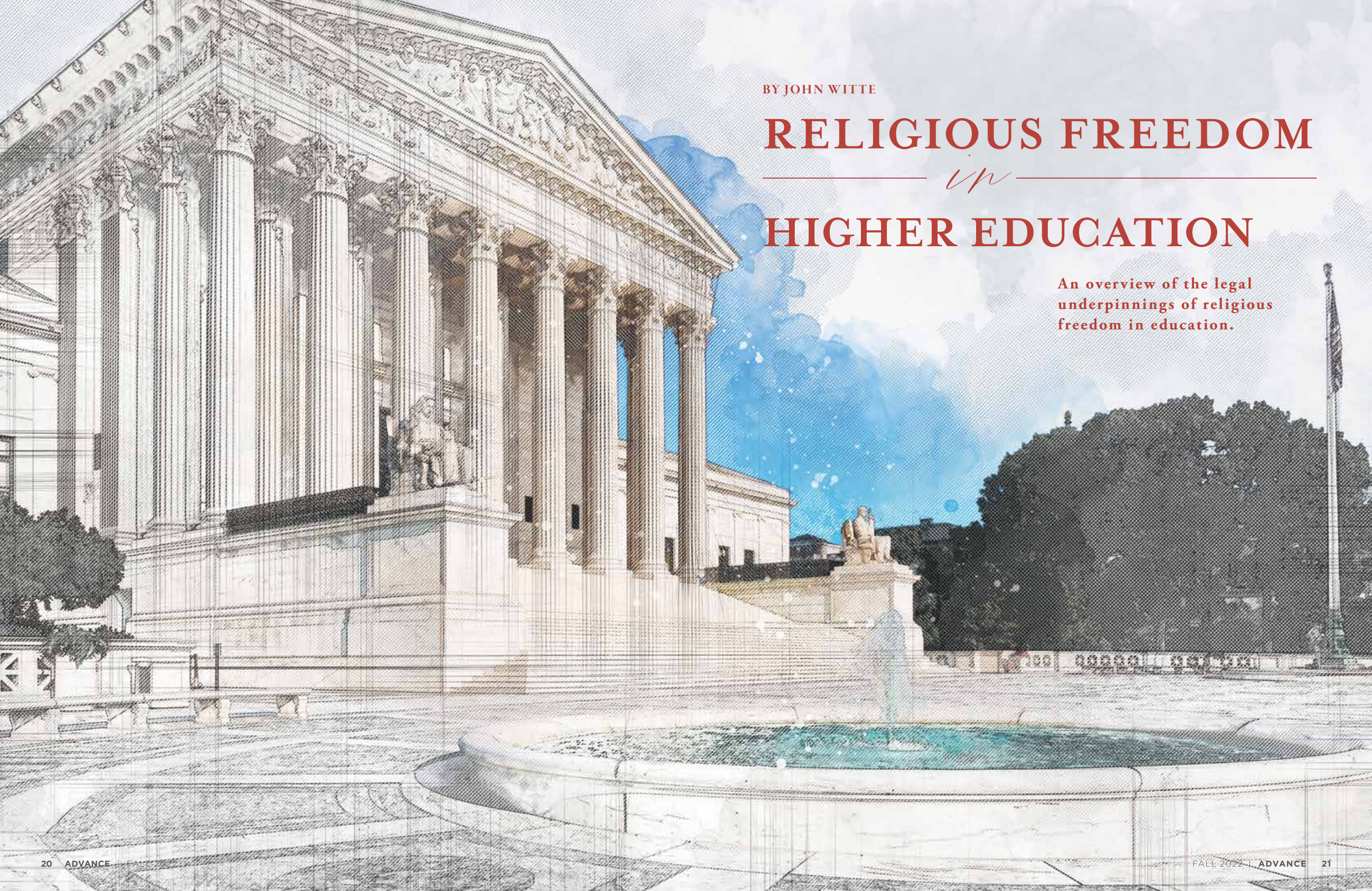
We've also found that MESP helps prepare students uniquely for other experiences. There's a school in Jordan where some of our students will do a service project. The school is often looking for American teachers, and so some of our alumni will come back and teach there for a few years, and they are far more likely than other Americans who have been recruited to be able to make the cultural adaptation and be willing to stay for more than a year, even if they were technically less qualified as teachers. We've had other students who have received fellowships — Boren and Fulbright — to study in the Middle East and have shared that with us MESP gave them the preparation and training to get the most out of those experiences.

As MESP celebrates its 30th year, what does that mean to you? Can you reflect a bit on the history and impact of the program?

DM: So the program was started in Cairo, Egypt, in 1993, and the first director was Cliff Gardner and his wife, Marilyn. We were in Tunisia in the time, so we didn't know them at the time, but we have since become good friends with them. We moved to Cairo in 1996, the same year that Rick Cahill became the second director. We met him early on and were involved with the program throughout the seven years we lived in Cairo — we did some teaching of different courses, hosted students at our house, and led the trip to Israel-Palestine one year when Rick and his wife were expecting. So we got to see how the program developed and expanded and the incredible impact it was having on students.

Then David Holt became director in 2002 and served for 11 years. The program continued to expand in those days, and there were so many opportunities for students to learn about major events — the Israeli Palestinian talks, the Oslo Accords, the aftermath of 9/11 — and hear directly from people involved. Then the program moved to Jerusalem when the Egyptian revolution happened in February 2011, where they laid a new foundation for the program using the connections and context they already had there. Then we came on board in 2013, and then the program moved to Amman in 2014. So we've been able to build on what we've inherited and added in some of our own connections and experiences into the program.

PM: What's fascinating to me is that the same four classes that were offered in the beginning are still what we teach. The content has been updated and tweaked, of course, but it's amazing that those who launched the program had the foresight to lay that kind of foundation. 🙌



BY JOHN WITTE

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

UP

HIGHER EDUCATION

An overview of the legal underpinnings of religious freedom in education.

JOHN WITTE JR. is an award-winning teacher, distinguished scholar, and long-serving director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University. A graduate of Calvin College and Harvard Law School, he has published 45 books and 300 articles and delivered 350 lectures worldwide.

This publication is adapted from his Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2022); I used an earlier edition of his book in my courses with him. The CCCU wanted to feature this piece now because of the various threats our institutions face to their constitutional rights on an increasingly regular basis — whether challenges to the constitutionality of the Titles VII and IX religious exemptions, pressures to cease hiring practices that align with a CCCU institution’s mission, or opposition to students using federal dollars at CCCU institutions.

A core tenet of the CCCU’s work is to assist institutions in addressing and engaging pressing issues, including by providing broader historical context where needed. Thus, this article is an attempt to highlight some of the longstanding legal underpinnings of religious freedom in education, with a particular focus on religious freedom in private education. We hope it will be an excellent resource for you in your work.

- Joy Mosley, CCCU Senior Director of Government Relations



FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE republic, American education has been a major battleground for religious freedom. While state laws and constitutions have always governed education, all schools are also now subject to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that guarantees that the government “shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Nearly one-third of the United States Supreme Court’s cases on religious freedom — 76 out of its 244 cases issued through 2022 — have addressed issues of religion and education; almost all of them have concerned state and local governmental laws and policies. For each Supreme Court case, there are scores, sometimes hundreds, of lower court cases, too.

The Supreme Court’s cases on religious freedom and education address three main questions: (1) What role may government play in private religious education? (2) What role may religion play in public (government-run) education? And (3) What religious rights do parents and students have in public and private schools? The Court has worked out a set of rough answers to these questions, albeit with ample vacillations over the past century. This article will focus on the first question, concerning the role of government in private religious education, but touch on the other two as well, in presenting the Supreme Court’s main cases on religious freedom that are and will continue to be important for Christian higher education.

Nearly a third of the Supreme Court’s cases on religious freedom have addressed religion and education; almost all have concerned state and local laws and policies.

The Evolution of Government’s Role in Religious Education

The role of government in private religious schools — particularly questions of government funding and support for religious schools — was hotly contested in the individual states long before the Supreme Court got actively involved. By 1921, 35 states had passed state constitutional amendments that barred state funding of religious schools. Moreover, in some states, various anti-Catholic and self-professed “secularist” groups pushed hard to eliminate religious schools altogether and to give public schools a monopoly on education.

In response, the Court developed a general argument about the place of private religious schools in modern society and the role that government could play in them. Private schools of

all sorts, the Court repeatedly held, are viable and valuable alternatives to public schools, and parents and students have the right to choose between them. Private *religious* schools, moreover, allow parents to educate their students in their own religious tradition, a right that they must enjoy without discrimination or prejudice. Given that public education must be secular under the First Amendment prohibition of religious establishments, private education may be religious under the First Amendment protection of the free exercise of religion.

To be accredited, all private schools must meet minimum educational standards so that their graduates are not left culturally or intellectually behind their public school peers. Free exercise objections to these baseline requirements by schools, parents, or students are of little avail. But these private schools may teach these subjects from a religious perspective and add religious instruction and activities beyond them. They may favor teachers and students who share their faith. And these religious schools are presumptively entitled to the same government-funded “secular” services and support — school bus rides, textbooks, laptops, lab equipment, gymnasiums, and more — that are made available to their counterparts in public schools.

The Supreme Court developed and applied this “accommodationist” logic, as it was called, from 1925 to 1971; abruptly reversed course in favor of strict separationism from 1971 to 1985; and since then has returned to a new variant of accommodationist logic, now often framed in “equal access” and “equal treatment” terms grounded in the First Amendment free exercise clause.

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Accommodating Religious Education

The most important early religious school case was *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), which struck down an Oregon law requiring all children to attend public school. This law, the Court held, violated the rights of religious parents to choose where to educate their children, and the right of religious schools to offer them a form of Christian education. This early accommodation of religious schools and students continued in a dozen cases into the early 1970s. *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), for example, though offering sweeping rhetoric on the need for a high wall of separation between church and state, still held that states could provide school bus transportation to religious and public school children alike or reimburse the parents for the costs of using school bus transportation. “[C]utting off church

schools [and their students] from these services, so separate and indisputably marked off from the religious function, would make it far more difficult for the schools to operate,” Justice Black wrote for the *Everson* Court. “But such obviously is not the purpose of the First Amendment. The Amendment requires the state to be neutral in its relations with groups of religious believers and non-believers; it does not require the state to be their adversary.”

The Court struck a similar tone in *Board of Education v. Allen* (1968), holding that states may offer secular textbooks and supplies to public and private schools and students alike. It continued this accommodationist tone in a trio of cases upholding government funding for construction of buildings at religious colleges and universities. In *Tilton v. Richardson* (1971), the Court rebuffed a challenge to a federal grant program sponsoring all manner of new buildings at public and private colleges

and universities across the country — including library, science, and arts buildings at four church-related colleges. Chief Justice Burger wrote for the plurality that the act that created the grant program “was carefully drafted to ensure that the federally-subsidized facilities would be devoted to the secular and not the religious functions of the recipient institution.” This feature, together with the reality that most funding was directed to state, not religious, universities and colleges, was sufficient to ensure the act’s constitutionality.

Then in *Hunt v. McNair* (1973), the Court upheld a state program of funding the construction of similar “secular” buildings at various universities within the state, including a religiously chartered college. Again in *Roemer v. Board of Public Works* (1977), the Court upheld a state construction grant program that included five church-related schools among its 17 grant recipients. The Court counseled against too zealous an application of the principle of separation of church and state, given the reality and reach of the modern welfare state: “A system of government that makes itself felt as pervasively as ours could hardly be expected never to cross paths with the church.... [R]eligious institutions need not be quarantined from public benefits that are neutrally available to all.”

