

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

# ADVANCE

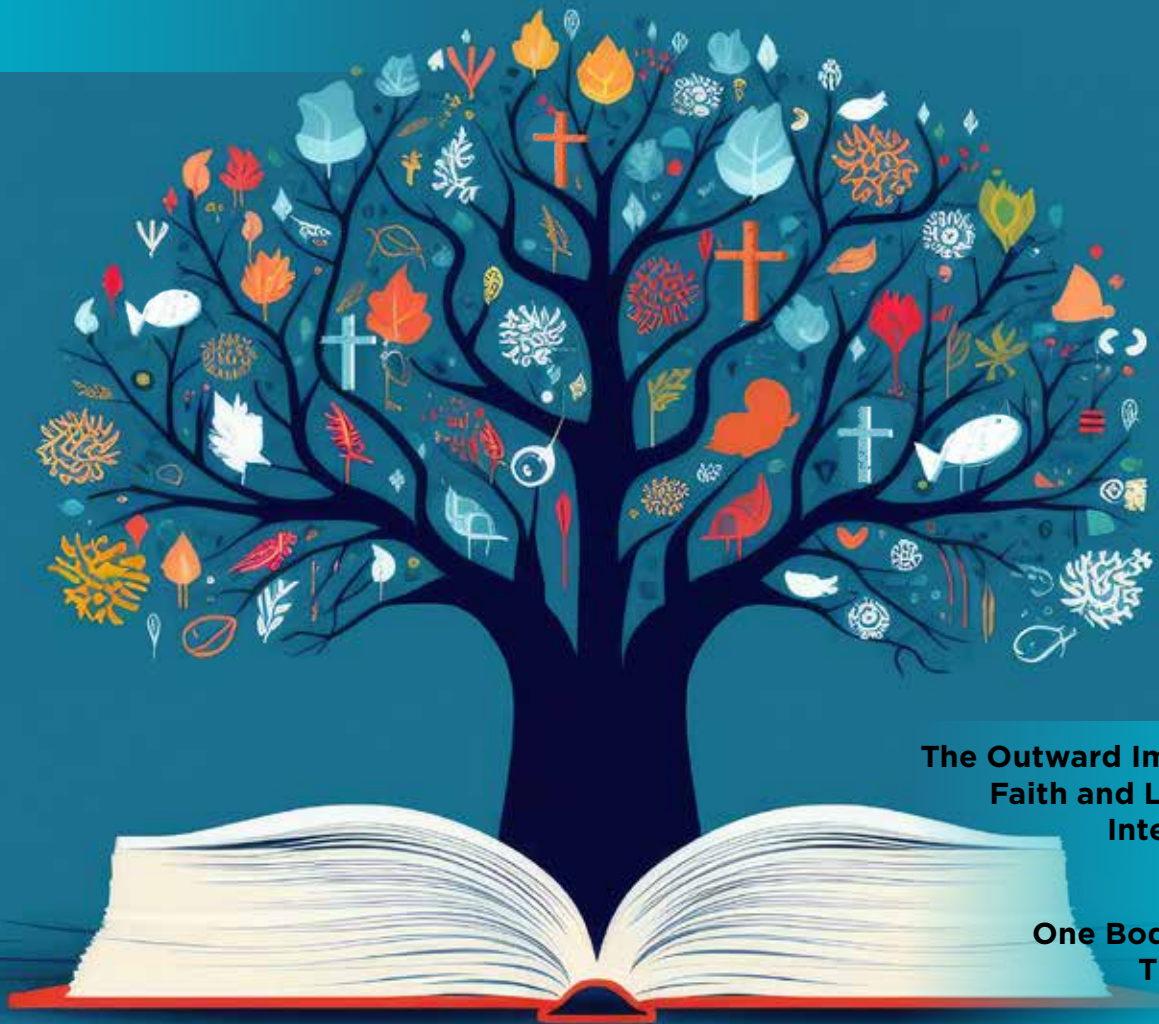
FALL 2023

MAGAZINE

## FAITH AND LEARNING

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### INTEGRATION AND IMPACT



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Thoughts**  
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THE LEADING NATIONAL VOICE OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION



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*-Jeff Walton, Executive Director, AACs*

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

## The World-Changing Work of Educating Christian Students



I believe that Christian higher education is an antidote to the world's cultural decline. It prepares the kinds of leaders we need for the future. The challenge for Christian higher education is to have the curriculum that meets the enormous responsibility. That is why the CCCU is a champion for the integration of faith and learning that is happening on our campuses. The last issue of CCCU's *Advance* addressed the "why" of the integration of faith and learning; in this fall issue, the CCCU addresses the "how" of this topic. Together, these issues are meant to be both an encouragement and a resource for campus leaders and boards of trustees, as well as a tool for explaining to the larger world the key distinctives of Christian higher education.

But let's take a step back. When we think about the future of our world, what do we worry about? As a parent and grandparent, I am worried about who will influence our children and who will be the future leaders in a society that is broken and bruised. Will it be the TikTok influencer who has the most sway over future generations? The Hollywood celebrity? The professional athlete? Or will it be parents, pastors, professors, and peers who share the love of Jesus? It is not passé, old fashioned, or out of touch to think that the influencers who matter most to the next generation will and should be the parents, pastors, professors, and peers who claim Jesus is Lord.


This issue of *Advance* offers powerful examples of the extraordinary professors who are available to mentor and teach the Christian college student of today. Christian colleges and universities create communities that enable the world's flourishing because of who they employ (professors and staff), because of who leads them (the presidents), and ultimately because of who attends them (the students). The result is that Christian higher education — like a little bit of yeast in a large batch of dough — is making an outsized difference in the world.

What happens at a Christian college is special. The distinction of a Christ-centered CCCU school is the all-Christian faculty, the intentional Christian formation of students, and a peer group that wants to explore a Christian worldview and lead a countercultural life. David Brooks, bestselling author and *New York Times* columnist, describes what happens on Christian

colleges this way: "Christian colleges have the formula to nurture human beings to have a devoted heart, a courageous mind, and a purposeful soul, and everyone wants it."

Though much has changed about our world and about the college experience, one thing is constant: Young men and women attending college remain impressionable, and the influences they have during this period will shape their lives. College is a time for setting students up for success, not just in what they will do with their lives, but also who they will become. Christian colleges have world-class academic programs, as do many other higher education institutions, but that isn't the only thing students need. The formation of one's personhood is shaped by whom you study with, who influences you, and who becomes your community, because that shapes adult practices and habits of the heart. Like someone training for the Olympics, a student who wants to be their best and do their best for Jesus starts by getting the best training they can, by getting the best coaches and mentors, and by surrounding themselves with the best teammates who spur them on to meet their big, audacious goals in a world that opposes those dreams. That's the Christian college described in the pages of this magazine.

Because Christian mission is so important to the ability to integrate one's faith into one's learning, the CCCU is the leading voice to protect and advance Christ-centered missions. Consider what is at stake. Imagine a world without overtly Christian colleges and universities. Imagine having no haven to openly, proudly live and share your Christian faith during your collegiate years. Make no mistake — there are those who would desire this future and will use the tools of government, media, and the courts to make it a reality. But the CCCU is the dam holding back those waters from pouring in and submerging Christian colleges and universities. And like a dam, the CCCU is steadfast. Immovable.

Together with the communities on our campuses, the expertise of our faculty and staff, the support of our boards of trustees, and the power of God at work in the world, Christian colleges and universities will be able to shape the lives of students — our future leaders — for generations to come. 



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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 throughout the world.

**DISTRIBUTION**  
*Advance* is published each year in the fall and spring and is mailed to members, affiliates, and friends of the CCCU. It is also available online at [www.cccu.org/magazine](http://www.cccu.org/magazine). Direct questions and letters to the editor to [editor@cccu.org](mailto:editor@cccu.org).

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# Sharing the Good Work of Christian Higher Education



In the last issue of *Advance* (Spring 2023), I wrote about how the common commitment to integrating Christian faith into all aspects of the higher education learning experience is the shared anchor of all CCCU institutions. It's what holds us steadfast in the midst of the winds buffeting higher education generally and Christian higher education specifically.

While I still maintain that the metaphor is apt, this issue dives into the reality that the integration of faith and learning is far more than something that centers our individual campus communities. The sheer nature of Christian higher education means that what happens on our campuses does not stay on our campuses. Nor should it, since we are followers of Jesus and thus called to live out the Great Commission. We want our students and graduates to take what they're learning out into the world; we want our faculty and staff to continue making meaningful contributions to their respective academic fields.

But in an era of hot takes on social media, increased scrutiny on what, exactly, students are learning on campuses across the country, and a growing animosity and villainization of those who don't hold the same views, there are more and more chances that what we're doing on our campuses can be misunderstood or misconstrued, unintentionally or otherwise.

That's why we wanted to spend some time this issue focusing on topics connected to how we share and promote the value of what we do with those who aren't as familiar with the ways of Christian higher education. Whether it's finding ways to bring the learning on our campuses out to broader communities (page 12), or navigating conflicts within Christian faith (page 20), or even thinking about how to measure the success and impact of faith and learning in the classroom (page 36), we hope this provides a helpful reference and starting spot for important conversations on your campus.

On a personal note, this was a particularly meaningful issue for me. For nearly a decade, I've been a part of the CCCU's efforts to preserve and promote the work of Christian higher education, a cause that is personal for me as a double alumna of CCCU institutions. I passionately believe in the value of an education that prioritizes not just the mind, but the heart as well; we need people in this world who not only excel in their profession but also follow what God requires as described in Micah 6 (NLT): "to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Now, as I step away from my role as editor of *Advance* after this, my 20th issue, to focus on our growing family (we're expecting our third child in December, Lord willing), I do so believing more in the value of — and the need for — Christian higher education than I ever have before. Though my time as editor is done, I know I will never stop being an advocate, promoter, and prayerful supporter of the work you do. 🙏

**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](mailto:editor@cccu.org).

## PRESIDENTIAL CHANGES

The following institutions have experienced presidential transitions since September 2022. Campuses that currently have interim presidents are not included.

