



COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

ADVANCE

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MAGAZINE

FAITH AND LEARNING

EXPLORING THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION

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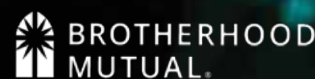
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FROM THE PRESIDENT | [SHIRLEY V. HOOGSTRA, J.D.](#)

Faith Integration: A Gift Beyond Measure



I recently spoke to the board of a CCCU campus. They asked me to do a SWOT analysis (internal strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities, and threats) of higher education, with an emphasis on Christian higher education. I love interacting with board volunteers who serve our campuses. Campuses could not thrive without their expertise, wisdom, and generosity.

In order to understand the SWOT analysis, I reminded them that Christian higher education is part of a larger community of over 4,700 degree-granting institutions within the United States, with more across Canada and the world. The CCCU's membership includes more than 185 in 20 countries.

To use an old boxing metaphor, I believe Christian higher education "punches above its weight." Today, more than ever, the influence and impact of Christian higher education is growing because of our unique mission and calling.

CCCU institutions share three distinct commitments:

- **Christian truth:** a demonstrated commitment by Christian faculty and staff to integrate biblical truth throughout the institution, including teaching and research in all academic disciplines;
- **Christian formation:** a demonstrated commitment to the spiritual formation of students into mature Christ followers through the curriculum and co-curriculum;
- **Christian witness:** a demonstrated commitment to graduate students who advance God's redemptive purposes in the world, living out the Gospel in word and in action.

In this issue of *Advance*, we address the "why" of the first distinctive: the integration of faith and learning. That means weaving one's faith in Christ and our unique Christian perspective into our scholarship, course work, and co-curricular learning, which deepens each student's faith. It's a whole-of-life approach that affects all of campus life, from the arts to athletics, from nursing to residence life. Its importance cannot be overstated.

My SWOT analysis also emphasized that because of our capacity to create a lifelong faith lens through which students see the world, Christian higher education has the educational mission to help the world to flourish.

Unfortunately, human sin has led to cultural decay. We see this decay in the erosion of human character and the incivility of public engagement. What was once ugly and unacceptable behavior is now touted as worthy of imitation. There seems to be a lost appreciation for what is good, true, and noble.

But Christian higher education, done well, is the antidote to culture decay. Journalist Peter Wehner observed that last fall in the *Deseret News* that Christian higher education at its best "re-

fines our sentiments, teaches us to cherish the true and the good, [and] is a gift beyond measure."

To achieve this ideal, the practice and proficiency of integrating faith into all of campus life must be of highest value. It must have the investment of time, resources, creativity, and accountability.

In his essay "Response to Comments on The Soul of the American University Revisited" in the fall 2021 issue of *Christian Scholars Review*, George Marsden put it this way: "Only a small minority of 18-year-olds have ever recognized on their own that study in great literature, the fine arts, history, philosophy, and other languages and cultures are important to broadening their horizons and developing life-long character traits, and shaping them into responsible citizens. Such studies when integrated with solid Christian, theological perspectives have been invaluable aspects of the burgeoning of Christian higher education."

Marsden also recognizes the variety of "valuable ways in which Christian perspectives are being integrated with more scientific, technical, practical, and vocational disciplines." That sort of holistic education, he says, is becoming rare elsewhere, though in the long run it "might prove to be a distinctive advantage [for Christian higher education, vis-à-vis higher education generally]."

The CCCU is committed to supporting each institution's distinct ability to expand and deepen the integration of faith in learning, both in scholarship and in the classroom. True, the SWOT analysis identifies threats that come externally. But the threat most likely to undermine an institution's Christian mission is the atrophy of faith-integration muscles.

We must exercise a daily commitment to the intentional study and practice of great thinkers and practitioners in this field. After all, Christian higher education has over a century of experience in this area of integration. Today, master teachers reflect Christ in all areas and conversations on every campus. We would do well to learn from them.

I often say we are stronger together in Christian higher education. That is especially true when it comes to our work in this distinctive. We do not have to strengthen our faith-integration muscles alone; like all athletes, we benefit from a community of committed practitioners who share similar goals. Let us endeavor in this work for the gold medal so that our practice of integrating faith and learning will be recognized for the excellence it brings to the educational community broadly — those 4,700 other expressions of learning. By its excellence, our practice can be the antidote to decay that results in educational flourishing this side of heaven. 🙏

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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.

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Finding Our Anchor




IN HIS BOOK *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, N.T. Wright says that the task of a Christian “is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second.” In other words, we live lives transformed by the universe-changing event of Easter — and the new creation that Jesus’ death and resurrection instigated and will be completed upon his return.

Like many things, this is so much easier said than it is done. As the decades and centuries go by, the constant barrage of war, famine, disease, changing cultures, new technologies and scientific discoveries, and internal and external corrupting forces have caused constant challenges for Christ’s church as they seek to live lives worthy of him. Yet it is precisely because of God’s grace and the hope Easter provides us that we can see how God has faithfully worked through his people to end war and begin rebuilding; to care for the hungry and the sick; to find ways to right long-held divisions and old injustices; to embrace and even pioneer new technological and scientific discoveries.

Personally, this is one of the greatest benefits of my own experiences as a student of Christian higher education. Certainly those who are curious and have eyes to see can explore how God is working in and through his people and how all things in creation stem from him, regardless of where they went to college or university. But there is something uniquely potent in a Christian college environment — an atmosphere dedicated to educating both mind and heart, with Christ always at the center. Particularly for those who are navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood and wrestling with just who they are and what they believe, a Christian campus community dedicated to Christ-centered, faith-integrated learning can offer insights and hope that other academic contexts just can’t quite reach.

Here again, however, we are, we are faced with the reality that this, too, is easier said than done. We all know the winds buffeting higher education generally and Christian higher education broadly. That’s one of the reasons we’re taking the next couple of issues to get back to the core of the Christian higher education enterprise — when you’re facing a storm, it’s important to recognize and hold on to your anchor. For CCCU institutions, our shared anchor is the commitment to infusing the higher education learning experience with the theology, doctrines, and practices of the orthodox Christian faith — in simpler terms, the integration of faith and learning.

But what does that look like in our current context, where the pandemic rapidly accelerated trends of moving toward hybrid or online learning and away from traditional in-person learning; where an increasing number of students have little to no understanding of the Bible or basic Christian doctrine; where new faculty have not had the training to explore how Christian doctrine interacts and enhances their discipline? How do we even know when we’re being successful in this enterprise?

Those are some of the questions we’re going to explore in this issue and the next. We pray that it will provide a reference and a reminder that “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). 

MORGAN FEDDES SATRE is the managing editor of *Advance*. She holds degrees from two CCCU institutions — a master’s from Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, California) and a bachelor’s from Whitworth University (Spokane, Washington).



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. Highlights of our recent advocacy work include:



Low Financial Value Programs | In January, the Department of Education (ED) put out a request for information (RFI) on how to identify low financial value postsecondary programs so that they can warn prospective students of programs where “total costs exceed the financial benefits provided to students.” The CCCU signed a letter with the American Council on Education and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and we filed our own comment as well. The CCCU urged ED to take a more holistic view of education instead of a narrow approach that views education as solely or primarily about earnings after graduation. CCCU institutions support a coherent approach to education in which the development of the mind, spirit, body, and emotions are seamlessly woven together in the quest not just for knowledge but also for wisdom. Since ED’s approach promotes an incomplete and limited view of education, the CCCU asked that it rescind this RFI and not move forward with plans to create a low-value program list.



Hunter v. Department of Education | On Jan. 13, 2023, Judge Ann Aiken officially granted the motion to dismiss this lawsuit. In March 2021, students from Christian colleges and universities filed suit claiming that the Department of Education propagated discrimination by allowing



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



these institutions to claim the Title IX religious exemption, a 50-year-old law that promotes diversity in higher education. The plaintiffs aimed to prevent students from being able to take federal financial aid to the school of their choice. Judge Aiken’s decision to dismiss this case based on strong legal precedent reaffirmed the constitutional rights of our institutions to live out their deeply and sincerely held religious beliefs, both in policy and in practice. The plaintiffs appealed the case to the 9th Circuit on March 13, 2023. While we remain confident of the legal basis of the judge’s opinion, we take nothing for granted. We will be strategically answering and responding to the appeal and look forward to continuing our work to protect religious freedom and supporting the Christian mission of our member institutions.

Third-Party Servicers | The Department of Education (ED) issued new guidance that dramatically expanded its interpretation beyond the current common understanding of which entities are considered a third-party servicer (TPS). The CCCU joined the American Council on Education on a comment to highlight issues and concerns with this broadened definition of TPS and ask ED to rescind the guidance. Though the deadline for reporting TPS contracts was originally Sept. 1, 2023, ED announced in April that it would delay the deadline until at least six months after the final guidance letter on this is published. Additionally, ED responded to concerns in that April announcement by clarifying that some entities would not be considered a TPS, such as study abroad programs and course sharing consortia. ED said it will continue to carefully review public comments and consider clarifying and narrowing the scope of the guidance.

TWO MEMBERS JOIN THE CCCU

At its latest meeting, the CCCU Board of Directors approved two new members, who join the CCCU’s expansive network of more than 185 Christian colleges and universities from around the globe:

- Universidad Evangelical de El Salvador (San Salvador, El Salvador)
- Mid-America Christian University (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma)

2023 CCCU AWARD RECIPIENTS



DAVID BROOKS
MARK O. HATFIELD LEADERSHIP AWARD

David Brooks is a *New York Times* columnist and a best-selling author known for his contributions to the public square as a thoughtful writer, spiritual guide, and humble leader. Established in 1997 in honor of Senator Hatfield (a longtime supporter of the CCCU), the Hatfield Leadership Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated uncommon leadership that reflects the value of Christ-centered higher education. Past recipients include Michael Cromartie, Congressman Tim Walberg, N.T. Wright, John Perkins, Vonette Bright, and Rick and Kay Warren, among others.



DARREN CAMPBELL
CHAMPION OF VISION AWARD

Darren Campbell is an entrepreneur and Christian college advocate. Along with his wife, Nancy, and members of her family, he opened a book and coffee shop in 1997 that grew first into the Tree of Life Bookstore before becoming SlingShot, the first textbook rental service in the industry. He has long sponsored many CCCU conferences and supported the CCCU and its membership in numerous other ways. The Champion of Vision Award is presented to individuals who have championed partnerships to promote the flourishing of CCCU institutions and their surrounding communities.



WENDY GOMEZ MATAMOROS
YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD

Wendy Gomez Matamoros is the executive director of Tesoros de Dios, a Nicaraguan-based Christian nonprofit that seeks to help children with disabilities achieve their full potential. Matamoros volunteered at the organization prior to going to college; there, she found her calling and chose to pursue a degree in special education at Dordt University, where she graduated in 2012. The Young Alumni Award is presented to individuals who have graduated within the last 10 years from a CCCU institution and have exhibited uncommon leadership or achieved notable success in a way that reflects Christian higher education.

Twenty Five Years of Leadership, Learning, and Bullfrogs

By Jo Kadlecsek

When most people arrive at Cedar Springs

Christian Retreat Center in the summertime, they notice two things: the peaceful setting and the occasional croaks of bullfrogs. Far from the demands and hurried pace of campus life, the sounds, creatures, and blooms of rural life offer an ideal space for reflection and discussion in a spot nestled about two hours north of Seattle.

Turns out there’s been a lot of both for the past 25 years here, thanks to the CCCU’s collection of leadership institutes — including the mixed-gender Leadership Development Institute (LDI), the Women in Leadership Development Institute (WLDI), and the Multi-Ethnic Leadership Institute (M-E LDI), which launched in 2011 — that gather at the Center every June. Almost 800 selected participants from more than 90 CCCU institutions have made the journey over the years. These attendees — vice presidents, deans, directors, and professors — had all been identified as “exhibiting prospective senior-leadership administration qualities.”

For each gathering, they arrive for the week with a packet of readings, current research, and case studies that institute facilitators have created for them. And they are invited to slow down, test ideas, network with like-minded colleagues, and explore the next levels of leadership responsibility, including setting up year-long professional development plans with one-on-one mentors.

“The location intentionally invites leaders to leave their busy lives and enter a time of reflection,” says CCCU President Shirley V. Hoogstra, who serves as an institute resource facilitator and is an alumna herself of the 2000 WLDI program. “We want people to be in a place where their imagination can be free and where God’s Spirit is optimally evident in nature. It’s a quiet place of awe that prepares you for humility and learning.”