The Court stretched its furthest in accommodating religious education in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). Faced with a Wisconsin requirement to send children to school until they were 16, a community of Old Order Amish (dedicated to a simple, biblically inspired agrarian lifestyle) refused to send kids to high school, lest they be tempted by worldly concerns and distracted from learning the values and skills they would need to maintain an

Amish life. After they faced fines for disobeying school attendance laws, the parents and community leaders filed suit, arguing that the state had violated their free exercise and parental rights.

The *Yoder* Court agreed and ordered that the Amish parents and students be exempted from full compliance with these mandatory school attendance laws. The Court was impressed that the Amish “lifestyle” was centuries-old and “not merely a matter of personal preference, but one of deep religious conviction, shared by an organized group, and intimately related to daily living.” In the Court’s view, compliance with the compulsory school attendance law would pose “a very real threat of undermining the Amish community and religious practice as they exist today; they must either abandon belief and be assimilated into society at large, or be forced to migrate to some other and more tolerant region.” To exempt them was not to “establish the Amish religion” but to “accommodate their free exercise rights.” This case is the classic example for the home schooling options now on offer in most states.

Separating Public and Religious Schools

But in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), the Supreme Court abruptly reversed course. Drawing on the strict separation of church and state logic of its earlier establishment clause cases — which prohibited religious teachers, prayers, Bible reading, and religious symbols in public, state-run school — the Court now adopted a firm policy against governmental aid to religious schools and against most forms of cooperation between religious and public schools, teachers, students, facilities,

and programs. Parents and students have the right to make a clear choice between state-funded public schools and privately funded religious schools, the Court reasoned. The more clearly the operations and officials of these two schools are separated, and the more cleanly the religious schools are cut off from state funding and dependence, the better it is for all parties and for the First Amendment values that protect them. Public schools can stand on their own without the risks of undue religious influence or mixed messages to their students. Religious schools can stand on their own without the dangers of unwelcome political interference by or undue financial dependence upon the state.

In implementing this new logic, the *Lemon* Court crafted a three-part test to be used in all future cases arising under the First Amendment establishment clause, including those dealing with religious schools. To meet constitutional objections, the Court held, any challenged government law must: 1) have a secular purpose; 2) have a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and 3) not foster an excessive entanglement between church and state. The *Lemon* Court applied this test to strike down a state program that reimbursed schools for the costs of teaching state-mandated secular subjects, arguing that this improperly advanced the religious mission of these private schools, and risked too much entanglement between state officials and religious teachers in supervising the use of these funds.

Lemon left open the question whether the state could give aid directly to religious students or to their parents, as the Court had allowed in earlier cases. Two years later, the Court closed this door tightly in *Committee for Public*

Mandating strict separation of church and state in the educational sphere — while alluring for some in theory — ultimately proved unworkable in practice.

Education v. Nyquist (1973) and *Sloan v. Lemon* (1973), striking down state policies that allowed low-income parents to seek reimbursements from the state or tax deductions for some of the costs of religious school tuition. In *Nyquist*, Justice Powell characterized such policies as just another “of the ingenious plans of channeling state aid to sectarian schools.” Responding to the state argument that “grants to parents, unlike grants to [religious] institutions, respect the ‘wall of separation’ required by the Constitution,” the Court declared that “the [primary] effect of the aid is unmistakably to provide desired financial support for non-public, sectarian institutions.” Over the next decade, the Court issued 15 cases seeking to separate strictly public and private education.

Accommodation and Equal Treatment of Religious Education

But mandating strict separation of church and state in the educational sphere — while alluring for some in theory — ultimately proved unworkable in practice. It also raised questions of fairness to religious parents who had to pay both state school taxes and religious school tuition if they wished to educate their children in their own faith. Accordingly, the Supreme Court gradually moved back toward greater

accommodation and state support for religious education. The Court eventually reversed three of its strict separationist cases on religious education, and it rejected strong state constitutional prohibitions on funding religious education when their application resulted in discriminatory treatment against religious students, parents, or schools.

A notable early example of this shift back was *Witters v. Washington Department of Services for the Blind* (1986), where the Court upheld a state program that furnished aid to a student attending a Christian college. The program provided funds directly to visually impaired students “for special education and/or training in the professions, business or trades” at programs of their choice. Mr. Witters’ condition qualified him for the funds. His profession of choice was the Christian ministry, and he sought funds to attend a Christian college in preparation. The state agency denied funding on grounds that this was direct funding of religious education in violation of the federal and state prohibitions on religious establishment. The Court disagreed. The policy served a secular purpose of fostering educational and professional choice for all, including the handicapped. It involved no entanglement of church and state. Its primary effect was to facilitate this student’s professional education, which

happened to be religious. As Justice Marshall wrote for the Court, “In this case, the fact that aid goes to individuals means that the decision to support religious education is made by the individual not by the State.”

In several more cases over the next two decades, the Court repeated this holding that indirect state aid to religious education through the private choices of parents or students was constitutionally permissible. The most consequential — and controversial — of these cases was *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002), which upheld an Ohio school voucher program that enabled parents to choose among public or private (religious) education for their children. Chief Justice Rehnquist wrote for a sharply divided Court that the primary effect of the program was not to advance religion but to enhance educational choice for poor students and parents living in a notoriously failing public school district. “Where a government aid program is *neutral* with respect to religion, and provides assistance directly to a *broad class of citizens*, who, in turn, direct government aid to religious schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent *private choice*,” there is no establishment of religion. “The incidental advancement of a religious mission, or the perceived endorsement of a religious message, is reasonably attributable to the individual, not the government, whose role ends with the disbursement of the funds.”

In its three most recent cases, the Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment free exercise clause mandates that religious schools, parents, and students be given equal access to government support made available to all others. In *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer* (2017), Missouri excluded a



church-run school (that met all the criteria) from a state program that reimbursed schools for the costs of resurfacing its playgrounds with a new rubber surface supplied by the state's recyclers. Missouri argued that it was simply applying its state constitutional prohibition on funding religious education. The Court held this to be a violation of the free exercise clause. "Here there is no question that Trinity Lutheran was denied a grant simply because of what it is — a church," Chief Justice Roberts wrote for the Court. State laws imposing "special disabilities on the basis of . . . religious status" alone are permissible only if the state has a "compelling interest" for doing so, and a general state constitutional prohibition on funding religious education is not compelling enough. What is being funded here is rubber asphalt, not religious education.

In *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* (2020), the Court widened this equal access logic. In this case, Montana offered its citizens state tax credits if they made donations to nonprofit organizations

that awarded scholarships for private school tuition. But the state program would not allow scholarships to go to private religious school students, since the state constitution prohibited all state aid to religious education. Three mothers whose children could not get scholarships to attend a Christian school filed suit under the free exercise clause, claiming religious discrimination contrary to the free exercise clause. The *Espinoza* Court agreed. The state's "interest in creating greater separation of church and State than the Federal Constitution requires 'cannot qualify as compelling' in the face of the infringement of free exercise here."

The Court repeated this ruling in *Carson v. Makin* (2022). The state of Maine had a longstanding tuition assistance program that allowed parents who lived in thinly populated rural school districts without their own public high school to use public funds to attend a public or private school of their choice, including schools outside Maine. But the state would provide assistance only if the chosen

school was not "sectarian" — based on the state's review of the school's curriculum, practices, character, and mission. Citing *Trinity Lutheran* and *Espinoza*, the Court struck down this policy as a violation of the free exercise clause. These private schools are disqualified from state public funds "solely because they are religious," the Court determined, and that is unconstitutional discrimination against religion. The state may "not exclude some members of the community from an otherwise generally available public benefit because of their religious exercise."

Labor and Employment in Religious Schools

The First Amendment requires that religious organizations, including religious schools, be given room to carry out their unique missions and functions. This is partly because religious organizations are places where many individuals manifest their free exercise rights. But the First Amendment "gives special solicitude to the rights of religious organizations" as such, the Court noted recently, protecting a "religious group's right to shape its own faith and mission," and "bar[ring] the government from interfering" with its internal decisions over membership and leadership.

Reflecting this basic teaching of "religious autonomy," as it is called, legislatures often exempt religious employers from various labor, employment, and civil rights laws, including those that prohibit discrimination based on "race, color, religion, sex, and national origin." Title VII has two exemptions that apply to religious employers. The first is in Section

702 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,¹ which includes:

This title [subchapter] shall not apply to an employer with respect ... to a religious corporation, association, educational institution, or society with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with the carrying on by such corporation, association, educational institution, or society of its activities.

The second is in Section 703 of the Civil Rights Act², which includes:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this title [subchapter] ... it shall not be an unlawful employment practice for a school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning to hire and employ employees of a particular religion if such school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning is, in whole or in substantial part, owned, supported, controlled, or managed by a particular religion or by a particular religious corporation, association, or society, or if the curriculum of such school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning is directed toward the propagation of a particular religion.

The core cases where Section 702 applies are easy. A synagogue does not have to hire a Baptist minister to serve as its rabbi or read the Torah. A denominational Christian seminary can dismiss a dean or professor who converts to Islam. The marginal cases

¹Specifically, Section 702(a), 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-1(a).

²Specifically, Section 703(3), 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(e).

The First Amendment requires that religious organizations be given room to carry out their unique missions and functions.

raise harder questions. Does the religious hiring exception — or "ministerial exception" as it is called — apply to non-clerical or non-ordained employees of the religious organization, such as teachers, secretaries, groundskeepers, suppliers, or janitors? What if the religious line-drawing by the religious employer adversely affects a party who is part of an otherwise protected class under the Civil Rights Act? Do women, say, who are denied ordination or religious leadership positions because of religious teachings have a sex discrimination claim under the Civil Rights Act? Or what of same-sex parties who are denied employment or membership because a religious group teaches that homosexuality is sinful?

The Supreme Court has provided only limited guidance to address these hard questions, although it has strongly affirmed the constitutionality of the ministerial exception. In *Presiding Bishop v. Amos* (1987), the Court upheld Section 702 against an establishment clause challenge, and further

allowed its application to a non-clerical employee. Amos was a building engineer for a gymnasium open to the public and owned and operated by the local Latter-Day Saints Church. He was dismissed from his position because he was no longer a member in good standing of that church. He sued, claiming religious discrimination in violation of the Civil Rights Act. The church defended its decision by invoking the religious hiring exception in Section 702. Amos argued the exception didn't apply in this case since he was an engineer, which was a secular position, not a religious one. Moreover, he argued, Section 702 violated the establishment clause because it unduly favored religious employers and employment over all others. Why should a public gym run by a church be able to religiously discriminate against an engineer when an identical public gym run by a local business corporation cannot do so? The Court applied Section 702 and held for the church, and it also upheld the constitutionality of this provision. The establishment clause does not forbid Congress from allowing religious organizations to hire members only of their own faith for both secular and religious jobs, the Court concluded. It was no establishment of religion for Congress to give more protection to religious employers than might otherwise be required by the Constitution. Such "benevolent neutrality" is not an "unlawful fostering of religion."