**Avondale University**  
(Cooranbong, NSW, Australia)  
Kerri-Lee Krause, July 2023

**Booth University College**  
(Winnipeg, MB, Canada)  
Rob Fringer, July 2023

**Charleston Southern University**  
(Charleston, SC)  
B. Keith Faulkner, October 2023

**Colorado Christian University**  
(Lakewood, CO)  
Eric K. Hogue, June 2023

**Concordia University Wisconsin**  
(Mequon, WI)  
Erik P. Ankerberg, January 2023

**Corban University**  
(Salem, OR)  
John Mark Yeats, June 2023

**Covenant College**  
(Lookout Mountain, GA)  
Brad Voyles, October 2023

**Eastern Nazarene College**  
(Quincy, MA)  
Colleen R. Derr, June 2023

**Emmanuel University**  
(Franklin Springs, GA)  
Greg Hearn, June 2023

**Fuller Theological Seminary**  
(Pasadena, CA)  
David Emmanuel Goatley, January 2023

**Hannibal-LaGrange University**  
(Hannibal, MO)  
Robert J. Matz, October 2022

**Mount Vernon Nazarene University**  
(Mount Vernon, OH)  
Carson D. Castleman, October 2023

**Oklahoma Christian University**  
(Edmond, OK)  
L. Ken Jones, May 2023

**Regent University**  
(Virginia Beach, VA)  
Gordon Robertson, July 2023

**Roberts Wesleyan University**  
(Rochester, NY)  
Rupert A. Hayles Jr., July 2023

**San Diego Christian College**  
(San Diego, CA)  
David Poole, July 2023

**Seattle Pacific University**  
(Seattle, WA)  
Deana L. Porterfield, July 2023

**Trinity Christian College**  
(Palos Heights, IL)  
Aaron J. Kuecker, October 2023

**University of the Southwest**  
(Hobbs, NM)  
Ryan Tipton, June 2023

## INSTITUTIONAL NAME CHANGES

**Avondale University College** in Cooranbong, NSW, Australia, is now **Avondale University**.

**Emmanuel College** in Franklin Springs, Georgia, is now **Emmanuel University**.

**William Jessup University** in Rocklin, California, is now **Jessup University**.



THE LATEST UPDATES FROM CAPITOL HILL

The CCCU’s advocacy work promotes and protects CCCU members’ unique position as Christ-centered, nonprofit institutions of higher education that are often in the crosshairs of a variety of issues affecting higher education and faith-based organizations, as well as challenges to religious character and convictions. In the last fiscal year, the CCCU signed onto 57 letters and 7 amicus briefs supporting our major advocacy issues and made 55 visits to offices around Capitol Hill. Other highlights of our recent advocacy work include:

CCCU RESPONDS TO GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

On May 19, the Department of Education released a set of proposed rules that would create a financial value framework for nonprofit institutions; the final changes were announced on October 10. Among other things, the Department proposes to calculate debt-to-earnings rates from all programs at all institutions of higher education, which means that all institutions would have an increased compliance burden.

The CCCU sent a comprehensive letter to the Department of Education explaining the major concerns with this massive proposal that looks to rate and assess all academic programs based solely on financial value. In our letter, we outlined our major concerns with evaluating one’s education with purely financial metrics, highlighting issues with the proposed debt-to-earnings ratios accuracy and pushing against the unreasonable debt-to-earnings reporting requirements.

CCCU COMMENT LETTER ON TITLE IX ATHLETICS

The CCCU submitted a comment letter on the Department of Education’s new proposed rule regarding transgender athletes. The CCCU called on the Department to reaffirm the Title IX religious exemption, acknowledge the authority of relevant legislation, maintain a strong emphasis on institutional autonomy, and highlight the original intent of Title IX while accepting the limitations and applicability of the 2020 *Bostock v. Clayton County* decision. The Department of Education announced that it anticipates releasing both the final Title IX rule and the final Athletics rule in October 2023.

BRIEF FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The CCCU led a brief in the *Garrick v. Moody Bible Institute* case. In this suit, Moody terminated a faculty member who, despite knowing about and agreeing to a doctrinal position related to who can fill the role of pastor or elder, advocated against Moody’s doctrinal position. The professor filed suit, and Moody is asking the appellate court to protect the right of faith-based institutions to live out their doctrinal and religious beliefs. The CCCU’s brief asks the court to uphold the ministerial exception as a bar to suit instead of a defense to liability, which would improperly entangle the court in the religious beliefs of the institution.

**LEARN MORE** | For more information about the CCCU’s advocacy work, including copies of letters sent to Capitol Hill offices and amicus briefs, visit [www.cccu.org/advocacy](http://www.cccu.org/advocacy).


CCCU Awards \$68,000 in Faculty Research Grants

In September, the CCCU announced the 2023 recipients of its annual Networking Grants, awarded to support high-quality Christian scholarship that speaks within the broader academy. A total of \$68,000 was awarded to five research teams hailing from 15 different institutions — including the first-ever team of researchers from an International Affiliate university.

The Networking Grants for Christian Scholars program was established more than two decades ago through the ongoing generosity of Walter and Darlene Hansen, and in 2020, a generous gift from the Christian Community Credit Union expanded the size of the grants. Each year, the CCCU awards Networking Grants to scholars whose work satisfies two key criteria: 1) the work is significantly informed by Christian practices, perspectives, and purposes, and 2) the work demonstrates the potential for dissemination in the larger academy.

“We join together faith and scholarship for the common good with an understanding that we are part of a larger educational fabric and need to engage the broader range of scholarship well,” shares Stan Rosenberg, CCCU vice president for research and scholarship and founding director of Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford (SCIO). “Our research efforts, like our commitment to service, need to be developed in a meaningful way to serve, communicate, and engage in meaningful discussions with the larger academic academy. We are grateful to both sets of donors for helping us spur even higher levels of excellence in research, teaching, and service at our member colleges.”

This year, the CCCU awarded Networking Grants to five distinct research teams composed of 23 scholars, representing 11 CCCU colleges or universities and four additional institutions. These institutions span a wide geographical area, both throughout the United States and abroad. Notably, one of the research teams is composed of scholars from Daystar University and Africa International University, both CCCU International Affiliate institutions located on Kenya. Daystar and Africa International are the first International Affiliate universities, and the first universities on the continent of Africa, to be awarded a Networking Grant.

Grant-funded projects are divided into two categories: Initiative Grants provide up to \$30,000 in funding over three years for teams implementing research projects, and Planning Grants provide up to \$5,000 in funding over one year for teams setting out to plan research projects. 

**Learn More** | For more information on the CCCU’s Networking Grants for Christian Scholars program, visit [cccunet.org/campus-grants/networking-grants/](http://cccunet.org/campus-grants/networking-grants/).





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# Integration and Interdisciplinarity: Building Authentic Christian Higher Education



When it comes to providing our students a foundation and understanding of the integration of faith with their studies, I suspect many of us can produce lists of unsatisfactory endeavors.

In the collective experience of Christian higher education, we’ve witnessed insufficient or even fallacious attempts at this. To name just a few: ‘God of the gaps’ explanations; nationalistic histories that presume God was with one nation or another; the idea of manifest destiny imparting divine providence and privileged place into contemporary or recent events; simple prayers or out-of-context Bible verses replacing the hard craft and conceptual rigor required to do integration well.

Many of these insufficient means share several inclinations. Some are shaped by formulaic reconstructions of biblical mandates or pietistic framings of the concerns. At other times, faith integration has been confused with apologetics or biblical study. These are of course valuable activities and to be sought as part of a maturing Christian life, but they are not the same as developing the ability to integrate faith and learning well.

Integration cannot be formulaic, nor is it reducible to or identifiable with a simple prayer or a Bible lesson. Neither can it be what is perhaps more tempting and readily found: an attempt to supply a neat biblical overlay to the academic material. Nor does it amount to a singular theological or credal assessment; otherwise, seminaries and divinity schools would be the main locus of such work.

Critically, many of our able students recognize that such approaches are insufficient. In my experience, these sorts of approaches often become the point of rejection for Christian thought. When bright and able students progress in their training (whether through continued academic education or through career experience), the answers they thought they had based on such formulaic responses can prove insufficient; thus, the Christian faith can suddenly seem to them as insufficient for the so-called “real world” of their chosen vocation.

When one looks at the broad array of works on integration, the liberal arts colleges represent a major source of such output. This should not be surprising when considering the history of integrative conversations. Modern notions evolved out of our medieval predecessors, whose focus on the integration of faith and reason sets our stage — where theology engaged seriously with the predecessor to the modern liberal arts, the quadrivium and trivium.

Integration requires clear critical thinking, and the maturing of critical analysis is especially served well by developing interdisciplinary thinking. However, in the relatively siloed world of modern higher education, we are often biased against interdisciplinarity for a variety of reasons. When considered singularly, many of these reasons can be justified, but this bias undermines the project of higher education when looked at as a cohesive whole. Among the reasons often given for academic siloes are lack of time (interdisciplinarity, after all, is a long game requiring the investment of time); the expectations of specialized excellence according to particular disciplinary canons; budgetary constraints undermining the opportunities for interdepartmental, team-taught courses; the constraints imposed by accreditation bodies; and narrow, prior experience (to name a few).

But faith-learning integration needs the benefits of many disciplinary minds: theologians, historians, chemists, psychologists, literary scholars, modern language scholars, engineers, business scholars, anthropologists, political scientists, and the like all need each other, and our understanding of our work is enhanced by making deep connections between the people, the ideas, and the experiences. We might apply Rudyard Kipling’s classic statement from his 1891 poem, “The English Flag,” about the need to travel outside of one’s own land for scholarly integration: “What do they know of England who only England know?” These salutary words are as true for intellectual boundaries as for political and geographic ones. We must bridge other disciplinary cultures if we want integration to flourish.

Photo courtesy of Stanley P. Rosenberg

But how to do it in our siloed academic worlds? Interdisciplinary training for students is an antidote, as it includes skilled, integrated teaching across the broad range of subjects. Programs such as honors and some forms of undergraduate research specifically draw upon interdisciplinary approaches alongside travel, study abroad, and team-taught courses that nurture integrating one or more disciplines.

All of these, to flourish well, require institutions to facilitate formative experiences for the faculty that press them to develop interdisciplinary commitments and vision of their own. For example, faculty gatherings that encourage the members to delve deeply into a concept, problem, or issue while bringing their various disciplinary strengths to bear can accomplish much for them, your institutions, and the student experience.

Interdisciplinarity provides the intellectual tools to build bridges between conceptual frameworks, shapes one’s ability to expand beyond one’s own narrower horizons, and prepares one to do the work of integration — bridging faith and academic work to provide an approach that encompasses the entire self. All involved in the process — students, faculty, and administrators

alike — enhance their ability to make use of rigorous intellectual methods, culturally sensitive commitments, and spiritually enlivening practices in a way that reflects the life and mission of Jesus Christ. In other words, interdisciplinarity enables institutions to truly provide the Christ-centered educational experience for which they strive.

