Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary

A PROGRAM FOR PERSISTENT INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING IN A
CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

A Thesis Project Submitted to
The Faculty of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by
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Lynchburg, Virginia
August 2015
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A PROGRAM FOR PERSISTENT INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING IN A
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John Mark Norris

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015

Mentor: Dr. Jeffrey Ward

Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia has expanded since 1971 to become the largest Christian university in the world. Liberty will be used in this thesis as a contemporary example of a Christian university that has maintained its Christian commitment. Liberty will be contrasted with numerous Christian colleges and universities that had similar missions but have eventually lost their religious affiliations and their Christian-oriented focus. This thesis will explore how and why other universities have drifted from their original religious affiliations and doctrines. The reasons and processes will be examined and used to develop a program for online Christian education that minimizes the risk of a drift toward secularism, establishes a method for integrating faith and learning in an online environment, and encourages students to develop a life-long commitment to their Christian university.

Abstract length: 132 words.
## Contents

**Introduction**

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ v

Statement of the Problem .............................................................................................................. 1

Statement of Limitations ............................................................................................................... 2

Terminology Defined ..................................................................................................................... 2

Theoretical Basis .......................................................................................................................... 3

Statement of Methodology ......................................................................................................... 6

Review of the Literature ............................................................................................................. 9

IRB Application .............................................................................................................................. 28

**Chapter 2: Distinctives of A Christian University** ................................................................. 33

  History of Liberty University .................................................................................................... 35

  Distinctives of Liberty University ......................................................................................... 38

**Chapter 3: The Trend toward Secularization** ........................................................................ 41

  Distinctives of Secular Universities ..................................................................................... 42

  A Worldview that Excludes Christianity ................................................................................. 42

  Emphasis on Academic Freedom above Scripture ............................................................... 42

  Hiring Practices ......................................................................................................................... 44

  History of a Diminishing Christian Influence .......................................................................... 46

**Chapter 4: Faith and Loyalty Integration** .............................................................................. 55

  Integration of Faith and Learning ............................................................................................. 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Perceptions of IFL</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perspectives on IFL</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Heuristic Study on Faith and Learning in an Online Environment</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Climate</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Student Loyalty</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating an Effective Online Learning Environment</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Online Education Effective?</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Online Education Important to University Strategy?</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctives of an Effective Online Environment</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: A Program for Persistent IFL in an Online Environment</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project #1 – University Loyalty</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project #2 – Minimizing the Risk of Secularization</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project #3 – Online Communities</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project #4 – Committed Integration of Faith and Learning</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A – Spiritual Assessment Inventory</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B – Becoming Established Assessment</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C – The Priorities Survey for Online Learners</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Approval</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

It was the Christian church that dominated the mission, administration, and teaching of American universities into the nineteenth century. Most universities were founded by churches and most professors were also clergymen. Since the nineteenth century, most American universities have migrated to secularism and their sponsoring religious denominations have abandoned them.¹

Abraham Kuyper, a pastor, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and founder of the Free University of Amsterdam writes the consequence of losing Christian universities is the death of all spiritual life:

If no Christian university is established, then we must fear that the higher academic education of our national life will be surrendered to unbelief; that science will become an instrument used against the glory of Christ; and that the whole of statesmen, lawyers, medical doctors, and literary men, together with the natural scientists, will become, with all their influence and power, apostles of naturalism – which in the end will kill all spiritual life.²

The death of spiritual life caused by the trend toward secularization of Christian universities is the problem investigated in this study. The reasons and patterns of the migration are evaluated in order to assist university administrators, faculty, students, and parents to recognize this trend in their universities and to inspire initiatives and programs to stall, reverse, or prevent the trend.


These initiatives and programs should build an integration of faith and learning in order to prepare graduates to carry their Christian worldview to their families and integrate them into their careers. The initiatives and programs should also encourage alumni to maintain lifelong ties to their university communities so they can continue to mentor and support the next generations of students. The annual graduation of new Champions for Christ will contribute to a driving force that will help to spread the Gospel and result in positive changes to the corporate culture of America. This force will influence families, friends and peers to know God and Jesus Christ, and to lead them to eternal salvation, resulting in the sustained proliferation of the Gospel message to this generation and future generations.

Statement of Limitations

While Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia is presented as a model of a successful Christian university, the program and projects presented in this thesis do not measure any specific university. The program and projects are intended rather to provide the tools needed for self-evaluation by any educational institution. The variables and measures used in the program and projects are likely to vary among institutions.

Terminology Defined

Data mining – A process of detecting patterns in complex databases and summarizing the findings into usable information.

The integration of faith and learning (IFL) - The connecting, applying, and/or synthesizing of information coherently between the disciplines and the Christian faith; using the Bible to evaluate academic concepts and to develop insights that allow for the application of new learning
through the lens of a Christian worldview. The Christian worldview provides coherence to everything.

Social Presence – The degree to which a person is perceived as a “real person” in mediated communication.³

Badge Boundary – The point where the specified number of actions of each type have been performed resulting in the earning of a badge.

Theoretical Basis

Biblical Basis

The theoretical basis that provides the foundation for this thesis is that the Bible is the full and true revelation from God. The Bible can be used for teaching, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so a man can be complete and equipped for every good work. Because the Bible is inerrant, we can depend upon its teachings as the basis for knowing truth and that it is the sure source for authoritative guidance.⁴

As the chapters of this thesis describe the history of Christian universities, outline the factors that contributed to their secularization, build the components that are essential to integrating Christian faith with learning, and propose a program for avoiding secularism and producing Champions for Christ, the central theme that provides assimilation of the parts and


assures credibility is the Word of God. Bible passages will be used throughout the chapters to illuminate this main theme and its significance. The relationship between the assimilation of research and Scripture is illustrated by C.S. Lewis:

Let us suppose we possess parts of a novel or a symphony. Someone now brings us a newly discovered piece of manuscript and says, “This is the missing part of the work. This is the chapter on which the whole plot of the novel really turned. This is the main theme of the symphony.” Our business would be to see whether the new passage, if admitted to the central place which the discoverer claimed for it, did actually illuminate all the parts we had already seen and ‘pull them together’. Nor should we be likely to go very far wrong. The new passage, if spurious, however attractive it looked at the first glance, would become harder and harder to reconcile with the rest of the work the longer we considered the matter. But if it were genuine then at every fresh hearing of the music or every fresh reading of the book, we should find it settling down, making itself more at home and eliciting significance from all sorts of details in the whole work which we had hitherto neglected. Even though the new central chapter or main theme contained great difficulties in itself, we should still think it genuine provided that it continually removed difficulties elsewhere.\(^5\)

**Historical Basis**

This study was guided by three theoretical ideas: the influence of prominent citizens on the spiritual life of the nation, the natural tendency of organizations and individuals to drift toward secularism, and the integration of faith and learning as a method for preventing the drift.

**Influential Citizens**

Abraham Kuyper theorized that the absence of Christian universities to train professionals would result in the death of all spiritual life. Influential citizens such as statesmen, attorneys, physicians, scientists and others would lead the country to a naturalist worldview.

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where God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are abandoned in favor of scientific method to explain reality.6

Tendency toward Secularism

History reveals that Christian universities are likely to be ridiculed and rejected by worldly associations. The influence of faith at American universities has atrophied and will continue to be viewed with confusion or hostility. Science is accepted as truth while religion is downgraded to historical, sociological, or psychological in nature.7

Integration of Faith and Learning

The author’s preferred paradigm for integration of faith and learning is perspectival integration. This paradigm emphasizes the influence of a Christian worldview in providing coherence to all learning. Coherence occurs within the minds of the students, as they develop understanding of both faith and the curriculum and are able to perceive the interrelationships between the two.8

Educational Basis

An effective online education is best approached through a constructivist teaching/learning process where new knowledge is built in the context of how it relates to the learner’s existing knowledge. Learning is stimulated by the cognitive dissonance that occurs

6 Wieringa, 15.


between the old and new knowledge. The learner is able to validate and build connections in a variety of contexts through the application of the new knowledge combined with feedback. Finally, the learner is provided the opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and then to articulate that new learning to others.⁹

Effective online teaching and learning require the psychological and communication gap between professor and learner be reduced by two-way communication that facilitates professor-student understanding. There should be an optimal amount of teacher control over the learning process, where the student is allowed enough autonomy to facilitate effective learning.¹⁰

Statement of Methodology

A survey of journals, books, theses, and articles will be conducted to discover relevant content and trends related to the difference in beliefs and practices of Christian students from non-Christian students, distinctives of a Christian university, the history of Christian universities that have migrated to secularism, and the integration of faith and learning. Historical surveys will be reviewed to determine trends in student attitudes and beliefs associated with Christianity. A survey conducted at a Christian university during the spring semester of 2014 will be used to determine student perceptions of the integration of faith and learning. The findings from that survey will be compared with a heuristic study that was designed to deepen knowledge of the integration of faith and learning from the perspective of online students.


The design for this project will include an introduction and four chapters which will consist of a rationale for choosing the topic, a review of the historical literature that examines and defines the imperatives that are required to establish and maintain a Christian university, a contemporary example of a successful Christian university that has not migrated to secularism, and a review of the imperatives that are attributable to their success in maintaining a campus with a Christian worldview.

Introduction: Overview and Rationale

Chapter Two: Distinctives of a Christian University

Chapter Three: The Trend toward Secularization

Chapter Four: Faith and Loyalty Integration

Chapter Five: A Program for Committed Faith and Learning in an Online Environment

Introduction

The introduction presents an overview of the problem of secularism at Christian universities. The scope of the project is defined in the statement of methodology and is followed by a section that defines uncommon terminology used in the thesis. The foundation for the thesis is described in the theoretical basis and is followed by a statement of methodology and review of the literature.

A review of the traits that typify a Christian university are presented in Chapter two. Liberty University, the largest Christian university in the world, is used as the model of a successful Christian university and is compared with other universities that have been infiltrated by secularism.
After describing the model of a successful Christian university in chapter two, the next chapter provides a contrasting examination of the characteristics of secular universities. The path from religious devotion to religious abandonment is described using various historical examples. The chapter concludes by scrutinizing the secularization of not just Christian universities, but America as a whole.

Students at a Christian university grow and change as they learn to integrate their Christian faith with their chosen study of a profession. Chapter four examines the integration of faith and learning and provides various methods for achieving successful integration. The author concludes that integration is not the responsibility of only the faculty, but must also be pursued by administrators and students to achieve success. The chapter proposes a program for facilitating lifelong loyalty to the Christian university among alumni and concludes with a proposal for facilitating effective learning in an online environment.

The final chapter gathers the insights and conclusions of the thesis into a consolidated program for achieving a persistent integration of faith and learning in a Christian university online environment. The program is organized into several projects that provide guidance on defining requirements of a successful program, and assistance in organizing a plan of action and measuring results.
Review of the Literature

Books


This source is relevant to methods used to integrate faith and learning. The author writes about methods for getting people excited about God’s vision for a community or group. He explores how a leader can best work with others and how to nurture a personal relationship with God. The bases for Barna’s assertions are surveys of thousands of Christian leaders who effectively lead others by blending their faith in Christ with skills and perspectives that are based upon Scripture.


This source explores the changes of society and how those changes can affect the effectiveness of training students in a Christian university. The author explores how religious beliefs and behaviors are changing. Based upon surveys, the author outlines the path society is following, and he makes predictions on what comes next and how we can prepare for those changes.


This source compares what Americans believe to what Christians believe. Barna’s survey includes a wide variety of questions that show the percentage of Americans who are born again, how many attend worship services, what they believe about absolute truth, the purpose of life, and much more. It is hypothesized that Liberty
Champions for Christ will be distinctively different from most Americans in their beliefs about God and their commitment to Him.


This article is applicable to the methods that might be used to effectively train Champions for Christ. Barna outlines specific outcomes that should be pursued including the establishment of close relationships with the students, professor commitment to student goals, and plans for reaching all goals. Barna’s survey revealed students should be taught to think independently, basing their framing of decisions on the Bible. The students should set spiritual goals for their lives, investigate other faiths, and learn to grasp critical beliefs related to Christianity.


This source is relevant to the design of a program that empowers Liberty to teach graduates after they have left the University. The program would reinforce desirable activities before and after graduation by awarding points. The points would be redeemed for tuition discounts, parking privileges, sports tickets, preferred registrations, and more. This source examines the loyalty programs for the purpose of highlighting methods for improving their effectiveness.

This source examines how Christian colleges and universities have abandoned their religious missions and their association with the founding church or denomination. Many of those schools have excluded Christian belief from formal studies at the university level. By examining the various examples in this book, a comparison can be made between repeating patterns of events leading to the dying of Christian influence at the university, and any comparable events that might have occurred or not occurred at other Christian universities.


This source examines the diminishing role of sponsoring churches and denominations, to their universities. The author examines the secularization of society and universities and the effect of public policy on how religious universities pursue their work. The collection of essays in this book is intended to help predict the future of religious universities. The essay writers focus on the place of religiously informed scholarship in classrooms, the trend toward separation from a distinctive religious identity and mission, whether universities that have lost their religious ties can be transformed, whether the diverse educational missions of religious universities is intellectually and socially viable, and whether government policy will help to advance or hinder the mission of Christian universities.

The applicability of this source is related to tools that can be used from the student perspectives, for making the connection between Christian faith and the knowledge that is learned in higher education settings. The reader is taught how to understand how worldviews influence the interpretation of knowledge, and how to assimilate that knowledge into Christian truth. The author demonstrates tools for how a student can integrate academic learning with faith.


This source reviews the founding and early years of Liberty University. It helps to highlight the distinctives of a Christian education. The University started as a liberal arts college with less than two hundred students and has grown to a major university with over 100,000 students. The autobiography describes the founder’s assumptions, mission, vision and goals for the University. The original vision of the University is defined by ten unique features that distinguish Liberty from other universities.


This source examines the methods for conducting database or consumer relationship management with customers. For every customer, demographic information and customer transactions are stored and used for future communication. The book examines what works and does not work in database marketing. The concepts are transferrable to relationship management of university prospects, students and alumni.
Journal Articles


This source is important to the description of distinctives of a Christian education at Liberty University. Anderson observes that Liberty faculty are committed to high academic standards in a wide range of disciplines. He emphasizes the diversity of instruction and independent thinking that is encouraged among students.


Barna contributes to the definition of “Champions for Christ.” Distinctives of Christians are explored through a survey of 1,008 adults from across the continental United States. Examples of how Christian evangelicals are described include having a faith that is very important to them, having a personal responsibility to share their beliefs about Christ with others, believing eternal salvation is possible only through grace, and many others.


This source is relevant to the abandoning of the founding vision of Christian universities and the training of Christ-centered students. The author asserts dozens of formerly Christian universities have abandoned a Christian worldview in favor of secularism, sexual relativism, and abortion.