These early precedents led several lower courts to give ample deference to religious schools, colleges, and universities to set their own standards of admission, employment, and discipline. In *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC* (2012), the Court reinforced this deference by

Over the past century, the Supreme Court's First Amendment cases have swung back and forth... Given the centrality and controversiality of both religion and education in American life, it is inevitable that such swings will continue.

grounding the ministerial exception in the First Amendment. Hosanna-Tabor was a church that operated a small K-8 school with both “called” and “lay” teachers. Cheryl Perich was a called teacher, which meant she had completed theological studies at a religious college, been endorsed by a local church district, passed an oral examination, and performed various spiritual functions in the school, including leading chapel and teaching Bible. When she became ill and took disability, the school filled her position with a lay teacher. She recovered and planned to return, but the school did not want her back. After some back-and-forth, ultimately the school board and church congregation revoked her call and fired her. Perich filed a claim with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), alleging that she had been wrongly terminated in violation of the non-retaliatory firing provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

A unanimous Court held for the Hosanna-Tabor church and school. “The establishment clause prevents the government from appointing ministers, and the free exercise clause prevents it from interfering with the freedom of religious groups to select their own,” Chief Justice Roberts wrote for the Court, citing precedents that went

back to the 1215 Magna Carta. To force a church to “accept or retain an unwanted minister, or punish a church for failing to do so” would “interfere with the internal governance of the church.” This would violate the free exercise clause, “which protects a religious group’s right to shape its faith and mission through its appointments.” Further, it would violate the establishment clause by involving the government in “ecclesiastical decisions” over the polity, property, membership, and leadership of the church, all of which are forbidden to courts. The Court accepted Hosanna-Tabor’s characterization of Perich as a “called teacher” who fit into the ministerial exception. The Court also refused to second-guess the church’s stated religious reason for firing her — that she violated its commitment to internal dispute resolution. “Such ‘a pretext inquiry,’ Justice Alito wrote in concurrence, stood in tension with ‘principles of religious autonomy.’”

The Court held similarly in *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* (2020). This case involved two private Catholic schools under the Archbishop of Los Angeles. Each school was committed to “religious instruction, worship, and personal modeling of the faith” and held its teachers to those Catholic standards. Agnes Mor-

rissey-Berru and Kristin Beil were both lay teachers on annual contracts. Both had some religious training and taught religion courses at their schools. They worshipped and prayed with their students each day, and they counseled and catechized them in the Catholic faith. Both were discharged for underperformance. Both sued. Morrissey-Berru claimed age discrimination because she had been replaced by a younger teacher. Beil claimed retaliatory firing because she had requested a leave of absence to undergo breast cancer treatment. The religious schools claimed the ministerial exception. The teachers countered that they were not ministers; they were lay people, with only modest religious training. They did not hold themselves out as ministers, and indeed could not be ministers since the Catholic Church ordained only males as ministers. The Supreme Court held for the schools, citing *Hosanna-Tabor* as dispositive. These two teachers performed even more ministerial functions in their schools than Cheryl Perich had performed at Hosanna-Tabor, the Court found. That left their employment status within the jurisdiction of the schools and diocese.

Limits on Religious Autonomy for Religious Schools

This right of religious schools and other religious organizations to engage in such religious line-drawing is not unlimited, however. *Bob Jones University v. United States* (1983) was an early case on point. This case involved a Christian university that challenged the revocation of its federal tax-exempt status due to the university’s religious beliefs that interracial dating and marriage were unbiblical. In their view, God created “separate races,” who must remain separate, and they applied this

teaching in their employment and admissions policies. In 1970, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) concluded that it could no longer legally justify granting tax-exempt status to any private religious schools that practiced racial discrimination. The IRS notified the university of the change in policy and threatened to revoke the school’s tax-exempt status if it persisted in its racial line-drawing practice. The school made no changes and thus lost its tax-exempt status, exposing it to hefty new income tax liability and shutting it off from tax-deductible donations. The university sued the IRS, arguing violations of the free exercise clause.

The Court held for the IRS. Chief Justice Burger made clear that tax exemption was a legislative privilege, not a constitutional right, and that the IRS had the authority to revoke the university’s tax-exempt status for violating “a fundamental public policy.” Given the long series of statutes and cases that have sought to remove the badges of chattel slavery and the ravages of racial prejudice in American history, Burger wrote, “there can no longer be any doubt that racial discrimination in education violates deeply and widely accepted views of elementary justice.”

This old precedent has come back into conversation since the Supreme Court’s cases of *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) declared the constitutional right to same-sex marriage and *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020) found that discrimination against gay or transgender workers constitutes “sex discrimination” under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Some religious schools and seminaries, including CCCU institutions, are theologically opposed to same-sex or trans-sex parties, activities, and couples. The question is whether exclusion of those

parties from admission, membership, employment, leadership, or other benefits at the religious school is a form of protected “religious line-drawing” or unprotected “sex discrimination.” Even if it is viewed as protected “religious discrimination,” could a local, state, or even national government revoke that school’s tax-exempt status or other government benefits or funding as a result? These issues are now being tested in legislatures and courts.

Recent Trends in the Court

Over the past century, the Supreme Court’s First Amendment cases have swung back and forth between more tolerant “accommodationist” and more stringent “separationist” approaches to the relations between government and religious schools. The Court has sometimes digressed and occasionally reversed itself, prompting loud academic and public commentary. Part of this back-and-forth is typical of any constitutional law in action, and it further reflects the reality that shifts in bigger constitutional doctrines like federalism, judicial review, and separation of powers inevitably produce shifts in more specialized areas like First Amendment religious freedom. “Constitutions work like clocks,” American founder John Adams once put it. To function properly, their “pendulums must swing back and forth,” and their mechanisms and operators must get “wound up from time to time.” Given the centrality and controversiality of both religion and education in American life, it is inevitable that such pendular swings in the Court’s cases on religion and education will continue.

Two decades ago, after completing a long run of strict separationist cases, the Supreme Court seemed content to leave many religious freedom and education

questions to statutes and to states, reflecting its new appetite at the time for separation of powers and federalism. Federal statutes, like Section 702 of the Civil Rights Act, were thought to provide enough religious freedom protection, including in the education field. And with softened standards of First Amendment review, state and local governments were able to engage in greater local experimentation in their schools, following the logic of federalism.

Many states, however, building on 19th century state constitutional restrictions on religious educational funding, and 21st century attacks on religious freedom altogether, began to provide far less protection for religious freedom in education. In response, the Supreme Court of late has again weighed in heavily in favor of religious freedom, including in the area of religious education where it has issued seven major cases in the past decade, from *Hosanna-Tabor* 2012 to *Carson* in 2022. These cases have strengthened constitutional and statutory protections for religion in education and relaxed limits on government actions and funding for religious schools, parents, and students. Compared to a generation ago, religious parents and students now have more educational choice, and religious schools have more equal access to general governmental support and more autonomy to make their own internal employment decisions. But these are only very recent Supreme Court precedents, and they remain constantly contested in public debates and tested in local courts and legislatures. Religious schools and parents alike would do well to remain vigilant to protect religious freedom in religious education. 🗳️

Important First Amendment Cases

A Timeline

 <p>Pierce v. Society of Sisters</p> <p>Outcome: Oregon law that required all children to attend public school is struck down.</p>		 <p>Lemon v. Kurtzman</p> <p>Outcome: Statutes that provide state funding for non-public, non-secular schools violate the First Amendment’s establishment clause, establishing a three-pronged “Lemon” test to avoid future violation of the clause.</p>	<p>Bob Jones University v. United States (1983)</p> <p>Outcome: The government can justify limitations on religious liberties by proving it is necessary in accomplishing an “overriding governmental interest” — in this case, prohibiting racial discrimination.</p> 		<p>Presiding Bishop v. Amos</p> <p>Outcome: Religious employers can choose employees for nonreligious jobs based on their religion, and the religious exemption in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act is constitutional.</p>		 <p>Locke v. Davey</p> <p>Outcome: A Washington state scholarship program did not violate a student’s First Amendment rights when it denied him the opportunity to use a publicly funded scholarship to major in theology.</p>		 <p>Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer</p> <p>Outcome: Excluding churches from otherwise neutral and secular aid programs violates the free exercise clause of the First Amendment.</p>		
1925	1947	1971	1972	1983	1986	1987	2002	2004	2012	2017	2020
 <p>Everson v. Board of Education</p> <p>Outcome: The First Amendment’s establishment clause is applied to state law.</p>		 <p>Wisconsin v. Yoder</p> <p>Outcome: Amish children in Wisconsin cannot be placed under compulsory education past 8th grade.</p>		<p>Witters v. Washington Department of Services for the Blind</p> <p>Outcome: Participants in Washington’s vocational rehabilitation program can use the funds for ministerial education and not violate the establishment clause.</p>		 <p>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</p> <p>Outcome: Ohio’s publicly funded school voucher program did not violate the First Amendment’s establishment clause when used to send children to religious schools.</p>		 <p>Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC</p> <p>Outcome: The “ministerial exception” for employees performing religious functions can apply to a teacher who teaches secular curriculum as well as religion classes and other religious activities.</p>		<p>Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue</p> <p>Outcome: Montana’s state law, which prohibited funds from a tuition assistance program to go to private religious schools, violated the free exercise clause of the First Amendment and is struck down.</p>	



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BY PETER WEHNER

Of Body & Spirit

American higher education began as a religious mission. What now?

OXFORD WAS FOUNDED more than a millennium ago. Its first known lecturer was a theologian. And some Muslim centers of learning date back even further. Religion was central to the core identity of the world's earliest universities. And, in colonial America, a student enrolling at Yale, Princeton, or Columbia would have had a very different experience than what he'd expect today. He wasn't there to do scientific research or get credentialed for professional school. He was there to shape his soul.

And yet, today American universities may be some of the most secular places in the country. Faith is an afterthought, if that, in most of American higher education. And that's a pity, because the two grew up together, deeply influenced each other, and still have much to learn from each other. Religious higher education isn't obsolete; properly conceived, it's more important than ever.

Harvard, the first college in the United States, for example, was established by Puritans. Ten of its first 12 presidents were ministers. The early Harvard motto was *Veritas pro Christo et Ecclesiae* — “Truth for Christ and the Church.” For many of America’s first colleges — Brown, Dartmouth, Georgetown, and others — the Christian faith was central to their core identity.

By the mid-19th century, a religious organization founded almost every university and college in the U.S. and Europe. According to the eminent historian George Marsden, until well into the 19th century, “higher education remained primarily a function of the church, as it always had been in Western civilization.” A strong relationship between religious faith and learning was a given, and by the early 1860s, 262 of 288 college presidents were clergy.

After the Civil War, Ivy League educators gradually began distinguishing between “religious” and “scientific” forms of knowledge. “For both practical and ideological reasons, they put religious ways of knowing outside the bounds of academic study,” says Baylor’s Benjamin P. Leavitt, whose research focuses on religion’s place in the history of American higher education.

The historian Mark Noll describes the period between 1870 and 1930 as one of profound change “in assumptions about intellectual life and in conceptions of higher education itself,” including colleges and universities becoming more secular and skeptical, growing more oriented toward research, and moving away from the task of shaping the character of students. “(T)he new university was far too secular, far too skeptical of Common Sense reasoning and Victorian conventions, to retain the Christian rationalism that had defined the intellectual life of American colleges since their beginning.”