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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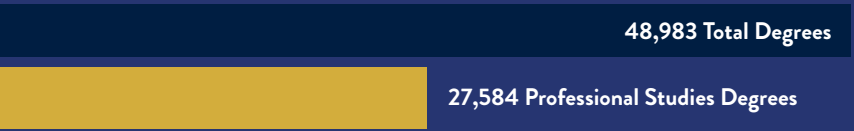


PROFESSIONAL DEGREES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

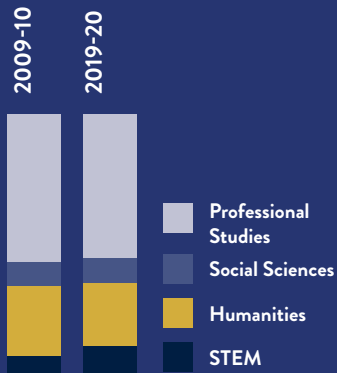
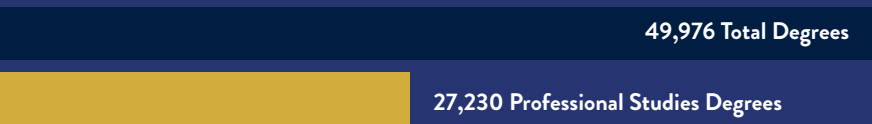
CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES DEGREES AT CCCU INSTITUTIONS

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

2009-10 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED



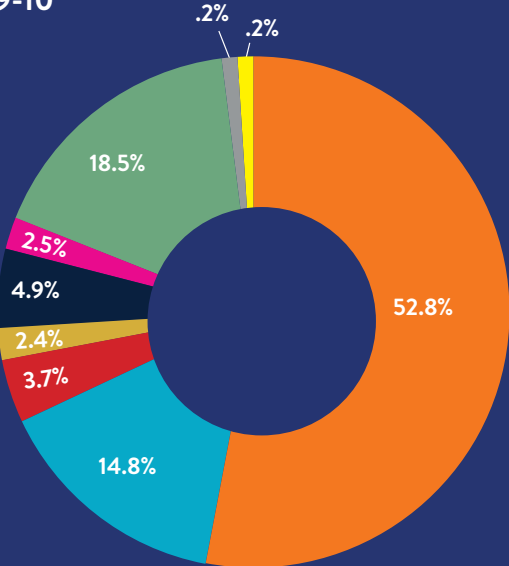
2019-20 BACHELOR DEGREES AWARDED



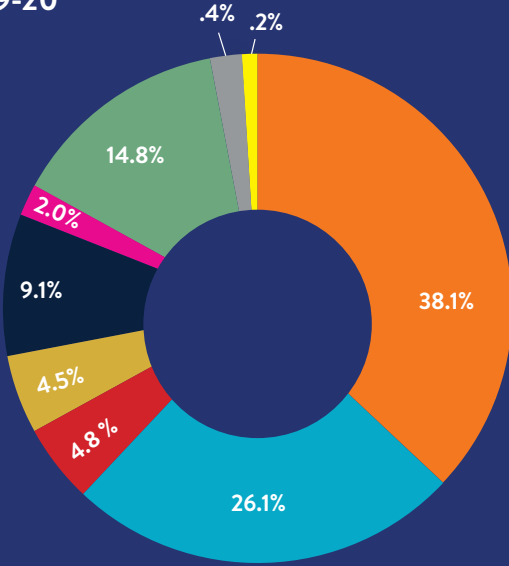
DISTRIBUTION OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES DEGREES AWARDED BY CATEGORY

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

2009-10



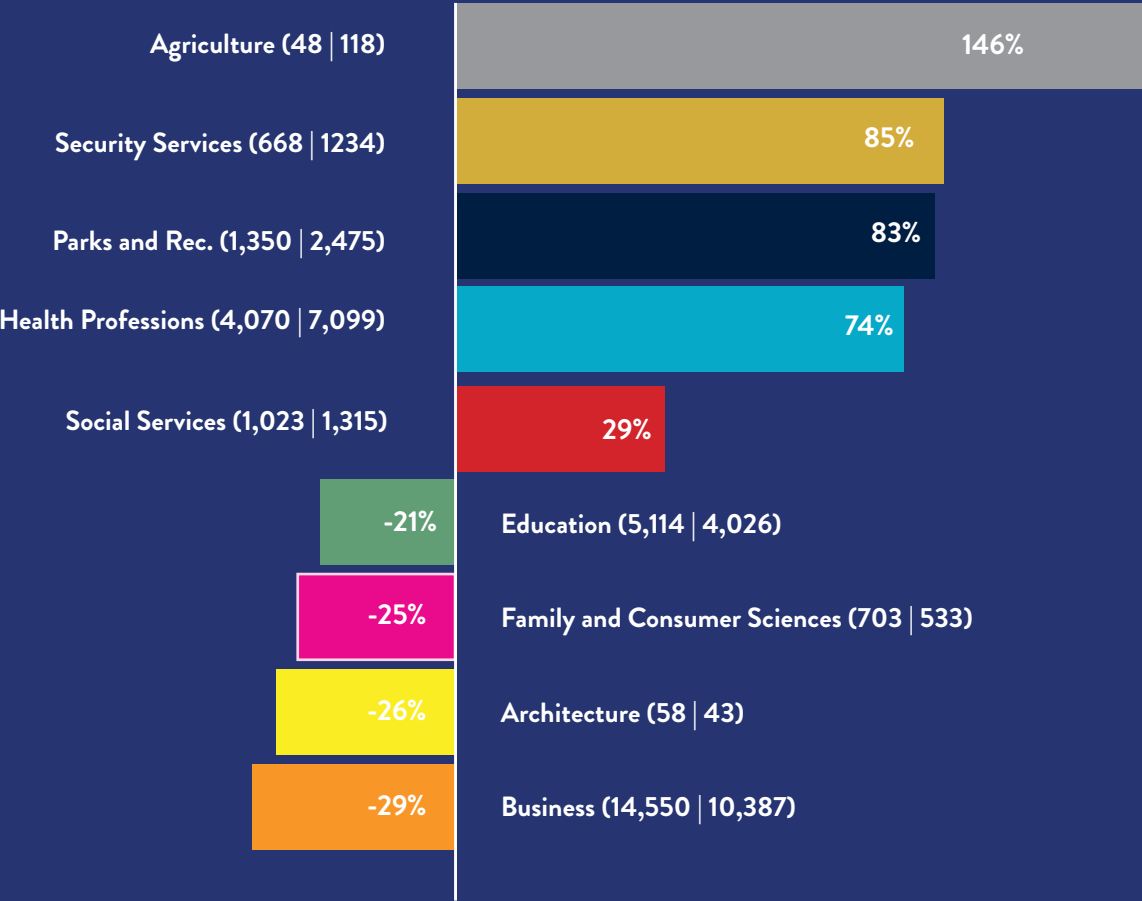
2019-20



- Parks and Rec
- Education
- Social Services
- Security Services
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Architecture
- Business
- Health Professions
- Agriculture

PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN DEGREES AWARDED BY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES CATEGORY FROM 2009-10 TO 2019-20

Given the overall changes in professional degrees awarded over the last 10 years, as well as the changes in which professional studies 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, 2009-10 on the left and 2019-20 on the right.)



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](http://www.scio-uk.org/research/supporting-stem).

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



# THE OUTWARD IMPACT OF FAITH AND LEARNING INTEGRATION

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*The faith-centered mission of  
Christian colleges impacts life  
far beyond campus boundaries.*

## A CONVERSATION

with  
Lena Crouso  
Nicole Eastes  
Allin Means  
Emily Milnes



**The faith-centered mission of Christian colleges provides the cornerstone of campus life. But this work is not only for the students on campus; every day, Christian colleges and universities are finding new ways to serve their communities, share their wealth of knowledge, and model for both students and those off campus how a Christ-centered educational experience can be a positive influence for the good of all.**

The following conversation explores this unique ripple effect of faith-integrated learning and asks some campus leaders — who in addition to their academic work also participate in programs and initiatives that bring the value of Christ-centered higher education to the community — ways that administrators can support this work.

Moderator Lena Crouso recently retired after more than 30 years of serving in Christian higher education; most recently, she served as the CCCU's senior fellow for diversity and special advisor to the president while also serving at Southern Nazarene University (Bethany, OK) as the vice president for intercultural learning and engagement, chief diversity officer, and professor. Nicole Eastes serves at Sterling College (Sterling, KS) as an assistant professor, the clinical education coordinator for the college's athletic training program, and the director for the integration of faith and learning. Allin Means is the associate dean and professor at the School of Communications at Missouri Baptist University (St. Louis, MO), where he also directs the university's Faith and Research Conference. Emily Milnes is the director of recruitment and program relations at Pepperdine University's School of Public Policy (Malibu, CA) and is also a licensed attorney with a background in immigration law and modern slavery.

The conversation has been edited for length and clarity; to view the full conversation, visit the CCCU's YouTube channel.



**Lena Crouso:** We all work at Christ-centered institutions whose missions are built on the central belief that faith-integrated learning is essential. How do you respond to someone off campus who asks why that kind of learning experience matters to anyone else who isn't a student or faculty member there?

**Allin Means:** At MBU [Missouri Baptist University], we're an evangelical university and we welcome all students from all walks of life. So it's the relational aspect [of our campus experience] that we hope draws them here — even if they just only know us because we have the word "Baptist" in our name ... or they may have never been in a church before or had any Christian influence whatsoever. It begins with that relationship; when they arrive, we want to show them what Christ looks like in what we do. I think that's what sets us apart.

But it's a tough question, isn't it, because you have to get them here before they see that, they're a part of that relationship, that they're a part of that kind of connection with faculty and other students. But I do think that at the end of the day, the ethic that a Christian higher education institution centers around is crucial, and it's so important to a student's development on the whole. So when people say, "Well, why do you like working at MBU?" I say, "Well, I love being around Christians. I love talking to students, whether they're Christians or not Christians. I love the openness that we can have in our discussions. We don't have to check things at the door — we can really talk about things and dive in deep. We're not here to do the saving. God will do the saving; we're just here to be [his] vessel."

**Emily Milnes:** As I was thinking about this question, I returned to Pepperdine University's mission statement, which is that we're a Christian institution that's committed to academic excellence and to equip students for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. It's those three last words in that phrase — purpose, service, and leadership — that I think are so crucial to having faith-integrated learning. It's introducing excellence in the classroom as we pursue truth and what is good and right and beautiful, and as we wrestle with the really big questions with intellectual integrity and with honesty.

But I think it also goes to casting a vision and a real imagination for what could be. C.S. Lewis talks about a baptism of imagination. In the Christian university setting, what does that mean? As faculty and staff are coming alongside students both in the classroom and outside of the classroom and giving them real skills of excellence and questions to wrestle with, they're also thinking through how one pursues excellence, pursues truth, loves God, loves humanity well, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

I think that's why faith-integrated learning is so important — it's lifting the vision and the imagination from being so inward to looking outward and saying, "How can I pursue excellence in all areas of life? What's it all for?" But then we know when

the students leave the classroom and go into the world, there's a lot of work to do. It's amazing work, but the work is a marathon, and it requires men and women who are willing to show up and do the hard work and stick with it for the long haul. When you're learning in the faith-integrated classroom that Christ came, he died, he saved us, and now he set us free to be light in the world, [that knowledge is] something that gives fuel to the work for the long haul.

**Nicole Eastes:** I've been thinking about what it means to have a holistic approach to education. Being in my area of healthcare, there's this push — whether you're in a secular culture or you're in a Christian faith-based culture — for a holistic approach, looking at the whole person in order to be well and what it means to be successful. When somebody comes to a place like Sterling or any of these other institutions — maybe they're young in their faith, maybe they're mature in their faith, or maybe they have no interest whatsoever in pursuing a faith in Christ — this type of education helps those students to wrestle with some of those tough life questions. It helps them to, in a safe space, think through what it means to have integrity. What does it mean to have faith and morals? How does that then apply to my future vocation? To me, that's really at the core of it.