Before they were an annual distinctive of the CCCU, the leadership institutes were a series of conversations in the mid-1990s between Karen Longman — who was serving then as the CCCU’s vice president for professional development — and Canadian philanthropists Barry and Sharon Hawes. Longman and the Haweses were concerned about the lack of opportunities for emerging leaders, specifically people of color and women leaders, within the CCCU. Through their generosity and shared vision, they built on the Executive Leadership Development Initiative, established in 1996 under then-CCCU president Bob Andringa, that offered regular summer gatherings for new presidents and chief academic officers.

A 25 YEAR LEGACY

289 Current known Christian higher ed leaders who have attended a CCCU leadership development institute

37 Presidents

46 Provosts (or similar role)

80 Vice Presidents

29 Chairs

97 Deans



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“Much of higher education has not done a good job of spotting high-potential future leaders, equipping and mentoring them,” says Longman, a scholar on leadership issues and a regular facilitator and organizer for the institutes who recently retired from the department of doctoral higher education at Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California. “Through summer institutes like these, the CCCU is uniquely positioned to equip emerging leaders for Christ-centered higher education.”

The result is a long list of institute alumni who are now presidents, deans, provosts, and other leaders across the CCCU’s 185 member institutions. Many alumni say they still return to those original resources to refresh their thinking and stay in touch with their mentors and cohorts for mutual encouragement in their leadership roles.

The CCCU also recently launched the Karen Longman Leadership Fund to honor Longman’s long history of developing Christian higher education leaders and to support emerging leaders in the future.

“The CCCU is about giving our campuses the best possible people for leadership, and that means getting many, including women and people of color, ready to lead,” Hoogstra says. “We want them to be refreshed to lead longer or imagine new ways of leading. That’s why we are grateful for this place and for this opportunity to do just that — to equip Christian leaders to serve.”



A small glimpse of the many facilitators (top right) and hundreds of leaders who have participated in the CCCU’s Leadership Development Institutes.



A GLIMPSE OF THE FEBRUARY CCCU CONFERENCES



The CCCU’s winter conferences brought presidents to Capitol Hill and hundreds of other senior leaders to sunny Florida for professional development and spiritual renewal. To see more photos from these events, visit the CCCU’s Facebook page.



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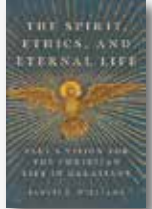
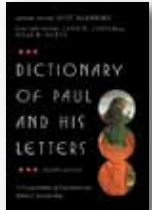
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Pursuing True Transformational Civility



CIVILITY IS OFTEN GIVEN a cursory nod for how we interact with each other in the public sphere. The word suggests being friendly, polite, and courteous (at the very least). The condition of civility also suggests that societies can function by getting along, being nice, and bearing good citizenship with each other. In fact, the root word for civility is *civilis*, meaning relating to public life, befitting a citizen.

But when we consider what relates to public life in Christian higher education, we must realize we are called to something much more transcendent than niceties, smiles, and courtesies. We are beckoned to bear God's image with each other. The empty, cursory, contemporary understanding of civility is replaced with sacrificial love and rooted in the convictions of the Spirit that establishes us in our Christian faith.

Perhaps in the midst of this kind of transcendent civility, Christ will be seen and known. After all, Jesus did tell us we would be known by the love we have for one another.

Of course, our civil behaviors should be friendly, polite, and courteous, but we must not be satisfied with the world's ideals of a "civil" society. In a world filled

with "civil" societies, we make believe we care for each other; we grit our teeth through the tolerance of one another; we justify our opinions by placing Jesus on our "side" of a situation, instead of viewing our situation solely through the world-changing reality of the cross and the resurrection. We divide across ideologies and use social media to declare who goes to hell or heaven.


However, in Christian higher education, we are compelled to embody a Kingdom identity of the beloved community, where we can bear witness to Christ's love with each other in all situations because we see the dignity of humanity in each other. When we disagree, have alternative opinions, or find ourselves with opposing social and cultural issues of a divided society, we must bend into a practice of love first, because we see the humanity in the people and ideals we oppose. We cannot bear injustice; we long to see the Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven; we are drawn to practice civility with charity.

Here are some simple practices that require very little effort to live out this deeper, fuller vision of civility every day on our campuses:

- Notice others. Their presence matters, so greet others even if they don't greet you.
- Practice cultural humility by self-reflecting on your motives, opinions, and positions.
- Be ready with a question for something you may not understand or agree with.
- Listen without waiting to talk.
- Remember that every human is worthy of respect because God respects

every human; we are, after all, created in the very image of God.

- Make your arms wide open during disagreements. Choose words that speak life, not death, even in disagreements.
- Remember that scripture is indeed like a two-edged sword, but it is not a weapon of destruction.
- In opposing views, choose the opportunity to build bridges of understanding instead of walls of division.

Now to be clear, this kind of transcendent civility can't change the heart, but it is a way forward on our campuses, and it may offer a flourishing model for the public sphere to consider. Perhaps in the midst of this kind of transcendent civility, Christ will be seen and known. After all, Jesus did tell us we would be known by the love we have for one another. 

LENA CROUSO is the CCCU's Senior Fellow for Diversity and Special Assistant to the President. She serves at Southern Nazarene University as vice president for intercultural learning and engagement, chief diversity officer, and professor.

Photo courtesy of Rev. Dr. Lena Crouso



Kiron Skinner / Taube Professor of International Relations and Politics and Robert C. O'Brien / Distinguished Senior Fellow and Former National Security Advisor

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Integrating Faith & Study Away: Becoming Bridge Builders



OUR WORLD IS DIVIDED. People draw lines and pick sides on a myriad of issues, making it harder to listen, learn, and address problems together. Some of this conflict falls upon the fault-line between those who consider themselves religious and those who do not. As recent reports (such as a Pew Research Center study last year) show, Americans are becoming less religious. The divide between religious and irreligious Americans is growing and shaping our national and local politics and contributing to a more fractured America. As a result, the challenge for higher education as a whole and especially for Christian higher education institutions is to find ways to prepare students to reach across lines of difference, build community, and offer hope and healing to a fractured and hurting world.

Within this context and challenge, over the last few years, GlobalEd programs at the CCCU have worked to focus more on helping students become those bridge builders by assisting in the development of the knowledge, skills, and virtues needed to reach across differences, learning to listen, finding common ground, and working to find ways to work together where possible. The challenge of this work is ensuring that our programs are grounded deeply in the Christian faith in such ways that they equip students to navigate the chaos of this world with timeless biblical truths. What does this mean practically in each of our programs?

The Middle East Studies Program (MESP) provides a unique opportunity for students to engage in interfaith dialogue as they interact with Muslims, Jews, and others as they explore the history, culture, and religions of the Middle East. As one recent participant shared, “My MESP semester refined my own faith, taught me so much about other faiths, and prepared me to better interact with other cultures.” (Two alumni from the program recently had a conversation about their shared experiences attending the program a de-

cade apart — check out “Sharing Global Perspectives: The Lasting Impact of the Middle East Program” on page 42.)

Staff at the American Studies Program (ASP) challenge students to lean into polarizing issues and equip them to have constructive conversations across differences that are rooted in intellectual humility, gratitude, respect, and a concern for biblical justice. Classes encourage students to be a renewing presence within a pluralistic public square. In addition, students are placed in a wide range of internships, many with faith-based institutions, where they work to put these principles into practice; recent examples include Redeeming Babel, the Center for Public Justice, Braver Angels, and the Trinity Forum. In describing the ASP experience, a recent student shared, “My ASP experience challenged me in ways that prompted my growth, exposed me to a variety of perspectives, and provided me with support and resources to navigate Washington, D.C.”

At the Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford (SCIO) program, faith integration is focused on research, helping students see the need that academe has for Christian scholarship that provides both academic excellence and a strong faith perspective. Students often acknowledge this growth as they come to see themselves as emerging Christian scholars who are needed and who can make contributions in all types of higher education institutions, including Oxford. As one recent participant reflected, “I feel that I know myself better and have a stronger sense of what I am capable of within and outside of an academic setting. I have developed new habits and mindsets I will take with me into my university and life beyond it.”

As always, we appreciate your willingness to partner with us to provide these types of transformative experiences for students throughout the CCCU.

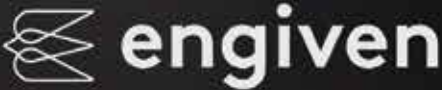


DON DEGRAAF Ph.D. is the CCCU's senior director of educational programs.

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Research-Led Integration Thickens the Conversation



LATELY, I'VE BEEN CONSIDERING the ways a focus on research might expand and enrich our efforts to integrate faith and learning. As scholars and leaders, we see a multitude of examples among our students demonstrating the truism that the message received is not always the message sent or intended. Expanding and emphasizing our focus on academic research with students can help us better send the message and inculcate a faith-integrated approach.

During my 24 years at the helm of Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford (SCIO), I have had many academically able CCCU students come to Oxford with notions of the integration of faith and learning that are quite simplistic and lack the nuance and vision that I know the faculty at their home campuses offer. These notions they bring — which they believe they learned from their colleges and faculty — can easily devolve to something quite utilitarian, simplistic and counterproductive. These same students realize and find the notions trivial but nonetheless think, much to their dismay, that such is what has been expected of them.

Take an example from my own discipline, history. For some history students, an over-simplistic approach to faith and learning integration can lead them to think they must adhere to providentialism — that is, a need to define the particular ways of God's providence in concrete historical moments. But this is beyond our perception. Whether one is discussing the collapse of the Roman empire, the Hundred Years' War, the development of germ theory, or any historical development, the historian looking on does not have the tools or perception to say what God was doing and willed to happen in those particular moments.

In other words, a historian wanting to integrate faith and learning cannot simplify that integrative approach to predicated that we know what God was doing and intended in a given moment in our history. That at once says too little and blames God for too much. Instead, a historian's scope of enquiries would include the human actors (and perhaps what they think about the divine), the contexts in which they work (such as environment, geography, or worldviews), and the like. While space does not allow me to express fully an historian's sense of integration of faith in history, I will say briefly that this integration begins by understanding the oblique nature of knowledge in a world racked by sin and uncertainty, allows for freedom and individual will, and acknowledges the multiplicity and obscurity of root causes. Among other things the historian might give careful thought to the understanding of atonement, the imago Dei, and the broad vision of the Christian moral framework.

Meanwhile, the study of history requires one to interpret chaos, confusion, multiple causes, and massive uncertainties. Consider the impossibility of answering contra-positives such as: What might have happened differently had Chamberlain agreed with Churchill about Hitler and the Nazis during the negotiations in Munich? Answer: we do not know! This does not suggest that God is not sovereign or is not involved in human history; instead, it reminds us that all the forms of causation in a particular historical event are exceedingly difficult to determine and that we do not have direct access to the mind and actions of God in any given historical moment. Even worse, we trivialize both God and the subject studied by defining God as merely another subject and cause. No, the historian's challenge is to discuss the God of history without wrongly encumbering God with our history.

The craft of research thickens formation and undergirds a view of integration of faith and learning that is honest, has lasting value, and is more readily able to sustain the challenges that a thin understanding rarely weathers.

So what does the active life of research offer to this problem, whatever the discipline? When an education is oriented around information — an emphasis on lectures and the reading of textbooks (which are generally filled with defined, known outcomes), it can unwittingly propagate the wrong message and a simplistic view of integration in any area of study. But by participating in and carrying out the art and craft of research, scholars — whether seasoned academic or aspiring undergraduate — discover the many challenges to arriving at a reasonable and firm conclusion when so much of our knowledge is provisional.

Well-conducted research is a hands-on teacher of the craft of knowledge-making and discovery; more than that, it is a hands-on teacher of our commitments to the integration of faith and learning. It affords faculty the opportunity to mentor and affords the student the benefit of being mentored, which thickens the knowledge gained. Research requires curiosity; one must be


other-centered with the desire to know more about the wider world. Research projects entered honestly teach humility, self-awareness, awareness of disciplinary limits, and awareness of the broader intellectual and cultural contexts shaping the findings.

The enterprise of research is a stern master that ultimately resists accepting sloppiness of thought or intent, requires patience, and reminds one of the necessities to both give and receive grace.