Since then, the gap between secular and Christian higher education institutions has widened. The overwhelming

At their best, Christian higher education institutions appreciate the fundamental purpose of education, which is to shape the human soul, to pursue the moral good, to love the right things. Christian colleges are almost alone today in intentionally developing students who, in the words of the Hebrew prophet Micah, “act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with their God.”

influence the Christian faith had on the broader higher education project dramatically diminished — in part, because Christians voluntarily ceded the ground to others.

In an effort to reclaim some of that ground, we witnessed the rise of evangelical liberal arts colleges in the 20th century. But the drifting apart continued, including on matters of teleology. Especially since the 1960s, the trend in higher education was toward fragmentation; Christian colleges, on the other hand, “strove to maintain a synoptic vision,” according to Thomas A. Askew, a historian at Gordon College. In the past, it was widely assumed a liberal education encompassed a theological education. That is hardly the case today. One way to think about it is that colleges and universities that started out with a Christian foundation but have

become secular now form the mainland while Christian colleges and universities — especially evangelical liberal arts ones — are the smaller islands dotting the coastline.

So in this third decade of the 21st century — almost 400 years after the founding of Harvard — what does Christianity have to contribute to higher education?

To start with, first-rate scholarship. This includes fields beyond biblical studies, and it is found on campuses where Christianity is considered core to their identity. Marsden says Protestants and Catholics are “producing intellectually rigorous work in just about every academic field.” In a forthcoming essay, Marsden writes that “at no time in history has there been so much fine scholarship from traditionalist Christians concerning so many subjects.” He adds, “This renaissance of

Christian scholarship, especially among traditionalist Protestants, is largely a development of the past quarter century or so.” (This renaissance in Christian scholarship is occurring at precisely the same time that anti-intellectualism is spreading in certain parts of American Christianity, particularly within the evangelical subculture.)

The influence of Christianity can also create a richer and more diverse intellectual culture since much of contemporary higher education lacks a spiritual center. In many places the intellectual dimensions of faith simply aren’t taken seriously. Academics in non-Christian colleges and universities may or may not be outwardly hostile to the Christian faith; mostly they find it an alien concept. But Christian thought clearly has something important to contribute to academic discourse. And as an alternative to naturalism and materialism, Christianity rightly understood is at least worth considering, since it strengthens the case for human rights and inherent human dignity.

One of the greatest documents in American history, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” articulates the grounding for human dignity beautifully. The epistle can’t be understood apart from King’s Christian faith. Neither can the role of faith be pried apart from Augustine’s *Confessions*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the poetry of John Donne and T.S. Eliot, the paintings of Rafael and Michelangelo, or the music of Bach and Handel. Religious faith has inspired excellence in so many different areas.

But that hardly exhausts the list of contributions the Christian faith can make to human life and contemporary higher education. Christian higher education institutions are essential to conserving and transmitting the best of Christian thought.

A FEW YEARS AGO, over breakfast with a renowned social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt, I asked him what constructive contribution Christians could make to public life. An atheist who finds much to admire in religion, Haidt answered simply: “Humility.”

Humility is a virtue in many realms, including epistemology. Because we have all fallen short, because our judgments are distorted, we “see through a glass darkly,” in the words of the Apostle Paul, knowing only in part.

This doesn’t mean objective truth doesn’t exist; it merely means we have to hold lightly to our ability to perceive truth. The philosopher and theologian Cornelius Van Til said that there is no such thing as a brute fact. Our presumptions alter the way in which we interpret things. True humility allows us to alter our views based on new information and circumstances, to refine and recalibrate our positions, to open the aperture of our understanding rather than go in search of evidence to confirm what we already believe.

Intellectual humility — openness to learning and correction — is needed everywhere, but one would hope it would

be found most conspicuously within the walls of academia. Right now, it’s not, and Christianity, when it’s most faithful, can model what it means to search for truth with integrity.

Along similar lines, and in important respects, Christian colleges and universities now model what it means to be a university better than their secular counterparts. I have in mind facilitating and encouraging free inquiry and expression.

Many students at non-Christian colleges are being shielded, or are shielding themselves, from words and ideas they find disrespectful or wounding. They are treated like porcelain dolls, fragile and easily breakable, and therefore in need of safe spaces, trigger warnings, and protection from microaggressions.

Prominent colleges and universities, whose very purpose should include exposing students to competing points of view and allowing intellectual debate to flourish, have instead become institutions that do the opposite. Efforts are made to scrub campuses of words, ideas, and subjects that might challenge pre-existing beliefs and cause offense. And professors themselves are self-censoring, afraid that they might be brought up on



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charges for even raising questions that are deemed threatening.

Christian universities can be on the forefront of creating a culture where free expression is valued. They are hardly perfect in this regard; they have their own challenges to face, their own pressures to resist, doctrines they need to conform with. And unlike secular campuses, the pressure on Christian colleges is often coming from the right rather than the left. Still, the stifling conformity of thought we see in much of American higher education today tends to be less pronounced among Christian colleges and universities, according to a recent National Survey of Student Engagement that found that Christian college students feel they have the most freedom to talk about the most issues.

But there’s something even more fundamental that Christian higher education can provide, which is to embody the liberal arts ideal at precisely the moment when much of the rest of American higher education is moving away from it. Non-Christian institutions of higher education increasingly view a college education as a commodity. Market-based thinking is dominant, and higher future earnings is the mark of success.

At their best, Christian higher education institutions appreciate the fundamental purpose of education, which is to shape the human soul, to pursue the moral good, to love the right things. It is a deeply integrative view. Christian colleges are almost alone today in intentionally developing students who, in the words of the Hebrew prophet Micah, “act justly and love mercy and walk

humbly with [their] God.” They do this imperfectly, of course, but more than any other institution in American higher education, they have the best chance to do it. Playing a redemptive role in the world — producing students who will be voices for justice, for truth, for reconciliation — is something about which Christian colleges and universities are explicit. But they also fall short, in some cases dramatically short, and that’s important to acknowledge.

Kristin Du Mez, professor of history and gender studies at Calvin University and author of the bestselling book *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, told me that in the last couple of years in particular, she has witnessed firsthand “the utter intellectual impoverishment that

characterizes many siloed Christian academic spaces.”

According to Du Mez, “They’re essentially engaging in propaganda rather than seeking truth, misconstrue actual academic arguments, and are either unwilling or unable — due to coercive pressure or deficient academic training — to engage in rigorous, good faith conversations about things that matter. And this sort of pseudo-intellectualism is rewarded in their spaces. For a faith that claims to hold to truth, this fundamentally distorts the faith and destroys their witness. And it imperils our democratic system.”

This doesn’t mean — nor would Du Mez argue — that the core mission of Christian colleges and universities is wrong or that the academe, comprised of around 5,300 colleges and universities, wouldn’t benefit from the truths

and insights that Christian institutions of higher education can provide.

But it requires individuals to personify that mission in how they conduct themselves, in ways that are faithful and winsome, that manifest integrity and honor. A mission statement without those willing to carry it out is meaningless.

For C.S. Lewis, who held academic positions in English literature at both Oxford University and Cambridge University, “The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.” He believed students needed to be taught the right order of the loves, to like and dislike what they ought.

Some of us find that vision of education to be compelling because it is taking soulcraft seriously; it is

making a correct assessment of the full human person. That isn’t to argue that there isn’t value, even great value, in an education that isn’t aimed at soulcraft. I received an excellent education at the University of Washington and, during my college years, my faith was strengthened by ministries to college students. Still, an education that refines our sentiments, that teaches us to cherish the true and the good, is a gift beyond measure. At their best, this is what Christian colleges and universities have to offer, and it’s a lot. 🙏

PETER WEHNER is a senior fellow at Trinity Forum and a regular contributor to *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times*. This essay originally appeared in the September issue of *Deseret Magazine* on the fate of the religious university and is reprinted with permission.

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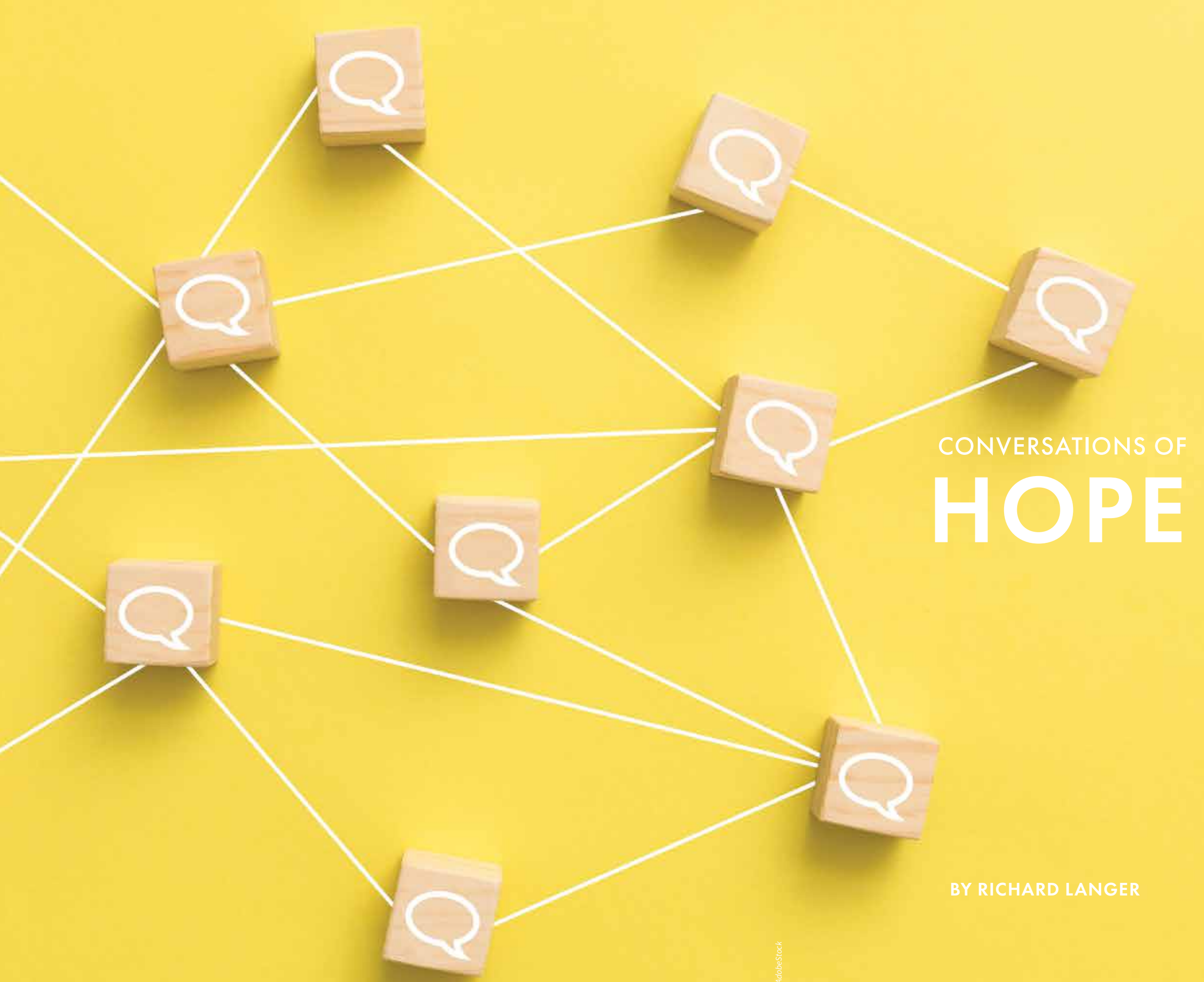


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CONVERSATIONS OF
HOPE

IN A CULTURE OF
CRISIS

WITH CONTROVERSIES ON THE RISE
BOTH ON CAMPUS AND OFF, CHRISTIAN
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES HAVE A
UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP THEIR
COMMUNITIES LEARN HOW TO DISAGREE —
WITHOUT BECOMING DIVIDED.