The bearing of this source is its contribution to knowledge related to what makes online students successful in a Christian university. Understanding the factors that contribute to student satisfaction will contribute to the success in training Champions for Christ. Instructor variables were found to be the most important contributing factor to student satisfaction. Specific instructor variables included communication, feedback, preparation, content knowledge, teaching methods, encouragement, accessibility, and professionalism. Adequate technology and interactivity were the other most important contributing factors to student satisfaction. Student satisfaction was shown to be important to the success or failure of online learners.


Bradley contributes to an understanding of how to define the integration between faith and learning. There have been historical differences on how this term is defined, so this article helps to arrive at a common understanding.


This article studies the student-identified factors that are important to facilitate the integration of faith and learning at a Christian university. The factors were related to professors, the curriculum, and the university environment. The professor should demonstrate a committed relationship to God and to the students. The university
environment should encourage feelings of openness, safety, and commitment to the integration of faith and learning.


This article is relevant to establishing the distinctives of a Christian university. Harvey asserts that religion is the basis for morality. A Christian university that strives to resist the pressures of corruption, greed, and evil must be based upon the morality that emanates from Christianity.


This source is relevant to a discussion on how to maintain relationships with students before, during, and after classes. Student loyalty was found to be heavily dependent upon the quality of teaching and the emotional commitment of students to the university. The study found the benefits of student loyalty to the university are greatest after a student graduates.


This source argues that Liberty is becoming more liberal. The author asserts Liberty students are following the trends of other Christians in support of gay marriage. A counter-view is offered by Jerry Falwell, who asserts Liberty faculty, staff, and students continue to be very politically and theologically conservative.

Maddix describes methods for achieving effectiveness with an online Christian delivery format. Most professors agree social interaction in a communal setting is the best environment for achieving learning and growth. The author found online learning communities are effective in developing effective learning and social interaction in an online environment. The professor must be actively involved in discussions and provide a model for effective communication.


The author concludes American universities predominately started as religious institutions. The church dominated universities through the nineteenth century.

Contemporary churches however, have abandoned Christian higher education. Many universities that were founded on biblical principles have been overtaken by secularization. The reasons for this migration toward secularization are examined and the author asserts the migration may not be all bad. He postulates universities should adopt a more universal moral standard where all religiously-based intellectual traditions are welcome. If that proves to be unacceptable, the university should abandon any expectation of influence or prestige and will likely be labeled as a subgroup of an unpopular sect.


The authors present three criteria for determining whether a university is intentionally religious. The linkage of a university to a church or religious heritage, a
mission statement with religious goals, and a core curriculum that includes religious courses that support the university’s mission were required to be considered a religious university. The authors concluded faith and learning are not universally accepted by faculty members as being critical to the success of a religious research university.


The authors describe the formation of the link between faith and profession. The study is designed to measure student views of integration and asserts not doing so could result in decreased student satisfaction and poor retention rates. Factors important to developing an effective integration include the formation of a collective identity through student life, characterized by a common university faith identity, spiritual formation practices, and shared faith with peers, faculty, and administration.


The relevance of this source is related to the bonds that need to exist between faculty and students in order to achieve an effective integration of faith and learning at a Christian university. The primary contributing factors to successful integration are faculty as models for faith, faculty who are emotionally transparent, and a learning environment that encourages integration, such as the reading of Scripture in class.

This source is significant because it explains how faculty members integrate faith and learning at religious universities. The underlying truths of Christianity and a liberal arts discipline are examined. The authors found that faith is inseparable from life, work and education. Faith is inseparable from all education practice and must be infused into pedagogy. The professor should cultivate loving relationships with students in the classroom and with colleagues outside of the classroom.


The authors designed a study that allowed students to evaluate faculty. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the characteristics and qualities faculty contributed that facilitated the students’ integration of faith and learning. The professors’ ongoing process in an intimate relationship with God was found to be the single most important dimension in helping the students’ integration. It was found professors can have greater influence than parents in integrating faith and learning.


Sorenson discusses how the integration of faith and learning takes place from a student perspective. The skill and helpfulness of the professor are found to be important. The professor’s demonstration of a life of faith helps the students to integrate faith with learning.
Theses


This source is relevant to the manner in which students are trained to be Champions for Christ. Hine develops a Resident Assistant selection and training process that helps to guarantee students are mentored with a Christian worldview. The RAs function as leaders in the dormitories and supervise a team that includes Spiritual Life Directors and Prayer Leaders. Some of the principles used to train Champions in dormitories can be used as well with the online student population. The student leaders are charged with influencing the lives of students in a way that results in sincere Christian students and commitment to the University mission.


Malacci contributes to the knowledge associated with infusing faith into the teaching of adults in non-religious courses. The study asserts that in order to effectively integrate faith with learning, the professor must be called by God to do so. This calling is evident in the lives of professors who are devoted to serving or helping others rather than working in a job or a vocation. Professors must be committed to reconciling their actions with Christian beliefs in a way that is visible to students. Professors are expected to be community builders who facilitate relationships between students and the professor.

Morton investigated how faith can be integrated with learning for the purpose of training Champions for Christ in non-religious courses. The integration of faith and learning occurs not just in the classroom, but also in the professor’s research and service in the community. The success of the integration was directly related to the professor’s love for God and others.

**Scripture Passages**

Judges 2: 6-14 [English Standard Version]

“When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. And the people served the L ORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the L ORD had done for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the L ORD, died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the L ORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the L ORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the L ORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the L ORD to anger. They abandoned the L ORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the L ORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.”

This source is relevant to the falling away from religious values. The passage describes the Israelites devotion to the Lord during the generation of Joshua and the
elders who outlived him. After that generation died, the next generation completely abandoned the Lord and forgot what He had done for them. The passage illustrates the very short time that people can forget their devotion to faith in God. The implication is devotion to other missions can be abandoned just as quickly, such as the devotion to the original mission of a Christian university.

John 15:18-20 ESV

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.”

This source shows the likelihood of being rejected for being faithful. A person without a Christian worldview will likely be accepted by the world, while one with a Christian worldview is likely to be rejected and persecuted. The same is likely to be true of a Christian university that is faithful to a Christian worldview. The university is likely to be ridiculed and rejected by worldly associations.

2 Timothy 4: 1-7 ESV

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
This passage asserts people will not tolerate sound doctrine but will instead surround themselves with teachers that say what they want to hear. The passage can be understood to instruct Christian professors to endure hardship and to be persistent in their ministries, keeping the faith in all situations, including persecution and rejection from peer universities, accreditation institutions, and government regulation.

**Genesis 1:26 ESV**

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

This passage defines the standard by which man was made. The image of God implies Christians are similar to God and represent Him. Christians and Christian universities should exhibit certain aspects of God. Christians know right from wrong and are expected to act according to God’s moral standards. As individuals and a community, Christian students, staff, and faculty are able to relate to each other through prayer, praise, and worship.

**2 Timothy 3:16 ESV**

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness”

The one authoritative source for teaching in righteousness, for rebuking and for correcting, is the Bible. Any effort to integrate the Christian faith with the teaching of liberal arts, sciences, or any other subject would have to include the Bible, and that is why this verse is relevant to any study that includes the integration of faith and learning.
Romans 12:1-2 ESV

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The Christian university that strives to train Champions for Christ must conform with the good, acceptable and perfect will of God in its teaching, rather than conforming to the world. The testing of worldly conditions and values is done by measuring them against the Word of God.

Exodus 18:21-23 ESV

“Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”

The proper span of control should be established for appointing leaders over others. Jethro advised Moses to appoint officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. That span of control allowed Moses to lighten his load and share it with other trustworthy men, and resulted in the people being satisfied. This is relevant to the selection of Resident Assistants or others who are responsible for integrating the faith and environment of residential and online students outside of the classroom.

Hebrews 5:11-14 ESV

“About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a
child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

The relevance of this verse is that it outlines the characteristics of teachers of the faith. The type of teachers who are equipped to demonstrate Godly character and model a Christ-like life are those who have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. These are the teachers who are able to integrate the teaching of subjects and integrate them with faith.

1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Everything that is attempted and accomplished can be done for the glory of God. There is no subject that can be taught, that cannot be dedicated to God and bring glory to Him. The integration of faith with learning provides the synergy needed to engage students and teachers in the quest to glorify God.

Hebrews 10:25 ESV

“Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

This verse directs believers to meet together for the purpose of giving and receiving encouragement. This type of meeting results in enhanced love and good deeds. It seems it would be possible to be obedient to this verse in a virtual rather than a physical sense, given the technology available today. This type of regular meeting is important for advancing the spiritual maturity of both residential and online students.
Acts 2:42-47 ESV

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe[a] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

The book of Acts provides specific characteristics for a fellowship of believers.

The believers were together with everything in common, providing for the needs of all. They ate together and praised God. Duplicating that fellowship among 100,000 online students seems possible with today’s technology, but is that duplication congruent with Biblical standards?

Romans 14:17-18 ESV

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”

When combined with the verse from Acts 2, this verse reinforces the practice of online faith communities. The overwhelming love that existed in these communities is evident in Acts. Romans expands the definition of these communities by describing the Kingdom of God, which is not defined by eating or drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is possible to love one another without being in a face-to-face physical relationship.
1 Corinthians 9:22-23 ESV

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

The distinctives of a Christian university should be derived directly from the Bible. They are characteristics of the body of Christ and are non-negotiable. How the mission of training Champions for Christ is pursued, however, is open to the moving of the Spirit of God. Methods used to train residential students may need to be different than those used to train online graduate students. What works for integrating faith and learning in the Medical School may not be appropriate for the Engineering School. The administrators and professors must become all things to all students for the sake of the Gospel and the sharing of its blessings.

Judges 5:2 ESV

“That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!”

The review of literature will show there are varying opinions on how to most effectively integrate faith and learning from the professors’ perspectives. There are also opinions on how to most effectively integrate faith and learning from the students’ perspectives. The most important proponent of integration and learning however, needs to be the leaders of the organization. The vision must be cast from the top of the organization to achieve consistent and universal success.
Acts 1:20 ESV

“For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and ‘Let another take his office.’”

This passage is relevant to the expectations for the leaders of a Christian university and their fate. David wrote in Psalm 109 regarding the evil actions of his enemy. He prays to God and asks that his enemy’s days be few and that another would take his place of leadership. Peter repeats this message in Acts 1 when he refers to Judas’ apostleship and says another will take his place of leadership. In both passages, the fate of the offender was not controlled or exercised by the offended, but by God. It was God who appointed the leader and it was God who removed him.

1 Corinthians 10:5 ESV

“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

This verse shows learning should be judged against the Bible to determine the truth. The assumption should be the Bible provides complete truth. It helps to frame and provide understanding of any subject that is taught at the university.
SEMINARY IRB APPLICATION  
Liberty University  
Institutional Review Board

I. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Complete each section of this form and email it and any accompanying materials (i.e. consent forms, surveys) to Please note that we can only accept our forms in Microsoft Word format.

- In addition, please submit one signed copy of the fourth page of the protocol form, which is the Investigator's (Your) Agreement. Signed materials can be submitted by mail, fax (434-522-0506), or email (scanned document to ). Signed materials can also be submitted via regular mail or in person to our office: Green Hall, Suite 1837.
- Please be sure to use the grey form fields to complete this document; do not change the format of the application. You are able to move quickly through the document by using the "Tab" key.
- Applications are processed on a first-come/first-serve basis. Preliminary review may take up to three weeks and then you will need to factor in the time it takes you to make those revisions. Thus, the review and approval processes are largely dependent on your prompt, adequate response to IRB revisions and inquiries. One month or longer could occur in this overall process, depending on your promptness in responding to our requests.
- Note: Applications with the following problems will be returned immediately for revisions: 1) Grammar/spelling/punctuation errors, 2) A lack of professionalism (lack of consistency/clarity) on the application itself or any supporting documents, 3) Incomplete applications. Failure to minimize these errors will cause delays in your processing time.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name and information for the student doing the study:

John M. Norris  
Student Name  
(434) 826-9813  
Student Phone

2. Name and information for the faculty mentor overseeing the study:

Dr. Jeff D. Ward  
Faculty Mentor Name  
(281) 979-0271  
Faculty Mentor Phone

ID: 00235444
Student ID
jmnorris33@liberty.edu
Student Email
3. Anticipated Duration of Study: (How long do you believe it will take you to collect all your data?) From May 2015 To July 2015

4. Is your study funded by a grant? Please list all sources of funding. If no outside funding is used, state “unfunded”: No

5. Has this research been reviewed by another IRB? □ Yes □ No
   (If yes, please provide a copy of the letter of approval or indicate the status of your application.)

III. RESEARCH SUMMARY

6. What is the title of your study? A Program for Persistent Integration of Faith and Learning in a Christian University Online Environment

7. Carefully describe your research project. Include your research question and purpose.
   The purpose of this project is to investigate the phenomenon of integration of faith and learning in a Christian online environment. The research question is how do professors and students effectively develop a more complete Christian worldview, integrate subjects with biblical principles, and exhibit a commitment to Christian principles? The purpose of the project is to develop a program for online Christian education that minimizes the risk of a drift toward secularism, establishes a method for integrating faith and learning in an online environment, and encourages students to develop a lifelong commitment to their Christian university.

8. This study involves (check all that apply):
   □ Anonymous survey □ Non-anonymous survey
   □ Unrecorded interview □ Recorded interviews (audio or video recording)
   □ Other (briefly describe): 

9. Step by step, describe exactly what your participants will be asked to do. Include information about how long it should take your participants to complete each step. The participants will be asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions. The time to complete the interview is estimated to be 15 minutes.

10. If you are planning to survey or interview your participants, please submit a copy of the survey or interview questions to the IRB along with this research application.

14. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

11. Who will participate in your study? Only check the box(es) for the participants your study will focus on. If you are focusing on Normal Volunteers (Age 18-65) and some of your participants may be veterans, you should only check Normal Volunteers. You would not check Discharged/Retired Military Personnel.

   □ Normal Volunteers (Age 18-65)
   □ Minors (under age 18)
   □ Over age 65
30

☑️ University Students
☑️ Active-Duty Military Personnel
☑️ Discharged/Retired Military Personnel
☑️ Inpatients
☑️ Outpatients
☑️ Cognitively Disabled
☑️ Physically Disabled
☑️ Participants Incapable of Giving Consent
☑️ Prisoners or Institutional Individuals
☑️ A specific racial or ethnic population (example: only Koreans, only members of an Indian tribe)
☐ Participant(s) related to the researcher

12. How many participants do you plan to recruit? 5 to 10. Increased to 20 at the direction of Dr. Charlie Davidson. The number may vary depending upon the uniqueness of the responses. If many unique responses are encountered, the number of participants will be increased, but only after submission and approval of a change-in-protocol form.

13. Are you related to your participant(s)? No

V. RECRUITMENT

14. Describe how you will recruit your participants. Be specific. Attach a copy of any verbal script, email, letter, advertisement, flyer, Facebook post, etc. Current students attending an on-Campus intensive during the Summer 2015 semester will be recruited for the study. The thesis candidate will visit classes after obtaining permission from the Professor, and ask for student volunteers. Dr. Davidson has granted preliminary approval for recruiting these students and will follow-up with approval via Email.