We all pray that in their time here, those students that don't know Christ would come to know him and that those students who do know Christ would grow deeper, because that's what we're always pursuing. But marrying those two things of faith and learning together, it helps us take the faith aspect and understand that it affects our vocation. It affects what God has called us to do.

I go back to, as Emily was saying, the why. There is so much burnout and so many mental health struggles that people have been dealing. So when we look at how we help our students be prepared for what they're going to face in the world, helping them to have that strong foundation in faith, and then also helping them to know how to stand on their morals and their integrity, that "why" changes everything. If you have a why, if you have that meaning and that purpose, it changes that pursuit of excellence from being just, "Okay, I did it, I'm excellent in my field," into a continued growth and a continued pursuit of excellence because of who you're serving.

**Means:** We know Gen Z wants to make a difference. ... So to Emily's point of the "why," why does this generation care? If we can connect that to faith, that's crucial. It might be a way that God can come into that mix. We talk about how Gen Z is entitled, they expect things, and some of that might be true, but they really want to do good. They grapple with difficult questions. They want to change the world, but they're not sure how yet. If we come alongside them, we can help them let God work through them and us to find out their "why" on a bigger scale than just, "It feels like the right thing to do."

**Eastes:** I'm going to borrow from one of my colleagues [who spoke at] our first convocation [of the academic year]. He talked about AI in higher education and how we're reaching an era where we don't necessarily need people to crunch the numbers and find all of the research and do all of the answers. What we need people



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**Emily Milnes, J.D.**  
Director of Recruitment and Program Relations, School of Public Policy, Pepperdine University (Malibu, CA)



for is for the humanity. We need to train people how to care for other people well, and how to take what we're learning and apply the moral and ethical element to it and actually care and not just be robots. A faith-integrated classroom does that.

**Milnes:** I think that's so beautiful. It's thinking about the imago Dei, how do we care well for the imago Dei, and incorporating this idea of human dignity and inherent value that is in each and every person. ... Students want to do good, but there are a lot of voices and pressure on them right now, [saying], "You've got to perform, you've got to do all these things by the time you're 22 years old or else the world's going to fall apart." [Faith-integrated learning] gives them the freedom to know that there are a lot of voices and pressure, but there's one voice that actually matters most.s. What is it that Jesus is calling them to do, and where is he telling them to go? And learning to recognize that voice — you can do that. Faith-integrated classrooms really equip students to walk in freedom and not have all of the pressure.

**Crouso:** In your own area of leadership and your experience, how are the external, tactile, practical aspects of learning — the public faculty seminars, the student performances or presentations — how are they important for sharing this value of the faith-centered learning approach?

**Means:** I don't want to just use this as an opportunity for a shameless plug of the Faith and Research Conference that I direct. But I will say, in all honesty, I took over the conference about three or four years ago because I saw an opportunity to reach out to a larger audience, whether Christian or not. We decide on themes. Two years ago, it was mental health and the wholeness of creation; last year, emerging from COVID, our theme was well-being, mind, body, and spirit. This year, our theme is going to be on artificial intelligence. These things are relevant in our current culture. When we saw statistics about students struggling with



“How we live and the calling that God’s placed on our lives to live a certain way is far more important than any content we’re going to share or any one practice that we’re going to implement into the classroom.”

mental health issues, we said, “All right, now let’s build this year’s conference around that.” And so we invited people from all over. A lot of folks from Missouri Baptist present, of course, but we also had speakers from different areas and secular schools, and we didn’t question their faith. If they submitted a strong proposal that fit into our theme, then I added them to the docket. We must have 14 or 15 universities here in the St. Louis area, and it is a great way to let this larger community know that we have areas that we can meet and visit and discuss together.

**Milnes:** I am a lawyer; that’s actually what brought me to Pepperdine in the first place. At Pepperdine, we have the Sudreau Global Justice Institute. It’s housed in the law school, and it’s an opportunity for students to work around the world in public justice systems, to come alongside and support the leaders who are doing courageous work there. It means going into the prisons; it means going into the [courts]. Faculty and administrators go along — I was just in Uganda with our president and vice president in June, in the prisons alongside our students and students from other schools around the country, doing plea bargaining and working with dear friends there.

In that setting, it really is rolling up the sleeves and seeing that academic excellence that’s taught in the classroom being implemented in real life, saying, “What does this look like?” It gives students a vision for what could be. It doesn’t mean all of them will go into human rights law or practice immigration law or look at human trafficking, but it does give them an idea of what could be. It’s what Allin was talking about: we need universities to think deeply on these topics and to think well, but we can’t just stop there. We’ve got to take the good ideas and actually put them into action. At the policy school, we have students who have to do an internship for graduation. They also have [to complete] a capstone for graduation. Our encouragement to our students is to work alongside organizations or NGOs or governments

and ask, “Where are there gaps, and how can we fill those gaps?” It’s meeting the requirements for the curriculum and the coursework, of course, but it’s also saying, “How can I actually use what’s learned in the classroom and apply it in a very practical and real sense?” It helps them recognize that they’re not the hero of the story, but they do get to be a part of it.

**Eastes:** One of the things that came to my mind was the day-to-day “normal” experiences — how do we make a difference in the lives of the people that we rub elbows with every single day and be a light to those people? Thinking about the programs that we have here at Sterling — whether it’s the athletic training program that I teach in, or it’s our education program where we have student teachers going out — we need to make sure that we’re first equipping them before we send them out into those experiences. We need to make sure we are modeling what that should look like, to be a positive influence wherever you go.

One of the things in my role that I’ve had to work on is doing different inter-professional education for our athletic training students with other healthcare professions. Being at a small Christian school in the middle of Kansas, there are not any other healthcare professions on campus, or even many nearby. So I stumbled upon a connection at a larger state institution, and now [our students] connect with one of their nurse practitioner programs and work alongside them. That is an opportunity to show that what we do here is just a little bit different — to show the light of what we do. That’s a priority for us, being with people ... whether it’s other faith-based individuals or people that have no interest in faith whatsoever — showing them the inherent good that comes from what we’re doing here and showing them that we are also scholars. We are still excellent in our field.

**Crouso:** As in all of higher education, Christian higher education has an increasing amount of faculty who are adjuncts. What are some of the skills, the mentoring opportunities you would offer them in this important area of faith and learning integration?

**Eastes:** We have quite a few adjuncts in our department, so I do get the opportunity to mentor them and answer those questions that they have. And with my role for the director for the integration of faith and learning, [the questions] tend to be like, “What does that even mean? What does that even look like? Do I have to read a Bible verse every day or something like that?” My first piece of advice to any faculty member, but especially a new faculty member or a faculty adjunct, is authenticity — living your faith in a way that you’re modeling for your students that you mean what you say, and that you really do believe all of this stuff that we talk about at Sterling College. When we’re trying to encourage people to integrate faith into their classroom, it’s first how they live it — and that’s in the classroom, but that’s also outside of the classroom. It’s in their office hours; it’s in how they respond to an email or a text message. It’s when they run into their student at the store. How we live and the calling that God’s placed on our lives to live a certain way is far more important than any content we’re going to share or any one practice that we’re going to implement into the classroom. Invest in the continued spiritual renewal of our faculty and encourage them to let that authentically come out and be who they are — because that’s why they’re here. They love being in a Christian institution and getting to be in their discipline.



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**Means:** I've written down something you said, Nicole: Encourage. I just started this position this semester, and so I'm getting my arms around our adjuncts — we've got them all over the country, and they're excellent. They do have to have a statement of faith to be hired, even as an adjunct, but [beyond that] I want to be encouraging. I want to let them know that if they are thinking about trying something new that may or may not work but it integrates some sort of faith message into whatever they are doing, try it.

For us at Missouri Baptist University — and probably all of our [CCCU] schools — the main mission is to keep doing the mission. The best way to do faith and learning is to keep doing it and keep it at the front of our minds. So I want to let our adjuncts know, don't be afraid to try something. If it doesn't work, that's okay.

**Milnes:** What came to mind was the Gospel itself, when Jesus says, "Come and see." I think that's the great invitation in the classroom — whether it's mentoring new faculty, adjunct faculty, or students and staff, it's that invitation to come and see. At the School of Public Policy at Pepperdine, we have adjunct faculty who are policy practitioners in their field all over the world, and they're teaching students, come and see how to do the work of public policy — whether it's in international relations, or economics, or state and local policy — come and see how to do this well. But it's that invitation that Jesus extends to all of us as well: come and see. [So we can extend that] in support of adjunct faculty.

**Crouso:** In the ongoing quest for resources — that includes money, but also time and other valuable resources — what one or two important ways can administrators support you and your colleagues right now in this work?

**Means:** Give us the space to do the things that we're already thinking about doing. I'll circle back to the Faith and Research Conference — no one came up and said, "Hey, Allin, would you be willing to take this thing over?" It's something I saw; I felt led to take it over and see what I could do with it. And immediately the university said, "Yes." We have very limited funds, but they gave me some release time and allowed me to hire a few more adjuncts to fill in some of the gaps so I could focus on this thing. Space was made available for us to host things, and our food services folks gave us a great price. Everybody pitched in a little bit together. It takes a village to do that.

You're right, it's not all about money. It's about effort. [For this conference,] everybody pitches in and says, "What can I do to help?" It was amazing to see the kind of response I've gotten. It hasn't required a great deal of money, and we still don't have to charge a fee to come and present or attend. It's free, and I hope to keep it free forever. The university has supported us, but everybody pitches in, old church picnic style — everybody's got a piece. Then, as you come away from that, you're like, "I'm just so excited about how this turned out because everybody was so helpful." It's been a real blessing. It's a picture of the church in a way.

**Crouso:** Well, it's bringing the body of Christ to Christian higher ed. We talk about the body of Christ from a church embodiment. But to see what you're describing there, that's really a beautiful thing.

**Milnes:** It goes back to that first question: what is this all for, and why does the university exist? So part of the support that administration can give is being on board and available and willing to listen and engage in the conversation, but especially to support it through prayer. We can talk a lot about doing, but really, spending time in prayer [is so important], and that comes from the top down and [includes] being engaged fully.

**Eastes:** Yes, jumping off that, the biggest way that administrators can support these efforts is to truly live these [efforts] themselves. So prioritizing that integration of faith and learning in their own life, that thought process that once we're done being a formal student and we're not in a formal classroom anymore, we're still learning. And if we're a Christian higher education institution, then that means we love education and learning and we love Christ. So making sure that how we spend our time, how we spend our energy, and yes, our budget dollars,

it should go toward those things that we say we prioritize and making sure that those are the priority.