BY RICHARD LANGER

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EDITOR'S NOTE

A core tenet of the CCCU's work is to assist institutions in addressing and engaging the current issues of the day. At the 2022 International Forum, Richard Langer, professor of theology and director of the Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning at Biola University, led a session on cultivating conversations of hope in a culture of crisis. He turned content from that session into an article that will be released in a forthcoming issue in the Journal of Christian Higher Education (the January-March 2024 special issue); it has been adapted as a shorter resource here.

CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES

have had significant conflicts with the surrounding culture on social issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage and transgenderism, and critical race theory. What is different in recent years is that the venues of these controversies have begun to change: The conflicts that were once external are now internal. Many fear that culture wars have now become civil wars within many Christian institutions.

These are not controversies between Christian beliefs and a secular worldview. These conflicts are happening between committed Christians who give biblical reasons for their convictions. These stories are not surprising just because Christians disagree — even a casual reading of the New Testament would make disagreements between believers expected. What is striking is the anger, animosity, and contempt expressed in many of these discussions. The trend toward affective polarization in the broader culture is clearly found in our Christian institutions as well.

In early 2020, Biola University launched the Winsome Conviction Project (WCP) to help improve the communication climate regarding contentious issues and to address the challenges of polarization on our campus and in culture more broadly. Our mission was to facilitate large and small group conversations in which deeply held convictions would engage honest disagreements in a virtuous communication climate. Our primary concern was not to generate agreement. It was to make room for mutual love and respect, even in the face of disagreement. We were particularly concerned to help participants care deeply, think clearly, speak graciously, and listen patiently.

This article gives a brief account of some of the efforts we have found helpful on our campus, as well as some of the lessons learned. The hope is that our experience will encourage other universities to engage differences within their respective communities and to experiment with techniques for developing deeply held convictions without dividing our communities.

ENGAGING CONFLICT THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

To respond to challenging conversations and tensions on campus, the WCP initiated a series of interventions aimed at facilitating better discourse, decreasing polarization, increasing mutual understanding, and promoting both social and intellectual virtues. These programs and events included both small groups and large public events on campus, as well as trainings and workshops in schools, churches, and Christian organizations.

One of the most important ways to change a communication climate is by having lots of small group conversations. Large, public events have

their place, but when dozens or hundreds of people gather — even those with a robust Q&A session — most people are passive. Small groups are different. In group of six to 10, everyone can contribute both by listening and by speaking. We have found these groups to be invaluable for creating healthy conversations. No matter the setting or focus, a clear structure and a moderator who enforced the structure were essential to a successful conversation. Below are some of the kinds of discussion group experiences that we offered to the Biola community.

"Can We Talk About This?" This group, meant to help faculty talk about important social and political issues, was launched in the fall of 2020 by way of an email to all faculty members from the provost's office, which read in part:

Do you long for a safe space to explore contentious issues facing our culture today? Many of us would love to talk to others with different viewpoints, but it just doesn't seem safe. In fact, it often seems downright dangerous. So we gravitate to echo-chamber groups, even though we long for a safe space to do something more. *But safe spaces are made, not born.*

We had over a dozen faculty respond to the invitation. Before the first meeting, we sent out a survey with seven issues. For each issue, two positions were given — one using statements from the Democratic party platform and the other from the Republican party platform. Participants were asked to identify the statements they most agreed with. We identified the four issues our participants most disagreed about and used them as discussion topics for each meeting. The meetings took place on Zoom, which we found to be surprisingly effective. Each session lasted 90 minutes, ensuring everyone had time to participate.

We also discovered that many of our faculty felt uninformed about some of the issues that we talked about, so we distributed short readings (blogs or brief articles) before each session so everyone could get up to speed on the issue. We asked faculty to tell us after the final session what they found to be particularly valuable. Answers included appreciation for hearing different perspectives; value in a discussion format that promoted seeking understanding (not persuasion); and appreciation for the safe space to engage in conversations with a small number of people. The main challenge for the moderator was keeping contributions to a relatively brief 2-3 minutes. The structure of the conversation exercises went a long way toward mitigating contentious interactions. (See "Conversation Chain" for further discussion of what this looked like.)

Social Justice Reading Group. This group emerged from two colleagues who shared an interest in surfing but disagreed on matters related to social justice. They decided to team up together and start a group that read and

Photo courtesy of Richard Langer



RICHARD LANGER

Professor of Theology and Director of the Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning, Biola University



CONVERSATION CHAIN

This exercise was developed by the Winsome Conviction Project and has been used in a wide variety of workshops, events, and small groups. The structure allows participants to engage in a sustained conversation about a controversial topic, but in a controlled fashion.

The chain begins with one person saying, "Here's what I think I think about _____." The links of the conversation chain are formed by requiring participants to make an intentional positive link to the previous speaker before adding their own contribution using the following pattern:

1. Here's what I heard you saying...
2. Here's what I resonated with... (or "something I agreed with," "something that impacted me," "something that made me stop and think," etc.)
3. Here's what I'd like to add to the conversation... (or, alternatively, a person might invite further comment from someone who has already spoken: "I wonder if you could tell me more about this...")

The moderator is responsible for reminding people to follow the structure and to be sure to give meaningful responses. We have noticed that people become eager to share their opinion and tend to rush through the first two questions. Moderators need to help people resist this temptation. The sequence of steps is important. Following the structure maintains civility and mutual respect, but it also slows down the interaction and gives people time to process what they have heard.

discussed each other's favorites texts or articles about social justice. Additional participants were recruited in such a way as to assure a balance of differing viewpoints, and most participants remained in the group for almost three years. The readings included material on Catholic social thought, critical race theory, biblical justice, and other related topics. They did not use structured conversation tools — the readings themselves provided the structure.

Departmental Discussion Groups. Individual academic departments have participated, organized, and moderated discussion groups to address important, controversial, or divisive issues related to the activities or teaching focus of the department. These groups are intended to address foundational issues that impact the department, but not specific academic programs or teaching loads. So, for example, one department structured a moderated conversation to discuss how race should be engaged both among faculty and students, and also to reflect on our institutional practices in this regard. One of our clear lessons from this experience is that the time of a normal departmental meeting is insufficient for a good conversation, since there always seems to be regular departmental business that demands attention. In the future, we are planning similar exercises built around dinner meetings.

PUBLIC FORUMS AND LARGE GROUP EVENTS

In addition to the small groups, we hosted several larger events. Some were “Duologues,” a term we coined to describe a public discussion between two people with differing views that is structured to be a conversation rather than a debate. These were evening events that were open to the public, but they

ACHIEVING DISAGREEMENT SOUNDS EASY, BUT MISUNDERSTANDING IS MUCH MORE COMMON THAN REAL DISAGREEMENT. ACHIEVING REAL DISAGREEMENT ALWAYS INVOLVES BOTH FACTS AND FEELINGS.

were also introduced to the Biola community in a morning chapel service. The participants were drawn exclusively from our own faculty members. These events were well attended and generally well received. (In fact, it was through one of these events that two donors came forward; their generosity resulted in the formal creation of the Winsome Conviction Project.)

In addition to the Duologues, we hosted a variety of other public events with guest speakers to maintain a tangible emphasis on civil discourse about contentious issues. The WCP also launched the *Winsome Conviction Podcast* and is actively involved in writing and speaking both locally and nationally. Facilitating a wide variety of trainings, workshops and consultations with Christian schools, churches, and Christian organizations was valuable for refining many of the activities we used in our on-campus events. We discovered a remarkable consistency in the challenges facing the Christian community regardless of size, geographical location, or ministry focus, but the specifics of these events move beyond the focus of this article.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is helpful to synthesize what we have learned by drawing some lessons from our experience, but it is also important to regard these lessons as provisional reports rather than the confirmed findings of a systematic research project. With this clarification in place, here are some lessons we have learned about helping people speak face-to-face without going toe-to-toe.

Achieving disagreement is a worthwhile goal. Achieving disagreement sounds deceptively easy, but achieving *misunderstanding* is much more common than achieving real *disagreement*. The easiest way to test if one has really achieved disagreement is to have a person to state the position of their opponent. Until you can state the opinion of your opponent in a way that makes them nod their head and say, “Yes—you’ve got it,” you have failed to achieve disagreement. Achieving real disagreement always involves both facts and feelings. We don’t achieve disagreement until the conflicting parties can clearly state what each other believes *and* why the matter is so important to them.

Exchanging stories, not just conclusions. Healthy conversations usually include a lot of backstories about conviction formation. Sharing only the

final statement of one’s conviction masks the reasoning process that went into forming the conviction. In all cases, we want to bring our thinking in line with biblical teaching. If an issue is not directly addressed in Scripture, then getting to a specific, action-guiding conviction requires quite a bit of philosophical and theological reasoning, which is not always clear when we just state our final conclusion. We need to view this like a math test for which one not only gives an answer but also shows the work.

In short, convictions have a backstory. Leading workshops that require participants to unpack the black box of their convictions has proven helpful in at least two ways. First, hearing a story slows down the conversation and decreases quick and dismissive responses. Second, when people are pressed to tell the story of a conviction, they often discover that it isn’t as easy as it sounds. The complexities of real life often require nuanced thinking that is hard for all of us; admitting this can prod us toward intellectual humility.

Seeking to be curious instead of seeking to be victorious. Our small group events served as hotbeds of curiosity. It did not take long for people to get excited about asking someone to “tell me more.” It is such a simple phrase, but it opens the door to so many powerful stories and unexpected insights. However, a desire to win the argument or convert a person to another viewpoint is the enemy of curiosity. In a highly polarized environment, showing curiosity toward the other side is often misread as being unfaithful to our own side. Therefore, curiosity demands courage, especially if other members of your in-group are present.

Practicing a hermeneutic of charity instead of suspicion. Put simply, a hermeneutic of suspicion refuses to take another person’s words at face value and instead tries to find the hidden things that shape what they feel or believe. In contrast, a hermeneutic of charity gives an intentionally generous reading to the comments of others and gives them the benefit of the doubt. It need not assume that everything people say is right or that all their self-perceptions are accurate. It simply begins with the best and most reasonable understanding of what a person has said, rather than assuming the worst of every statement.

It is natural to think that a hermeneutic of charity is biblical and a hermeneutic of suspicion is unbiblical. In reality, however, we encounter both charity and suspicion in Scripture. The biblical corrective is not to eliminate a hermeneutic of suspicion, but rather to apply it to ourselves instead of others. This is difficult and counterintuitive for many of us, so we developed some preparatory exercises for participants in our workshops. In particular, we wrote a five-day personal devotional guide that began with helping people avoid thinking of themselves too highly and instead cultivating a sober introspection (Rom 12:3). The devotional also encouraged prayerfully asking God to search hearts and reveal any hidden, hurtful ways (Psalm 139:23-24). Toward others, it asked people to identify and meditate on positive qualities in those with whom they disagree and even express gratitude for ways in which they may have blessed a person or the community of which they were a part. This devotional has often been identified as a particularly valuable part of our conversation workshops.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the last several years, we have put substantial effort into having healthy conversations about the conflicting convictions within our community. We have had many successful group experiences — both large and small. We have been encouraged by many individual stories. We have developed strategies and structures for having good conversations despite our differences, and many of these have proved effective.