15. Will your participants be paid or given gift cards for taking part in your research? If your answer is yes, please explain. No

16. Are you planning to utilize a church, ministry, school, convention, or membership database to recruit your participants and/or gather your data? You may need to obtain permission to do so. Please submit documentation of any necessary permission to the IRB along with this research application. No

VI. INFORMED CONSENT

17. Informed consent information: People need to know enough about your study to decide whether they want to participate. Unless you are only using archived data for your study, please prepare an informed consent form using the template located at and submit it to the IRB along with this research application.

18. When and how will you provide your participants with the informed consent form? The participants will be given the form immediately before the interview. After signing the form, the interview will begin.
VII. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

19. How will you maintain the confidentiality of the information obtained from your subjects? There will be no collection of personal identifiable information. The data will be stored on an encrypted storage device.

20. Will data identifying subjects be made available to anyone other than you or your advisor? Who? No.

21. Where will the data be kept, how long will it be kept, and who will have access to it? The data will be retained for 7 years. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

VIII. RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

22. List any anticipated direct benefits to your participants. If none, state that fact here. There are no direct benefits to the participants of the study.

23. List any anticipated risks to your participants. If the risks are no more than one would expect when taking part in normal, daily activities, state that fact here. The risks are no more than what the participants would experience in their daily lives.

IX. DOCUMENTS

24. Please attach these documents to your application:
   
   A. Informed consent document
   B. Recruitment verbal script, email, letter, advertisement, flyer, or Facebook post
   C. Survey questions (if used)
   D. Interview questions (if used)
   E. Permission from the organization(s) involved in your study

25. Print the signature page below, sign it, and have your faculty mentor sign it. You may return your completed signature page by email as a scanned pdf, by fax to 434-522-0506, or by mail/campus mail/hand delivery to Green Hall, Suite 1837.
II. INVESTIGATOR AGREEMENT & SIGNATURE PAGE

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, YOU AGREE:

1. That no participants will be recruited or entered into the study until you have received the final approval or exemption email from the Institutional Review Board.
2. That no participants will be recruited or entered into the study until they have been properly educated on the study.
3. That any modifications of the study or consent form will not be initiated without prior written approval, by email, from the IRB and your faculty mentor.
4. The Investigator (You) agrees to carry out the study as stated in the approved application: all participants will be recruited and consented as stated in the study approved or exempted by the IRB. If written consent is required, all participants will be consented by signing a copy of the approved consent form.
5. That any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others participating in the approved study, which must be in accordance with the (and/or the ) and the will be promptly reported in writing to the IRB.
6. That the IRB office will be notified within 30 days of the completion of this study.
7. That the PI will inform the IRB and complete all necessary reports should he/she terminate University Association.
8. To maintain records and keep informed consent documents for three years after completion of the project, even if the Investigator terminates association with the University.
9. That he/she has access to copies of ________, and the

Investigator (Printed) Investigator (Signature) Date

FOR FACULTY MENTORS INVOLVED IN STUDENT PROPOSALS ONLY

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE FACULTY MENTOR AGREES:

1. To assume responsibility for the oversight of the student’s current investigation, as outlined in the approved IRB application.
2. To work with the Investigator, and the Institutional Review Board, as needed, in maintaining compliance with this agreement.
3. That the investigator is qualified to perform this study.
4. That by signing this document you verify you have carefully read this application and approve of the procedures described herein, and also verify that the application complies with all instructions listed above. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Faculty Mentor (Printed) Faculty Mentor (Signature) Date

*The Institutional Review Board reserves the right to terminate this study at any time if, in its opinion, (1) the risks of further experimentation are prohibitive, or (2) the above agreement is breached.
CHAPTER TWO

Distinctives of A Christian University

O’Connell asserts a Christian university is guaranteed to surrender to secularism unless two primary imperatives are upheld. For a Christian university to survive there must first be an institutional imperative the school will remain Christian. This Christian imperative must be understood, supported and assimilated by the faculty and staff of the university. Second, there must be a Christian character to the operations and activities of the university. A Christian identity must influence and impact every aspect of the education and student life.\(^{11}\) Paul refers to the all-encompassing aspect of a Christian identity when he writes, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31 ESV).

Carlberg states the most important distinctive of a Christian university is a commitment to the integration of faith and learning. Faculty members are drawn to a Christian university because of their commitment to devote their lives to the calling of Christian education. As students are educated to competence in their chosen disciplines, they are also guided to develop their Christian faith and to discover how faith should influence the assumptions and presuppositions of their chosen discipline.\(^ {12}\)

Ream stresses three criteria needed to be present for a university to be considered intentionally religious. First, the university should have a mission statement that acknowledges a


specific linkage to a church or claim to a religious heritage. Second, the mission statement of the university should mention at least one explicitly religious goal. Third, the core curriculum of the university should require religion courses that reflect and support the university’s religious identity.13

Carpenter suggests it is not the conducting of chapel services, the frequency of campus prayer groups, the design of curriculum that includes Christian theology, nor biblical studies that distinguish a university as Christian. The primary distinctive of a Christian university is the Christian worldview that permeates all aspects of learning. There is a sincere and coordinated commitment to the integration of the Christian faith and learning.14 The Christian university must conform with the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in its teaching, rather than conforming to the world. The testing of worldly conditions and values is done by measuring them against the Word of God. Paul writes,

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:1-2 ESV).


History of Liberty University

Liberty University’s Champions for Christ are graduates with degrees in one of 450 programs of study. Champions for Christ are born-again Christian evangelicals. Barna describes born-again Christian evangelicals as people who say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. They believe when they die they will go to Heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. They also believe their faith is very important in their lives; that they have a personal responsibility to share their belief about Christ with non-Christians; that Satan exists; that eternal salvation is possible only through grace and not works; that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today.15

Liberty University has been chosen to be highlighted in this thesis as a contemporary model of a Christian university that has not migrated to secularism. It will be contrasted with other Christian universities that have been secularized. A summary of the mission, distinctives and history of Liberty help to illustrate its commitment to the original vision of 1971 when Jerry Falwell, Sr. enrolled the first 154 students. It was founded as a distinctively evangelical Christian liberal arts university “which would be for evangelical students, a world-class institution comparing favorably, in every way, with Notre Dame and Brigham Young in what they provide for Catholic and Mormon young people.”16 The Thomas Road Baptist Church was considered the spiritual parent of the University and exercised influence over the doctrinal

15 George Barna, The Role of Faith in the 2012 Election, (Barna Group, November 5, 2012), 47.

16 Jerry Falwell, Falwell: An Autobiography, 482.
position of the University for many years. Dr. Falwell’s vision called for academic excellence, strong spiritual values, a commitment to a Christian worldview, and a behavior code based upon traditional and moral principles. Faculty and staff were expected to be men and women dedicated to the founding principles of the University. The graduates were expected to take the Christian worldview and the Gospel into the marketplace and their ministries all over America and the world.17

By 1985, Liberty had grown from a small Bible college to a full-service university with an enrollment of 7,500 students. The initial years of financial struggle were replaced by a financial picture that grew stronger each year. According to Liberty’s IRS 990 tax forms, the University’s net assets sustained a fivefold increase – from $150 million to $860 million in just six years. As the enrollment now eclipses 100,000 students, President Jerry Falwell, Jr’s vision has not deviated from his father’s. Jerry, Jr. declared during the 2012 Commencement,

My father’s vision for Liberty University was both a theological and a cultural vision. Theologically, it was to found the world’s preeminent Christian university where every faculty member professed faith in Jesus Christ, agreed with our doctrinal statement, and sought to fulfill the Great Commission and live the Great Commandment. Culturally, it was to found a university that held in high regard our nation’s founding principles of limited government, the free enterprise system, and individual Liberty.18

At the dedication of the new medical school in 2014, Jerry, Jr. quoted from Dr. Martin, the Dean of the new Medical School, who asserted,

This is a faith based institution with a Christian worldview. You will hear that a lot. That faith and worldview will be reflected in these manners. It will be reflected in how we act more than what we say. I tell people that my ministry over the last 35 years has

17 ibid.

been my practice of medicine; what I have done for people. We are not going to teach you apologetics or theology. We have a great seminary and school of religion on campus if you want to learn more about that. I am not a theologian but I am here to teach you to be the best physicians you can be. Our faculty is also here to be role models and mentors to help you become quality faith-based individuals and the best Osteopathic physicians possible; the type of quality individual that patients want. I know it is trite, but patients really don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. They want to be treated as individuals. Dr. Martin with that one statement beautifully summarized my vision for all of Liberty University; that we train young people to go into every profession with the highest level of competence, with the values to compel them to use their talents and abilities to serve others. His statement also echoed the teachings of Jesus; to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.19

The Statement of Mission and Purpose published on Liberty’s current website and approved by the Board of Trustees on March 7, 2014, confirms the vision of the founder, Dr. Jerry Falwell. It states that,

Liberty University develops Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential to impact the world. Through its residential and online programs, services, facilities, and collaborations, the University educates men and women who will make important contributions to their workplaces and communities, follow their chosen vocations as callings to glorify God, and fulfill the Great Commission.

Liberty University will:

1. Emphasize excellent teaching and learning.
2. Foster university-level competencies in communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and mathematics in all undergraduate programs.
3. Ensure competency in scholarship, research, and professional communication in all graduate programs and undergraduate programs where appropriate.
4. Promote the synthesis of academic knowledge and Christian worldview in order that there might be a maturing of spiritual, intellectual, social and physical value-driven behavior.
5. Enable students to engage in a major field of study in career-focused disciplines built on a solid foundation in the liberal arts.
6. Promote an understanding of Western tradition and the diverse elements of American cultural history, especially the importance of the individual in maintaining democratic and free market processes.
7. Contribute to a knowledge and understanding of other cultures and of international events.
8. Encourage a commitment to the Christian life; one of personal integrity, sensitivity to the needs of others, social responsibility and active communication of the Christian faith, and, as it is lived out, a life that leads

people to Jesus Christ as the Lord of the universe and their own personal Savior.  

Distinctives of Liberty University

Paul describes empathy as one of the required distinctives that supports a Christian’s ability to share the gospel and share its blessings with others when he writes,

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

The distinctives of a Christian university should be derived directly from the Bible. They are characteristics of the body of Christ and are non-negotiable. How the mission of training Champions for Christ is pursued however, is open to the moving of the Holy Spirit of God. Methods used to train residential students may need to be different than those used to train online graduate students. What works for integrating faith and learning in the Medical School may not be appropriate for the Cinematic Arts School. The administrators and professors must become all things to all students for the sake of the Gospel and the sharing of its blessings.

The distinctives of professors who are equipped to demonstrate godly character and model a Christ-like life are those who have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. These are the professors who are able to teach subjects and integrate them with faith. The writer

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of Hebrews outlined the characteristics of teachers of the faith when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write,

> About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5: 11-14 ESV).

Beck writes that a distinctive of a Christian university is to provide for not just the students’ intellectual needs, but also their spiritual growth. He asserts professors should model Godly behavior, exhibited by the discipline of prayer and Scripture reading in class, and the modeling of a desire to reach the world with the gospel of Christ. The professors should practice an attitude of love and concern for their student needs. He writes that a Christian education should encourage students of law, medicine, science, art, education or athletics to communicate the gospel of Christ.  

The distinctives of Liberty University have remained mostly unchanged since its founding in 1971. Of the ten original distinctives, only the ninth has been modified. The ten distinctives as published in Dr. Falwell’s autobiography and on the current Liberty website are:

1. Academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment
2. A commitment to training visionary champions for Christ
3. An action-oriented curriculum
4. An uncompromising doctrinal statement, based upon an inerrant Bible, a Christian worldview beginning with belief in biblical creationism, an eschatological belief in the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation coming of Christ for all of his Church, dedication to world evangelization, an absolute repudiation of “political correctness,” a strong commitment to political conservatism, total rejection of socialism, and firm support for America’s economic system of free enterprise
5. Behavioral standards which include the prohibition of drug, alcohol and tobacco use, coed residence halls, and sexual promiscuity
6. A modest dress code, reasonable curfews and respect for authority

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7. A highly-qualified, non-tenured teaching faculty. Unlike many major universities, graduate assistants do not stand-in for faculty. The faculty does the teaching.
8. Twenty highly competitive NCAA Division I athletic programs for men and women, including football
9. Tuition costs among the lowest in the nation
10. Required attendance at convocations and chapels three times a week²²

CHAPTER THREE

The Trend toward Secularization

When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth (Judges 2: 6-14 ESV).

The generation of Israelites following Joshua was an example of how rapidly a group of people can fall away from their religious values. The passage in Judges describes the Israelites devotion to the Lord during the generation of Joshua and the elders who outlived him. After that generation died, the next generation completely abandoned the Lord and forgot what He had done for them. The passage illustrates that in a very short time period, people can forget their devotion to faith in God. The implication is devotion to other missions can be abandoned just as quickly, such as the devotion to the original mission of a Christian university. That velocity of change to devotion to mission among Christian universities was confirmed by Burtchaell, as discussed in subsequent paragraphs of this chapter.
Distinctives of Secular Universities

A Worldview that Excludes Christianity

A person with a Christian worldview is less likely to be accepted by the world than one who does not have a Christian worldview. The person with a Christian worldview is often ridiculed, rejected and persecuted by worldly institutions. This bias against a Christian worldview is just as applicable to a Christian university. A Christian university is likely to be ridiculed and rejected by worldly associations. The predominant place of religion in American universities has atrophied to a state where concurrent references to religion and higher education are viewed with confusion or hostility.\(^{23}\)

Naturalism became the dominate worldview late in the 20\(^{th}\) century. In this worldview, religion is viewed as an emotional need and a belief, rather than knowledge or truth. People who pursue religion are those who crave an emotional need for security. Religion is generally judged to be irrational and irrelevant and must therefore be excluded from education and the pursuit of knowledge.\(^{24}\)

Emphasis on Academic Freedom above Scripture

The undermining of the religious devotion that exists at Christian universities originates through the advocacy of ideas that are often encouraged by the pursuit of unlimited academic freedom. The American Association of University Professors requires almost limitless academic freedom.


\(^{24}\) W. David Beck, 12-13.
freedom. Those universities that violate the requirement, risk expulsion from the Association. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting body for Liberty University, includes in its Comprehensive Standards that the university governing board be free from undue influence from religious or other external bodies.25

Barnhill suggests academic freedom can be balanced with the need to maintain the faith-based character of the Christian university. Reasonable limits on academic freedom can be imposed without adversely affecting the effectiveness and legitimacy of a Christian university.26

Marsden suggests it is not possible to maintain a distinctly Christian perspective at a university and instead, one of two strategies should be used. First, he suggests the Christian university should adopt a more universal moral standard because it is impossible to achieve a Christian moral consensus between religious conservatives and liberals. He writes the only academic option is a practical pluralism that is relative to communities. He believes Christians need to be more inclusive. Instead of sharing exclusively Christian traditions, a wide variety of minority opinions should be permitted. God’s moral laws should not be forced upon those who object and all religiously-based intellectual traditions should be allowed. Instead of a universal moral tradition, the university should think of itself as a federation of competing intellectual viewpoints. If the Christian university rejects this strategy, Marsden asserts their second option is to opt-out of mainstream education. The university would need to concentrate on building a


distinctively Christian university that is doomed to lack any influence or prestige and that is relegated to a subgroup of an unpopular sect.\textsuperscript{27} This type of situation is described in John’s Gospel, where he is relating the likelihood of being rejected for being faithful. John writes,

\begin{quote}
If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours” (John 15: 18-20 ESV).
\end{quote}

A person without a Christian worldview will likely be accepted by the world, while one with a Christian worldview is likely to be rejected and persecuted. The same is likely to be true of a Christian university that is faithful to a Christian worldview. The university is likely to be ridiculed and rejected by worldly associations.