And then for the events that are meant to facilitate growth in this area, [a priority would be having] administrators come to those events. I know administrators are very busy, but prioritize that — because your time is so huge. There are a lot of things that we can figure out financially — God makes the money for what we need to have money for, is my philosophy. But when it comes to administrators supporting the integration of faith and learning, model it in your own lives and also show your faculty and staff that you prioritize it by participating in those events and being a part of those conversations. It also really helps with the camaraderie among administration and faculty, to see the heart of the administrators in those roles. 🙏

Jesus said, "Come and see..."



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# ONE BODY, MANY THOUGHTS

Exploring the connections  
between faith integration and  
orthodoxy — and navigating  
conflicts that arise.

**A Conversation with**  
**Vincent Bacote**  
**Louise Huang**  
**Beck A. Taylor**  
**Morgan Feddes Satre**



For Christian colleges and universities committed to the integration of Christian faith with the academic learning experience, there come times when the campus community wrestles with questions of orthodoxy — the doctrines and beliefs that define our understanding of faith within community.

With over 185 members around the world, the CCCU's membership encompasses dozens of Christian denominations that hold to central, shared orthodox beliefs (e.g., the divinity and humanity of Christ) interpret others differently. Add in the academic learning environment — where students and faculty are constantly exploring tough questions, exchanging and questioning each other's opinions, and learning new information and perspectives — and it creates ample opportunities for theological differences within the campus community.

The following conversation, moderated by Advance managing editor Morgan Feddes Satre, explores the impact of orthodoxy on the faith and learning integration process and on campus life. Vincent Bacote is a professor of theology and the director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL). Louise Huang

serves at Azusa Pacific University (Azusa, CA) as interim dean and associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the director of both the Center for Research and Science and the environmental studies program at APU. She also participated in the Bridging the Two Cultures of Science and Humanities program at Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford, the CCCU's U.K. subsidiary. Beck A. Taylor has served as president of Samford University (Birmingham, AL) since the summer of 2021; he previously served as president of Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) from 2010 to 2021.

The conversation has been edited for length and clarity; to view the full conversation, visit the CCCU's YouTube channel.



**Morgan Feddes Satre:** An understanding of orthodoxy is important in the development and maturation of Christians' faith. When you think about the work of Christian higher education, how does orthodoxy factor in? In other words, is a chief goal of a Christian college education to give students a good foundation in Christian doctrine and practice, or is there more to a faith-integrated learning experience than that?

**Vincent Bacote:** The first question to ask is how each institution understands or articulates what their mission is. Their mission is going to give an indication of what kind of formation they're thinking about. To the extent that the mission is very clearly about forming certain kinds of Christian persons, then something is informing your idea of what "Christian" is—and so whatever that something is will be some version of orthodoxy. It may be as basic as the Nicene Creed, or it may be as particular as a certain denomination's views.

However we approach that, we are thinking about orthodoxy in terms of right belief or proper belief, and depending upon what kind of lifestyle expectations you have for students, that's going to play a role in how you're thinking about the role of orthodoxy. ... To the extent that that's clearly articulated, then people know that what they are agreeing to is being in an educational environment where—however you're thinking about the broad range of disciplines—there is some way that Christian belief is informing and is engaged with those various disciplines.

But again, I think it's going to vary, depending upon what the institution is, what the history of the institution is, what peaks and valleys the institution has had, what's going on in society, [and] what vocabulary you are using. But to the extent that [campuses] are calling themselves Christian institutions, something about "Christian" is going to be defined, articulated, and presented as what the that



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aspirations are of the institution. So in that case, they are taking orthodoxy with some kind of seriousness.

When people are assessing different Christian institutions, people need to ask, "What is the goal of this institution? Is it to form pastors?" Then the education should reflect that. But if you're talking about wanting to provide an education where people encounter the Christian faith through the various disciplines, then that's going to be a very different thing, because you want people to experience and encounter a way of thinking about business, law, art, et cetera, with the fact that there's some lens of Christian faith on that.

**Louise Huang:** I really appreciate the underscoring of the institutional identity, vision, and mission, because that can vary. And I see faith integration being key—how one's faith enhances one's discipline, and vice versa. Then students from different traditions can experience a Christian faith and value in a very academic way, and as a result, the orthodoxy might not be presented in just a theoretical way. Rather it is expressed in a rich way. As I teach science, I try to help students make connections and bring them to question [things like], why did God design a certain chemical a certain way? As a result, they can see how faith informs the science and how

science informs the faith. At the end, I'm praying and hopeful that it will be a very rich transformation.

**Beck A. Taylor:** I, too, think about this question from the perspective of institutional identity. We know that CCCU institutions were founded by the church and for the church, but we are not churches. I say that because I think it's important to realize that we Christians have typically depended upon churches or groups of churches like denominations to be the primary entities in and through which theological standards are created and sustained. Those are the teachings that have been sustained and generally agreed upon throughout the history of the church. That is what defines orthodoxy.

Even the term "orthodoxy" can be a contested idea on our campuses. For example, in a very practical sense, we know that throughout the history of the church, issues of human sexuality were not up for debate. Christian scholars and theologians, practitioners from the vast mainstream of Christianity were of one mind about same-sex activity: Homosexuality has always been considered contrary to God's design for human flourishing. It's really only been, say, in the last 40 to 50 years that there's been a concerted effort to make more heterodox viewpoints around same-sex

relationships more mainstream. I say all that simply to make the point that we as Christ-centered institutions of higher learning are now being brought into these debates. There may have been debates in the past that we would not have paid a lot of attention to. But as these debates have been focused on our campuses, and to the extent that our institutional standards and beliefs are now being called into question by some, I think it's very important for us to be very clear about our institutional values and beliefs.

To that end, a defense of orthodoxy as we understand it becomes increasingly important. Inasmuch as Christian colleges and universities find themselves in the middle of these social debates and theological conflicts, I think it's loving and responsible for us to stake out where the boundaries of orthodoxy lie on our campuses so that members of our community can successfully navigate the terrain, no matter which side of the boundary they may find themselves on. I'm of the mind that it's increasingly important for us at Christ-centered colleges and universities to be thinking of issues of orthodoxy to help our communities understand where those boundaries of orthodoxy lie on our campuses, and to acknowledge that orthodoxy in and of itself can be a contested idea.

**Bacote:** To add to that, part of the challenge is for people to understand the orthopraxy [right practice] that goes alongside of that in terms of how orthodoxy is articulated, how it's displayed, how it's engaged with others who are in tension with it, that it's not being done in ways that give confirmation bias. I think it's important that people see that a commitment to orthodoxy isn't a commitment to the worst kinds of things that you see in terms of Christians behaving badly towards people with whom they might have tension or disagreement.

**Taylor:** That's a really good point. The way we live out our commitments to orthodoxy is just as important as our stance for orthodoxy — particularly the way we may treat people who disagree with our particular perspectives. Whether they be employees or students or external constituencies, the way that we, in a very grace-filled way, engage in orthopraxy and live out our commitments to orthodoxy says just as much about us as image bearers of Christ as our stance for orthodoxy might.

**Satre:** How have you addressed issues of theological conflict that have come up within your community in ways that respect the differences of opinion that can arise in an academic setting, but still hold true to those orthodox beliefs that each institution has defined as central to your mission?

**Huang:** We live in such interesting times that are increasingly divisive.

I'm keenly aware that whenever a disagreement happens, it's actually an opportunity for us to embody how we practice our charitable and intellectual humility. When there's a conflict, I first want to listen and identify the different stakeholders and parties who might approach the topic very differently. In the classroom, I remember when I started teaching about fossil fuels and where they came from, I had a student come up after lecture and say, "Well, I heard this growing up in the church that this is the age of the earth." I'll invite individuals to come to my office hours and I'll walk them through [the conflict]. I will first ask them, where are the hangups, where are the conflicts? And then I'll share with them, "Well, based on the science that we have learned so far, this is what that [what we've learned] is pointing to." And I'll then share my point of view and hopefully unpack some of those. My goal isn't to convert when there's a conflict, but really to listen and point out where the common ground is and what we can understand from the Christian point of view, especially if there are any ethical considerations that we need to consider.

I think it is sometimes common nowadays to jump to a conclusion, especially on things that we don't agree on, and to have some kind of response. But I want to foster a hospitable space so that students will feel comfortable and safe to ask questions, even questions that might seem out of the ordinary. I think with that, we can grow in our tactical empathy and therefore practice intellectual humility — which I feel very

strongly that we have to demonstrate as Christ's followers. I don't think the world really knows how to handle that [humility]. If we can show that and be an example, we will have accomplished quite a bit.

**Taylor:** As a president, I tend to find myself arbitrating conflict and negotiating peaceful resolutions at the institutional level. We're a large campus; we have hundreds of faculty members, thousands of students. We expect that employees and students will differ in their understanding of the issues of the day. We know that faithful Christians can and do disagree on many topics of faithful living. In an academic community we need to create spaces, I think, for dissenting and contrarian perspectives on many issues, so long as faculty members don't undermine the central theological tenets of the university — and disagreeing and undermining are two very different things.

What I have found is that it isn't the academic or good faith disagreements that drive conflict on our campuses. Our campuses are well suited and built to sustain civil debates about interesting and timely issues without threatening the underlying faithfulness we have to orthodox teaching. What drives conflict — and often it's the worst kind of conflict in my experience — are certain forms of bad faith activism that surround these issues.

For example, if a faculty member were to use their position of power — their place in the classroom — to speak

out on particular issues, and sometimes even on issues that are far outside their academic expertise and experience, that can put students in a very vulnerable position, and it ultimately undermines the unity that binds our campuses together. And so at Samford, while I certainly want to create space and room for faculty members to hold views that might be contrary to our institutional positions, I do expect, at the end of the day, that faculty members will treat those institutional positions with respect — to acknowledge that those positions have been arrived at in principled ways and not to try to actively undermine them in ways that violate their responsibility as faculty members under the privilege of academic freedom.

**Bacote:** One thing to add is we want to think about what students are told before they're coming to campus. Where do they think that they're coming? It depends whether it's open enrollment or whether it's specifically supposed to be the Christian population, but people are given a narrative about what kind of place they're going to. And sometimes the narrative that they have is, "I'm going to go here but I want to make sure that I don't lose something or that something [in my faith] isn't undermined." And then their presumption may be, "Okay, I'm here to make sure that I get the best of this institution but also that I don't lose anything."

Then the challenge is to help students understand that, even if they were completely right about their position, they're going into a world where everybody isn't like you. How are we helping you to go into a world where everyone isn't like you so that you can be a person of conviction but also a person of generosity? Even if you are learning something that you disagree with, what I tell my students is, "Can you articulate that in a way where a person who does not agree with you sees themselves in your explanation of what you just said?" Then you're doing that in a good-faith point of view, even



If people can learn how to be respectful of other people, even if you disagree with their argument, then that's an opportunity of being in an educational space.



if you think it's bonkers. You're saying, "Hey, I hold certain things and I believe these things are true, but I'm also going to make sure that I'm respectful of views that are not my own."