But all of this has taken place against a cultural backdrop that is increasingly dark and contentious. We are experiencing consistent and ever-increasing pressure towards polarization. We explicitly state that our goal is not creating unanimity, but even when that has been acknowledged, it is hard to fully celebrate healthy and respectful disagreements. Our hearts seem to yearn for agreement, and anything less than that can feel like a disappointment that drains more out of our emotional tanks than it puts in. We believe that pursuing community that includes disagreement is the right thing to do, and over the course of time it pays off in a better life for the institutions of which we are a part, but progress feels slow and painful.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, learning to listen to others and respect them as human beings made in the image of God is not something that is optional. It is an essential task of Christian discipleship. In a similar way, creating institutional structures that preserve Christian fidelity and at the same time allow for freedom of conscience and diversity of thought simply must be done, no matter how difficult it might prove. 🙏



Counseling and Sexuality on Christian Campuses

New research examines how CCCU counseling centers are serving their sexual and gender minority students.

**MARK A. YARHOUSE, JANET B. DEAN,
AND STEPHEN P. STRATTON**

IN RECENT YEARS, there have been several surveys conducted at religious institutions of higher education seeking to learn more about the experiences of sexual and gender minority students seeking and/or being referred for counseling services.

One such survey was published in 2021 by College Pulse on behalf of the Religious Exemption Accountability Project (REAP) and discussed in an *Inside Higher Ed* article (“Being LGBTQ+ on a Christian Campus”). One person quoted in the article claimed the survey showed some students “face mandatory counseling, reparative therapy, and loss of campus privileges when their identities are brought to the attention of campus administration.” The context of that quote made it seem as though this was common, but findings of the survey itself showed that it was a very small percentage — less than 10% of students indicated they were “suggested counseling” or other efforts to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

While every student story is important and worthy of consideration, the *Inside*

Higher Ed article and others like it make it seem that sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) or gender identity change efforts (GICE) are widely accepted and commonly practiced in Christian college counseling centers. We (the authors) have each worked in, trained in, provided training to, or directed a counseling center at a Christian college or university. We are uniquely familiar with those settings. The declaration that SOCE or GICE are widely accepted and commonly practiced in Christian college counseling centers has often been confusing to us, as we have not seen it practiced, nor have we seen it as a part of any training or equipping of counselors in such settings. Even the REAP data does not show it as a common practice — yet the perception persists.

At the same time, we know that sexual and gender minority students do indeed seek out mental health services at their college or university. In the research done for *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses*, 34% of participants reported that they had already gone to the counseling center for assistance, and another 15% indicated that they would go. This makes sense given the concerns raised in various studies about potential health and mental health disparities for sexual and gender minority students both at private religious institutions and at public universities (see, e.g., “Queer-Spectrum and Trans-Spectrum Student Experiences in American Higher Education,” Greathouse et. al., 2018).

Thus, the REAP research and subsequent discussions made us wonder: How do counselors at Christian colleges and university counseling centers actually

respond to sexual minority and gender minority students who seek mental health services?

The Approach We Took

To answer that question, we developed a study with a goal of better understanding the counseling and referrals provided at CCCU member institutions when students seek services for concerns related to sexual or gender identity. Counseling staff in these settings have a unique role when one looks across college mental health centers in higher education. Counselors, like those in CCCU schools, navigate the counseling needs of the students, the mission of the college/university, and the ethics of their particular professional associations. We sought to gain a better understanding of how staff think through different goals in treatment, particularly in light of recent claims that students who seek services at counseling centers at CCCU institutions may have negative experiences.

Staff in these settings learned about the study via email invitation from the counseling center director. Staff who were interested in participating in the study were then directed to a secure, anonymous questionnaire.

A sample of 81 staff members reviewed six different clinical vignettes that presented variations on sexual or gender minority students seeking services at their college counseling center. We presented scenarios related to faith and sexuality or gender: how being gay fits with their Christian faith; dating the same gender; feeling troubled by same-sex attractions and requesting help to not act on feelings in relationships; feeling troubled by their same-sex attractions and requesting SOCE; responding to teasing and harassment; and identifying as transgender.

We asked counselors at CCCU schools to rank how they would respond to the various requests for services by providing options that represented ways to respond that align with traditional religious



The responses show a more balanced, nuanced approach that seems very much in keeping with what might be expected from all mental health professionals, including those at a Christian college or university.

teaching, align with institutional policies, align with student values and goals, align with an “affirmational approach” (that is, emphasis on the student as a gay person regardless of policy), and align with sexual or gender change goals. Participants could also indicate on a five-point Likert-like scale from *Definitely Not Discuss* (1) to *Definitely Discuss* (5) how likely they were to discuss any of these considerations if the student did not object. We also asked them to rank on a five-point Likert-like scale from *Extremely Unlikely* (1) to *Extremely Likely* (5) that they would refer a case out based on the information obtained.

What We Found

There was great consistency in how staff indicated they would approach these clinical concerns about sexuality and gender. Across the board, therapists prioritized treatments that focused on students and adapted to how students best engaged and processed the questions they were struggling with. In fact, 9

out of 10 counselors ranked a student-focused intervention as among their top two preferred options, and 95% would likely or definitely discuss students’ own processing, questioning, and values.

This emphasis on shaping therapy around students may explain how staff ordered the other treatment options. For example, in addition to first using a student-focused approach, counseling staff tended to next emphasize an affirmational approach to the student as a gay person regardless of institutional policies. (The phrase “affirmational approach” may have meant different things to different respondents, as it could convey just acknowledging the reality of the student being gay, or it could have been taken to mean walking with a student who may be stepping into or reflecting an identity or affiliation with the mainstream LGBTQ community, or something along those lines.)

The two exceptions to this were when the vignette specifically presented a student wanting to steward their sexuality within the bounds of their faith

or a student sharing they are transgender. In both cases, staff tended to prioritize a traditionally religious approach to help students respond to their questions regarding sexuality and behavior second to the student-focused approach. Across all scenarios, the likelihood of discussing various approaches was largely dependent upon students’ presenting concerns.

When it comes to addressing institutional policies with a student and helping them align with policies, staff generally ranked that fourth. The exception was with the scenario in which the student presents with concerns about the school’s policies — even then, however, it was still ranked as less important than having a student focus and an affirmational approach. About half of the clinicians would be likely or very likely to include some discussion of institutional policies in their work with the students. In light of the community context for Christian higher education, it is presumed that understanding the influences of the unique environment at CCCU schools might be important, even in the more common student-centered approach.

Regardless of student concerns, and even when the student presented with wanting to change attractions, clinicians ranked the approach of shifting sexual attractions as the least prioritized treatment option for all vignettes. Shifting sexual attractions would be the closest to what is referred to as sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) or the equivalent with gender identity change efforts (GICE). Across all scenarios, 80-90% of the clinicians indicated they most likely would *not* include this approach in their conversations with

students unless students specifically asked for this topic to be included.

For our sample, the pattern of rankings seems to suggest that the majority of counseling staff at these CCCU institutions tailor their treatment approaches to the presenting concerns and personal values of the students seeking help, with apparently some awareness of the appropriateness of the various treatment approaches.

Interestingly, staff were not likely to refer students to outside treatment providers. Only about 10% indicated some likelihood of doing so in each of the vignettes. The counseling scenarios in our study seemed to be managed first and foremost by campus services, not outside religious or counseling agencies.

The one exception to these low referral rates occurred when the student presented with a desire to change their sexual orientation. Here, just over 30% reported being likely or very likely to refer such students to counseling services external to the campus. In commenting on reasons for referral, clinicians most often cited clients’ goals, ethical and clinical concerns about conversion therapy, and lack of competency in this area. Several clinicians indicated that they would discuss their concerns, including research findings, with clients seeking this kind of treatment.

Concluding Thoughts

While research continues to survey the experience of sexual and gender minority students seeking counseling at Christian colleges and universities, there has been less research sharing the perspective of the counselors themselves. Since the

discussions shape public perceptions of Christian college counseling services, having this information is helpful in correcting the narrative.

Our findings showed counselors respond primarily in a student-focused manner because they want to help the students clarify for themselves how they process and respond to their counseling questions. This came as no surprise to us, given our own experience; it also is in line with the training that counselors receive for professional practice.

But it might come as a surprise to those who assume counseling services on CCCU campuses must be dominated by an institutional agenda or a values-based approach that focuses exclusively on conventional religiosity. Yet the responses from these 81 professionals show a more balanced, nuanced approach that seems very much in keeping with what might be expected from all mental health professionals, including those caring for students at a Christian college or university.

It is important to hear from those professionals who provide counseling services at CCCU institutions. Besides speaking to misperceptions of others outside of these settings, such information can inform future counselor center training related to care for sexual and gender minorities. This approach can also be incorporated into an overall campus response to students navigating sexual or gender identity and faith, so that students are seen, heard, and respected in ways that serve their mental health needs as they navigate sexual, gender, and faith development in the college years. 🙏



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STRATEGIC PLANNING THAT'S TRULY STRATEGIC

Leadership lessons from a study of 108 strategic plans.

BY AIMEE HOSEMANN AND ROB ZINKAN,
WITH CONNOR LAGRANGE

A core tenet of the CCCU's work is to assist institutions in addressing and engaging current issues of the day. At the 2022 International Forum, Aimee Hosemann, RHB's director of qualitative research, and Rob Zinkan, vice president for marketing leadership at RHB, led a session on developing strategic plans that are truly strategic. This article is adapted from that presentation and from their executive summary, written with graduate student research assistant Connor LaGrange. To access the full executive summary, visit www.rhb.com/strategic-planning.

Strategic planning is a universal experience in higher education, but high-quality plans do not seem to be ubiquitous. At RHB, our work requires us to mine strategic plans for language and imagery we can use to help institutions meet enrollment or organizational goals, often in response to requests for proposals that explicitly mention strategic plans as orienting documents. Our general impression has been that we have had to do a lot of digging to get to the gems in those plans. Specifically, we felt that plans often did not present or reflect the best scenes in institutional stories, nor did plans often map clear directions for where an institution should go and how to tell when it arrived.

We became curious about whether it was really that common for strategic plans to seem insufficient to the purposes they could be serving, and we realized we were not entirely sure what purpose these documents served. Nor were we sure for whom these documents are produced. So we decided to test our general impressions against a corpus of active strategic plans. The instability of 2020 was a further driver for this research. We wanted to know whether these plans lent stability and guidance during the historic and fast-moving

challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the spreading movement to create social justice and racial equity.

We undertook a study of more than 100 strategic plans covering institutions of different sizes, with a goal of capturing a plan for one public and one private institution in each state when available online. We included in our dataset strategic plans from public and private institutions that were publicly available on institutional websites. All 50 states were represented in the dataset at least one time.

To sum up our results, we found that the vast majority of strategic plans are low on strategy and high on operational planning; they also tend to not be written with audience clarification, prioritization, and mobilization in mind. By that we mean it can be difficult for people who care deeply about action and accountability in strategic endeavors to know how to contribute just by reading these plans.