Academic freedom has been taken as a license to teach conclusions that are contradictory to Scripture. Rather than professors who resolve to test all data against the truth of Scripture, references to the Bible are intentionally excluded from consideration.\textsuperscript{28}

**Hiring Practices**

Noll asserts the preservation of religious convictions at Christian universities and the avoidance of secularism can be achieved only through structured, systematic, and courageous policies. There must be a commitment to hiring only Christian faculty, a focus on providing resources to improve the Christian professors’ competence in their disciplines, and the avoidance of making tenure decisions exactly as other secular universities. Trustees, presidents, and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} W. David Beck, 20.
\end{flushright}
administrators must exercise considerable control over who is hired. Christian scholars must be hired whose work is influenced by their religious convictions. At Christian universities, this type of religious conviction is admired and encouraged. At secular universities, these professors are likely to be battered by colleagues who take offense at a Christian worldview and distrust the integration of faith and learning. The result is a loss of moral purpose, of religious convictions, of the development of ethical character among students, and of the integration of curriculums with divine revelation.29

A survey of 105 colleges and universities that belong to the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities and who describe themselves as “religiously affiliated” found 32% did not grant tenure. Twenty-eight reasons were given for not granting tenure and those responses were grouped into thirteen categories which included tradition/institutional values (28.6%), tenure creates problems/is overly complicated (10.7%), tenured faculty have little incentive to stay current in their profession (10.7%), tenure provides no advantage/is unnecessary (10.7%), faculty members should be judged on current performance (7.1%), and various other reasons (25.2%).

The survey also found the reasons that these schools granted tenure. Academic freedom was cited as the primary reason and accounted for 22.9% of the responses. Other reasons for granting tenure included commitment by institution and faculty (14.3%), retention of quality faculty (12.9%), recruiting quality faculty (11.4%), recognition and affirmation (11.4%), job security (5.7%), protects faculty/due process (5.7%), tradition (4.3%), and other various reasons.

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29 Mark A. Noll, 78-89.
(11.4%). Many institutions believe faculty members who take controversial or unconventional positions in their classrooms need to be protected from administrators.\textsuperscript{30}

History of a Diminishing of Christian Influence

The generation that populated America in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, started the first three denominationally sponsored universities. Established churches during that generation founded Harvard, William and Mary and Yale. The schools trained ministers and also included liberal arts and service to the public in their curriculums. Non-resident governors who were not teachers provided the administrative oversight of the schools and would become the major reason for what was perceived as a lack of academic freedom in American universities.\textsuperscript{31}

The pace of denominational sponsorship and increased sectarianism resulted in the founding of many colleges and universities with distinctly Christian missions that were closely affiliated with the church. Some of the original Christian schools included Johns Hopkins, Michigan, Columbia, Dartmouth, Beloit, Lafayette, Davidson, Millsap, Ohio Wesleyan, Wake Forest, Linfield, Virginia Union, Gettysburg, St. Olaf, Concordia, Boston, Azusa Pacific and Princeton. Each of these schools eventually abandoned their church or denominational


affiliations and have since excluded Christianity as a worthy subject of study at the university level.\textsuperscript{32}

Marsden asserted the predominant religion associated with Christian universities was Protestant. Protestants were better educated than most in America in the nineteenth century and they dominated higher education during that period. Most professors were ministers and they helped to set the standards for American universities. Most universities established prior to 1850 were founded by churches and the majority of them required attendance at chapel services.\textsuperscript{33}

Burtchaell examined the relationships of churches with colleges and universities that began with heavy Christian influences. He found most no longer have any significant relationship with their former Christian sponsors. Many of the schools formed colleges for the purpose of training ministers but later abandoned their religious roots and their sponsoring agencies. These colleges and universities eventually excluded Christianity because of its unworthiness as an academic discipline. Southern Baptist seminaries that were historically sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist colleges and universities that were sponsored by state conventions, abandoned those relationships. There were up to three hundred Baptist collegiate colleges and universities in history, but that number has now dwindled to just over fifty. Examples of institutions no longer recognized as Baptist include Brown,

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\textsuperscript{33} George M. Marsden, “The Soul of the American University, “ \textit{First Things} 9 (September 1991): 34-35.
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Burtchaell postulated three factors that caused the drift from religious sponsorship. First, there was a move away from educating ministers. There was a general consensus higher education corrupted the preaching of the gospel. Also, there were seldom enough ministerial students to sustain the institutions. The ministerial students were seldom able to afford tuition, so the primary objective for the Christian colleges and universities was never adequately sustained. Second, there were not enough committed university-aged Christians in the population to sustain the enrollment required to remain financially solvent. Survival required the recruitment of non-religious applicants in such large numbers that the campus environments became only marginally Christian. Third, many schools that started with a specific denominational focus, were forced to become non-sectarian in order to survive. That non-sectarianism eventually evolved into non-Christian and then non-religious.

Burtchaell’s observations for the steps that preceded secularization included:

1. Faculty began to distance themselves from the enforcement of behavioral and devotional standards. The faculty came to love their careers more than their college. They became specialists who moved from institution to institution.
2. Students began to petition the administration to remove Campus devotional duties and behavioral restrictions.
3. The enforcement of piety and morality were moved from the faculty, to the deans of students who provided only loose enforcement.
4. Learning and religion became mutually exclusive. Theology and religion became the exclusive domain of the seminaries.
5. The religious identities became circumstantial, indirect, and eventually unidentifiable.


6. Religiously-centered trustees lost respect and were replaced with influential alumni.
7. Independent funding and/or sudden influxes of funding apart from the church encouraged schools to become independent of their religious sponsors.
8. Religion was marginalized as the academic disciplines matured.
9. The move toward secularization often occurred under the watch of one president. These presidents were typically highly trusted and their actions were seen as a move toward professionalism and increased resources.
10. The sponsoring church or religious organization was removed from institutional governance.
11. The expressed concern that the school might become secular usually began a decade after the critical turn toward secularization had been made.
12. The day-to-day policies and procedures failed to enforce the religious vision statements and bylaws.
13. The authority of the influence of the religious sponsor was replaced by the authority of the accrediting institution.
14. There was a move from pietism to indifference, to rationalism. Chapel became convocation, which became assembly, which eventually resulted in dissolution.
15. Faculty who shared the faith of the religious sponsors were replaced by faculty who viewed faith in academics as inappropriate.
16. Christian staff and faculty were intimidated by their academic peers.36

During the period 1800 to 1860, Christian universities experienced internal disorder and a lack of funding. Denominational institutions became chaotic and the universities began to seek secular support. The change in the base of support helped to erode the religious purposes of the universities. The schools became more commercial than religious and the percentage of graduates who went into professions other than the ministry increased.37

During the period following the Civil War, there was a struggle for academic freedom in higher education in America. Academic freedom and advanced scholarship replaced what was perceived as an environment that was choking and wrought with sabotage. Science replaced

36 Ibid., 836-850.
37 Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, 185-278.
religion as the dominant authority. Professions assumed control of the standards for teaching and the dominance of tenured professors became the norm in education.\textsuperscript{38}

Contemporary Protestants abandoned Christian higher education. Many Christian universities abandoned the teaching of theology and stopped requiring students to attend chapel or convocation services. Yale discontinued chapel in 1926 and Princeton in 1964. Secularization overcame many of the universities that had been founded on Christian principles, including Duke, Boston, Emory, Syracuse, Northwestern, Southern Methodist and USC.\textsuperscript{39}

Beck asserts the existence of Christian universities is now in peril. He writes Christian universities will not survive unless they grant terminal degrees in a wide variety of disciplines, including the arts and sciences. The shift of worldviews across America has resulted in opposition to Christian thinking. He found many new faculty at Christian universities came from secular universities and have never completed a research project, formed a solution to a problem, or developed course content within the context of a Christian worldview. It is difficult for these new professors to teach from a Christian worldview when they haven’t experienced for themselves, the integration of faith and learning.\textsuperscript{40}

Marsden suggests the disappearance of a Christian influence at American universities in less than just one century is attributable to two major contributors. First, the demand for a more practical and scientific education overwhelmed a concentration on religion courses. The second contributing cause was the drive after the Civil War to compete with other countries of the

\textsuperscript{38} Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, ix – xiii.

\textsuperscript{39} George M. Marsden, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{40} W. David Beck, 9-11.
modern world. Specialization demanded the training of scholars who were professionals, pursued scientific inquiry, and demanded openness in education. Religious belief was suspended in the interest of scientific inquiry. Religious activities were separated from academics and relegated to areas outside of the University community. Curriculums were transformed into technical specialties that were demanded by consumers, most of whom were supported by government funding. For a university to maintain its prestige, it needed to avoid the embarrassment of religion and the church. Dependence on financial support for government interests and research resulted in an emphasis on technical skills and sub-disciplines at the expense of the humanities.  

As universities abandoned their missions of training ministers for the church, new missions were adopted that favored the growing interest in the study of the professions and natural sciences. Christian universities like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Michigan and Virginia became thoroughly secular in their pursuit of research and professions and their abandonment of religion.

The decline that occurs at Christian universities is characterized by a redefinition of their missions as “continuing a tradition” and “incorporating a Christian worldview.” There is a move away from the inclusion of the propositions of Scripture within the content of the various academic disciplines. Religion is instead viewed as historical, sociological, or psychological rather than accepted as the truth. Scripture is no longer accepted as a part of the knowledge base

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41 George M. Marsden, 35-41.

for academic disciplines and ties to Christian preferences are ignored. The Bible is no longer normative in classroom discussions, it is no longer considered the one source of knowledge that is absolutely true, and is no longer incorporated into the data of research or considered relevant to non-religious degree programs.43

At the University of Chicago and many other previously Christian institutions, scientific inquiry completely replaced the development of character or moral precepts. Campus chapel services that had the appearance of Christian worship services, actually allowed any topic that might be presented by the speaker of the day. A high level of scholarship was admired while the maintenance of faith was excluded from campus life activities. A Christian worldview is no longer required of the trustees or faculty, and sympathy toward Christian values is no longer required for the admission of students. Behaviors that were not tolerated fifty years ago such as smoking, alcohol use, dancing, playing cards, watching movies and attending theater are now commonplace. Attendance at compulsory chapel service has been replaced by voluntary and individual worship options.44

The Secularization of America

George Barna conducted eighteen surveys between 2008 and 2014 that measured the level of devotion to God among United States adults. The survey sample of 20,524 United States adults had a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Adults were categorized along a continuum of secularity based upon more than fifteen variables such as belief in God, moral behaviors, church attendance, belief related to accuracy of the Bible,


44 Judson R. Carlberg, 224-230.
volunteering in church, and donating to the church. His results illustrate the trends associated with the secularization of U.S. adults:

- The percent of adults who had not attended a Christian church service, other than a special event such as a funeral or wedding, within the past six months had increased from 30% in the 1990’s to 43% in the current decade.
- After defining “secularized” as those who responded negatively to 60% or more of fifteen variables related to identity, moral behaviors, belief in God, church attendance, accuracy of the Bible, volunteering at church, and donating to the church, the research showed that the proportion of highly secularized individuals in America is growing steadily. The younger a generation, the more secular it is. He found 48% of millennials (born 1984 to 2002) were highly secularized, 40% of busters (born 1965 to 1983), 35% boomers (1946 to 1964), and 28% elders (earlier than 1945).
- Skeptics, who are defined as those who claim to be atheists or agnostics, have rapidly increased in number the past few years, especially among the millennials.
- Twenty years ago, 8% of born-again Christians did not attend church. In just twenty years that percentage has more than doubled to 18%.

The six reasons young adults left the church were:

1. The church restricted their freedom of expression. The millennials’ desire for freedom to express their feelings, ideas, and experiences were perceived to have been stifled.
2. There was a belief the older generations’ Christianity was shallow. Church was described as boring and irrelevant. The Bible was not emphasized or taught clearly.
3. The millennials’ desire for honest conversation about reality was blocked by the churches’ antagonism toward science. The millennials didn’t want to hear all of the questions had already been answered.
4. The millennials were offended by the churches’ expression of sexuality. The church was perceived as too rigid and judgmental.
5. Other ideas and religions were excluded from conversation.
6. Talk about doubts related to beliefs, teachings, or practices of Christianity were discouraged.  

Kinneman’s research was devoted to identifying the reasons eighteen to twenty-nine-year-old Christians have left church and their faith. He found young adults were 43% less likely

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to attend or participate in church. The research showed 59% of young people with a Christian background had stopped attending church.⁴⁶

CHAPTER FOUR – FAITH INTEGRATION

Integration of learning is the demonstrated ability to connect, apply, and/or synthesize information coherently from disparate contexts and perspectives, and make use of these new insights in multiple contexts. This includes the ability to connect the domain of ideas and philosophies to the everyday experience, from one field of study or discipline to another, from the past to the present, between campus and community life, from one part of the whole, from the abstract to the concrete, among multiple identity roles – and vice versa.  

The above is Barber’s definition of integration of learning that he developed from a review of empirical research and his own analyses. He focuses on how students connect learning from one context to another. He suggests students have an increasing capacity to integrate learning as they progress through college and develop an orientation that is focused on their own beliefs. Those beliefs are refined by curricular and co-curricular activities such as study abroad, discussion-based academic courses, research opportunities, and interaction with peers in residential housing. He analyzed surveys for each of the four years students attended their university, searching for trends in development. The two components that form the basis for his theoretical framework are the self-authorship development model and the integration of learning construct.  

In the self-authorship development model, individuals grow and change in how they understand knowledge, how they understand themselves, and in their relationship with others. They tend to progress from reliance on others’ meanings to reliance on self-authorship of

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48 Ibid.
meaning. As their self-authorship of meaning matures, they become more effective at integrating learning and they integrate more frequently.\footnote{J. P. Barber,” Integration of Learning: Meaning Making for Undergraduates through Connection, Application, and Synthesis” (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 62-63.}

In the integration of learning construct, knowledge, skills, and experience are assimilated. The research shows there are three major categories of integration. The first category is Connections. In this category, similarities are discovered between distinctive ideas. The second category, Application, is characterized by the ability to gain insights from one context and use it in another. Finally, the Synthesis category is characterized by the ability to create new knowledge by combining multiple insights. He concludes there are four methods for facilitating integration:

1. Promote integration by introducing multiple perspectives, such as study abroad or cross-cultural interactions.
2. Rather than encouraging integration by exposing the students to opportunities for mixing learning with specific faith activities, he promoted the evaluation of one’s beliefs by facilitating engagement with diverse peers.
3. Class discussions and faculty-led programs are beneficial but short-lived. A faculty partner should follow the student from year to year to facilitate the development of integration and integration opportunities.
4. Utilize campus networks or professional associations to assign students a consistent mentor through their campus experience. Mentors could include faculty, staff, and alumni.\footnote{Ibid., 71-73.}

The Integration of Faith and Learning

The Introduction to this thesis describes the eventual death of spiritual life caused by the secularization of Christian universities. Because the death of spiritual life implies the loss of a significant relationship with God and Jesus Christ, it also implies according to Scripture, that this
loss results in the loss of eternal life with God and His people. John writes in his Gospel
“Whoever has the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the
wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36 ESV). Matthew writes, “and these will go away into
eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:45 ESV).