In the world of study abroad, we often say that a key benefit is helping students become less certain but more committed: the maturing leads to reducing unwarranted certainty on views held without sufficient basis, knowledge, or breadth of experience. More commitment develops when that space is freed up to engage the core understandings and discover a revised self-awareness of limitations.

Serious commitment to research offers a parallel benefit. Casual and thin certainties fall away amid the depth and extent of study that a substantial research project affords. In entering a world with unknown outcomes, we are taught to meet challenges and to negotiate living with a degree of uncertainty. What the student comes to know, however, benefits from the depth of work and the ways in which she came to that knowledge. This knowledge can be held with greater commitment (even if with

some degree of provisionality) knowing that she does not have the last word on the subject and that the particular item under her scrutiny is the beginning of an endeavour, not its end.

The craft of research thickens formation and undergirds a view of integration of faith and learning that is honest, has lasting value, and is more readily able to sustain the challenges that a thin understanding rarely weathers. Participating in research is one of the antidotes to oversimplification. In committing to the work of integration, we should be looking to expand our focus on and access to research opportunities for our students to more fully provide the tools to properly receive the message the faculty are sending and realize our goal of the integration of faith and learning. 

STANLEY P. ROSENBERG Ph.D 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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SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

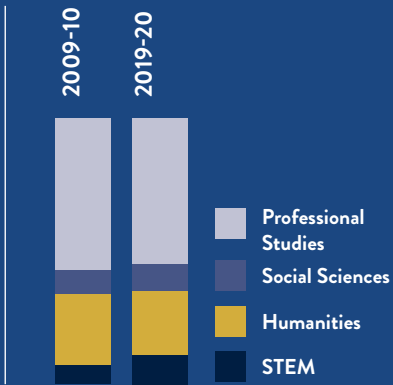
CHANGE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

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

2009-10 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED



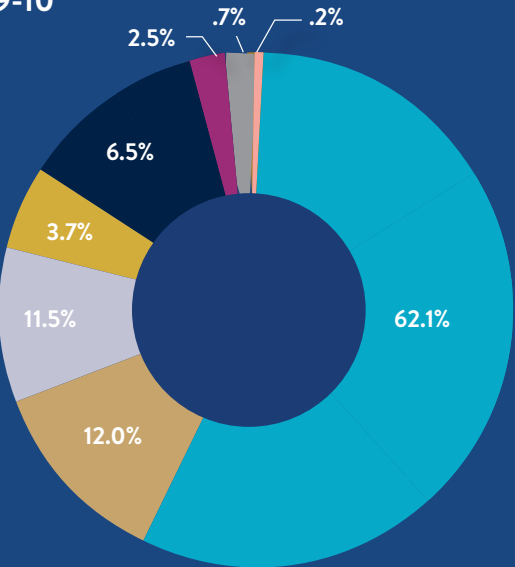
2019-20 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED



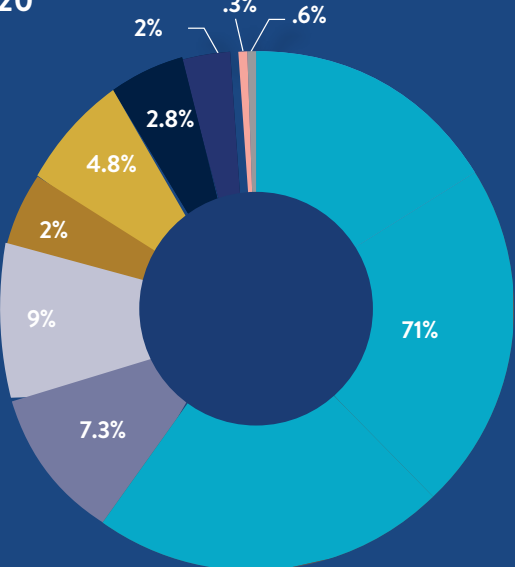
DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREES AWARDED BY CATEGORY

Just as the overall number of social science degrees has shifted over the last decade, so too has the distribution of the particular majors students have completed (Specific numbers for each degree are given in the parentheses, first from 2009-10 and then from 2019-20.).

2009-10



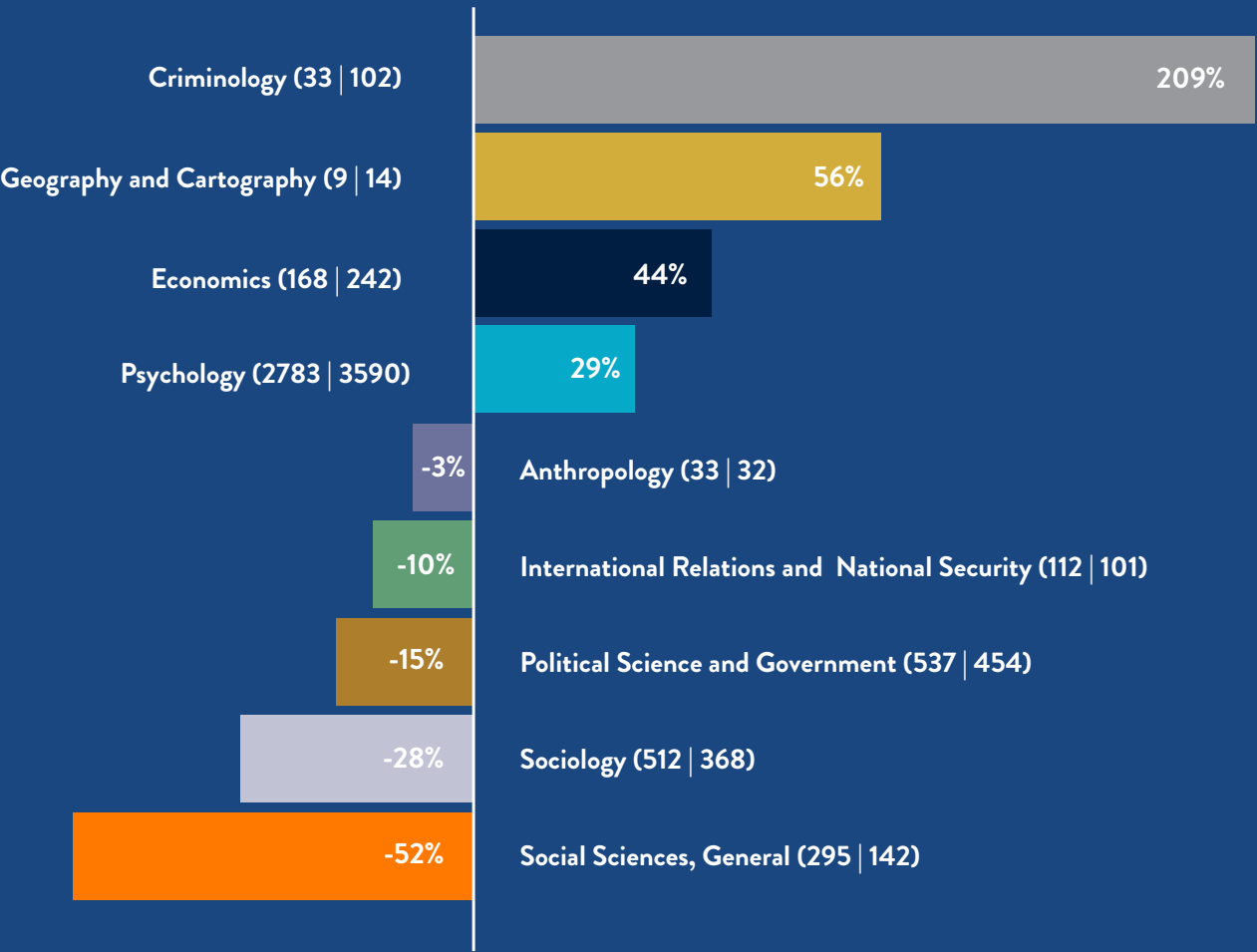
2019-20



- Social Sciences, General (295 | 142)
- Geography and Cartography (9 | 14)
- Psychology (2,783 | 3,590)
- Sociology (512 | 368)
- Economics (168 | 242)
- Anthropology (33 | 32)
- International Relations and National Security (112 | 101)
- Criminology (33 | 102)
- Political Science and Government (537 | 454)

PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN NUMBER OF DEGREES AWARDED BY CATEGORY

Given the overall changes in social science degrees awarded over the last 10 years, as well as the changes in the social science 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, Ph.D, Pete Jordan, Ph.D., and Stanley P. Rosenberg, Ph.D. All data is from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)



DEFINING THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING

*Exploring what the foundation
of Christian higher education
looks like in the current context.*

A CONVERSATION

*with
Esau McCaulley,
Todd Ream,
Derek Schuurman,
and Andrea Scott*

The cornerstone of Christian higher education is the commitment to the practice of infusing the higher education learning experience with the theology, doctrines, and practices of the orthodox Christian faith - in simpler terms, the integration of faith and learning.

What, exactly, does this union of faith and education look like on a Christian college campus? In the wake of the trends of the last few decades and especially the disruption caused by the pandemic, what does faith-integrated learning look like in our current context?

Morgan Feddes Satre, the managing editor for Advance, brought together several scholar — practitioners who come from a broad spectrum of professional backgrounds and who serve at several CCCU institutions across the U.S. for a conversation on these questions. The full conversation (including an additional question) is available on the CCCU's YouTube channel; this version has been edited for length and clarity.

Esau McCaulley is associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL). He is the author of several books, including the forthcoming *How Far to the Promised Land: One Black Family's Story of Hope and Survival in the American South* (Convergent Books, September 2023).

Todd Ream serves at Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN) as a professor of humanities, as the executive director of faculty research and scholarship, and as senior fellow for programming for the Lumen Research Institute. He's also the CCCU'S senior fellow for public engagement and the publisher for *Christian Scholar's Review*.

Derek Schuurman is a professor of computer science at Calvin University (Grand Rapids, MI). He has industry experience and is interested in issues related to faith and technology. He's the author of *Shaping a Digital World* and co-author of *A Christian Field Guide to Technology for Engineers and Designers*.

Andrea Scott is an academic leader with extensive experience in the business world. She currently serves as provost at George Fox University (Newberg, OR), previously served as a dean and professor of marketing, and she's also a former Fulbright Scholar.

Morgan Feddes Satre: I want to start by asking how each of you would describe what "the integration of faith and learning" looks like in your classroom or on your campus. How would you describe what this is to students or to their parents?

Esau McCaulley: It's a little bit tricky for me because I actually teach Bible, and so the integration of faith and learning takes on a different vibe. I know when I talk to my colleagues in math and science and other places, they're struggling — "should I do a devotional, or should I try to tie some theological concept to what we're studying?" For me, my content is all biblical studies. So what I'm doing is showing that learning is actually related to faith, [whereas] everyone else is asking, "How does faith come into learning?" As a Bible scholar, I try to teach my students that biblical studies is an academic discipline — there are certain questions [we're exploring], and we're not in simply an extended devotional when we're doing Bible and theology classes.

The other thing that I try to say to them is that in biblical studies, while we're studying the material, the material is also studying us. Students are engaging in an academic discipline that is asking you at every page the existential questions: Who am I? What does it mean to be human? What is the good life? All of these questions come up in biblical studies, and that's part of what it means to do faith and learning on my side.

Derek Schuurman: I'll add that I chafe a little bit at the phrase "integration of faith and learning," in part because there are always hidden assumptions and presuppositions in every single discipline in every single classroom. And so this idea that you have to take some religious content and somehow bolt it on to your course is an artificial notion. Even in secular settings where people have this sort of idea that it's completely neutral, I think they're wrong. Like Esau said, there are ideas about what does it mean to be human? What's wrong with the world? What's the remedy?

These things are always floating below the surface, often implicit. In fact, looking back to my undergraduate education in a large secular school, it's only now that I'm able to see that while none of these questions were answered explicitly, it was implicit throughout the curriculum. There was a certain idea about what flourishing was and how to achieve that. In engineering, there was this technological worldview that the world is a machine that can be manipulated and optimized.

So integrating faith and learning isn't something that you artificially have to do. It's always there. The neat thing about a Christian college is that we can be very explicit about the biblical story animating every single thing in our discipline, including computer science and engineering topics where people think, "Oh, isn't that just cold, hard math?" Well, no — technology's not neutral, and faith has a lot to say about how we use these tools.