The mission of the institution is a piece that also plays into this, whether you're faculty, staff, or students. What kind of place is this? What kind of discourse is here? What kind of conversations are we trying to have here? What kind of people do we want going across the stage and graduating? Who will you become if you're here? If people understand that, it has the possibility and the opportunity in these polarized times to form people that can have deep conviction but also are okay with recognizing that there are people who don't think what I think, and that doesn't have to be a threat to me. I can come to a place and see there are Christians who see things differently from me, and most of them aren't a threat to me either. If people can learn how to be respectful of other people, even if you disagree with their argument, then that's an opportunity of being in an educational space. And arguably places that are committed to Christian orthodoxy expressed out in a second-greatest commandment view [of loving your neighbor], those places create people that are leaving that view wherever they go in the world. You're holding a conviction that doesn't require you to demand that everybody agrees with you, and you can be okay with that.

**Satre:** How would you advise campus leaders to weigh and consider the input of groups beyond the students and faculty and staff who are invested in the campus community but aren't involved in the day-to-day learning?

**Taylor:** I'll tell you candidly, this is one of the more frustrating parts of being an administrator these days. Long gone are the days of being a sleepy campus where we could depend on the close-knit and closed off communities that colleges and universities often were,







particularly when contending with difficult issues. The notion of having a bright light, if you will, shine on us as we try to deal with these very difficult issues is one of the more challenging aspects of the job these days. I would quickly point to the pervasiveness of social media, which turns what used to be relatively small events on our campuses into potentially international media events.

It does change the way institutional leaders deal with these things. In the past, we would deal with these controversies, these disagreements, as a close-knit community. That's how we want to continue to deal with them, I can assure you — as a community in a faithful, loving, grace-filled relationship with each other, without the prying eyes of a world that too often doesn't have the first clue about what we're trying to do and teach on our campuses. But now, with the advent of having so many external constituents engaging in the issues of our campus today, the stakes are just that much higher for institutional leaders. And the peering eyes of the world sometimes prevent us from engaging issues or conflict in the healthy ways that we might have otherwise done in the past. It can quickly derail an otherwise healthy opportunity to discuss a controversial issue or to host a speaker that might bring responsibly provocative thoughts or ideas — a discussion that isn't intended to threaten an institutional position, but rather one that's intended to expose students to the kind of thinking that is pervasive in the world beyond the gates of campus, so they can exercise critical thinking and begin to discern what is truth and what is folly.

It's frankly very hard to do in practice, but ideally, university leaders need to tune out those voices as much as possible and to really concentrate on their institutional missions and to serve their students well.

**Bacote:** I want to return to thinking about the title of our conversation — the place of orthodoxy. I think there is the opportunity in these moments to pivot and say, “Let me direct you to what our mission is, and to what our curriculum is, and what we do. And here's how we do what we do.” In other words, “Here's what we're actually doing. Would you actually like to know what we're doing, or do you want to only articulate something through fear or speculation? Do you know what the mission of the institution is? Do you actually know how this institution talks about the way that its statement of faith functions for this community? Do you understand the strategies that we are taking to prepare students for a changing world? Are you aware of all those things and how orthodoxy is an important driver for how all this is being navigated, as opposed to other worldviews?”

**Satre:** What are one or two practical things that administrators or faculty could be thinking about to help prepare their campus communities — and maybe to some extent these external communities we were just discussing — for possible theological conflicts that might arise in the future?

**Huang:** It's so easy to get caught up in the frustration and the challenges of our times. I always have to go back to Jesus' teaching that we are supposed to be in the world and not of the world.

I sometimes think, “Can it [the problem] just be whisked away? Can this all just go away?” Time and time again, I'm being reminded we are here for a time such as this. I really believe Christian higher education institutions have a very unique and important role to play in these days — not just in conflicts, but to really live out and lean into our values and tradition of community. It is very unhealthy to have difficult conversations out of vacuums. [But if we seek to] build relationships all along and build community, that will allow for those difficult conversations to happen organically, not just because we are reacting to certain things. I know I'm busy and we're all living in busy, hectic times, and it's difficult, but making time for conversations and building relationships and bridges will go far.

**Bacote:** In a Christian college where you have a set of beliefs that everyone should know, [it's also important] to remind them that this is an opportunity for generosity toward other people in this moment and to give other people the benefit of the doubt that they would want for themselves. So often there is a climate of fear that the sky's going to fall. But [we as] Christians can say that we believe in what happens on Easter: God wins. And if we really believe

that, then that ought to inform what we're thinking. We ought to be hopeful people. Hope doesn't necessarily mean things are going to be easy in the moment, but it does mean you know what the end of the story is. You know that the evil is going to be vanquished; it's not going to win. If you can have that kind of a disposition, then you can't let fear be the driver. Fear is much less likely to be the driver if you're really letting hope be foregrounded in that way. That's one of the things that I would encourage people to think about.

And then, just as Dr. Huang was saying, get to know people, especially people that are not like yourself, and talk about things that aren't the topics that are the subject of conflict. Ask them about their family. Ask them about their hobbies. Just go for a walk with somebody. Go bowling with somebody, play tennis with somebody. Do something like that. You'll probably discover that you might think that some of their ideas are just bonkers, but you really like this person. And then that will complicate the simple ways that we look at people. With a one-dimensional gaze, we dismiss people. But when they're more complicated, then we really have to think about how to treat them as three-dimensional, complicated persons.

**Taylor:** I think our institutions are I'm being reminded when we think of ourselves as “bullseye” rather than “boundary” organizations. What I mean by that is we're at our best when we're focusing on the bullseye of our institutional missions, and that is the work and person of Jesus Christ. But we are distracted and often pulled off that mission when we're more concerned about the boundaries of our organizations and defining and policing those boundaries. I firmly believe that. With that said, I do think — and this has been mentioned several times — we as institutions would do a loving service to our constituents if we were to spend some time gracefully articulating what orthodoxy means for our campuses. And doing that in a way, as has been said, to practice graciousness, to practice intellectual and faithful humility, to practice loving our neighbor.

The other thing that I would call us to is prayer. We will never fall short in our obedience to the Lord if we, at the very first sign of trouble, at the very first tension that we experience, if we go to the Lord in prayer and pray for Christian unity, even amidst the controversy or disagreement that we may be having. 🙏

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# HOW RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES CAN HELP RESTORE THE PROMISE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

*Higher education is at a crisis point. Do religious institutions have an answer?*

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**CLARK G. GILBERT AND SHIRLEY V. HOOGSTRA**



*Editor's Note: This essay originally appeared in the September 2023 issue of Deseret Magazine, which features discussions on how religious institutions can lead the way on restoring the broken promise of American education, and is reprinted with permission.*

Education opens doors. Students who earn a college degree realize lifetime earnings nearly double those with only a high school degree. Educational attainment breaks cycles of intergenerational poverty. College graduates are 3.5 times less likely to be in poverty than those who stop at high school graduation. Education predicts social mobility, personal development, and civic engagement. This transformative impact on the lives of students is why so many dedicated professionals pursue educational careers.

Yet the promise of education is in peril, stemming from the interrelated crises of access, completion, and affordability.

Too many young people do not have access to education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, barely 38% of 18- to 24-year-olds enroll in college. The crisis of access is a national phenomenon that spans racial backgrounds — white, Black, and Hispanic students all enroll at rates below 40 percent.

Completion statistics are more concerning. According to the Pell Institute, less than half of all college students complete a college degree. The data for students from the lowest income quartile is even more alarming. Less than 15% of low-income students who start college will complete college.

With low access and even lower attainment, the cost of a degree is coming under increased scrutiny from media, policymakers, and families. Only health care costs have increased as rapidly as education costs over the last two decades. Moreover, with easy access to credit, college debt has ballooned to \$1.6 trillion with default rates predictably highest where

completion rates are lowest — the “high debt, no degree” phenomenon.

Despite these challenges, a growing number of educational leaders are finding innovative ways to overcome the crises of access, completion, and affordability.

For example, professor Eric Bettinger at Stanford University has shown how mentoring programs can increase graduation rates. Tristan Denley in the Louisiana, Georgia, and Tennessee state educational systems has validated the idea of a “momentum year” where mentors, a graduation plan, and institutional connection increases retention. Pioneers like President Michael Crow at Arizona State University and President Scott Pulsipher at Western Governors University are innovating to lower costs and increase educational relevance. We applaud these innovators and hope others will build on their ideas.

Religious universities also can offer unique insights to contribute to battling these same challenges. Remarkably, some media and policymakers fail to recognize the impact of religious identity. At a recent editorial meeting highlighting religious universities, the response from one prominent education publication was: “We recognize some of your educational innovations, but we do not think they are tied to religious identity. They are simply evidence of good governance and talented people.”

In “Finding the Light: Restoring the Broken Promise of American Education,” the September issue of *Deseret Magazine* [where this essay first appeared], we hope to show that not only are religious schools innovating, but they are doing so because of their religious identity. Religious purpose can be the wellspring of innovation.

For people of faith, educational attainment is often seen as a religious responsibility. Tapping into that motivation can help bring the needed confidence and hope required to access education.

We have seen this in Hispanic

## “Religious colleges and universities can help the whole of higher education by adhering to the best versions of their authentic identity.”

educational communities who access a shared Catholic identity to reach out to at-risk populations. Many religiously focused historically Black colleges and universities, or HBCUs, draw on their Baptist or Methodist heritage to build connection and purpose with African American faith communities.

At Fresno Pacific University, a member of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, the Samaritan Leadership Program offers mentoring and academic opportunities for undocumented students in California. The program allows students to serve their campus and local community while completing their academic requirements under the university’s Mennonite Brethren Church denomination.

BYU-Pathway Worldwide was created as a solution for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to deliberately open access to marginalized prospective college students by emphasizing divine potential and religious purpose. Since its creation in 2009, BYU-Pathway enrollment has grown to over 70,000 students with more than 70 percent of its students coming from low-income households.

In each of these examples, religious identity is a source of differential advantage in helping at-risk prospective college students find access to college education.

The pastoral care that religious institutions bring also offers unique opportunities to strengthen college completion rates. Rabbi Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University, describes in his commentary in *Deseret Magazine* how the “covenant” relationship religious schools have with students can provide deeper connection than a more transactional “consumer” relationship.

In her essay in the *Deseret Magazine* collection, professor Ilana Horwitz at

Tulane shows how religious identity can have a strong correlation with graduation rates. She and her Stanford co-author, professor Eric Bettinger, also suggest that religious identity can draw on religious volunteerism to support student mentoring efforts. In each of these examples, religious identity adds motivation for students, but it also opens access to a network of pastoral care.

Religious purpose also brings a call to care for the poor. This is manifest not only in needs-based scholarships, but also in cost innovations at religiously based universities. According to a 2018 study, 1 in 3 students attending a CCCU school are first generation, and 50% of students come from families making less than \$50,000 annually.