The following sections of this thesis assume eternal death is a condition many will desire
to avoid, and present important elements for preserving and prolonging the existence and
growing the effectiveness of Christian universities for the purpose of avoiding the death of
spiritual life. Matthew asserts all of our needs will be supplied by God as long as we seek His
kingdom and righteousness. He writes, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we
eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink’? or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these
things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of
God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6: 31-33 ESV).

The training of Champions for Christ is based upon the teaching of Paul to the
Corinthians. Paul asserts, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the
knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV). As
students learn the teachings of the Bible, they develop a Christian worldview that provides
context and understanding for all aspects of life and learning. The Christian university must
encourage the development of the curriculum, teaching techniques, and faith communities so
students are empowered to integrate their Christian faith with all aspects of the university
learning experience.51

51 K. Badley, 29-30.
Badley found there are a variety of definitions for the integration of faith and learning (IFL) and the taking captive of every thought. While he concludes there was a lack of clarification and clarity in the history of defining IFL, he found there are five models or paradigms for how the term is used today. The five paradigms include fusion integration, incorporation integration, correlation integration, dialogical integration, and perspectival integration.52

Fusion integration assumes faith and learning fuse together to form a new entity. Both faith and learning retain some of their original characteristics after the fusion.53

Incorporation integration is the incorporation of one element into the other. Even though faith and learning are fused, one of the two disappears or dissolves into the other.54

Correlation integration does not involve any joining at all. The faculty illustrates relationships between the curriculum and faith and highlights points of integration or common interest.55

Dialogical integration is characterized by no intersections of interest or points of comparison at all. Faith comes to bear on curriculum so a dialog results.56

52 Ibid., 13.
53 Ibid., 24-25.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
Finally, with perspectival integration, the Christian worldview provides coherence to everything. The worldview provides meaning and direction so that all aspects of education are influenced by it. Nothing is actually integrated with this paradigm, but coherence is achieved. With all of the five paradigms proposed by Badley, integration takes place in the mind of the students. They must develop their own understanding based upon their perceptions of the interrelationships of various elements of knowledge. It is not necessary the curriculum be integrated, but rather that the students understand both faith and the curriculum and are able to perceive the interrelationships between the two.  

It is likely students and faculty will perceive IFL in different ways. Studies have been conducted on both student perception of IFL and faculty perception of IFL. The variances between perceptions of the students and faculty could have a significant impact on the success of IFL, on student satisfaction with the university, and on retention.

Faculty Perceptions of IFL

Ream’s examination of the perceptions of faculty from academically successful religious research institutions found there is a continuum of approaches on the integration of faith and learning. He summarizes the continuum into six categories:

1. Faith and learning are independent of each other. They should remain separate and independent. Mixing them diminishes the integrity of each. Faith is private and nonintellectual. Faith compromises learning.
2. Faith should be integrated into the campus environment but not the curricula. Faith-specific activities should be voluntary and separate from the classroom.

57 Ibid., 27.
3. Faith is a valued dimension of one’s personal experience, but it should be kept private. The integration of faith and learning is very personal and internal.

4. Curriculum serves as a medium to view the relationship between faith and learning, but religious subjects should be restricted to specific elective courses.

5. A religious university should promote the moral formation of students. Ethics is equated with faith and most disciplines include ethical reflections. The curriculum comes first.

6. Faith and learning should be completely integrated in the classroom and extracurricular activities.⁵⁹

Ream concludes faith and learning have a doubtful relationship. The four universities used in his study were rated highly in their academic reputations, so it was assumed faculty would be pressured to conform to the norms of the academic profession. He found 43% of faculty indicated faith should have no part in the academic curriculum, except in courses of philosophy, religion, and theology. He found 30% of the faculty asserted faith should not have a part in the curriculum of any course. He postulates that as a university becomes more academic and less religious, the integration of faith and learning diminishes.⁶⁰

It is interesting that Ream seems to ignore the wide disparity between three of the universities with the fourth – Brigham Young. Brigham Young respondents represented 56% of all respondents. Sixty-seven percent of the Brigham Young respondents described the preferred relationship between faith and learning as complete integration. In fact, complete integration was the most selected of the eight patterns among each of the four schools. It seems odd given those results, that the author would conclude faith and learning have a doubtful relationship.

Morton conducted interviews of thirty faculty members from three Southern Baptist affiliated colleges. He asked the faculty fourteen questions that were designed to elicit their

⁵⁹ T.C. Ream, M. Beaty and L. Lion, 351-368.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 354.
beliefs on how best to integrate faith with learning. He found the integration of faith and learning occurs not just in the classroom, but also in research, academic advising, committee assignments, faculty hiring practices, service, and community activities. IFL occurs through role-modeling and mentoring and is supported by a dynamic prayer life and Bible study. Three specific methods used to integrate faith and learning in the classroom were the integration of a Christian worldview with the discipline, direct instruction of Christian values, and role modeling Christian behavior.  

Beck collected works from various university professors who attempted to explain how they integrate their subjects into a Christian worldview. Professors from philosophy, literature, the arts, social sciences, history, economics, natural sciences, mathematics, health and sports, and education agreed that God is consistent and His Word is truth and must provide a foundation for all research. They assert if there is conflict between curriculum and the Bible, it is because we have a misunderstanding of the curriculum or a misinterpretation of the Scripture.

The opposite of integrating curriculum with Scripture would be the rejection of the Bible as a source of truth. Chanov claims an atheist rejects the Bible as a source of truth. The Bible predicts Chanov’s claim when Paul writes, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

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61 C. H. Morton, “A Description of Deliberate Attempts of the Integration of Faith and Learning by Faculty Members at Colleges Affiliated with the Southern Baptist Denomination” (doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2004), 235-236.

While the atheist rejects the source of truth, Christian professors may be guilty of ignoring facts for the purpose of validating a misinterpretation of Scripture. All Christians have a predisposition for misinterpreting Scripture. Paul writes, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV). Christian professors must trust in the revelation of Scripture and use it to validate the hypotheses of their curriculum. Closing their minds to the relevance of God’s Word, or ignoring their own disposition in misinterpreting it, does an injustice to the students who depend upon the professors to lead them into the discovery of truth.

In an attempt to provide greater influence of student opinions on IFL, Sites conducted interviews with eight professors from an evangelical Christian university who had been nominated by students as outstanding models for positively influencing their pursuit of IFL. He found there were three primary themes in how IFL is practiced. First, there is an inseparability of faith from practice. Second, faith permeates every aspect of the professors’ lives and work, and is the center of everything they do. Integration happens not just in the educational environment, but in every aspect of the professors’ lives. They incorporate Scripture into their class discussions and teach from a Christian worldview. Faith is inseparable from educational practice. Third, demonstrating faith in interpersonal relationships helps to infuse faith into the method and practice of teaching. The professors should intentionally cultivate loving relationships with students inside the classroom and with colleagues outside of the classroom.

Student Perceptions of IFL

What are the student’s perceptions for how faith should be integrated into the learning process? Is IFL something professors do, or is it something students do? What are the qualities or characteristics in professors that students believe are useful for their quests to integrate faith with learning? Sorenson concluded all students learn integration in the same way: through relational attachments with mentors who model the integration for the students in a personal way. Students have the instinctive developmental need to establish a particular kind of affective contact with their professors. Adult attachment figures in students’ lives have as much or more influence than the students’ parents. Sorenson proposed two dimensions that influence IFL and Ripley later proposed a third.64

Bulwark Factor – Faculty as a Sojourner

Sorenson defines the Bulwark Factor as the professors’ ongoing process in a personal relationship with God. Critical elements include the professors’ firm commitment to their faith, their persistent process of personal relationship with God, and their well-developed Christian worldview.65

Students are skilled at discriminating whether attempts at IFL by the professors and the institution are genuine and valuable. Professors hired by the university must demonstrate a potential for sophisticated and sincere integration. Hall found five traits of the professors that


65 Ibid., 530.
students valued as facilitative to their integrative thinking and practice. The first trait was self-revelation. The professors reveal evidence of their continual process in a personal relationship with God in an emotionally transparent way. Words used by students to describe these professors included genuine, truthful, transparent, vulnerable, open, humble, and honest. The professors integrated into their classrooms, discussions on moral decision-making, accounts of struggles in their own lives in relation to God, accounts of personal experiences that led to spiritual growth, and insights they had gained through personal devotional practices.66

The second trait of professors that was valued by students was caring. Professors need to demonstrate genuine care about students’ lives. They often opened their homes and cooked meals for them. Professors were close enough to students that they noticed difficulties and helped students with them.67

The third trait was welcoming. Professors should encourage talk about integration. They must provide and facilitate opportunities to integrate.68

Fourth, the professors must be dedicated. They must demonstrate to the students their dedication to the integration of faith and learning. They must be devoted to acting professionally within their discipline and uphold a Christian worldview at the same time. They live and breathe their faith and it is contagious.69


67 Ibid., 17.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., 28.
Finally, the professors must be open-minded. Open-minded professors welcome students’ perspectives and encourage them to speak honestly and transparently.\textsuperscript{70}

Ripley found faculty must have a firm commitment to their faith, been in their faith longer than the students, unchanging bulwarks of the faith, emotional transparency, humor, and willingness to share their journeys with their students. The faculty should also demonstrate a willingness to be open to different points of view.\textsuperscript{71}

Emotional Transparency

Emotional transparency is the second dimension identified by Sorenson as influencing IFL. Students need to have access to the professor’s processes and to the professor as a person. The professor must be open to different points of view from the students.\textsuperscript{72}

Attachment to the Environment

Ripley confirmed Sorenson’s two dimensions that influence IFL and proposed Attachment to the Environment as a third dimension. Students have an innate need to attach themselves to their environments. The environment can be a place, an institution, a department, or a large group. Students that participate in university life, form a collective identity which can persist even after the students leave the university. The environmental factors associated with attachment at a university can include a university faith identity, university-based spiritual

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} J. Ripley, F. Garzon, E. Hall, and M. Mangis, 9-11.

\textsuperscript{72} R. L. Sorenson, 541.
formation practices, shared faith with peers, shared faith with faculty, and shared faith with the administration.\textsuperscript{73}

Lawrence found students attributed their IFL to the environment as well. Students believed their efforts at IFL were facilitated when they felt accepted by their classmates in the classroom environment, they felt safe to respond honestly in class, the classroom was perceived as a pleasant place to learn, and the students felt they were supported by the professor and their classmates.\textsuperscript{74}

Hall supports Lawrence’s findings. She asserts students believe their IFL is facilitated by three primary factors: the curriculum, the institutional climate, and the professors. According to Hall, students attribute an effective curriculum in IFL with learning when there is intentional prayer in the classroom, integrative discussions, and the incorporation of integrative assignments into the coursework. Integration is perceived as being everywhere because Christianity is connected to every subject. Three themes were found among students for integrating theological content with another discipline. The Integration as Propositional Content is the traditional category for integration. Hall also added Integration as Embodiment and Integration as Practice.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} J. Ripley, F. Garzon, E. Hall, and M. Mangis, 5-9.


\textsuperscript{75} Elizabeth L. Hall, Jennifer S. Ripley, Fernando L. Garzon, and Michael W. Mangis, 20-21.
Integration as Propositional Content

Faith is believed to be the foundation for the study of the discipline. Truths from the Bible are lined-up with truths from the discipline. The Bible is also used as a filter to alter the discipline. Theories are evaluated from a Christian worldview. Commonalities and dissimilarities are investigated to discover fallacies in the discipline. Faith is used as a guide to the discipline and as a motivation for the discipline. Disciplinary content is examined to detect Christian principles and Scripture is used to illustrate disciplinary content and methodology.\(^\text{76}\)

The curriculum in a faith-based study of a discipline must focus on intentionality, it must balance general revelation and special revelation, it must encourage a diversity of opinions, and there must be a pervasiveness of integration. There should be intentional time set aside for prayer and integrative discussions. Incorporation of integrative assignments, with emphasis on encouraging students to think through integration issues is imperative. Integration in a faith-based study of a discipline is everywhere; it is weaved throughout every course.\(^\text{77}\)

Integration as Embodiment

As mentioned previously, Hall found that to facilitate successful IFL, students needed professors to act professionally within their discipline and uphold a Christian worldview at the same time. They live and breathe their faith personally and in the work setting, and their commitment is contagious.\(^\text{78}\)

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 21.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 19-20.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 28.
Students at Christian universities work to integrate their faith into the training for their professions. They expect faculty to act as mentors to facilitate each student’s divine calling. Ripley asserts student views of successful IFL are critical to their level of satisfaction and result in increased retention rates.79

Waller found students who were religiously satisfied with their institutions had significantly higher retention rates than students with less religious satisfaction. He asserts retention can be improved by examining the personal and institutional factors that impact retention.80

The students’ perception of IFL must be congruent with the perception of the faculty. Morris found student satisfaction and retention rates at a Christian university were reduced when students’ perception of IFL varied substantially from faculty perceptions. The students’ perception of spiritual integration is a significant predictor of student retention. He developed a tool for measuring spiritual integration that includes five statements:

1. This class contributed to my spiritual growth.
2. My understanding of spirituality was strengthened by interactions associated with this class.
3. The instructor helped me to process issues related to my faith.
4. This class provided opportunities for me to get involved in ministry or to become more effective in existing ministries that I am involved with.
5. Given where I am spiritually, this class was beneficial to my spiritual growth.81

End of Course Surveys

A similar survey to Morris’ tool was conducted at a southeastern Christian university. The survey included undergraduate and graduate students’ responses to thirty-five questions, three of which were related to perspectives on IFL.

1. The course enabled me to develop a more complete Christian worldview.
2. The course integrated the subject with biblical principles.
3. The instructor exhibited commitment to Christian principles.

Students (n=25,884) were asked to complete the survey at the end of the spring 2014 semester. The students represented 1,524 courses that included a wide range of subjects in the sciences, liberal arts, and theology.

The question associated with developing a Christian worldview had the largest range of responses. The percentage of Bible and Evangelism students who responded as “strongly agree” or “agree” to whether the course enabled them to develop a more complete Christian worldview, ranged from 95.48% to 97.81%. Courses from Cinematic Arts and Government had a range of 40% to 86.09%.