Andrea Scott: I often encountered a similar frustration in the discipline of business — because [there's an idea], "Of course God is nowhere in business." But that is not how my Bible reads. So when I thought about this question, I went back to the Westminster Catechism, where it says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and worship him forever." To me, that permeates the worldview, the perspective that I take to anything that I'm preparing for my students. I love what you said, Esau, about being under examination [by the discipline]. What permeates my thinking is the end purpose — my end purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And that colors how I view anything that I read, that I digest. That's the way that I've tried to frame it for myself and whenever possible for students.

Todd Ream: As a parent of one college student and a second who will start this fall, both at CCCU schools, I'll take this question from the perspective of how to communicate with parents. ... What I enjoy when I talk with parents is that the integration of faith and learning is about the fact that I live first and foremost with the responsibility of trying to understand God's story in the largest possible sense. I'm not going to be able to do that in full likely this side of eternity, but that is my first commitment to you all as parents. And in order to do that well, I have to take the responsibility of getting to know your son or daughter as a whole person. And no offense to my friends who teach at state universities, but students are not simply minds in a classroom or potential citizens. Those are characteristics of students that come into the classroom — and I do have friends at state universities who care about them more than just in those ways but we, by virtue of how we see students, see them as whole people. ... My colleagues will occasionally say that your discipline, first and foremost, is an end — it's not. It's a means to shape certain virtues. It's a means to address certain vices, but it's a means. And we do hope that in those disciplines, students go on to flourish professionally as a result of what we teach them. But if those characteristics are not there, then we're not going to be able to help students live in the largest possible story, and in the end, that's our first commitment.

"I think it's a blessed opportunity in a number of ways to be stewards of a hopeful and expansive story with our students"



Esau McCaulley
Ph.D.
Associate Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College (IL)



Derek Schuurman
Ph.D.
Professor of Computer Science, Calvin University (MI)




Andrea Scott
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Provost, George Fox University (OR)



Todd Ream
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Professor of Humanities and Executive Director of Faculty Research and Scholarship, Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)



Morgan Feddes Satre
Managing Editor, Advance Magazine



“the integration of faith and learning is about the fact that I live first and foremost with the responsibility of trying to understand God’s story in the largest possible sense”

Let’s discuss the changes in our incoming student population - not so much the demographic changes, though those are important — but the growing awareness that there’s a lack of familiarity of the basic tenets of Christian doctrine and theology as the American culture continues to secularize. Should faculty and administrators be rethinking the approach to the integration of faith and learning in light of this transition? And if so, how?

Ream: I think it’s always good to be returning to this question each year, if for no other reason than we have a new class of newly minted colleagues coming into the institution. ... Thinking about that logic of the nature of the story and the expansive nature of God’s story, I think in this recent period in time — and it was coming before the pandemic, but the pandemic really accelerated this — we’ve become very fearful people. We are fearful people in part because our understanding of the Gospel has become cramped, self-referential, and defensive. I think that’s what we need to check right now and what we need to be looking at when we speak with one another. We have a faculty meeting tomorrow what will be the nature of our dialogue when we’re sharing with one another? Will it reflect those qualities of a Gospel that’s cramped, self-referential, and defensive? Or will it reflect qualities of hope and the redemptive power of God’s grace in all that we are called to do and all that and all who are called to be?

Those are the things that we need to be asking ourselves. I’m fortunate to work with colleagues who are prayerfully straining into what a hopeful posture is, but our students are acutely aware of that [sense of fear]. So if we are selling them nothing more than what to be afraid of and who’s to blame for it, then we’ve got bigger problems than we even think we do right now. Culturally, we have the opportunity — and I think it’s a blessed opportunity in a number of ways — to be stewards of a hopeful story and an expansive story with our students.

McCaulley: My hope would be that if we understand that we’re coming into a less biblically literate age, CCCU schools would be places where there’s more robust biblical and theological education. I worry sometimes

that market forces are causing us to sell everything except for the part that makes us unique, which is the Christian heritage. So my wish is that we would make space in the curriculum to make sure we give people the opportunity to be really formed and shaped, and that we would also invest in that real development for our faculty — because they’re also coming with the lack and the same potential opportunity for formation.

All ideas have consequences. A couple of decades ago, graduate theological education began to remove Greek and Hebrew and reduce other requirements. Market forces drove them to do that, which means you have less well-formed pastors, which then filters all the way down into churches, which filters all the way down into our students. So each time we make a market compromise for the sake of holding a share, those ideas always have consequences. And if we are going to say that we value these things, that needs to be reflected in how we train our faculty and how we train our students.

And the second thing that I will say is that if we’re going to be a Christian institution, we should make Jesus central. Sometimes I worry that in place of a clear conviction about the person and work of Jesus, we are tempted to convince our prospective parents that we will give a certain ideological formation instead of a spiritual formation. I would pray and hope that we would say, “We want your students to be more deeply in love with God and his word and historic teachings of the church, even though we might be diffuse in some of our political leanings.” But I worry that in place of, “you can go here and get a good dose of scripture and theology and church history and spiritual formation and ethics,” we’re saying, “Come here and you’ll get complete ideological conformity.” And that’s just simply not what the church is. And so I would hope - this will sound overly superficial — that Christian schools would stay Christian.

Scott: I really appreciate both of those responses, and what keeps coming to me is the role of discipleship. I think we have walked away from that a bit. Jesus calls us to make disciples. So often we think about that primarily as evangelism, but I think it’s bigger than that. I know that God has called us into discipleship via serving others, and that is part of the burden. When you talk about spiritual formation, we need to have fewer assumptions

about what people know before we start questioning what they believe. So there is a call for discipleship, to teach, to coach, and hold accountable — it is both exciting and a little surprising the extent to which we need to walk alongside colleagues and students — that puts an obligation on [campus] leadership to be disciplined by the Lord Jesus daily in order to be in a position to pour into students, staff, and faculty.

Schuurman: I would add that the fact that there’s a declining logical fluency in our students is also an opportunity to knock their socks off with this sort of comprehensive Christian worldview. There’s this phrase that I love from Gordon Spykman, a former theology professor [at Calvin] who said, “Nothing matters but the kingdom. But because of the kingdom, everything matters.” This cosmic scope of redemption is really exciting. If students come in thinking, well, Christian education means attending chapel and not drinking in the dorms, that’s a very narrow, not very exciting view of what faith is. But if right from the beginning you could knock their socks off with this cosmic view of the Gospel’s implications for all of life — I’ve seen students light up.

I would echo, too, the need for faculty mentoring and training. I mean, realistically, all of our faculty, perhaps with the exception of theology faculty, are in secular higher education getting their Ph.Ds. They’re basically catechized for seven years in the worldview thinking of their particular discipline, and they get their Ph.D. by being able to articulate the paradigm of their discipline in an acceptable way. Then you bring them into your Christian college, and they really need to be challenged and equipped to question the hidden assumptions in their discipline, the philosophical presuppositions that they’ve been trained in and mentored in for six or seven years, and sift them through this comprehensive Christian worldview. Faculty really are at the heart of that mission of this comprehensive view. And in order for them to articulate that to students, we need to spend a lot of effort and resources on equipping our faculty.

Ream: That’s exactly what I thought when Esau said that he hoped that the Christian college would stay Christian. We live in an era where financial margins need to be watched quite carefully in any number of ways. As a result, things that tend to be

perceived as proactive are being cut, and faculty development and formation tends to be one of those things — it’s perceived as proactive. So we’re seeing declining investment in that at the exact same time we need to be actually increasing it in its quality and its quantity. And it needs to be lifelong in terms of one’s commitment to the academic location. I think we’ve done an adequate job of a first-year course for faculty. But how do we keep resourcing faculty in such a way that they can be models to their junior colleagues and also stay passionate and engaged over the course of their lifespan? And so one of the things that has been growing in concern for me is how we’re cutting these things at the exact same time we need to be increasing them.

“Will the nature of our dialogue reflect those qualities of a Gospel that’s cramped, self-referential, and defensive? Or will it reflect qualities of hope and the redemptive power of God’s grace in all that we are called to do?”

When we think about the pandemic transitions, one of the biggest was that sudden, sometimes traumatic shift from in-person to online, and then back to in-person. As we see a growing trend toward a hybrid model, how do we keep the faith-integrated learning when we're having increased physical distance from each other? How do we keep the humanity in our technology?

Schuurman: A residential, Christian liberal arts undergraduate experience is a many splendored thing. I teach a capstone course in Faith in Computing, and we look at digital life and at all kinds of contemporary issues and technology through a Reformed Christian lens. And one of the things I talk about is the importance of physicality. As we build all of these tools, we actually lose something. [These tools] are beautiful — this very meeting, we are in different parts of the country, and we're able to do it through Teams. There are lots of blessings that come with technology in terms of making connections. But the question about what it means to be human also has to do with our physicality — the Incarnation [of Jesus] being an excellent example of the importance of physically being present. I've had students reflect on some of the things that came up during the pandemic, and they realize that there's a reduction of our ability to live in community and to be able to communicate. So I think it's been helpful for students to reflect about the limits of digital learning.

On the flip side, a lot of online education allows Christian higher education to be made accessible and obtainable to peo-

ple who might otherwise not be able to move to a Christian college and live in the dorms for four years. We need a somewhat balanced approach, always understanding the importance of physical community. [The same is true] also when it comes to church. I talk to my students about online worship services, and even now in computer science, a lot of people are talking about VR and Meta and working in the virtual world. Can we actually have the Lord's Supper in a virtual world, or is that a heretical idea? It's a philosophically fascinating and rich conversation, especially for people who are creating these digital spaces that we're going to be living in, but we need to give them a sensitivity to the importance of nudging people into physical community, including in higher education.

Scott: I get excited about the options that the digital space has provided for learning styles. I think that was probably one of the most exciting things coming out of the manic rush to get online — we learned there were people who could experience and understand what they were learning in very different ways. They participated in class differently; they challenged other students to enter into a new way of learning. When I thought about this question, I thought about recently hearing a pastor talk about how we're so uniquely wired with different ways to worship God - some people need nature, some music, physical activity, conversation, the list goes on and on.

In my experience, it has been truly exciting to watch how the online space has created almost a new language for people to enter into the learning space and how my "digi-church" and

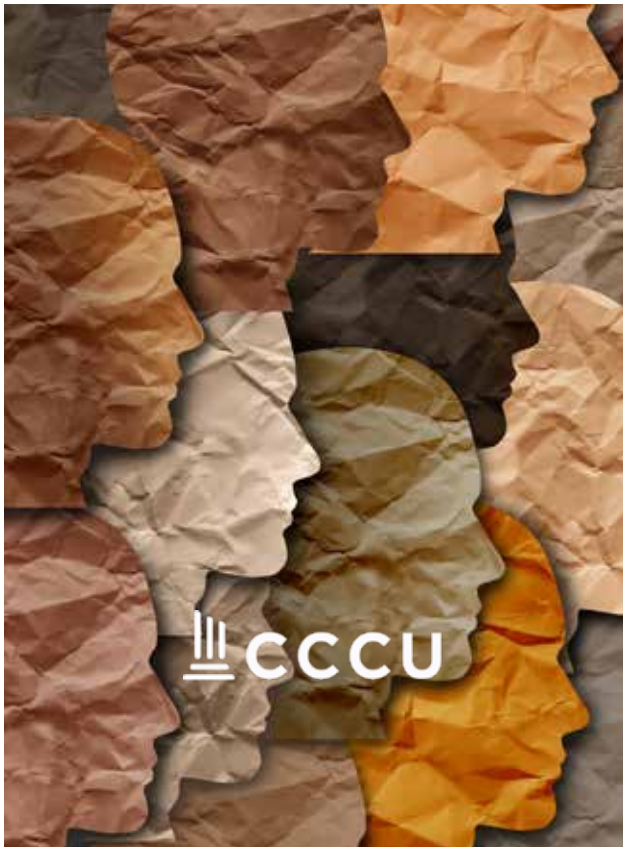
the bonds formed there have strengthened my own faith. Experiencing a different way of processing, engaging, etcetera, can deepen faith, deepen experience, deepen connection to the institution. What Dr. Ream was talking about before, the fear-driven response, I think we need to really back away from the fear and figure out how we can embrace more [of the change]. As believers, we have such an advantage with the Holy Spirit, we've got to leverage it every way we can.