However, out of the 108 plans we studied, we identified 16 that contained some of the most strategic tendencies. These 16 plans included much clarity about process, goals, and measuring outcomes including key performance indicators (KPIs). Wanting to understand how these plans came to contain strategic commitments, we invited the presidents and chancellors of these 16 institutions to participate in interviews about their strategic plans. What follows is an overview of the eight characteristics these successful plans had in common.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN
TO BE STRATEGIC?

Before identifying the shared themes of successful strategic plans, we must clarify what it means to be strategic. Broadly speaking, strategy requires change: changing one’s behavior or making choices that others do not.

Many so-called strategic plans are actually heavy on tactical or operational plans. If you are thinking about doing something you’ve been doing but enhancing those efforts, you are probably not thinking strategically. If you are planning to do something you should be doing already, you are not thinking strategically. You may actually be thinking tactically about how to refine a pre-existing process or find new ways to assess success of initiatives, and you may have more or less nailed down how that might work. But that is still not necessarily strategy.

Here’s an “opposite test” from Peter Eckel: consider an action you are thinking about taking and flip it so you are considering doing the opposite. Would you ever do that? If you would not do the opposite of an action, it’s probably not strategic. Ultimately, strategy is an exercise in making choices — where an institution will compete, where it will invest, how it will define success — which a strategic plan should reflect. If everything is a priority (one plan we saw had more than 20 overarching goals), how will your campus community and other stakeholders know what is most important and what the institution’s direction is?

COMMON ELEMENTS OF
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC PLANS

- 1

As part of an inclusive, transparent process, successful plans contained a description of a process of brutally honest self-examination and a genuine desire to forthrightly engage challenges. The best-written plans were by those who were able to take an honest look at ugly truths and beautiful gems within their reach. Those who most clearly stated the challenges they faced and who could also catalogue the many wonderful things and people that make an institution distinctive were best equipped to make a persuasive case that the goals and outcomes they set were the correct ones.
- 2

Successful plans included an intent to involve marketing and communications functions early in the process as fundamental agents in creating engagement with the people who matter most to the institution. Over the last decade-plus, the rise of the CMO (chief marketing officer) has brought the importance of the marketing function to a leadership role in higher ed, but our study showed that even so, marketing is still seen primarily as a promotional function. But marketing can serve a more strategic role beyond that, such as informing program development and helping shape the constituent experience. Since strategic plans touch all facets of an institution, marketing can bring an institution-wide perspective that layers in a constituent-centric understanding of market perceptions and opportunities.

- 3

Successful plans envisioned a detailed and holistic perspective toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging goals and metrics. The overwhelmingly top priority in all the plans we saw was developing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives. Successful plans envisioned this in holistic ways. Not only were there demographic goals in terms of recruitment or student success measures, but there were also goals for making the physical plant safer and more accessible for different abilities, updating curricular offerings, or developing new and innovative relationships with alumni from diverse backgrounds who could mentor students. We also saw that initiatives for faculty, staff, and administration were addressed as well, such as thorough plans to improve hiring, mentorship, and retention at all points on the employment ladder. Successful plans also reiterated how DEIB work is everyone’s responsibility, not just that of a few people or teams.
- 4

Institutional leaders who applied a mental framework of abundance thinking, rather than a scarcity model, were better able to inspire their campus communities toward exploration. Even in times of challenge and tremendous uncertainty, these leaders assume a stance in which there are enough resources to meaningfully move an institution forward after a period of thoughtful decision making. We have probably all heard (and maybe used) the phrase “doing more with less” many times since the economic downturn of 2008. This mental shift requires moving from this perspective to one that favors the assumption that you will find what you need. It reveals a different universe of possibilities and provides an opportunity to create a shared sense of drive around new priorities — enabling development of true strategic goals.



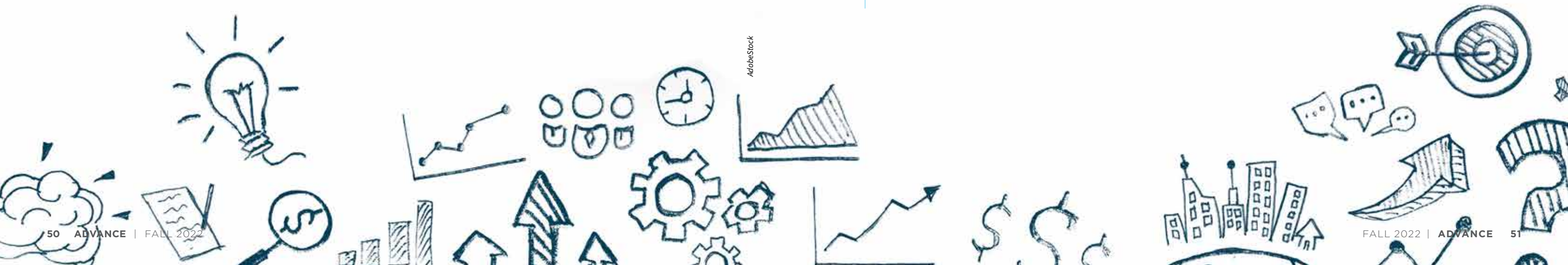
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STRATEGIC PLANS SHOULD CONTAIN EXPLICIT CALLS TO ACTION, SO THAT READERS — THOSE BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION — KNOW WHAT TO DO ONCE THEY READ THE PLAN, WHICH CAN INCLUDE ADVOCATING WITH LEGISLATORS, DONATING, VOLUNTEERING, OR SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH THEIR COMMUNITIES.

5 Successful strategic plans assigned accountability and process management roles, often to a cabinet-level staff member who would oversee the plan's execution. We spoke to presidents who either deputized an administrator or staff member with duties to oversee the process, or who hired a person specifically for a role with a title along the lines of “chief strategy officer.” Another option is to assign oversight duties to specific members of working groups or committees that have scope over portions of the plan.

6 In developing and executing a successful strategic plan, presidents led in the way that was most authentic to them, with the discernment to assess when to be visible in the process and when not to. One president put it this way: “College presidents have to be visionary, but not hallucinatory.” Presidents need to have some big ideas that ultimately also need to be doable. That means presidents need to understand what kinds of initiatives they can back, but also that they need to be astute judges of campus, cultural, and political climates. They also need to be willing to listen to others who have advice on where that line between visionary and hallucinatory is.

7 Successful plans took an audience-centric perspective: audiences for the plan were defined early in the process, and the plans were written to be both pleasant to read and practically useful. As one university put it, the strategic plan was meant to be used, “not to sit up on a shelf.” Thus, the first step is to determine who the audiences for your strategic plan are. Consider who your various stakeholders or constituents are and what kinds of engagement a new plan can create for them. Plans that are poorly designed, that contain dense or un-specific language about opportunities and pathways, and that provide vague measures for tracking success are not user-friendly. Plans should contain explicit calls to action so that readers — those both internal and external to the institution — know what to do once they have read the plan, which can include (among many possibilities) advocating with legislators, donating, volunteering, or spreading the word through their communities.

8 Student success and well-being was as fundamental an aspect of the successful plans as the institutions' own. It makes a lot of sense from a pragmatic angle to create plans that are tightly focused on institutional success and legacy. After all, the job of a president and cabinet is to steward through the current moment and set up the next people in those roles for success. But the plans with the most strategic tendencies discussed students and student well-being and success more frequently than others. Undergraduate and graduate students were also members of working groups or task forces, giving them the ability to contribute to the process and to see how it worked so they could explain it to others. Moreover, the plans often conceptualized post-graduation success as a life well-lived, with a more holistic approach to outcomes beyond short-term placement rates.

WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, SUCCESSFUL PLANS CAN HELP

It would be the sensible thing to suppose, given how much disruption has occurred since March 2020, that even the best-considered strategic plans would be rearranged or even discarded. But as one of our interviewees noted, crises like the COVID-19 pandemic don't reveal new problems. They reveal the truth about problems that already exist — the ones that we should have been aware of already.

Remember, well-designed strategic plans excel in pointing toward solutions that have already been identified by an honest, open, and critical self-examination. Thus, we were both surprised and excited to hear from our interviewees how the strategic planning process had actually prepared them to meet the challenges we've faced. The pandemic and movement for racial justice did not actually introduce new challenges — they confirmed for how well the plans identified existing challenges.

Every institution is on its own journey, and strategic planning is part of it. Since we identified 16 most-strategic plans, that means 92 of the 108 plans we studied were not as strategic. Consider the time, effort, and emotion that went into producing documents that will not do justice to the important work of the institutions that produced them. That's too bad — strategic planning can be a positive, unifying experience for your institution.

We hope that this research provided examples of what has worked for other campuses. We are not interested in prescribing how you should do things on your own campus. What we want is to give you grace to know yourself and your institution, and the flexibility to make the right decisions for your context. You do have the power to design an effective strategic plan, one that sets your institution on the trajectory for stability and desired growth over the long term. 📌

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Navigating the Hard Work of Faith Integration



Three considerations for
developing faith integration
on campus for a new
generation of students.

BY REGINALD FINGER

AMONG CCCU INSTITUTIONS, the phrase “integration of faith and learning” (or its shorter form, “faith integration”) is widely understood to be foundational to our work. But what *is* the integration of faith and learning?

In 2020, I was entrusted with a key role in faculty development on this very subject at Indiana Wesleyan University, where I also serve as an epidemiology faculty member in the School of Health Sciences. To prepare, I embarked on a rapid journey of reading and key conversations. For the previous five years, I had led an online class for CCCU faculty on integrating scripture into the teaching of health sciences, but now my assignment was much broader: promoting faith integration for all academic disciplines in ways that went above and beyond the integration of scriptural themes in coursework.

The voices of long-respected leaders in this field resounded with this challenge: “Do not let it be said of your university that everything outside of your Bible and theology department is indistinguishable from a secular institution.” This means that as important as things such as a robust chapel program, prayers before classes, and in-class and on-line devotional presentations are, they alone will not suffice. The coursework itself needs to

be addressed. Until everything taught in every academic discipline has been subjected to the lens of an identifiably *scriptural* Christian worldview and adjusted as needed to be in alignment, the job is not done. This is not just about course materials, either — the teaching styles, behavior, and character of the professors must evidence both a growing, living personal Christian faith and a sincere journey of participation in this integration of faith and academic principles in their own work.

I was graciously able to share what I learned on this journey with a group of attendees at the CCCU International Forum in February 2022. The group included some of the top minds on faith integration in the CCCU, including Dr. Paul Kaak from Azusa Pacific, who has authored a 72-page manual

on the subject and leads a team of faith integration scholars at APU. I was also honored by the attendance of President Joel Pearsall of my alma mater, Northwest Nazarene University, as well as my own university provost, Dr. Stacy Hammons. The session was a time of lively discussion, and so I share here the three categories we discussed, in the hopes that they might be useful for further discussion on CCCU campuses.

The Ongoing Spiritual Formation of Faculty Scholars

For there to be successful integration of faith and learning in the classroom, CCCU institutions need to support the ongoing spiritual formation of their faculty. To be clear, this does not replace the responsibility each individual faculty member has in their own development through things like church attendance or Bible studies, nor is it the same kind of development that a church provides.

The nature of this development also might look different from campus to campus. For example, in my own position, I have to share my testimony on how I have been learning and growing in faith in front of my colleagues twice a year.