On integrating the subject with biblical principles, the range of responses across all curriculums was more compressed. Cinematic Arts had the lowest percentage of students responding “strongly agree” or “agree” at 85.61% and Evangelism was highest with 99.77%.
As expected at a Christian university, the response to whether the instructor exhibited Christian principles was high among the students from all courses. The range of responses across all curriculums was 94.18% to 99.77%. The results of the survey provide a basis for measuring course coherence to a Christian worldview according to Badley’s perspectival integration paradigm. Since all aspects of education at a Christian institution are expected to be influenced by the Christian worldview, results would be expected to show high levels of agreement among students for variables associated with IFL across all disciplines. It is not necessary that the curriculum be integrated, so the type of curriculum should have little to no effect on the scores. All instructors should have similar scores for the exhibition of commitment to Christian principles. Scores that deviate significantly from the norm should warrant investigation and possible corrective action.

The integration of the subject with Christian principles is based upon the students’ understanding of faith and the curriculum, and their ability to perceive the interrelationships
between the two. Once again, scores on this item would be expected to be similar among all disciplines. Large variations should indicate the need for investigation.

Morris’ list of statements provides a more thorough analysis for measuring spiritual integration. Future end-of-course surveys should include these:

1. This class contributed to my spiritual growth.
2. My understanding was strengthened by interactions associated with this class.
3. The instructor helped me to process issues related to my faith.
4. This class provided opportunities for me to get involved in ministry or to become more effective in existing ministries that I am involved with.
5. Given where I am spiritually, this class was beneficial to my spiritual growth.\(^2\)

Integration as Practice

Professors provide specific guidance on applying integrative insights. Applying integration is illustrated with real-life examples such as professional challenges and using the discipline as a platform for evangelism.\(^3\)

**A Heuristic Study on Faith and Learning in an Online Environment**

A heuristic study was designed to deepen knowledge of the integration of faith and learning from the perspectives of online students. A cause-effect relationship was not assumed, but instead the discovery of the nature and meaning of thirteen students’ perspectives on IFL were explored by involving them in direct first-person interviews. The students were Doctor of Ministry students at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university who were attending a one-

\(^2\) Jason M. Morris, Albert B. Smith, and Brent D. Cejda, 344.

\(^3\) Elizabeth L. Hall, Jennifer S. Ripley, Fernando L. Garzon, and Michael W. Mangis, 28.
week intensive course on campus. The perspectives of the online students provided new insights into the integration of faith and learning and provided ideas for future directions in research.

Introduction and Statement of the Topic and Question

As mentioned previously in this thesis, it is imperative that future statesmen, scientists, attorneys, physicians, and other university graduates who are likely to exercise influence over the society, be trained and live according to a Christian worldview. The spiritual lives of the members of our society is dependent upon the influence and mentoring of these professionals, so it is vital they be committed to bringing glory to God in their professions and private lives. The failure of Christian universities to effectively prepare these professionals will result in a national life devoid of Christian belief and the death of all spiritual life.

This heuristic study examined the question of how professors and students effectively develop a more complete Christian worldview, integrate subjects with biblical principles, and exhibit a commitment to those principles. The findings contribute to the development of a program for online Christian education that minimizes the risk of a drift toward secularism, establish a method for integrating faith and learning in an online environment, and encourage students to develop a life-long commitment to their Christian university.

Methodology

Consistent with Moustakas’ model of heuristic research, the research question was defined, followed by the organizing of methods and procedures to guide the collection of data to answer the question. The participants of this study were recruited from Doctor of Ministry students who had completed both online and residential classes. The students were on Campus at a southeastern Christian university during the summer of 2015 while attending 1-week intensive
courses. The recruits participated in a non-recorded interview and were asked a series of open-ended questions.

There were 13 participants in the study and they did not receive any compensation for their participation. The notes from the interviews were gathered together and organized in a manner that allowed each participant’s response to tell a story. The stories were reviewed until the researcher felt they were completely understood. Notes were taken, identifying the qualities and themes that emerged from the data. The notes were then compared with the original data to verify that the researcher’s depiction matched the original data. Finally, a creative synthesis of the experience was developed. Themes and essential meanings were identified and incorporated into the research.84

The twelve open-ended interview questions were:

1. Have you taken both online and residential courses with the University?
2. How did Professors help you to develop a more complete Christian worldview?
3. Did you feel online professors were generally more effective, less effective, or equally effective than residential professors in helping you to develop a more complete Christian worldview?
4. Did you feel online professors were generally more effective, less effective, or equally effective than residential professors in helping you to integrate subjects with biblical principles?
5. Did you feel online professors were generally more effective, less effective, or equally effective than residential professors in helping you to exhibit commitment to Christian principles?
6. Would you be interested in mentoring other students after you graduate?
7. How did Professors strive to develop a loving relationship with you as a student?
8. Referring to the development of a loving relationship, did you see any difference between online and residential professors?
9. How did Professors demonstrate they had a personal relationship with God?
10. Referring to their demonstration of a personal relationship with God, did you see any difference between online and residential professors?

11. How would you describe your opportunities and degree of freedom to articulate your perspectives and speak transparently in your classes?
12. Referring to your opportunities and degree of freedom to articulate your perspectives and speak transparently in your classes, did you experience any differences between online and residential classes?

Findings

More than 70% of the participants believed online professors were equally effective or more effective than residential professors in helping the students to develop a more complete Christian worldview. One student said the effectiveness was determined more by who the professor was, than whether the course was taught residually or online. Another said the professor’s effectiveness was related to whether he/she remained Christ-centered. Another said his online professor was effective because he combined biblical principles in both the information presented and his character as a teacher, and that the online nature of the course was irrelevant to the professor’s effectiveness. A student commented on the effectiveness of developing a more complete Christian worldview by saying, “I had one online professor, Dr. Smith, who was the best professor I had in helping me develop a more Christian worldview in my discipline of strategic communications. His comments on papers were thought provoking and often encouraging. However, the same can be said for Dr. Jones, a residential professor. Again, I believe it is up to the professor, not the platform.”

The overwhelming response indicated that online professors and residential professors were equally effective at developing a loving relationship with the students. “I was often told by my online instructors that they were praying for me and also received encouragement from them.” “One in particular helped my family at Christmastime. He bought a new Bible for my daughter and sent it when we were having a very tough financial period.” “They reached out
through Emails and made themselves more available through phone calls and texting.”

“Encouragement. Listening. Sharing life stories. Once, an online professor gave me grace and allowed me to redo an assignment that I did not understand properly.”

Interestingly, when asked specifically how the professors developed a loving relationship with the students, the residential professors were described as being more effective than online professors. One student said “There is no way to develop the same type of relationship online as in-person. I learned more about a professor in one week of being with them than I do in 8-weeks online.” Another asserted “Residential professors certainly have more opportunity to share their lives with students. If it wasn’t for my experience with Dr. Smith, I would say that residential professors are more relational, but he broke the mold.”

Various methods were attributed to online and residential professors on how they helped students to develop a more complete Christian worldview in their courses. Methods included challenging the students to think independently, tying every principle back to Biblical truth, praying for the students, sharing prayer requests on the Learning Management System or in class, the teacher modeling Christianity, challenging students to examine how course content compares with a Christian worldview, incorporating scripture into lessons, and assignments that required students to write how their faith integrated with principles of the course.

In describing their perceived freedom to express their opinions and speak transparently, more than 80% of the students expressed positive viewpoints on their freedom. “I feel free to express my perspectives in both online and residential settings.” “I was able to be transparent in both. Residentially I would raise my hand or talk after class; online I would Email the professor.” “I always felt I had plenty of freedom in articulating my perspectives in my classes.
I saw more freedom in online classes because there was not the pressure of the reaction of the professor or other students.” “More opportunities to speak in residential. More freedom to express potentially dissenting opinions online.”

In describing the manner in which online and residential professors demonstrated their personal relationship with God, 100% of the students described positive attributes. Students said “they spoke of their relationship with God directly,” “by example, by teaching, by class illustrations,” “through personal testimony,” “every professor online related personal testimony at some point and also biblical encouragement about our themes,” “through asking God to bless us, by letting us know they prayed for us,” “sharing stories of their faith,” “they did so online by posting Bible verses to the homepage and residentially by praying,” “through their encouraging Emails and scriptures,” “online professors would talk a little bit about themselves and send out verses,” and “discussing missions efforts they are involved in, church activities, etc. . . “

There was a clear distinction between online and residential professors in how they demonstrated their personal relationship with God. While 100% of the students believed all professors demonstrated a personal relationship with God, 60% felt residential professors were able to demonstrate that relationship more effectively. Not surprisingly, it was felt relationships were more effectively demonstrated in-person than online. Student comments included phrases such as, “It was easier to see the demonstration in-person in class than online,” “Where before I have said it is the professor rather than the platform, this question hones on a very important point. The online community does not afford a platform for corporate prayer or sharing personal testimonies or stories of one’s faith in action,” “Residentially was apparently more real of a relationship because online the professor could have simply copied and pasted their posts,” “Online professors were mostly on reading the occasional scripture verse they would send out in
an Email, but with residential professors, it was apparent in the way they interacted with students and encouraged them and made time for them.”

Summary, Implications, and Outcomes

The purpose of this study was to learn new insights into the integration of faith and learning from the perspectives of online students and allow for the discovery of future directions in research. The attributes identified from the review of the literature that contribute to the effective integration of faith and learning were found to be present in both online and residential classes at the university where students were interviewed. Online professors were found to be as effective as residential professors in assisting students to develop a Christian worldview.

While the online professors were successful in developing a loving relationship with their students, they were not as effective as professors who were able to spend face-to-face time with their students. New information technologies should help to bridge that communication gap. Microsoft’s Lync or Cisco’s WebEx and Telepresence products allow for on-demand meetings with voice and video capabilities. Many universities are offering these services at no additional cost to the students. Tools such as these allow for more effective communication between students, between cohorts, between teachers and students, and between individuals and groups.

While the current literature supports the overwhelming effectiveness of online education, this study illustrates that it is realistic to expect, and possible to also achieve effective integration of faith and learning in an online environment. Sorenson’s conclusion that all students learn integration through relational attachments with mentors who model the integration for the students in a personal way, and that students have an instinctive developmental need to establish a particular kind of affective contact with their professors, infers university professors and
administrators should strive to create and enhance methods that can contribute toward the
effectiveness of those relational attachments.

Future studies might consider examining the reasons some disciplines are more
successful in integrating faith and learning than others, and how to improve upon those that are
deficient.

Institutional Climate

Students experienced successful integration of faith and learning when there were no
barriers between Christianity and academics. Students were given opportunities and encouraged
to pray together, worship together, participate in group devotions, and to pray for community
needs. The university emphasizes the importance of integration and the students are held
accountable to live as Christians. Students and professors are expected to know each other
beyond superficial limits.85

The task of integrating faith with learning does not rest solely with the professors.
Students are essential contributors to removing barriers between Christianity and academics. At
Liberty University, Resident Assistants (RAs) lead communal prayer, worship, and devotions for
students living on Campus. These student leaders are an integral component of the University’s
mission to train Champions for Christ. They are trained to lead a residence-life process that
models biblical principles and are responsible for influencing the lives of their assigned students.
The RA teams are supplemented with spiritual life directors and prayer leaders. These leaders
have formal and informal gatherings with their students where they share information regarding

85 Ibid.
their lives, motivate team members to serve each other through prayer and interaction, share leadership principles to facilitate spiritual growth, gather input about the residential atmosphere and offer suggestions for improvement, and organize meetings for the purpose of facilitating spiritual, social, physical, and academic growth.\footnote{L. Mark Hine, “A Comparison of the Resident Assistant Selection and Training Process at Liberty University with Biblical and Practical Principles of Leadership Selection and Training” (Doctoral diss., Liberty University, 2003), 27.}

Guidance for the proper span of control between students and their leaders can be found in the Bible. Exodus reports the instructions from Jethro to Moses where he advises,

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace” (Exodus 18:21-23 ESV).

Jethro’s advice to Moses to appoint officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens sets the standard for a proper span of control for effective leadership. That span of control allowed Moses to lighten his load and share it with other trustworthy men, and resulted in the people being satisfied. This is relevant to the selection of Resident Assistants or others who are responsible for integrating the faith and environment of residential and online students outside of the classroom.

Badley found that real integration occurs in faith communities and the actual work associated with the academic disciplines. He asserted successful IFL was dependent upon the presence of both faithful professors and faithful students. All learning must take place within the
boundaries of Christian faith and the development of curriculums and teaching must be based upon the facilitation of the students’ faithful understanding.\textsuperscript{87}

Facilitating Student Loyalty

The university community of faithful professors and faithful students must be sustained from year to year. The transition of students to alumni and their departure from the residential or online courses should not include their departure from the university community. The existing and new alumni are a valuable resource of spiritual maturity who are uniquely prepared to pass-on their experience to those who come after them. The alumni, staff, faculty and students should, “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25 ESV).

The potential army of future encouragers can be developed and enlisted with the administration of a loyalty program. Current students enrolled in a loyalty program are more satisfied, more trusting of the university, and have a stronger social identification to the institution. They are likely to positively influence the quality of teaching through their enhanced class participation and committed behavior. Because they are more likely to remain with the university until graduation, they also contribute to the financial security of the institution. After graduation, the loyal student is more likely to contribute to the university, to promote the

\textsuperscript{87} K. Badley, 30.
university, and to cooperate with the university in valuable ways, such as encouraging existing students.\textsuperscript{88}

Hennig-Thurau found the retention of students was the most efficient source of income for a university, as compared with the income generated from a new student which is reduced by the intensive costs associated with recruiting. A loyalty program creates loyal students that are more likely to contribute financially and contribute after graduation in levels greater than before graduation. Like Aritonang, he found loyal students are more active participants in the classroom and help to improve the quality of teaching by inspiring the professors to be more involved.\textsuperscript{89}

Loyalty programs have resulted in an increase in sales of 1\% to 8\% during the first year. Participation in a loyalty program was found to produce a positive effect on retention and relationship, reduced the rate of attrition to other institutions, and increased the levels of behavioral loyalty. They have yielded a wealth of data about student behavior, purchases and responses to communications.\textsuperscript{90}

The design of a loyalty program should include several elements that have been proven to increase performance. It should require membership and rules for redemption. Rewards for members should be based upon past, current, and future value to the university. The rewards can


\textsuperscript{90} Tammo Bijmolt, Matilda Dorotic and Peter C. Vernoef, Loyalty Programs: Generalizations on Their Adoption, Effectiveness, and Design (Boston: Now Publishers Inc., 2011), 226.
include discounts, goods, services, personalized offers, or preferential treatment. A student who earns sufficient points during the first three years, may receive discounted or waived tuition during the fourth year. Discounts or complementary food service benefits are common. Students that lead in the accumulation of points might be recognized on sport scoreboards or university publications. They might be given access to enhanced dining areas, dining with the President, preferred stadium seating, popular parking spots or many other psychological and emotional benefits.\footnote{iIbid., 203-209.}

Bijmolt suggested two predominant structures for a loyalty program. First, frequency rewards is often the structure which is designed to attract initial members. A points-pressure mechanism is used to allow a member to earn points and then exchange them for benefits. After a period of time, reward behavior becomes more influenced by the second structure; customer tiers. Each tier earns for the member, preferential treatment and upgraded service. The tiers are usually determined by actual or potential volume of purchases or profitability. The tiers should be distinguished from each other by important differences like behavioral indicators, attitudinal indicators, or the potential value of the customer. The program should discriminate among the customers in a way that does not alienate or demotivate those in lower tiers and induces customers to increase their loyalty over time.\footnote{iIbid., 226.}

The use of badges is a growing trend in the design of online communities and customer loyalty programs. Elements associated with computer games are used to motivate people to take desired actions. The badges steer behavior and level of effort toward actions that lead to the

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\footnote{iIbid., 203-209.}

\footnote{iIbid., 226.}
badge. Badges have also been used in education settings, such as the Mozilla Open Badges project, where badges are used as credentials to motivate students.  