McCaulley: I think it's a bit tricky. I grew up in a time before online education was normative. Most of us who have this dream of being a liberal arts educator have this visceral memory of the joy of learning in class and the influence our professors had upon us. We want to serve our students in that way. So in-person education is really important, and I still believe that. But I'll also say that most studies show that the moment that you get flexible delivery systems, it increases the opportunity in ethnic diversity and gender diversity. You get more women, at least in graduate school, more women and more ethnic minorities who are able to access theological education. It tends to be people with resources who have the money to move and relocate and be in place for three or four years.

One of the advantages that secular institutions have is they have more scholarship money, and they have ease of access. We can't be inaccessible and more expensive. We need to find ways to make in-person education affordable, and we need to be able to have compelling scholarships for our students so we can bring them in to experience what we have in the CCCU. But we have

to understand that there is a justice issue as it relates to access. If we want to be a place that educates everybody, we can't be so purist that we are not allowed to say, "I will sacrifice a little bit of the dream that I had in my head as to what a professor might be so that I might be that kind of professor for more students in different places."

Ream: I would agree wholeheartedly with that. This is my 27th year teaching, so not only my student days but my first 15 years or so of teaching and administrative work were necessarily in person. ...I think it's an opportunity for us as educators, to think about what anthropological assumptions we're bringing about students. The danger is we can flatten students' identities greatly and [revert] back to an "information dissemination" mode if we simply see them as faces on a screen. So the question becomes, do we recognize the assumptions with which we're working? What other means does technology, or in-person interaction, or whatever is available to us in the moment, provide us, and do we avail ourselves of those resources? I still think there's certain blessings to in-person education, but we've got to take the time to ask ourselves how deep and how large is the anthropology with which we're working when we're interacting with students in certain spaces and in certain ways. 🌐



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AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP GRAHAM RYKEN
AND GORDON T. SMITH

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition,” states the opening of the “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenures,” published in 1940 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Endorsed by more than 250 national scholarly and educational associations, this is key to understanding how higher education traditionally regarded the importance of academic freedom — the freedom to think and investigate within one’s subject without interference — in fostering the search for truth and advancing the common good of society.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY LIZZIE SWOBODA

For Christian colleges and universities, this academic search for truth has always been rooted in the Gospel truth, succinctly summarized by Jesus in John 8: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Christian higher education remains true to biblical values and standards, even in the midst of changing educational and societal standards.

At CCCU institutions, a biblical understanding of the world does not eradicate academic freedom and the ability to explore subjects and ideas. Rather, it enables it. The challenge is to help everyone — on campus and off — understand and apply this reality.

To explore this relationship between the integration of faith and learning and academic freedom, Lizzy Swoboda, the CCCU’s government relations fellow, interviewed two CCCU presidents. Thanks to their experience both as institutional leaders and theologians, both Philip Graham Ryken and Gordon T. Smith are intimately familiar with the challenges and opportunities of navigating the integration of faith and learning in the context of academic freedom.

Ryken is the president of Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL), where he also serves as a professor of theology. He published more than 50 books and served on the boards of multiple faith-based organizations (including the CCCU).

Smith is the president of Ambrose University and Seminary (Calgary, Alberta), where he also serves as professor of systematic and spiritual theology. He has written more than a dozen books and also serves as a teaching fellow at Regent College (Vancouver, British Columbia). Swoboda is a graduate of Grove City College with an interest in exploring education and how it intersects with faith; she is currently a part of the Capital Fellows leadership development program.

The interview was conducted both in-person and over email; it has been edited for clarity and length.

We do engage the world and the questions that emerge from outside of our immediate playing field. Doing so is not a violation of our statement of faith but a recognition that our faith is found and expressed within a broader intellectual world.

Lizzie Swoboda: Could you share with us traditional notions of academic freedom and why it is important to higher education?

Philip Ryken: Traditionally, academic freedom was designed to protect a faculty member’s ability to teach, do research, and explore the world of ideas without a lot of preconceived notions about what truths they would discover or institutional control over what the outcomes of their research would be. Galileo provides helpful historical background on this idea. In his culture, Galileo did not have the freedom to say that the Earth was not the center of the universe. There was a constraint on truth, because there was a limit on the freedom of exploration of the world and of truth. Academic freedom works to keep that from happening today.

In the popular understanding, people think of academic freedom as a faculty member’s ability to say whatever they want to say. That’s actually not what academic freedom means; it is freedom specifically in the areas of their teaching and research and expertise. It is a confined freedom. It is also important to add that it is not just faculty members that need the freedom to explore ideas, it is also students and institutions within higher education.

CCCU governing members require a statement of faith from their faculty members. Can you describe how the statement of faith interacts with academic freedom?

Gordon Smith: I suggest two perspectives. First, think of the statement of faith as the boundaries of a soccer pitch: you can play within the pitch to your heart’s content — and battle for the ball and engage the back-and-forth of an intense soccer match with alacrity and skill. But out-of-bounds is out-of-bounds. And so we have freedom within those boundaries, but we are not free to play outside of them.

And yet, second, part of the vitality of a CCCU school is precisely that this is a safe place to ask the hard questions [ones] that not so much challenge these boundaries as explore what those boundaries mean. We recognize that the game of soccer does include times when we step off the pitch and ask what it is that we are doing and why the coach actually stands outside of the playing field but is a full actor in the game. I may be press-

We are passionate about religious liberty so that our institutions can have the freedom they need to honor God and offer the education they uniquely can provide. In short, I see freedom of conscience alive and well within our Christ-centered colleges and universities, but much less well understood in the academy generally.

ing my metaphor too far, but what I want to highlight is that in our studies, we are not insular, locked away in a cloistered monastery. We do engage the world and the questions that emerge from outside of our immediate playing field. Doing so is not a violation of our statement of faith but a recognition that our faith is found and expressed within a broader intellectual world.

I have heard many people argue that institutions that have a statement of faith and are committed to Christian values lack objectivity and true academic freedom. How would you respond to that, Dr. Ryken?

Ryken: A misconception in secular higher education is that Christ-centered institutions do not have or do not value academic freedom because we have theological convictions that have a bearing on our thinking, which is seen as a constraint or a limit on academic freedom. However, virtually without exception, CCCU faculty would say they have much greater academic freedom. Most of our faculty have a university education, have done doctoral work in secular contexts, and have had some teaching experience at a research university. But they feel much more freedom to fully be who they are in a classroom context when prayer is a part of classroom life and when they can think about the key issues in their discipline from a Christian perspective. They experience greater freedom because they are liberated from what is often the tyranny of secular presuppositions about academic work and can explore their own foundational assumptions that come from their Christian convictions.

Christ-centered institutions value academic freedom so much that we have worked out our convictions and created our own statement. The CCCU has a two-page document that, in a public way, explains how our concept of academic freedom may differ from the AAUP’s standard. It says, in part:

Ultimately, the commitment of CCCU institutions to academic freedom is rooted in the enterprise of Christian education itself. First, we seek to form students into mature Christians who will contribute positively to the common good. In order to do so, professors need

freedom in the classroom to challenge students’ assumptions and expose them to new ideas and subjects. Second, we seek the continual re-forming of the church and society to more closely reflect God’s standards of justice and goodness. As such, professors require freedom in research to discover new insights and to challenge inherited systems and ideas. Academic freedom, therefore, is essential to the Christian university.

Everyone has assumptions that they bring to the thinking that they do. As Christ-centered institutions, we are clear and public about our presuppositions. Our approach to academic freedom is similar to the approach we take to chapel worship at Wheaton. In one sense, it is required, but actually it is entirely voluntary. No one is required to go to Wheaton, and we make it clear from the beginning that we have required chapel. We fully understand our model might not be the best fit for all students. In the same way, faculty members should have the freedom to choose to serve in institutions that share their religious convictions. The honest assessment and articulation of our foundational beliefs ultimately furthers the goal of the free exchange of ideas.

What responsibilities does cultivating academic freedom create for your faculty members, Dr. Smith? What responsibilities does academic freedom create for students, especially in today’s environment where disagreement is often conflated with hatred?

Smith: One of the challenges of our current climate is that students are so easily offended and that they have been taught to assume that they should be offended, and we end up coddling them rather than fostering intellectual and emotional maturity. From the beginning, we can and should be saying that even if you are in a Christian university, you are being equipped to function and flourish in a pluralist and secular context where you will not be



“The reason we have religious liberty in the United States is because Christians believed in religious liberty.”

coddled and where your faith will be routinely challenged, if not actually ridiculed. So, put your seatbelts on, and perhaps a hockey helmet as well; we are going into some rough terrain here that will leave you intellectually and emotionally stronger.

But we are still gentle as doves. The professor at Hamline University, who was let go because she upset Muslim students in her class by showing a painting in her art history course that depicted the Prophet Muhammad’s face, gave her class plenty of notice of what was coming; she was respectful of the social, religious, and emotional terrain of her students. My concern is that many students, and especially parents and religious leaders, think that students in a Christian university will be indoctrinated and that this will be a safe place where they will not be challenged. What happened at Hamline is that what occurred in class “got out” into the larger constituency. And rather than the constituency affirming that this is what needs to happen in a university, it balked and screamed without any real appreciation of what needs to happen in the classroom.

In other situations, constituents think that faculty cannot raise questions about Black Lives Matter or Palestinian rights or matters of human sexuality. But surely, academic freedom means that we ask the hard questions; we look at the complex issues and encourage students to think for themselves. Having said that, faculty need to respect the terms of the game and resist the temptation to use the class-

room as a bully pulpit for political gain. Trust the student to engage the issues and teach them to think critically and compassionately. If we teach them how to think and learn and listen, we have been effective rather than assuming that if they agree with the teacher, the teacher has been effective.

In other words, academic freedom is a responsibility for both the institution and the faculty member; and it is a privilege that can be abused.

In his classic *The Idea of a Christian College*, Arthur Holmes wrote about the early leaders of the Reformation: “Religious liberty and academic freedom went hand in hand, insisting on the right to examine the cherished and to improve on the past. ... It is not by accident that freedom of conscience is part of the Reformation heritage.” Do you see this heritage still alive in Christian higher education?

Ryker: I do see this heritage alive today, although I think we do not talk about freedom of conscience nearly as much as people did in the Reformation and post-Reformation era. One of the reasons the Reformers believed so strongly in freedom of conscience is because they believed in the sovereignty of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. So, they did not feel that they needed to control the freedom, the religious liberty, and the conscience of other persons, but believed that we each answer to God for our own thoughts

... When students see how their Christian faith shapes how they look at the world, it gives greater understanding to what they are exploring and teaches them to value academic freedom.

and actions. More clearly, after the Reformation, they came to recognize that they could not and should not try to coerce people to have certain convictions.

The reason we have religious liberty in the United States is because Christians believed in religious liberty. As Christians, we know we do not need to force anybody else to become a Christian. We can share the gospel and leave things up to God’s sovereignty and the work of his Spirit in people’s lives. We also have a deep respect for individual personhood and believe that each person is made in the image of God and has a will and a heart and a mind. Christians since Antioch and Alexandria have wanted to bring the best of education under the lordship of Jesus Christ and were at the forefront of the thinking that led to a nation that valued religious liberty. We do not believe that only Christians should have religious liberty. Actually, we believe all people should have religious liberty because we believe in the freedom of the conscience.

We also prize religious liberty because we see threats to it. Government regulations, accrediting bodies, and organizations like the National Collegiate Athletic Association are places where the prevailing attitudes of our culture influence and potentially threaten our ability to carry out our mission. We are passionate about religious liberty so that our institutions can have the freedom they need to honor God and offer the education they uniquely can provide. In short, I see freedom of conscience alive and well within our Christ-centered colleges and universities, but much less well understood in the academy generally.

Both Ambrose and Wheaton foster an environment where biblical faithfulness and academic freedom flourish. How

do you cultivate that community, and what advice would you give to institutions seeking to continue that approach?

Smith: I would say, simply, two things. One, we are seeking to cultivate critical and compassionate thinking. Two, respect the boundaries and honor what it means to be part of this university — a community of learning. We ask faculty to respect our social and religious location; and we will in turn give them freedom to raise challenging questions and explore topics that may unsettle our constituents. But can we do this from a posture of mutual respect?