The challenge here is for each institution to decide what degree of accountability for spiritual formation is appropriate, given the wide variety of institutional experiences and expectations across the CCCU. Suggestions I floated, such as requiring

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"Do not let it be said of your university that everything outside of your Bible and theology department is indistinguishable from a secular institution."

each faculty member to meet regularly with a spiritual accountability partner or requiring a specific scripturally based reconciliation pathway for identified conflicts on the job, were met with interesting facial expressions.

Dealing with the Discrepancies in Worldview

This involves helping faculty navigate the discrepancies that can arise between Christian principles and generally accepted secular dogma within an academic field. One of the most helpful ways to do so is utilizing the Christian philosopher and faith-learning expert William Hasker's three models:

- *Compatibilist*: This approach comes when a scholar sees no tension between a discipline and the Christian faith; they are compatible and thus easy to exhibit in discussion and exemplify in practice.
- *Transformationalist*: Scholars in this approach see some tension between the Christian faith and a discipline; they see elements in the discipline that offer necessary insights and perspectives but then must go further in “remaking” or “transforming” the discipline into a Christian orientation.
- *Reconstructionist*: In this strategy, scholars see the tensions between a discipline and the Christian faith to be so fundamental that the discipline needs to be “reconstructed” from its foundation with Christian principles; the secular foundations are too anti-Christian to be valid.

One might suppose that a scholar's choice from among these models is governed principally by the kind of discipline in which the scholar works. In subjects like biostatistics, for instance, one is hard-pressed to find anything in the coursework that could possibly be seen as conflicting with a Christian worldview. At the other extreme, subjects such as anthropology, psychology, and philosophy involve multiple concepts that have propelled

debate that has raged for centuries both among Christian scholars and between Christians and those outside the faith. Here transformationalist and reconstructionist models are likely to be recommended.

However, interestingly, both among the scholars in the room in Dallas and among about 70 faculty who participated in webinars on faith integration at Indiana Wesleyan University in March, not everyone in the same discipline agrees on the choice of model. For instance, some nursing faculty, citing the faith-based roots that have nourished the nursing profession for the last two centuries, lean in the compatibilist direction, while others, wary of trends in the profession on subjects such as sexuality and reproductive health, urge a transformationalist approach.

The good news is that all the scholars I have interacted with agree that faith integration cannot be left to a few leaders in the field — it is the job of every faculty member. That gives the Holy Spirit a broad avenue to do mighty acts through our faculties, on behalf of our students.

Developing an Approach that Works for All Students

As colleges continue seeing an increase in students who have little or no

familiarity with Christian principles, it is important that whatever faith-integration approaches are developed on campus work both for students who are well-versed in scriptural principles and for those with no faith background.

An important first step is making sure the classroom is a place free from peer or professorial hostility — the adage “no bad questions” comes to mind. It might also be helpful to require students to read and respond to scripture texts as part of a discussion so as to make sure everyone has, indeed, read and considered a Bible passage.

This line of presentation received broad acceptance from the group, as fellow scholars mentioned that we should be wary of how much prior knowledge of Christian principles and Bible passages we should expect of students in class. It takes more work and can be a struggle, but taking the time to help students learn biblical ideas and background knowledge is important in helping them succeed in understanding and applying their faith to their work. After all, as precious and important as Christian higher education is, it is the means to an end — that end being the transformation of future generations for Christ. 🙏

REGINALD FINGER, M.D., is an assistant professor at Indiana Wesleyan University's School of Health Sciences.



Recommended Reading

David S. Dockery, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society Through Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008)

William Hasker, “Faith-Learning Integration: An Overview,” *Christian Scholar's Review* 21, no. 3 (March 1992): 234-248

George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Stephen Moroney, “Where Faith and Learning Intersect: Re-Mapping the Contemporary Terrain,” *Christian Scholar's Review* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 139-155



Four Ways to Help Your Institution

Navigate the Great Resignation

Bad news: The Great Resignation is here to stay. Good news: There are steps colleges and universities can take to mitigate its impact.

By William Vanderbloemen

William Vanderbloemen is the CEO and founder of Vanderbloemen Search Group, a pastor search firm, and author of Culture Wins: The Roadmap to an Irresistible Workplace.

IN 2020, THE PANDEMIC significantly impacted all businesses, including educational institutions. We saw the warning signs and trends pointing to massive job turnover before the Great Resignation became a reality, and we continue to see evidence that the job churn of the past year is likely to stick around for at least a couple more.

We have helped hundreds of educational institutions, non-profits, and churches navigate this brave new world. As we continue to serve and learn, we are seeing best practices emerge that we believe can help mitigate the impact of the turnover that we believe will be with us for at least the next two years.

1

ENABLE — AND ENCOURAGE — OPEN COMMUNICATION.

In seasons of transition, it is critical that open communication between faculty, administration, students, and boards is not only allowed, but *encouraged*. During times of transition, people assume the worst, not the best. And under-communication is a petri dish for bad assumptions. Smart educational institutions are upping the number of meetings they have (not lowering them), with a clear focus on communication around change. If your team feels able to ask honest questions about their futures at the school, trust will be fostered and stability will grow. One way to immediately encourage this is to perform a culture audit to better understand what is preventing communication. (If you're interested in learning more on this, my book *Culture Wins: The Roadmap to an Irresistible Workplace* identifies eight key areas of cultural health.)

2

ENCOURAGE REST.

Anyone on your staff who has stuck around to this point is likely experiencing some level of burnout. The pandemic and the Great Resignation have only exacerbated the burnout dynamic. During lockdowns, everyone was asked to move to more virtual work, which created a myriad of “other duties as necessary” in everyone’s job description. This was especially true in the educational sphere. Chances are, your staff is dealing with personal exhaustion from the pandemic, plus from possibly navigating political and racial strife that has divided congregations, as well as likely changes to job expectations since the onset of the pandemic. Your team has gone from working one job to working two: They’re maintaining the in-person aspect of the school while now having to also foster an online experience for those attending remotely.

For those in Christian education specifically, there are fewer opportunities than ever for a regular sabbath. You need to not only be encouraging your staff to rest but also providing real, practical ways to do so. Consider giving them additional days off to make up for all the extra time they have worked in the past two years. And check in on them; ask them how they spent their time off, and make sure they spent that time resting rather than catching up on work.

3

LISTEN.

In some ways, this falls under open communication, but it is important that we clarify the ways that leaders should be distinctly listening to their staff. As leaders, we tend to expect to be the ones communicating, rather than being the ones communicated to. Instead of speaking to what you think your staff’s needs are and trying to encourage them, choose to listen for what their needs actually are. Right now, they need you to listen more than you speak. Come up with better, regular, and creative ways to listen to your team members. If they don’t respond one way, try another until you are actually able to hear their needs and adequately respond. Create space for your staff to express their needs, hurts, desires, and expectations.

4

LIMIT WORKING HOURS.

Regardless of whether you think otherwise, it’s not sustainable to work 60-hour weeks regularly. Your staff can’t, either. The human body doesn’t have the bandwidth to sustain that much work, because God designed us to need rest. Consider forming accountability systems to ensure that neither you nor others on your staff are working more than a certain amount. As a leader, this might be frustrating to get used to — we tend to want to pour ourselves completely into our ministerial work and abandon all other needs. But doing so is not as selfless as it seems. You need to set boundaries for yourself and your staff. Ministry in education is a long, long marathon, not a series of sprints. The body may be able to sprint for a while, but eventually it will exhaust itself and cause long-term harm to what it is capable of doing in the future. If you limit how much you and others can work, you will be grateful in the long run.

At Vanderbloemen, because of the breadth of our work, we get to hear from Christian leaders all over the world and the nation. And the key thing we are hearing is that people are struggling in the midst of all of this turnover. We encourage you to have open communication, good policies to protect your staff, and regular rest, but ultimately, no system will be able to fully protect you from turmoil and tiredness. The good news is, at the end of the day, we serve a God whose work cannot be disrupted by the chaos of the world.

As Isaiah 40 says, “He does not grow faint or weary, and His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might, he increases strength.” 🙏

A Necessary Calling

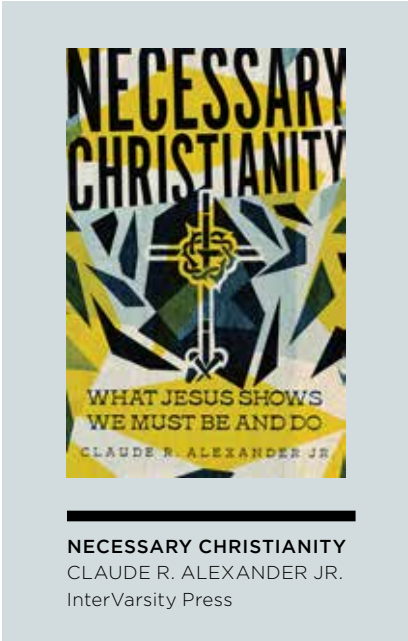
BY CLAUDE R. ALEXANDER JR.

IN LUKE'S STORY of 12-year-old Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:41-52), Jesus says to Mary, "I must be about My Father's business." In saying this, Jesus is emphasizing: *I must keep the calling that I am to pursue in focus.*

Mary says, "Son, why have you done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." Jesus responds, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" While Mary speaks of herself and Joseph, Jesus speaks of himself and God, of the necessity God has laid upon him. There is a necessity God has required of him. There is a necessity God has declared about him. It is that necessity about which he must direct his life. There is a calling upon him that he must pursue.

Jesus doesn't want Mary to be confused. The necessity of his life is not found in the carpentry business. The reason for his being in the world and the reason toward which his life is aimed is not construction. The reason for his life, the necessity of his life, lies not in his occupation but in his vocation. He must be about the Father's business and calling. He must be about what the Father has declared and demanded from his life. He must be about what the Father is laying upon his life.

Necessary Christianity is a maturity in Christ that knows the difference between occupation and vocation. It knows the difference between making a living and living the life God has called us to. While our life includes



our occupation, it's more than our occupation. We are called to a vocation. We have a charge to keep. We live life knowing that the Father has some business for us to attend to. There's an assignment for our life, a calling on our life. God has requirements for our life. He has made a declaration about our life. We must be about our Father's business. We must be about the claim God has made on us. We must be found faithful in the stewardship with which we have been entrusted.

Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" It's as though he was saying, "If you had remembered that I must be about my Father's business, you would have

known where to find me. You would have known where to look for me. You would have known where I was. If you had remembered that I must be about my Father's business, you would have known to look for me in my Father's house first rather than last. You would have known that I'd be where the Father wanted me to be."

When we are about the Father's business, we are found where the Father is. We are found where the Father assigns us and where the Father has called us. There are some places where we must be found when we're about the Father's business. We must be found in the Father's house worshiping him and giving him glory. We must be found in the Father's house learning about him. We must be found in the midst of the fellowship of the saints of God. We must be found in the field being a witness for the Lord. We must be found on our knees praying to God.

We must be found with our delight in the law of the Lord and meditating on his law day and night. When we live a necessary life, people should know where they can find us.

They should know that they can find us pursuing the call of God. 🙏



BISHOP CLAUDE R. ALEXANDER JR. is senior pastor of The Park Church (Charlotte, NC) and a CCCU board member. This has been adapted from his new book, *Necessary Christianity*. ©2022 by Claude Richard Alexander Jr. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press. www.ivpress.com.

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