Gamification is the application of game playing elements to other areas of activity in order to encourage engagement and participation with a product or service. Gamification can be used to drive customers to register and persist with a vendor, to be marketed, and to participate in loyalty programs. Customers are enticed to return often, to be more engaged, to explore new products, to share their experience, to invite their friends, and to refer new customers.

Typical gaming elements include badges and reputation scores. A badge is a summary of the user achieving an accomplishment such as a cumulative number of actions. A reputation score is grown through the completion of activities and tasks and shows at a glance the member’s commitment and contribution to the institution. Both badges and reputation scores are used to reward desired behaviors and actions. As a user gains perceived experience, authority, and respect with more badges and higher scores, they are incentivized to attempt to achieve more badges and higher scores.

Several studies have been completed on the positive effect of gamification on customer behavior. Typical research questions have included:

- Do gaming elements increase participation?
- Do gaming elements steer users into taking actions that they would not have normally taken?

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• How do we use gaming elements to model behavior?
• How do we design gaming elements to obtain the desired outcomes?

Anderson found badges produce strong incentive effects. Users optimize their behavior and are willing to expend considerable effort when given opportunities to earn badges. The badges inspire users to initiate actions and achieve rewards sooner. Desired behaviors are accelerated as the user draws closer to the badge boundary. They found users are willing to dedicate work for the purpose of achieving badges. The badges acted as powerful incentives to action. They lead to increased participation and helped to steer users to modify their behaviors.

In another study by Grant and Betts, the effect of badges were examined by mining user behavior near the time badges were earned on a popular badge-granting website. The analysis demonstrated users increased their rate of badge-related activity immediately before they were awarded. Their findings supported the claim that badges can be used to influence behavior and actions.95

Thom, Millen, and DiMicco found the playfulness associated with gamification helps to create a desire to participate and inspires a sense of enjoyment. Game-inspired elements like points and badges have been used as incentives to prompt users to repeat usage, increase contributions, and establish user reputations. In their study, they found the removal of an established points-based incentive system on a social network service resulted in a significant

95 Grant and Betts, 65.
overall reduction of user activity on the site. They concluded that badges and points influence users to participate more intensely.\textsuperscript{96}

Anderson’s research was designed to increase understanding of how badges affect behavior and to develop principles for how to use badges most effectively. Badges should be used to reward different types of activities at specific levels, allowing the badge designer to steer the users’ activities toward desired behaviors. Users’ behaviors were found to be associated with efforts to maximize achievement. Certain types of activities that are awarded by a badge result in users increasing these activity types as they approach the badge boundary. After the badge is earned, the behavior or activity returns to baseline levels. Earning a badge does not adversely affect the level of actions associated with other badges that are being pursued. Different badges had varying steering effects and the velocity of the steering was related to closeness of the badge boundary. When a user was close to achieving the badge, the level of participation and the mixture of actions was accelerated.\textsuperscript{97}

As a result of the study, Anderson proposed several design principles:

- There are different types of badges:
  - Badges to encourage new users, which nearly everyone obtains
  - Badges that require substantial effort to achieve. As users progress toward the badge, it should be easy to determine how many actions have been taken and how many more are needed to fulfill the requirements of the badge.
- The effectiveness of the badge in steering behavior is related to how long it takes to earn the badge. Earning of the badge should be prolonged rather than allowing it to be earned too soon.
- For multiple badges that are earned for the same type of action, it is best to spread badges out and assign them equal value, rather than assigning their boundaries close together.


\textsuperscript{97} Ashton Anderson, Daniel Huttenlocher, Jon Kleinberg, and Jure Leskovec, 95-101.
There is greater value in creating multiple small rewards that are relatively far off, because that model helps to preserve the incentive effects for longer periods of time.

- When designing badges, define the possible types of actions that need to be encouraged.
- The badge boundary is defined by specifying how many actions of each type must be performed.
- The parameters of normal or baseline behavior should be defined. Badges are then used to steer behavior beyond the norm.
- If a badge is intended to affect many actions, there should be many required steps to achieve the badge boundary. The boundary should not be set so high as to result in the loss of interest.\(^98\)

Finally, for all gamification elements, customer analytics should be used to track and manage success.

**Facilitating an Effective Online Environment**

There has been much research regarding whether an online learning environment can be as effective as face-to-face learning. A relevant foundation for answering this question was written by Paul in his letter to the Colossians. Paul taught the Colossians and other communities through his letters because he was not able to be physically present with them. He taught that relationships and knowledge are able to be enriched in the absence of face-to-face encounters. Paul writes,

> For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For though I am absent in the body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and firmness of your faith in Christ (Colossians 2: 1-5 ESV).

\(^98\) Ibid., 99-100.
Numerous studies have demonstrated that a sense of authentic Christian community can be created through an online learning format. Esselman asserts learning cohorts are effective for achieving graduate-level theological formation.\(^9\)

Shore identified two key elements for establishing social presence in the online environment: the recognition of the Professor as a person of faith and the effectiveness of the professor in communicating to students they are partners in the studying of Scripture.\(^10\) Silvers et.al., proposes strategies for achieving communities of practice in graduate online education programs. Strategies include the use of interactive learning experiences, video, and digital storytelling. Collaborative learning experiences and whole-class discussions are used to connect students.\(^11\) Tyron and Bishop assert social information processing and group structure theories can be combined to develop a group social structure for online environments. Use of long-term cohorts can be used to form community, where the participants share background, life situation, vision, and personal lives. Students are genuine colleagues in the learning process and there is significant interaction between students and the professor.\(^12\)

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\(^12\) P.J. Tyron and M. J. Bishop, “Theoretical Foundations for Enhancing Social Connectedness in Online Learning Environments,” *Distance Education* 30, no. 3 (2009), 291-295.
Is Online Education Effective?

A study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education examined the hypothesis that modern online learning, which is enhanced by applications that use various Web resources, multimedia and new collaboration technologies, is as effective as face-to-face learning. They conducted a search for empirical research of online learning from the research literature published between 1996 and July 2008. More than one thousand studies were found. They screened the studies to find those that met four requirements:

1. Online learning was contrasted with face-to-face learning.
2. Student learning outcomes were measured.
3. There was evidence of a rigorous research design.
4. Enough information was included that allowed for the calculation of an effect size.

The authors discovered that on-average, online students performed modestly better than students who received face-to-face instruction. Learning outcomes were +.20 better for online students and the findings were statistically significant at the p<.001 level. The effect sizes were larger for students who participated in collaborative or instructor-directed learning, than those who worked independently. The effectiveness of the online learning approaches were found to exist among both undergraduate and graduate students.103

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Doody’s analysis of surveys returned by online seminaries found 57% of respondents reported meaningful personal connections from their online communication. The online environment contributed to the significant building of relationships and spiritual interactions.104

Lowe found there was a positive correlation between the completion of online theology courses and spiritual formation. Spiritual formation was enhanced by increased knowledge, increased community development, increased personal growth, peer and faculty relationships, and practical application of course content. Online students reported their knowledge of God had been increased, they had a stronger relationship with Him, and their fellowship with God was more effective. The spiritual growth of the students was enhanced by their relationships with other believers in the courses, by the encouragement received from the online community, and by the diversity of theological views obtained during the courses. The faculty were also found to have had a critical role in enhancing student spiritual formation by their expression of encouragement, compassion, and support within the online community.105

Measuring Effectiveness

At a Christian university, the online learning approach must be effective at developing the spiritual formation of the students. To determine the effectiveness of spiritual formation, a measurement instrument is needed to gain insight into whether spiritual formation has occurred and at what velocity. Solomon linked the importance of insight to wisdom when he writes, “The

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beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight” (Proverbs 4:7 ESV). Insight to the effectiveness of any program to facilitate the IFL in an online environment must be determined through effective measurement of degrees of IFL. H. James Harrington asserts, “Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you can’t measure something, you can’t understand it. If you can’t understand it, you can’t control it. If you can’t control it, you can’t improve it.”

The foundation for measuring faith integration is the fusion of the relationship of the student with God and the relationship of the student with other humans. These relationships are developed and enhanced in an online environment by increasing knowledge, increasing community development, increasing personal growth, peer and faculty relationships, and the practical application of the course content. As online students increase their knowledge about God, they develop a stronger relationship with Him. Lowe found a positive correlation between the completion of online theology courses and the nurturing of the students’ faith. The students increased the diversity of their theological views, they developed relationships with other believers, and they received encouragement from their online community. There was also a significant relationship between the students’ spiritual formation and the spirituality of the professors. Professors who intentionally supported the online course community with expressions of encouragement and compassion were found to enhance the students’ spiritual formation.

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Lowe reviewed 125 scales and measures associated with religious measurement. The preferred instruments for measuring spirituality included:

- Fowler’s Faith Development Interview Guide
- Religious Status Interview
- Religious Orientation Scale
- Quest
- Spiritual Well-Being Scale: The instrument further develops the Faith Maturity Scale but has been found to have a ceiling effect with evangelicals, making it a poor choice for Christian universities.¹⁰⁸
- Spiritual Assessment Inventory: This instrument is designed to measure two dimensions of spiritual development. The first dimension is the awareness of God and the second is the quality of the relationship with God.¹⁰⁹
- Faith Maturity Scale: This instrument is used for assessing the spiritual development of college students attending a Christian university. The authors assert this tool has a sound theological and biblical foundation and has psychometric qualities. It measures both observable outcomes of faith and attitudinal faith.¹¹⁰

Hall’s and Edwards’ Spiritual Assessment Inventory was selected as the measure of spiritual formation to be used in the program associated with this thesis. The inventory has two primary dimensions: the quality or developmental maturity of relationship with God and awareness of God. The fifty-eight self-reported items of the instrument measure awareness of God, instability, grandiosity, realistic acceptance, and disappointment. The factor structure and correlations with several elements of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Bell Object Relations Inventory, the Defense Styles Questionnaire, and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory support


¹¹⁰ Lowe, 3.
the construct validity of the SAI subscales. The Spiritual Assessment Inventory can be found in Appendix A.\textsuperscript{111}

BILD International’s “Becoming Established Assessment” can be used to significantly enhance social presence in conformance with biblical standards. Kemp asserts that simply providing this tool where it can be used as a standard to measure social presence is effective in enhancing it. The Becoming Established Assessment can be found in Appendix B.

**Is Online Education Important to the Strategy of the University?**

Another survey was published in 2014 that examines data collected from more than 2,800 colleges and universities for each of the past 11 years. The authors found that in 2002, less than one-half of all higher education institutions believed online education was critical to their long-term strategy. In 2014, that percentage had grown to almost seventy percent. Fifty-seven percent of academic leaders in 2003 rated learning outcomes of online learners as equal or superior to face-to-face learning. That percentage grew to 77\% in 2012. The rate of online enrollments has risen faster than the rate of overall higher education enrollments every year for the past eleven years.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{111} Todd W. Hall and Keith J. Edwards, 341.

Distinctives of an Effective Online Environment

As discussed above, it has been well established an online education is an effective medium for student learning and important to the strategy of institutions of higher learning. This section examines the best practices and distinctives of an effective online environment.

Maddix found the most effective learning environment is one that inspires social interaction in a communal setting. A communal setting has historically existed in the traditional classroom. Replicating that communal environment in an online setting, while achieving enhanced learning and formation, requires the online courses be designed to include regular and intentional interactions among the students and interactions between students and faculty. He found the characteristics of an online learning community needed to include:

1. Members who shared a sense of purpose.
2. Boundaries are established that define who is a member and who is not.
3. Rules and policies are established and enforced regarding accepted community behavior.
4. Regular interaction among faculty and students.
5. Members share a level of support, respect and trust.\(^{113}\)

Another study that involved fourteen online faculty members and forty-eight graduate students had similar findings. Both students and faculty believed building community is more difficult in an online environment than in a classroom, but community is still very important. The elements identified by faculty and students for building online community were the same,

\(^{113}\) Mark A. Maddix, “Developing Online Learning Communities,” *Christian Education Journal* 6, no 10 (Spring 2013): 139-144.
even though they were ranked differently. Students believed the most important element in building community was instructor modeling of desired behaviors and interactions.\textsuperscript{114}

Building a learning community is encouraged by including structured and collaborative activities in the design of the course and opportunities for intentional, supportive, and persistent interaction among the class members. There must be trust, respect, and support among members of the community. An instructor’s presence in the course is vital to learner success and is provided through frequent and timely feedback. Impediments to building community included the lack of immediate feedback and nonverbal cues, the higher demand for self-discipline, and the lack of face-to-face informal sharing that takes place in a classroom environment. Suggestions for enhancing the instructors’ presence in their courses included:

1. Modeling desired behaviors and interactions
2. Encouraging students
3. Facilitating participation and sharing
4. Timely response to student concerns and the establishment of an environment of open communications.

Some specific examples of these suggestions might include sending an Email that compliments a student on their participation during a given week, establishing a chat-room that encourages spontaneous and open communication, asking students to provide feedback on how to develop and improve a sense of community, and providing feedback to students on their performance that is polite and honest.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{114} Pam Vesely, Lisa Bloom and John Sherlock, “Key Elements of Building Online Community: Comparing Faculty and Student Perceptions,” MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching 3, no. 3 (2007: 234-246).