Ryker: From an institutional standpoint, a school’s understanding of academic freedom should be reviewed from time to time and should be a part of faculty orientation. For students, the best way to learn how to love academic freedom is to experience the vigorous exchange of ideas. The more that students experience an atmosphere of, “I’m not sure I know what I think about that, but I want to figure that out and learn,” the more an appetite for pursuing truth grows. I also think that when students see how their Christian faith shapes how they look at the world, it gives greater understanding to what they are exploring and teaches them to value academic freedom. Here is a quote from the 1877-1878 Wheaton College Catalog one I think people today might be surprised to hear today: “Free discussion is encouraged in all these studies. And students are not expected to adopt without question the views of either textbook or teacher, but to think for themselves.” From our historical founding, we were meant to be a “how to think” institution, not merely a “what to think institution, and this is important for faculty and students to understand.”



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STRATEGIC DISCIPLESHIP

Decreasing awareness of Christianity means CCCU institutions may need to rethink their approach to faith and discipleship across campus.

JOY MOSLEY
AND GENTRY SUTTON

More and more CCCU member institutions are facing an issue that has become increasingly apparent in the last few decades: Students are arriving at our institutions with less and less knowledge about the Bible and basic Christian beliefs. The problem is not a new one, for Christian college and university professors have lamented students’ biblical literacy levels for years. Yet many faculty members would argue that the problem seems to be getting worse.

“As our culture has continued to shift, I have noticed that few of my unchurched students have any exposure to the Bible,” says Roy Millhouse, associate professor of biblical studies at Sterling College (Sterling, KS). “Unfortunately, I increasingly see something similar for those who grew up in the church.”

Robert Herron, professor of religion and ethics at Regent University (Virginia Beach, VA), shared a similar assessment. “When it comes to discussing the Bible with today’s students, I definitely have to start in a different place and with different assumptions than I did when I began my career,” he says. “In fact, general understanding about the very nature of Scripture is one thing that has changed over the years.”

In their 2019 book *Faith for Exiles*, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock share their research about young Christians who are “resilient” in their faith compared to young people who were previously in the church but have drifted from faith commitments. Their research makes clear what we all know: What they call “Digital Babylon” is a monster of an obstacle to biblical literacy and the understanding of basic Christian teachings. Kinnaman and Matlock found that the typical 15 to 23-year-old spends approximately 2,767 hours per year consuming digital content; the typical churchgoer of the same age spends only about 291 hours taking in spiritual content. Unchurched young people spend only 153 hours per year consuming spiritual content and, presumably, much of that content is likely not orthodox or even Christian.

The statistics are overwhelming. But for Christian colleges and universities that are serious about making a spiritual impact in the lives of their students, they do offer clear direction: We must compete for students’ time with strategic discipleship efforts. Christian colleges and universities have students in their spheres of influence for two to five years and, consequently, have an opportunity to significantly reduce the negative impact that Digital Babylon can have on them.

Recognizing Our Influence

As cultural confusion about God and who he has made us to be continues to affect young people, the role of discipleship in Christian colleges and universities becomes more and more important. In fact, Christian higher education is argu-

ably the single most important means for the Christian worldview to compete in the world of ideas. The most socially influential professions in our culture typically require college degrees, but most citizens in those professions have graduated from universities where Christian beliefs are repudiated or marginalized and where students have thus not learned to apply a Christian worldview to the challenging issues of the day.

Therefore, for the Christian worldview to contend well within those professions — and thus contribute to meaningful solutions for cultural and societal problems — college graduates who have been pointedly disciplined within their academic disciplines need to represent a larger portion of the influential workforce. As Brad Fipps, professor of religion at Southern Wesleyan University (Central, SC) says, “I am concerned that if we don’t disciple our students well during this crucial state in their development, their generation will continue to fall prey to the temptations of competing worldviews.”

In its recent “Moral Compass Summons,” the CCCU Moral Compass Taskforce demonstrates a succinct understanding of the cultural importance of Christian higher education:

A Christian education has the dual focus of forming students to be faithful citizens of a Kingdom whose builder and maker is God, while also teaching them to be constructive and responsible members of the communities where they live and work. It seeks objective knowledge, which is essential in the quest for truth. An education that promotes faith and learning is a bulwark against baseless assertions, dark fantasies unsubstantiated by evidence, and destructive falsehoods that imperil our safety and stability. The temptation to fall from uncertain truth to certain untruth is a constant in human experience. [Christian] education is an indispensable means for resisting this temptation.

Given both the cultural need for graduates steeped in Christian worldview training and the challenge that Digital Babylon poses to the faith commitments of young people, the issue of discipleship in our institutions is of critical importance.

Exposure vs. Discipleship

It is important to define discipleship in the context of Christian higher education, and a term of contrast may be helpful.

Like Robert Herron noted above, there has been a noticeable reduction in biblical literacy among students attending Christian colleges throughout the years. For a long time, Christian institutions could be distinctly Christian and operate according to what we (the authors) call an “exposure model.” The exposure model is a passive approach that assumes students have received solid biblical teaching at home and are active in a church.

How the exposure model impacts the life of a student varies

from campus to campus. For some institutions, exposing students to Christian thought may look like a prayer or devotion before classes but not necessarily include biblical integration with subject matter during class. For others, a Christian worldview may be integrated throughout each discipline but mainly relegated to the academic side of the house. Others might include courses on the Bible or Christian theology in their general education requirements or offer regular chapel services without being strategic in developing additional discipleship opportunities at other points in the curricula. Still others may include behavior requirements for students without teaching students *why* those behaviors are not compatible for Christian living.

Even if the exposure model has worked in the past for some institutions, we suggest that Christian colleges move toward a more proactive “discipleship model.” Jesus commands us to go and make disciples (Matthew 28). Making disciples is necessarily an active and strategic posture (go and make) that involves evangelism, but it is more than that as well.

In a post on Cru’s website discussing discipleship, Jayson Bradley writes, “Discipleship goes beyond evangelism. The discipleship process is more than teaching people the right knowledge about God. A disciple models him or herself after someone. Making disciples of Jesus goes beyond teaching

facts about Jesus. It means teaching people how to know and be like Jesus—to obey God and seek his best for their lives.”

This definition shows campus leaders that faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students are all disciple makers. Discipleship cannot be relegated to any person or department, or even the faculty as a whole. Every person on campus can take ownership of this responsibility, creating a unique opportunity for the campus community. As Millhouse notes, our students’ lack of understanding about Scripture and the faith “can also be an excellent opportunity for us to reset as we address perceptions from the culture at large and offer tools to help our students become informed Bible readers. That said, there is only so much a required general education class can do. Thus, I have appreciated it when the entire campus community seeks to move students forward in foundational knowledge of what it means to be a follower of Christ.”

Start with How You Hire

One way for a campus to move toward discipleship is to be intentional about mission in its hiring practices. Institutions operate in different denominational contexts, locations, and historic missions, but our suggestion is to prioritize hiring within the specific institutional context. We both have connections with



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Warner University (Lake Wales, FL), and so we will share some of the insights and practices from our work at Warner as examples to consider and adapt as needed in various institutional contexts. When it comes to hiring considerations, Jan Craigmiles, Warner’s vice president for HR and organizational effectiveness, told us:



“Discipleship goes beyond evangelism. The discipleship process is more than teaching people the right knowledge about God. stability.”

Hiring the right employees is crucial to the missional success of Warner University. All employees, no matter their position, interact with our students and may be called upon to evangelize and disciple them both in formal and informal settings. As a part of our hiring process, we talk to applicants about their spiritual journey. New hires are also required to sign a statement affirming their commitment to the Warner Statement of Faith. Our faculty also reaffirm this commitment annually as a part of signing their academic contract.

As the provost at Warner, I (Gentry) have found that having a clear Statement of Faith that is front and center in the hiring process makes hiring for discipleship much easier. Warner’s Statement of Faith is boldly orthodox for the times, and that boldness is invaluable as I interact with applicants. We ask candidates to respond to our Statement in their application materials, and when interviewing, I review every paragraph of our Statement, one by one. I frequently see four results:

1. Candidates will avoid the cultural issues about which Warner has decided to be bold;
2. They will express disagreement with our Statement;
3. They will say they agree with certain parts of our State-

ment but do so reluctantly; or
4. They will agree enthusiastically, expressing gratitude that an institution of higher education has actually decided to stand on biblical truth and face in faith and obedience the possibility of public scrutiny for doing so.

Provided they have the right academic qualifications and experience, the candidates in the latter category rise to the top of our applicant pool. Here, the support and active engagement of the Board of Trustees is also crucial. A board is usually responsible for the mission fidelity and long-term sustainability of an institution. Trustees should thus play a vital and active role in discipleship, even if their campus interactions are limited. “At Warner University our board is fully committed to our mission,” Craigmiles says. “In addition to annually confirming their commitment to our statement of faith, our board members often ask to hear stories of student spiritual growth. Our faculty and staff play an integral role in many of these stories as they lead and guide our students spiritually.

Knowing that our students are disciplined by our faculty and staff gives the board confidence that we are living out the core values and mission of the university.” I (Joy) am an advisor for the board of Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, GA) and a member of the board at Warner University. At both institutions, I am required to annually affirm the statement of faith to ensure board alignment with the mission of the school.

Connecting the Programming and Expectations

Intentional discipleship goes beyond hiring and trustee involvement though. It is also important to ensure that evaluation practices complement discipleship efforts and that discipleship is tied to the curriculum. Many institutions have, in the last few years, reduced the required number of Bible and Christian worldview hours in their core curricula. But with the power that Digital Babylon has over our students, it seems that now is the time

to be adding more Bible requirements, not removing them. I (Gentry) do my best to ensure that discipleship drives everything we do on the academic side of the house at Warner, and that’s why Warner has added more Bible requirements to our curricula in recent years. Additionally, we are intentional at Warner about addressing the various elements of our Statement of Faith in our programming and expectations:

- We are intentional about having and assessing program-level objectives related to faith in the various academic disciplines.
- We have created a strong connection between faith integration and faculty review and promotion.
- We report to our trustees about how we are adhering to our biblical commitments in the hiring process.
- We discuss faith integration at almost all faculty workshops.
- We are intentional about working with athletic coaches and

support personnel in helping students grow in Christ. But discipleship is owned by the whole campus at Warner. Everyone is expected to model being a Christ-follower, and staff play an integral role in discipling students. As much as possible, we offer outside-of-the-classroom activities that are co-curricular, not extra-curricular. Athletic coaches are required to submit discipleship plans, and virtually all student life and residence life activities are mission-driven. The three guiding principles of student life are hospitality, grace, and accountability. The hope and goal are for all students to experience the welcome of Christ, to feel accepted as image-bearers, and to be fully who God is calling them to be. We would be remiss to not point out that budgets must also support discipleship. As Warner president David Hoag puts it, “If an institution wants to disciple their students, they need to invest in discipling those who will be discipling students.” Budgets need to allow for investing in faculty and staff

and in programming and other activities that model discipleship. As budgets are stretched thin, it can be easy to cut dollars that do not seem as directly related to instruction and other necessities—but discipleship must be considered a necessity. We want to encourage campus leaders to prioritize Jesus’ command to go and make disciples. The historical exposure model seems ill-suited for today’s students and the opportunities that are before us. A discipleship approach to higher education to can and will impact our students and thereby our communities, but it must be characterized by intentionality from one end of campus to the other.