CCCU member schools offer many options to assist these students. Spring Arbor University, the second-largest evangelical university in Michigan, announced the Spring Arbor Cougar Commitment in 2023, utilizing state and federal funding combined with Spring Arbor University grants and scholarships to offer free tuition to prospective students with the highest levels of need.

Similarly, Greenville University in Illinois offers the Illinois Allegiance, which highlights the institution’s commitment to providing the opportunity for a private Christian liberal arts education to students in Illinois with the greatest need.

Religious identity can also lead to cost innovations. When BYU-Idaho was created, one of its religiously inspired directives was to make quality education affordable to many more students. A unique university design was built on a

three-track calendar system that allowed students to be admitted to one of three different calendar tracks, essentially serving 50% more students than traditional universities without raising proportional costs. The reason faculty supported a teaching emphasis with such direct religious oversight was specifically because they shared a spiritual commitment to make quality education more affordable.

In their essay in the collection, Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, and his colleague Gailda Davis state, “Religious colleges and universities can help the whole of higher education by adhering to the best versions of their authentic identity.” A striking finding of a national survey of higher education conducted for *Deseret Magazine* is that respondents don’t feel secular universities are supportive of religion. Ironically, the courage to hold to their religious identity is what makes faith-based universities such a unique national resource in the first place.

Rabbi Berman’s introductory essay to the *Deseret Magazine* collection reminds us that today’s youth are not facing a crisis of faith, but rather a crisis of meaning. As religious schools continue to embrace their unique ability to help students find spiritual meaning, they simultaneously support efforts to address the nation’s educational crises and help restore the promise of education. 

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# WANT TO ASSESS FAITH-LEARNING ON YOUR CAMPUS?



Five things to keep  
in mind.

By Morgan Feddes Satre



College administrators consistently gather, analyze, and share data from across campuses. Accreditation requirements, updates for trustees, assessment of the success or needed improvements of current programs, data that informs and encourages potential students (and their parents) to enroll — any multitude of reasons compel campus leaders to know as much as they can about how certain efforts are doing on campus.

Core to the identity and mission of Christian colleges and universities is something notoriously hard to measure — the practice of faith-learning integration in the classroom. Some of the latest work in this area was published in the journal *Christian Higher Education* (2023: Vol. 22, No. 1), by Preston Cosgrove, associate professor in the School of Education at Concordia University-Wisconsin. His work, “Measuring Faculty Faith & Learning Involvement: Toward the Validation of a Survey Instrument,” aimed to develop and validate a tool to measure faculty’s self-assessed involvement in faith-learning integration.

Though his survey tool was successful in its goal, Cosgrove contends his tool is meant to be an initial step toward administrators trying to determine the best methods for training and professional development. He notes that “measuring involvement does not address pedagogical techniques, the faculty member’s own conceptual/theoretical framework, or other areas” that other assessments have attempted to capture (several of which he discusses in the piece).

While the myriad of approaches to assessing faith-learning integration are part of what makes such efforts so difficult, value exists in successful assessment. As Cosgrove offers, this research “allows an institution to be better informed about the current state of faculty perceptions, to clarify areas of faculty growth, and to inform future professional development approaches, which are important means to help fulfill the very mission of Christian colleges and universities.”

With that in mind, we have developed five points for your campus administrators to consider if you want to assess the success of the faith-learning integration happening on your own campus.

## 1 MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU’RE TRYING TO MEASURE.

Does your institution have a specific vision or definition of what faith-learning integration looks like on your campus? For example, Azusa Pacific University (Azusa, CA) has an Office of Faith Integration tasked with the mission “to facilitate the dialogue between academics, the knowledge of their discipline and/or profession, and the Christian faith by resourcing our faculty in their efforts to bring faith to life in their research, their teaching, and their scholarship.” Another key resource for the APU community is the Faith Integration Faculty Guidebook, designed as a comprehensive resource for faculty wanting to understand what faith integration looks like on campus, including how it factors into faculty evaluations.

Similarly, a shared understanding of what faith-learning integration should look like on your campus and/or in each department is necessary before attempting to gauge whether that goal is being met. Additionally, make sure everyone who will participate in an assessment — from long-time administrators to new adjunct faculty — is reminded of and understands your institution’s goals for integrating faith and learning prior to starting the process. Doing so can better ensure everyone is on the same page of what you’re trying to measure.

## 2 CONSIDER DIFFERENCES AMONG DEPARTMENTS AND/OR FIELDS OF RESEARCH.

Some departments—like theology—should have no problem answering an assessment measuring how they bring faith into the classroom. Departments such as computer science or mathematics, however, might have a harder time, especially if there has previously not been a clear approach outlined by the university and/or department. Discussions with department heads prior to the creation of a campus-wide survey can aid in identifying the questions and approaches that will gather the best information from each department.

## 3 MAKE INTENTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENT EFFORTS CLEAR.

Your campus likely has a number of tools already used to assess a faculty member’s job performance. A survey to measure faith-learning integration may be viewed as another item in the performance review process—and faculty will adjust their responses accordingly. In developing your assessment, decide whether such an effort will purely be used for broader analysis and planning or in individual performance evaluation. Be sure to clearly communicate those intentions prior to conducting the survey.

## 4 TREAT IT AS A UNIQUE ASSESSMENT EFFORT.

With a broad spectrum of assessment efforts already in place, lumping all surveys into one, including this one, can prove tempting. But just as the integration of faith and learning is unique to the work of CCCU campuses as compared to higher education broadly, so, too, will the assessment of this integral part of CCCU campus life be unique from other measurements. As the saying goes, “Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

## 5 FOLLOW THROUGH ON YOUR RESEARCH.

As Allin Means, an associate dean and professor at Missouri Baptist University, shares in “*The Outward Impact of Faith and Learning Integration*” (page 12), “The best way to do faith and learning is to keep doing it and keep it at the front of our minds.” Thus, ensure that as much — if not more — time as is spent on providing training for your faculty and enabling them to pursue the practice of integrating faith with learning in their classrooms is spent on developing and deploying assessments of faith and learning integration. An assessment tool is not the end to the process; rather, it’s a way to help everyone continually assess, improve, and innovate in the work they are so passionately committed to: raising up the next generation of thinkers who serve Jesus Christ with both mind and heart. 🙏

*Special thanks to Preston Cosgrove at Concordia University-Wisconsin and Todd Ream at Indiana Wesleyan University for their assistance in developing this piece.*



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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

**“Measuring Faculty Faith & Learning Involvement: Toward the Validation of a Survey Instrument”**

Preston B. Cosgrove  
(*Christian Higher Education*, Vol. 22, No. 1)

***Where Wisdom May Be Found: The Eternal Purpose of Christian Higher Education***

Edward P. Meadors, ed.  
(Pickwick Publications, 2019)

***On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom***

David I. Smith  
(Eerdmans, 2018)

**“Where Faith and Learning Intersect: Re-Mapping the Contemporary Terrain”**

Stephen Moroney  
(*Christian Scholar’s Review*, Winter 2014)



# NAVIGATING THE ANXIOUS MIDDLE

*Bonhoeffer's  
exploration of  
Genesis 1-4:1  
offers Christian  
colleges insight  
for the future in  
an anxious time.*

*By Todd C. Ream and  
Jerry Pattengale*

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.*  
*Genesis 1:1–2 (RSV)*

Inspired by Karl Barth's determination to break with the historical-critical efforts of the age, Dietrich Bonhoeffer turned to Genesis 1–4:1 for a lecture series in the winter 1932–1933 semester as a source for theological understanding concerning how Christians could live at any point in time between Eden and the Apocalypse, but, in particular, during what was proving to be an anxious season. To their credit, the students who heard Bonhoeffer offer those lectures that semester insisted he publish them in *Creation and Fall*. If they had not done so, we may never have known what he offered during those unsettling days as the Third Reich rose to power.

Central to what Bonhoeffer offered that semester, and for our focus on how Christian colleges can plan for the world in which they find themselves, is Bonhoeffer's opening claim: "The church of Christ witnesses to the end of all things." Such a claim is eschatological in that it focuses our eyes on the end of history and how one day all things will find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. As a result, the church "views the creation from Christ; or better, in the fallen, old world it believes in the world of the new creation, the new world of the beginning and the end, because it believes in Christ and nothing else." The church, and all other institutions to which she gives birth (such as a Christian college), in turn, claim to serve in her name, focus their sight by properly appreciating "the witness of Holy Scripture." Individuals draw inspiration from their study of

Scripture, but "the Bible is after all nothing other than the book of the church." As Christ's body, the church bears witness to the end — that all things will find their fulfillment in Christ on the day of Christ's return.

While living in the anxious middle, that end informs how we understand God's abiding relationship with our predecessors, with us, and those who may follow us. When understood properly, such an understanding does not provide a means of escape for the church and a Christian college to which the church gives birth; rather, it provides a means of understanding how to discern the paradoxical reality in which a Christian college finds itself — how to thrive in a world in which it ultimately does not belong.

As a result, Bonhoeffer contends that any reading of Genesis 1–4:1, a reading of the very beginning, must begin by understanding "the end of our whole world." Debates concerning the historical and literary merits of Genesis 1–4:1 have their place. The story of creation, however, "must be read in a way that begins with Christ and only then moves to him as its goal." Such a claim may not register as being radical in nature until one compares it to the state of biblical scholarship during Bonhoeffer's time and, in many ways, our own today. What currently presents as biblical scholarship, for example, is often captive to the competing stories of myriad individuals instead of being found in the magnanimous story of Jesus Christ — a

story that knows its end, properly sees its beginning, and defines the present regardless of how great or small the challenges.

One way to assess the value of plans proposed by Christian colleges is to inquire about the size of the stories that animate them. Does that story, often more implicit than explicit, yet nonetheless always present, reflect an appreciation for the end Christ alone ushers into existence? Or does that story reflect an appreciation for something smaller or, dare we say, petty? One way of discerning the difference between the two is by considering how much time is spent on such a plan or in meetings detailing the qualities that do not define an institution compared to detailing the qualities that do.

The size of that story determines the size of an imagination. Small stories yield contradistinctive details. Large stories may eventually yield contradistinctive details but only as derivatives of distinctive details. The story Christ ushers into existence defines those distinctive details. Or, in the case of a Christian college, to what end should it aspire to order its efforts?

When drawing upon *Creation and Fall* as a means of understanding to what end a Christian college should aspire to order its efforts, we propose that Bonhoeffer makes at least three points that merit consideration. First, while seemingly evident, Bonhoeffer challenges us to remember that God alone is God and that upon such an understanding all





subsequent theological convictions find their proper place. “In the beginning — God” may be the most critical words in all of Scripture if for no other reason than no one could testify to the beginning other than God and God alone.

For Bonhoeffer, “God is the absolute beginning or the primal reality, who had being before our life and thinking, with all its anxiety. God alone tells us that God is in the beginning.” We can know of the beginning but by no means of our own. By various means of revelation, God testifies to the beginning, something that, again, God alone can do. Bonhoeffer would then go on to contend, “We can know of the beginning in the true sense only by hearing of the beginning while we ourselves are in the middle, between the beginning and the end.” Hearing, as we do in Scripture, is not the result of human speculation. By faith, hearing is an acceptance of the most fundamental condition of reality — God exists. God alone existed at the beginning, and what we know of God’s existence is the result of God’s revelation.