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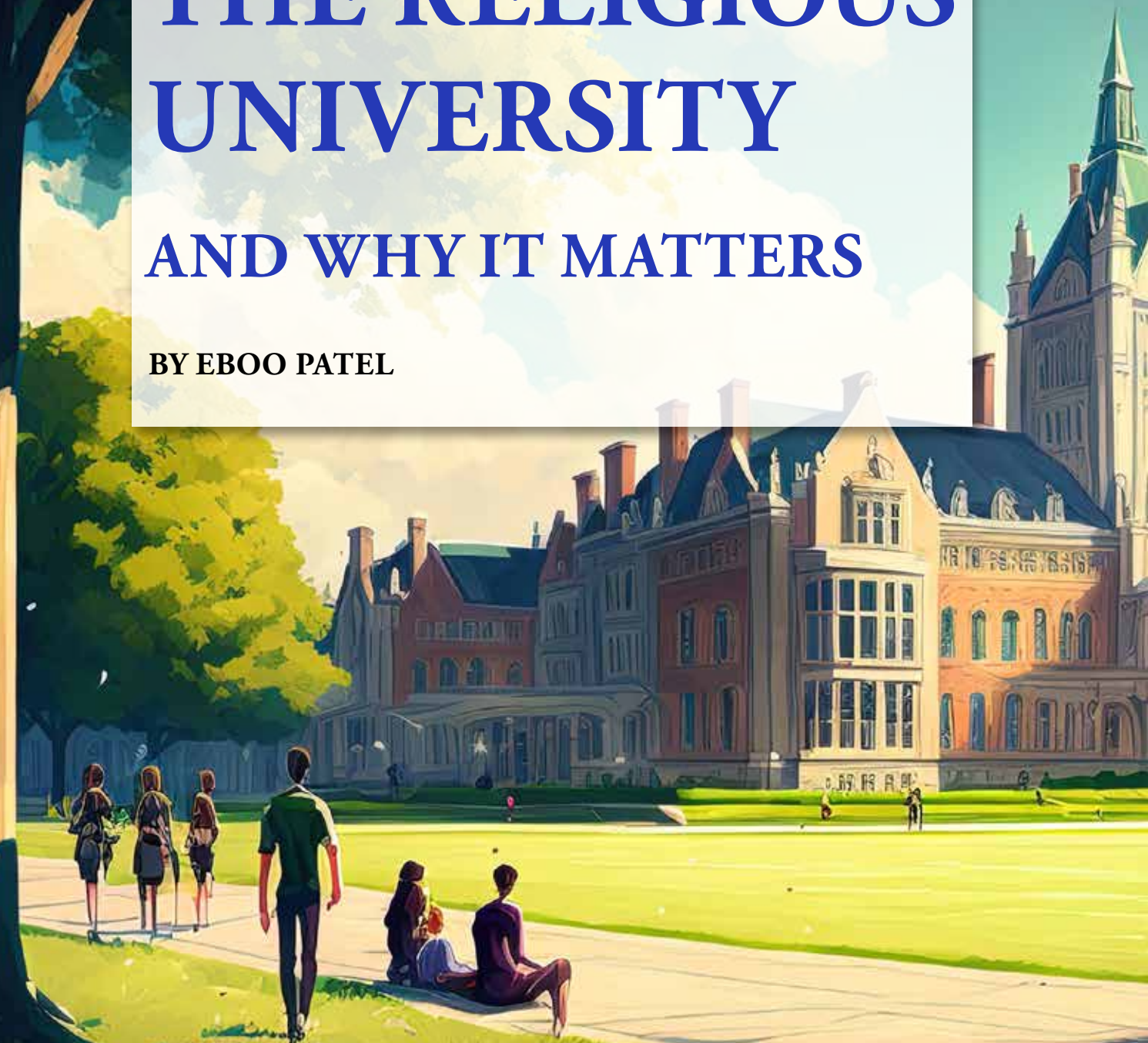


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THE FATE OF THE RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITY AND WHY IT MATTERS

BY EBOO PATEL





The light went on for me when Elder Clark Gilbert, a senior leader in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with special responsibility for higher education, said this:

“I grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona as a designated driver, shuffling my drunk friends around town every weekend and constantly feeling like the odd man out. I never felt at home until I stepped foot onto the campus of Brigham Young University and thought to myself: finally, a place where I fit, where my beliefs are not only respected, but where my religious identity can actually be strengthened for a season before returning to a world where it would continue to be challenged.”



The statement struck me because it’s virtually the same story I hear from Black men who went to Morehouse and Black women who went to Spelman. It’s a version of the following:

I grew up as an outsider in a majority culture that didn’t understand me. So much of what I did put me at a slight angle to everyone else. It was like walking uphill against the wind all the time. And I didn’t even know I was doing it, and how exhausting it was, until I got here, and I experienced the ease of walking on flat road with the wind at my back.

I love that there is a place in our society where the experiences of Black men and women are affirmed. And

of course, by that logic, it makes perfect sense that people with a particular religious identity also need a place where they can have their identity supported, especially when that religion has a history of facing bigotry, as Latter-day Saints, Jews and Catholics certainly have.

This was the conversation taking place in my mind during an event called “The Fate of the Religious University,” hosted by the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 12. There were serious heavy hitters present: the leaders of major faith-based networks that collectively represent some 400 colleges [including the CCCU], and the presidents of Notre Dame, BYU-Provo, BYU-Hawaii, College of the Ozarks, The Catholic University of America, Yeshiva University and Dillard University.

Two things struck me about the gathering. First, these institutions were making the case for their importance based on goals that they share with progressives, rather than principles that typically code as exclusively conservative, like religious freedom or moral character. There were panels on increasing college affordability, improving graduation rates and focusing applied research in ways that benefit the poor and marginalized. And there was a clear demonstration that faith-based schools did each one of these things exceedingly well.

The message of these schools to their secular counterparts is clear: There are so many objectives that we share and matters on which we can work together. Let’s focus there. Let’s help poor students get an education and a better job. Let’s make sure that our

faculty focus on research that lifts everyone up. That’s so much better than taking up opposing positions in the culture wars.


The second thing that struck me was that these various faith-based networks were making the case for the importance of their work as a collective. Latter-day Saints, Catholics, Evangelicals, Jews — there are huge differences between these communities, to include differences of doctrine, ritual, ecclesiology, you name it. And the stakes could not be higher. It’s not just about how you should live life on Earth, but about how you are going to spend eternity.

And yet here they were making the case together: Diverse faith-based colleges are assets not just for their own particular communities, but for the broader nation. We excel at what everybody in higher education is trying to improve. We have poor kids of a variety of racial (and, in some cases, religious) backgrounds at our schools, getting an education, learning real-world skills, lifting each other up, working well together and graduating. And we do this because of our faith, not in spite of it.

In other words, respect our values. The secular world

might not understand all of what we believe and every reason we do what we do, but can’t you see the results? The least you can do is affirm that our religious identity is an asset. It is what drives our commitment and results in our excellence.

I am an interested party. I was a keynote speaker at the event. Why? Because this is as good a demonstration of Interfaith America as I have ever seen. Our nation needs to be a place where people who disagree on matters regarding heaven can still work together on important issues here on earth.

That is precisely what these institutions and networks are doing. We should see them for what they are — an American treasure. 

EBOO PATEL Ph.D., the founder and president of Interfaith America, is a contributing writer for the *Deseret News*, the author of *We Need to Build: Field Notes for a Diverse Democracy*, and the host of the podcast *Interfaith America with Eboo Patel*. This essay originally appeared in *Deseret News* and is reprinted with permission.

Our nation needs to be a place where people who disagree about heaven can work together on important issues here on Earth.

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SHARING GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: THE LASTING IMPACT OF THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES PROGRAM

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

AN INTERVIEW WITH MEAGAN DOOLEY AND ANNIE VINCENT

For 30 years, the CCCU's Middle East Studies Program (MESP) has provided hundreds of students from Christian colleges across North America a chance to participate in a Christ-centered, academically rigorous experiential program in a unique and important context. Over the decades, MESP's goal has remained the same: to help students listen, learn, and grow in understanding and loving Middle Eastern neighbors both inside and outside the classroom.

Since its founding in 1993, the program has been housed in several locations, first in Cairo, Egypt, then in Jerusalem, Israel, before moving to its current location in Amman, Jordan, in 2014. Hundreds of CCCU students from across the academic spectrum of majors have experienced the program and come home forever changed.

To capture a glimpse of how MESP has impacted students' career and faith journeys, the CCCU orchestrated an opportunity for two alumni to share with each other how MESP has impacted them: Meagan Dooley, a graduate from Seattle Pacific University who attended the program in Spring 2013 when it was based in Jerusalem, and Annie Vincent, a graduate of Cairn University who attended the program in Spring 2019 in Amman.



MEAGAN DOOLEY

As a transfer student who was having a hard time finding community and also wanting to find an opportunity to put her Arabic studies into practice, Dooley was intrigued by the way CCCU's GlobalEd programs brought together students from different universities. She calls her experience at MESP "the most transformational experience of my life" and knew that she wanted to come back to the region as soon as possible. She applied for a Fulbright scholarship and was awarded one in Turkey. During her time there, she reconnected with MESP when a cohort traveled to Turkey; the next year, she moved to Jordan to serve as a program assistant for MESP for the 2015-16 academic year. After that, Dooley completed a master's at Georgetown University (which included fieldwork in Jordan), and now she works for Tetra Tech, a contractor for USAID, where she works on a global project that does rural land tenure reform and natural research rights in eight countries.

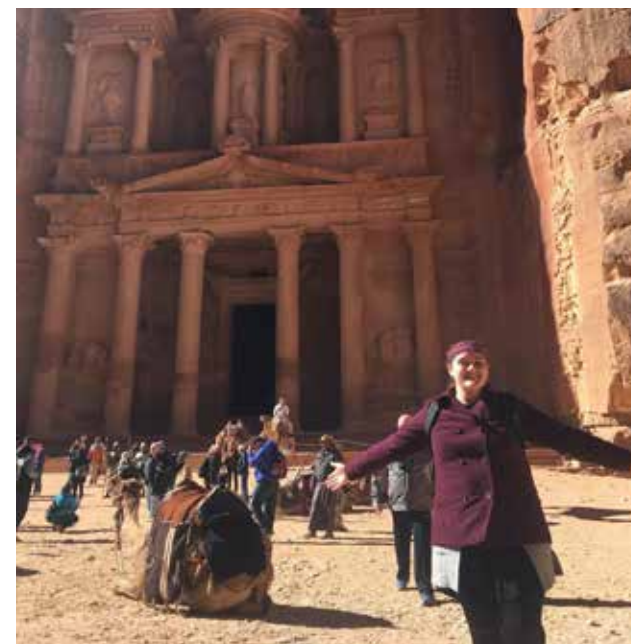


ANNIE VINCENT

Vincent knew from an early age that she wanted to study and work in the Middle East and had made several visits before beginning her studies at Cairn. When she learned about MESP, she was immediately drawn to the program, and her time there cemented her desire to be in the region long-term. She currently teaches English to seventh and eighth graders in Jordan, where she says she gets to use the lessons she learned at MESP every day. "I'm working in a more challenging school environment where you come in expecting a cultural gap," she says. "MESP helped me bridge that gap."

What follows are some reflections Dooley and Vincent shared during their conversation with Alan Haven, the CCCU's director of marketing. It has been edited for length and clarity.

Annie Vincent, a Cairn University graduate who attended MESP in Spring 2019, with poses with some of the friends from her cohort (top left) and in front of Petra (bottom left). Meagan Dooley, a Spring 2013 MESP alumna who graduated from Seattle Pacific University, in front of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (top right) and on a Jerusalem rooftop (bottom right).



All photos courtesy of Meagan Dooley, Annie Vincent, and Adobe Stock

Alan Haven: What are some of the lessons learned or memories you have that stand out to you from your time at MESP?

Meagan Dooley: The Middle East is a culture of hospitality and food that I connected to deeply. One of the iconic moments from my MESP time was during our homestays in Israel-Palestine, where I lived with an Arab Palestinian Christian family for a week, sitting down and sharing meals and fellowship with them, before living with a Jewish Orthodox family and doing Shabbat with them. That was significant [for me] ... sitting there and thinking about these cultures, faiths, and people who on the surface look quite different than us, but at the end of the day have a shared humanity. ... That’s one of the biggest things that MESP offers students: putting you into a culture and a faith tradition that’s different from your own and allowing you to learn from those differences. But also [highlighting] the throughline of this common humanity: we are not nearly as different as we like to believe. That reality sticks with me all these years later.

“I started to question my own heart. I remember visiting the mosque and just praying to the Lord, ‘whoever you are, show me,’ and holding that with open hands, wanting to know the truth and see who the Lord is.”
Annie Vincent

Annie Vincent: The relational side of things is the heart of MESP. The focus is on experiential learning, where it’s not just reading a book — it’s going and seeing the places that your books talk about, or talking with people who have lived through these things and hearing about things from the source. We’re learning about Islam from Muslims — we’re not reading about it or listening to a Christian speaker talk about Islam. We’re listening to people who believe it in their own lives and practice it every day. That was eye-opening [to me]. It lowered the barriers I had in my own heart that I didn’t realize were there, barriers I had between myself and Muslims. I thought, “They’re different; they’re separate. I don’t want to let them in.” I had no idea these feelings were in me. I didn’t realize that I held these beliefs until I came here, and I felt a bit of friction. Then I discovered sweet friendships with Muslims.

For instance, once a few friends and I went to a cafe just to read and do homework. As we were about to leave for dinner, the owner and waiter invited us to share this huge platter of mansaf, a traditional Jordanian meal. They insisted we



sit and eat with them. They had ordered it for us. We had no idea it was coming, but then they sat with us, and talked with us, and laughed about eating with our hands because you can do that here. It was such a fun moment of realizing this culture is so sweet. That’s one of many stories people going out of their way to take care of us and have fun moments with us.

Dooley: When I was in grad school, I came to Amman for the summer, and my AC broke. It was like 102 degrees, and I had not slept because it was so hot. I went to the old part of town where the repair shops were, and I didn’t know the words for broken air conditioning heating element in Arabic. When I finally communicated [what I needed], he said, “Oh, no. We have to fix this for you now!” He didn’t sell the parts, but he spent two hours helping me find an AC repairman who could fix the unit. I’m not sure anyone would have done that in the U.S. Here I was, a white, blonde, tall stranger who sticks out like a sore thumb, and these strangers went out of their way to make sure that I was cared for. I think it’s such a beautiful illustration of the Gospel and humanity from people who are not of your faith. That those artificial boundaries we have in the U.S. are broken down and reconstructed before your eyes.



Dooley visited Petra while serving as a MESP program assistant in the 2015-16 year.



Your experiences reflect the core of what we hope all our programs do: students immersed in a cultural experience while also integrating Christian faith. How did MESP affect your faith? How is it still shaping you?

Vincent: This was the first time that I’d been so immersed in a Muslim culture with the intention to learn from it. That was not the goal of my other trips to the region. But [at MESP] we were there to learn, and that was it. [We were told,] “You can ask questions, but you are not trying to prove you’re right. You are just here to learn.” Having that approach to a completely different religion and worldview completely different is challenging because sometimes we want to say, “No, that’s not right.” Yet I had to slow down, think about it [Islam], and hear from people who truly believe it.

I started to question my own heart. I remember visiting the mosque and just praying to the Lord, “Whoever you are, show me,” and holding that with open hands, wanting to know the truth and see who the Lord is. Throughout the course of the semester, I really came to a firmer conviction that I believe in the God of Christianity. There were just so many things I came to believe and trust more deeply. I came to trust that we’re allowed to ask questions and that God is able to handle those questions. That was a transformative thing in my own faith.

In this program, you grapple with tough, deep questions that maybe we’ve just accepted for a long time. Maybe these are things that we’ve been taught since Sunday school. It’s a challenge. But when you’re able to come and know where you stand, that is a beautiful, faith-building thing.

I know that in the work I do now, in a predominantly Muslim school, I really need to know what I believe. If I’m talking

with other ladies at the school about different celebrations and ideas, I need to know what I think, and I need to have already wrestled before I get into that room. Not to prove I’m right, but just to stand in my own faith. Having wrestled in a Christian environment, within a Muslim culture, is really beautiful, especially now knowing with confidence who the Lord is.

“Seriously consider a non-traditional opportunity like MESP in Amman. You are going to learn so much outside the classroom than you do in, and you are going to enter into a culture, a faith tradition, and a history that’s rich and complex that is not well-captured on the written page.”
Meagan Dooley

Dooley: I love how the MESP brings together people from different backgrounds and traditions in schools within the U.S., and then plops them in this other world. Programs like MESP put you outside of your comfort zone. Our CCCU schools tend to be pretty homogenous: a lot of white people who look like me from similar middle-class upbringings. I don’t know that that sets us up for the real diverse, multicultural, multi-faith, multi-ethnic world that we all get to navigate every day. Preparing students for the world they need to interact with today is critical — without intentionally going outside your bubble, you are less equipped. Study abroad is one great way to do this.

Within my MESP community, there were people from a Nazarene tradition, Baptist, conservative evangelical, liberal evangelical, mainline denominations. We were questioning and pushing each other on what we believed, and then we were interacting with our Jewish, Muslim, and Orthodox Palestinian Christian counterparts, and they are pushing us to think about all the things we believed. That’s critical for having a strong faith in a multicultural world.

How do you think MESP can help prepare today’s college students for specific careers?

Dooley: MESP has been utterly transformational for most students, whether or not they continue working in the Middle East, international relations, missions, or other “traditional” MESP paths. We had a pre-med student on my semester. We had a math major. We had some in international relations, communications, and religion. Of course, not everybody has taken my path to go back to the region. I work in international development, I travel regularly and work with different cultures, but I know my friends who are now math teachers and doctors from my program would still

say that MESP was transformational in how they interact with others and how they treat different cultures, different religions.

Whether you go back to the region, whether you want to work internationally, or whether you're going to stay home, I think the cross-cultural learning and the ability to make friends and connections with people different from you serves students of all backgrounds and fields.

What advice would you give students who are interested in MESP? How might they prepare for a semester in the Middle East?

Vincent: Hold things loosely. Hold your ideas, your thoughts, opinions, everything loosely, especially plans. It can be intimidating to walk into a place that is completely foreign, that is going to challenge you in a lot of different ways, but it's so good. I think the best things in life are going to be intimidating to begin with. At the beginning of the program especially, it's easy to look at what's planned for the semester and wonder how we'll do all the reading, lectures, and processing.

It can look like a daunting semester, especially when you consider you're in another culture, far from friends and family in America. Trust that this is worth it, that there is support in place, that you can always phone home. It's such a good program. It will be hard, but it will be so good.

Dooley: Seriously consider a non-traditional opportunity like a MESP in Amman. You are going to learn so much more outside the classroom than you do in, and you are going to enter into a culture, a faith tradition, and a history that's rich and complex that is not well-captured on the written page. You'll be in a relational community, a small cohort with a director and co-director who are invested in students academic, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing. You get to travel around the region with this cohort that becomes a family, and you get to take those insights back to your own classroom discussions.

It completely changed the trajectory of my career. I was going to go into security studies when I came to MESP, but after working in the West Bank and seeing the level of poverty, limited economic opportunities, and political restrictions, I came back and switched to a concentration in development, which has led me on my career path these past 10 years. So you may get out of MESP something different than you thought when you were going in, but it will be rich and beautiful, and it will challenge you intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Vincent: MESP is different because you are entering a region that is not well-represented and understood. I mean, a lot of our understanding of the Middle East is just characterized by violence, camels, and desert. So why wouldn't you want to dig

deeper? It teaches you how to ask the right questions about yourself, your beliefs, the people around you, the world around you in a way that I think that you would miss otherwise.

Dooley: Plus, MESP has this rich alumni network 30 years deep now. I've been fortunate to attend alumni gatherings in D.C. to hear where some of the first or second cohort have ended up. MESP hosts alumni nights during the semester with alumni who have ended up in Amman and on travel. They get together in Morocco, Turkey, or Egypt, or anywhere that they've got alumni while they're traveling.

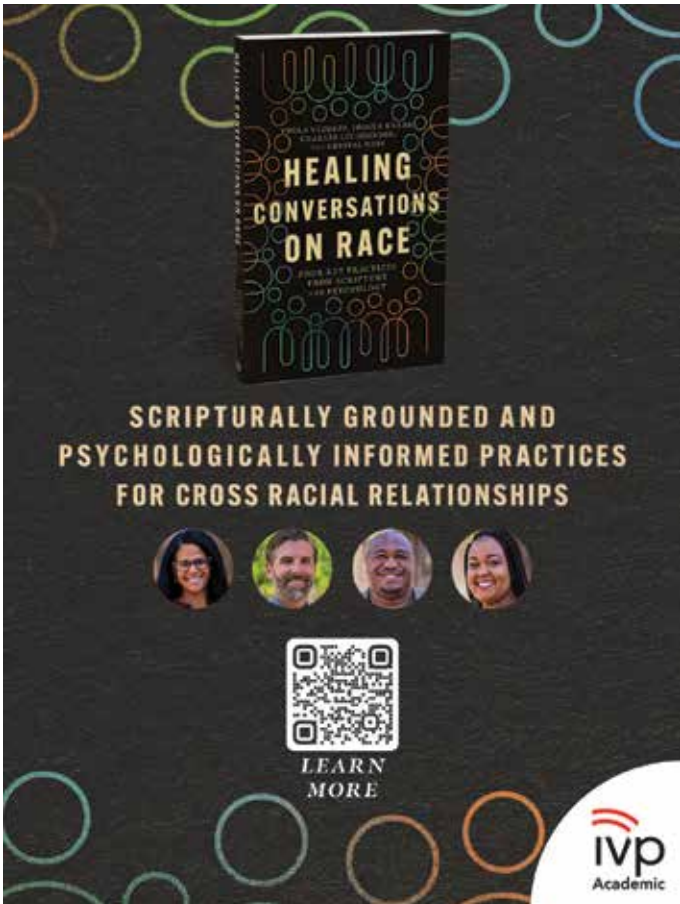
Vincent: One of my favorite things right now is going to these alumni nights and getting to talk with the students who are currently in the program. I also wanted to mention the service projects, where once a week, you're given a placement. My placement was actually here in Zarqa, an hour outside of Amman. This familiarity is part of why I was willing to come to this school. My placement was not actually at this particular school. It was at a different center in the same city. So when my company asked me about starting a partnership with this particular school in Zarqa, I said, "I know Zarqa. Sign me up." Service projects can look different whether it's teaching English, which mine was. Some are more tech-oriented or business-oriented, but it's another way that you can engage with the community with an interest you already have.



Hold things loosely. Hold your ideas, your thoughts, opinions, everything loosely, especially plans. It can be intimidating to walk into a place that is completely foreign, that is going to challenge you in a lot of different ways, but it's so good.

- Annie Vincent

Dooley: And for anybody who's interested in peace and conflict studies or security, MESP is a huge hands-on experiential learning opportunity in a complicated region, which is pretty unique for an undergraduate college experience.



Thoughts on the Asbury Awakening

BY TIMOTHY TENNENT



I have been reticent to write blogs or make a lot of public statements about this outpouring at Asbury because it is always better to stand in awe of something than to talk about something. I have been [to the outpouring] every day and night, and it is like stepping into a flowing spiritual river. You sense the presence and power of God working in people's lives. Since last Wednesday when the outpouring began, I have reflected many times on Jesus' statement about the Spirit when he said, "The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." This is not a time to "manage" this or to try to "shape" it. This is the time to simply receive from God's hand.

Someday, we will look back on these days and thank God that he visited us in ways we will talk about for years to come.

Despite the endless coverage in social media and the regular media calling this a revival, I think it is wise to see this,

at the current phase, as an awakening. Only if we see lasting transformation that shakes the comfortable foundations of the church and truly brings us all to a new and deeper place can we look back in hindsight and say, "Yes, this has been a revival." An awakening is where God begins to stir and awaken people up from their spiritual slumber. This is definitely happening, not only in Wilmore, but as this move of God spreads to other schools and communities across the nation and even the world. There are many reports that this is what is happening. But we must keep our hearts and eyes fixed on Jesus and ask for him to complete the work he has begun so that, over time, there is a lasting transformation in the lives of those who are being touched by God.

This is the reason why both the university and the seminary have not cancelled classes. It is not because we are in a "business as usual" mode. Far from it. There is talk of little else in every chapel, in every classroom, in every hallway conversation, and, I suspect, in every home and apartment in the community. The desire is to "mainstream" renewal into the very fabric of our lives so that we are transformed right where we live and work and study. We all love mountaintop experiences, but we also know that it must be lived out in all the normal rhythms of life. We have to live into this desperation for God to do what we cannot do. We have to live into transformed relationships. We have to live into new patterns of life

and worship. In short, we must embrace what it means to really live as Christians in the midst of a church culture that has largely domesticated the Gospel beyond recognition. We will know that revival has truly come to us when we are truly changed to live more like him at work, at study, at worship, and at witness. ... Someday, we will look back on these days and thank God that he visited us in ways we will talk about for years to come. But what we are doggedly seeking is not lasting memories, but transformed lives long after the lights go out in Hughes Auditorium or Estes Chapel or all other places that are experiencing this work of grace. In short, it is not about "this place" or "that place," whether Wilmore or any other city. It is about Christ himself. None of us "owns" this awakening. But all of us must own in our own lives his work and his gracious beckoning to that deeper place. Come, Holy Spirit!

TIMOTHY C. TENNENT Ph.D has served as president of Asbury Theological Seminary since July 2009. He originally published this reflection on his blog on Feb. 14, 2023. It has been edited for length and is republished with permission.



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