For Bonhoeffer, such a claim concerning God is not simply the result of ensuring that the most basic tenet of historic Christian orthodoxy be properly placed. The underlying challenge is

that communities charged with the cultivation of created potential often wrestle with the malady of practical atheism more than almost any other set of institutions to which the church gives birth. Such a challenge lurks in questions we rarely pause to consider; nevertheless, it defines the pace of our days, the source of the talents we bear, and the truths we propose. Bonhoeffer belabors the points that God exists, that God alone existed at the beginning, and that what we know of God’s existence is the result of God’s creation as a means of confirming our radical dependence upon God. A properly ordered existence demands we never delude ourselves into thinking, however subtle the temptation, that we are God. Bonhoeffer would have nothing of such thinking in the winter of 1932–1933, nor should we as we navigate the anxious middle in which we currently find ourselves. The root conviction any Christian college must set before itself when planning for its future is that God exists.

Second, human beings, as with all creation, are God’s creation. For Bonhoeffer, being God’s creation demands we appreciate “that in the beginning God created.” As humans, we cannot step outside of ourselves — out

of the middle in which we find ourselves — and in and by ourselves define the beginning. This beginning, the beginning in which God alone existed, “is distinguished by something utterly unique — unique not in the sense of a number that one can count back to, but in a qualitative sense, that is, in the sense that it simply cannot be repeated, that it is completely free.” All of creation, including the presence of humanity, is the result of God’s nature as creator.

Part of what makes us as human beings unique among all of creation is our ability to reflect God’s nature. Regardless, we are incapable of creating out of nothing. With God, Bonhoeffer argues, “There is simply nothing that provides [God with] the ground for creation. Creation comes out of this nothing. God affirms the nothing only to the extent that God has already overcome it.” Humans create, but humans create out of something, the something that God created in its origin and to which proper appreciation is due.

For Bonhoeffer, this understanding is not simply affirmed in the opening words to Genesis but made possible to comprehend in full in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer goes so far as to offer that, absent a proper Christology,

we cannot understand the full theological significance of God’s ability to create out of nothing.

To Bonhoeffer, “the dead Jesus Christ of Good Friday and the resurrected Lord of Easter Sunday [reflect] creation out of nothing, creation from the beginning.” Failure to appreciate the theological significance of Christ’s death and resurrection means humanity is incapable of appreciating what it means: “In the beginning — that is, out of freedom, out of nothing — God created heaven and earth.” Such an understanding proves critical to understanding how God relates to creation and thus serves as the foundation for how creation relates to God.

Third, only when we acknowledge that God alone is God and that God alone created out of nothing do we as human beings begin to understand what it means to be disciples — people who, by God’s grace, participate in rightly ordered relationships with God and, in turn, with one another. In making this claim, Bonhoeffer confirms once again that “the creation still rests entirely in God’s hands, in God’s power; it has no being of its own.” Only then, however, can he go on to claim “the praise of the Creator is completed only when the creature receives its own being from God and praises God’s being y its own being.”


In the first two verses of Genesis 1, Bonhoeffer sees the imprint of the relationship the Creator desired to have with creation and, in turn, what kind of relationship creation was called to share with the Creator. Apart from the Creator, creation has no being or even essence of its very existence. All that is present in creation is ultimately dependent upon the Creator. By the nature of its existence, creation is called to praise the Creator — such is its very purpose.

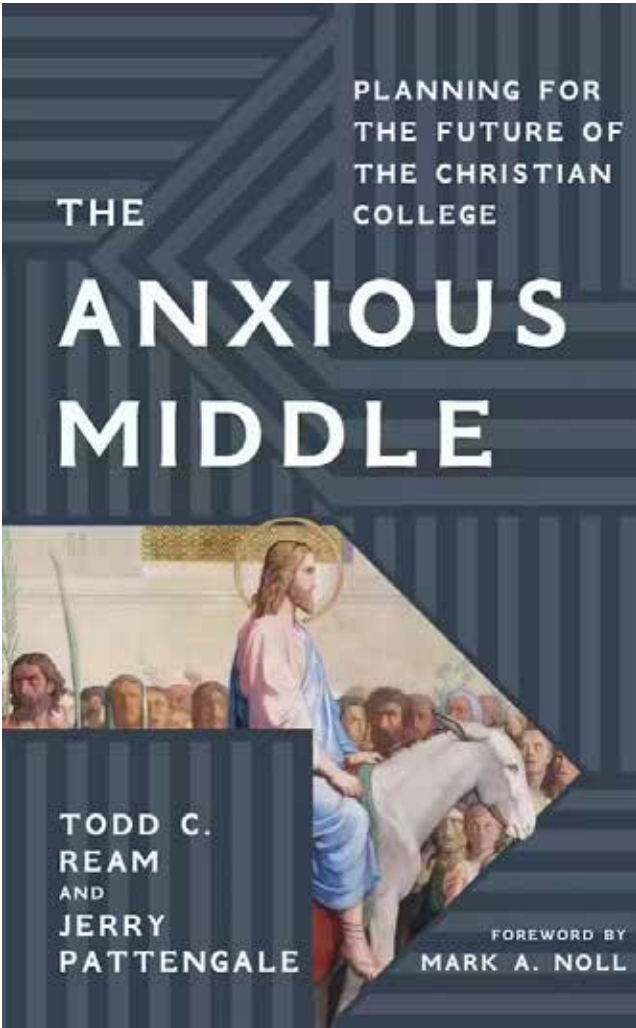
The relationship that creation and the Creator share, however, is not complete according to Bonhoeffer until it “praises God by its own being.” As asked and answered in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

*“Q: What is the chief end of man?”*

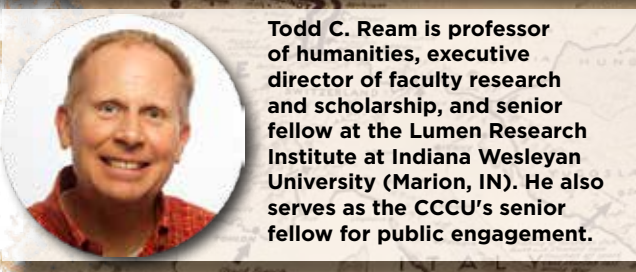
*A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”*

As with all creation, we find our being in God. Our being, however, finds its completion when we praise God as an expression of our own being.

The question then is, what role does a Christian college play in the lives of the individuals it serves? Is its chief end or aspiration, in whatever ways that aspiration may be exemplified, “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever”? Or do other aspirations, aspirations parading as distinctively Christian, define that aspiration? At the heart of any planning process, a Christian college is called by its very nature — or, borrowing from Bonhoeffer’s terminology, being — to root its efforts in a clear understanding of discipleship whether the locale in which that understanding of discipleship is exercised is its library, laboratory, studio, recital hall, residence hall, or athletic field. Only when such an aspiration is clear and collectively embraced is the social imagination that gives life to a Christian college fully realized. 



**Adapted from *The Anxious Middle: Planning for the Future of the Christian College* by Todd C. Ream and Jerry Pattengale. Copyright © Baylor University Press, 2023. Reprinted by arrangement with Baylor University Press. All rights reserved.**



*Part of what makes us as human beings unique among all of creation is our ability to reflect God’s nature.*





# What the Next Generation Needs: A New Christian Approach to Anxiety

BY CURTIS CHANG



*At the 2023 CCCU Multi-Academic Conferences, Curtis Chang, founder of Redeeming Babel, and David French, columnist for the New York Times, recorded a live episode of the Good Faith podcast, "What the Next Generation of Christians Needs." What follows is an excerpt from Chang's portion of the presentation; it has been adapted here for length and clarity. The full session, published Feb. 18, is available on the Good Faith podcast feed across all platforms.*

Anxiety is in a massive upswing. This is the new pandemic that we're in — a mental health epidemic. The scale is staggering. In 2011, they surveyed college students for whether they were suffering from significant anxiety struggles — that number was one in ten. In 2019, before the pandemic, that figure had risen to one in four. That's a massive increase, and researchers believe the numbers are only going higher.

Now, you can ask the question why this surge happened, and that would be a very complicated question. But there's a different way to ask the question: why are our measures, structures, and practices that are supposed to contain this collapsing? That's the question I want to ask, and I believe at least one answer in the Christian community, is our spiritual approach to anxiety is broken; it's deeply flawed.

There are generally two approaches to anxiety in the Christian community. One could be characterized as, "Pray anxiety away." It's the notion that anxiety is a flaw, a problem — maybe even a

sin, or a sign of a lack of faith. So just pray anxiety away, or maybe memorize Scripture [to keep] anxiety away. Anxiety is a problem, and through spiritual means, you're supposed to eliminate it. There's another stream, even within Christianity, that says, "We'll outsource it to secular mental health, and they will medicate it away or therapize it away." Now, I'm a big fan of medication and therapy, rightly used. I've benefitted from it myself. But treating anxiety as a problem strips it of any spiritual meaning or purpose.

This is where I think Christians really need a correction. Anxiety is not a problem, fundamentally. It is not a flaw. It is not a sin or a sign of lack of faith. It is a profoundly human condition. How do we know that? Because the scriptures are all clear that Jesus suffered anxiety. Read the Gethsemane passages. They're all very clear: Jesus was anxious, distressed, overwhelmed with sorrow, sweating profusely. These are all classic signs of anxiety. John is the only gospel that doesn't have the Gethsemane passage, but John 12 it goes out of its way to describe Jesus as deeply sorrowed and troubled as he approaches the cross. So, this is fundamental to the gospel portrayal of Jesus — Jesus, as he faced a future of loss, was deeply emotionally affected by all the characteristics that you would call anxiety.

We need a reframing of anxiety — not as a problem to eliminate, but rather as a deeply human experience that is an opportunity for growth. It's not like we get rid of anxiety, and then we can be close to Jesus. Actually, we go through

anxiety to meet Jesus. It is the place where we meet Jesus — because Jesus himself has embraced the human condition, including the human condition of anxiety.

This is going to require us to do a reframe, and this is an important task for Christian colleges and universities. There are a lot of reasons for it, but one is because you have the next generation that is suffering these high rates [of anxiety]. The other reason is that you have a chance to reframe it as not simply a problem to solve in order to do other things. It can be tempting to fall into a mindset that anxiety is a problem that needs to be eliminated so that we can do the stuff we were really meant to do.

Even institutionally, we silo this off into student life, into campus ministry, or something else. This is a fundamentally flawed way to think of anxiety, because anxiety is so human. You can't understand human realities unless you understand anxiety. If you want to teach your academic fields, but you don't have a way to address anxiety, you're missing the boat. If we want to form Christians and how they think, we have to reframe how they experience anxiety.

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