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
According to Rovai, student satisfaction and educational success are enhanced online by developing communities that are characterized by frequent interactions with the professor and with other students. Students believe that the best professors are those who are present in the course every day. The best professors provide timely feedback and are engaged with all class discussions and course assignments. Forming relational connections with the students should be an obvious priority of the professors. Relational connections are established in the learner community and are measured using the dimensions of spirit, trust, interaction, and commonality of learning expectations and goals.116

The dimension of spirit is the recognition that members belong to the learning community and the associated feelings of bonding, cohesion, and friendship that develop among the students and professor. The members enjoy one another and look forward to spending time with each other. A lack of spirit would be evidenced by feelings of loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, and low motivation to learn.117

The dimension of trust is related to the willingness to rely on other members of the community. The members of the community can be relied-upon and they have a genuine interest in other members and their learning. A lack of trust would be evidenced by classroom discussions monopolized by the professor, and the lack of an open and caring environment where diverse interactions help learners to negotiate understanding.118


117 Ibid., 4-5.

118 Ibid., 5.
The dimension of interaction is measured both in quantity and quality. Personal information is openly disclosed, which helps to encourage others to participate, to trust, to seek support, and to find satisfaction. A lack of interaction would be evidenced by a reluctance to criticize, fear of criticism and retaliation, unwillingness to provide honest feedback, and diminished feelings of safety and trust among learners.\textsuperscript{119}

The final dimension is learning, and is characterized by a common educational purpose. Learning takes place in a community of practice where activities are conducted for the purpose of encouraging participation and achieving transformation. This leads to deeper understanding of content and processes through active participation in the community.\textsuperscript{120}

Rovai identified seven factors that influence the quality of interaction and the sense of community in a distance learning environment. The first factor, transactional distance, is the psychological and communication space between learners and professors. As a professor increases control over the learning environment, student dialogue tends to decrease which results in increased psychological distance and decreased sense of community. To encourage dialogue, the professor should manipulate the communications media and course design by grading for quantity, quality, and timeliness of course participation. Second, social presence is the intentional nurturing and support provided by the professor for enhancing social presence. Third, social equality is the establishment of equal opportunities for participation among all students. The professor can facilitate social equality by having all students introduce themselves at the beginning of the course, by discouraging authoritative/aggressive discussion tones, and by

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 6.
introducing alternative views in discussion threads. Small group activities is the fourth factor that influences the quality of interaction and the sense of community in a distance learning environment. These activities involve breaking larger groups into groups of ten or less students. Specific tasks and timelines help to establish the communities of practice and encourage meaningful engagement in learning activities. Fifth, group facilitation is used to inspire learners to interact. The professor must facilitate in a way that enhances the group task and builds and maintains the group. The professor should demonstrate humility as students are allowed to contribute to the attainment of knowledge. Words used to describe the professor’s group facilitative function include encourager, harmonizer, gatekeeper, setter of standards, follower, observer, and compromiser. The sixth factor is teaching style and learning stage. These two elements must be in alignment. Learners evolve through various stages of dependence to independence in learning. The professor matches his teaching style with the learning stage of the group, by gauging whether a structured learning environment is needed for dependent learners, or more dialogue is needed because the learners are more self-directed. The professor must be flexible because one style will not be appropriate for all students, and multiple styles may be needed for individual students. The final factor is community size. Smaller class sizes tend to improve student achievement, classroom processes, and community attitudes. Rovai asserted the minimum class size for promoting good interactions should be 8-10 students. The largest number of students that can be handled by a professor is 20-30. Larger class sizes should be managed by a team of professors.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 8-11.
Maddix identified four best practices for developing a sense of community among the members of an online learning community. First, the professor must develop clear guidelines for the online discussions. The discussion and dialogue that occur during a course should be guided by a discussion board rubric that identifies the criteria for an effective online discussion. The rubric allows for an objective method for measuring the effectiveness of the student’s contribution to the discussion. The rubric should include timeliness of responses, the frequency of responses, the length of the responses, the thoughtfulness of the responses, and the student’s ability to integrate and analyze what has been learned in the course. It is vital the professor demonstrate an active social presence in the discussion. The professor should summarize threads, send personal critiques to students individually, and praise students who make substantive contributions to the discussion.  

The second best practice for developing a sense of community among the members is the development of the supportive learning environment. The professor should help the students to feel safe, welcomed, and supported. The professor sets the tone for the atmosphere by moderating discussions, by encouraging positive behavior and discouraging negative behavior.

Third, the professor must be intimately involved in the course. The professor’s role in facilitating the personal and social dynamics of the online community is critical to the success of

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123 Ibid.
the learning experience. The professor should be visible on a daily basis and should respond to any student queries within twenty-four hours. 124

Finally, the professor must work to motivate student engagement, interaction, and dialogue in the online discussions and provide a variety of learning activities that support the diverse learning styles that may be present among the students. Examples of learning activities include the formation of small groups, developing collaborative learning opportunities among teams of students, and other methods that engage students in dynamic forms of collaboration. 125

Christian institutions have attempted to create online versions of classrooms, student lounges, prayer rooms, and chapels, but they have been mostly ineffective in establishing or enhancing social presence. Mature online students tend to avoid these forums because they already have well-established alternatives within their families, neighborhoods, and churches. Maddix, Estep, and Lowe identified a variety of best practices and future practices for enhancing social presence in online learning:

1. Threaded discussion forums where the professor posts discussion topics for each lesson. Small groups can be formed to better manage the discussions. There should be no more than 15 students in a group.
2. Encourage posts of personal information and links to personal websites, Facebook, and Twitter.
3. Provide the ability to track multiple discussions within a lesson.
4. Provide the ability to mark what has been read.
5. Rather than assuming a post is wrong and criticizing it, approach posts with acceptance, with questions, and with empathy.
6. Professors should take the initiative to present personal information about themselves and be intentional to form personal connections with students. There is a positive relationship between the quantity/quality of professor initiative and the robustness of the social presence within the course.

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
7. 24/7 availability to the online learning environment is important. There should be daily postings from the professor.
8. Avoid having to rebuild a new learning community with each course, by establishing cohorts so that the learning communities are carried from one course to another throughout the student’s program. The cohort format provides a context that fosters a strong learning community. Students are able to build significant relationships and share life together when a cohort is established.
9. Use an assessment to enhance social presence according to biblical standards. Two examples are Mary Lowe’s “One Another” assessment or BILD International’s “Becoming Established” assessment.¹²⁶

The “one another” imperatives found in the New Testament can help to establish understanding of the components required to facilitate effective spiritual development. Social interactions in a Christian community that assimilate the “one another” imperatives are mutually beneficial between the participants and lead to positive spiritual formation. These reciprocal interactions result in collaborations with one another where there is the giving and receiving emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually. Enhancing social presence in online classes requires that teachers and students pursue interpersonal relationships based upon the “one another” imperatives, resulting in mutual edification and spiritual transformation. Lowe proposes five “one another” categories for interacting with other Christians, based upon New Testament passages. These imperatives can be shared with professors and students to inspire spiritual growth. They can also be used to measure social presence according to biblical principles.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Ibid., 43-48.

### Table 2

**Lowe’s one-another principles**

| Physical                               | John 13:14 ESV  
|----------------------------------------|-----------------  
| Wash one another’s feet                | Rom 16:16  
| Greet one another with a holy kiss     |                  
| Emotional                              | John 13:34  
| Love one another                       | Eph 4:32  
| Be kind to one another                 |                  
| Social                                 | Rom 15:7  
| Accept one another                     | Gal 6:2  
| Bear one another’s burdens             | 1 Cor 11:33  
| Wait for one another                   | Eph 5:21  
| Submit to one another                  | Col 3:13  
| Forbear one another                    | 1 Cor 12:25  
| Show concern for one another           | Rom 12:10  
| Honor one another                      | Mark 9:50  
| Be at peace with one another           |                  
| Moral                                  | Col 3:9  
| Do not lie to one another              | Jas 4:11  
| Do not slander one another             | Rom 14:13  
| Do not judge one another               |                  
| Spiritual                              | Jas 5:16  
| Confess your sins to one another       | Jas 5:16  
| Pray for one another                   | Col 3:16  
| Admonish one another                   | Heb 10:24  
| Consider how to stir up one another    | Rom 14:19  
| Let us pursue building up one another  | 1 Thess 4:18  
| Comfort one another                    |                 

The mentoring of current students has been proposed as a method for improving the effectiveness of online education. Participating alumni are given the opportunity to maintain a long-term engagement with the university while providing a valuable service to current students. The alumni mentor provides career advice, assistance on the integration of faith with learning, assistance with courses, prayer support, and networking.

Hongmei proposed a system for establishing and sustaining mentoring relationships between graduates, current students, faculty, and staff. The Smart Alumni System (SAS) he proposed can help to establish relationships, facilitate mentoring, increase student retention rates, enhance student academic success, and facilitate the long-term engagement of alumni. The
registration page for the system prompts the new user to enter certain information, which is automatically compared with existing data from the university database. Once confirmed, the new user enters profile information including demographics, hometown, passions, sport interests, favorite TV shows, education major, employer, career related details, universities attended, degrees earned, year graduated, and more. Using algorithm-based recommendations, data-mining is then used to link students with alumni, staff, or faculty who have indicated their willingness to mentor. These mentoring relationships can be life-long engagements that provide enormous outreach potential for the university. The mentors can be organized into groups that are gathered together periodically to reinforce the university mission, review practices in the integration of faith and learning, fundraising, and more.\textsuperscript{128}

The preceding section has examined the best practices and distinctives of an effective online environment. The following chapter will assimilate these practices and distinctives into a program that can be used by Christian universities to facilitate University loyalty, to minimize the risk of secularization, to facilitate online communities, and to encourage the committed integration of faith and learning.

CHAPTER FIVE – A Program for Persistent Integration of Faith and Learning

The domination of the Christian church over the mission, administration, and teaching at American universities has waned from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. The accountability for continuing the effective integration of faith and learning at institutions of higher education now rests collectively with Christian administrators, faculty, students, parents, and alumni. As asserted by Kuyper, the influence of prominent statesmen, natural scientists, attorneys, physicians, and literary graduates over the higher academic education and the American culture is likely to result in the death of all spiritual life unless a significant number of these professionals are trained and live according to a Christian worldview and are committed to bringing glory to God in their professions, their mentoring, their churches, and their families. It is the mission of Christian universities to train Champions for Christ; professionals who are committed to Jesus Christ, who seek to fulfill the Great Commission, and who strive to live the Great Commandment in their professional and personal lives.

The previous chapters have reviewed the literature associated with the distinctives of a Christian university, the trend toward secularization, and the integration of faith and learning. IFL has been viewed from the perspective of the faculty, from the students, and from the institution. The elements required to facilitate an effective online environment have been identified and include the development of community among online students, increased personal growth, significant relationships with peers and faculty, and opportunities for practical application of course content.

This final chapter of the thesis will assimilate this information into a program that can be used by Christian universities to facilitate University loyalty, to minimize the risk of
secularization, to facilitate effective online communities, and to encourage the committed integration of faith and learning. The Program is organized into four distinct projects: University Loyalty, Minimizing the Risk of Secularism, Online Communities, and Committed Integration of Faith and Learning. The execution of the projects will help to establish baseline measurements for important variables at the institution, to attain the expected outcomes and benefits, and to track trends so that adjustments can be made for continuous improvement.
Project #1 – University Loyalty Initiative

**Problem/Need** – To encourage students to develop a lifelong commitment to the university. To increase the retention rate of existing students. To transition the maximum number of students to loyal alumni. To retain alumni as a valuable resource for mentoring and support.

**Benefits and Success Criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Expected Outcome / Benefit</th>
<th>Target / Achievement Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Improved retention rate of current students</td>
<td>&quot;How will we know that we achieved the benefit?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  **Target Variable to be Measured:**
  “Annual Retention Rate – Current Students”
  “Financial value in dollars, of an increase of the retention rate by 1%.”
  **Unit of Measure:** “persons”
  **Current Baseline Value:** “87%”
  **Target Baseline Value:** “90%”
  **Trends:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Increase in the number of active/engaged alumni:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attendance at Campus NCAA sporting events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentor participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Referred a prospective student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alumni chapter member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attend Homecoming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteer with Alumni Relations Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sports Sponsor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  **Target Variable to be Measured:**
  “Varies – see adjacent column”
  **U. of Measure:** ex. “total attendance at event; number of alumni, faculty, staff mentors; number of referrals; number of chapter members; percent who attend homecoming; volunteer hours with Alumni Relations Office; percent of alumni, staff, faculty who sponsor sports.”
  **Current Baseline Value:** “tbd”
  **Target Baseline Value:** “tbd”
  **Trends:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Participation in student life activities</th>
<th>Target Variable to be Measured: “Time devoted”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>U. of Measure:</strong> ex. “Hours”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Current Baseline Value:</strong> “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Target Baseline Value:</strong> “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Trends:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | Mentoring | **Target Variable to be Measured:** “Time devoted or number of students mentored by mentor; number of students with mentors, percent of students with mentors, percent of staff, faculty, staff who mentor.”  
**U. of Measure:** ex. “Hours or persons”  
**Current Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Target Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Trends:** |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Satisfaction with University | **Target Variable to be Measured:** “Survey to measure satisfaction level”  
**U. of Measure:** ex. “Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory – Appendix C”  
**Current Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Target Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Trends:** |
| 5 | Contributions after Graduation | **Target Variable to be Measured:** “Annual Giving”  
**U. of Measure:** ex. “Dollars”  
**Current Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Target Baseline Value:** “tbd”  
**Trends:** |

### Project Deliverables/Requirements

- Define membership rules so that participants are empowered to join the program. For example:
  - Register on the University Loyalty Program website
  - Must be a current applicant, student, staff, faculty, or alumni of the University
  - In good financial standing with University obligations
- Define redemption rules so members are aware of how to redeem their points.
  - Design rewards based upon the members’ past, current, and future value to the University
  - Define the rewards that can be earned with badges and points
    - Deep senior-year discounts for dependents of loyal alumni (free classes, discounts on tuition/fees)
    - Priority for course registration
    - Priority for residence hall selection
    - Discounts at university dining locations
- Partnerships with other corporations – hotels, frequent flyer, rental cars, etc. . .
- Priority or upgraded seating at theatre, sporting events, commencement, etc. . .
- Develop award tiers to encourage members to strive toward higher levels of participation and loyalty.
  - Attract initial members with frequency awards that can be earned and redeemed relatively quickly.
  - Establish customer tiers for long-term members.
  - Design a badge program and reputation scores.
    - Badges and points are earned by accomplishing tasks that benefit the University. Earn badges or points by:
      - Referring new applicants, including dependents and relatives
      - Completing individual semesters
      - Graduating from the university
      - First college course is taken with this university
      - Applicant has been a member of the online high school program
      - Applicant has attended a college-for-a-weekend activity at the university
      - Applicant has attended the Winterfest activity during January break
      - Applicant has attend a sporting event with the university
      - The alumni, staff, or faculty serve as a mentor to a current student
      - The alumni is a sponsor of the sports program at the university
      - The alumni is a member of the local alumni chapter
      - Alumni participates in the annual member survey
      - Alumni enrolls their high school aged relatives in the loyalty program
      - Attendance at sporting events
      - Attendance at homecoming
      - Volunteering at homecoming
      - Attendance at graduation
      - Points for using University card (Flames Cash) at partner alumni businesses
      - Updating contact information once per year
      - Online viewing of convocation
      - Membership and participation in an online cohort
- Establish Rewards – discounts, goods, services, personalized offers, preferential treatment, waived tuition, food discounts, scoreboard/mobile recognition, university publications, preferred stadium seating, and popular parking.
- Establish an IT architectural solution that allows the member and the administration to manage various aspects of the rewards program. There are several off-the-shelf applications available such as Touchpoint Plus, The 360 Platform, Loyalty Program Software, The Loyalty Box, and more.
Project #2 – Minimizing the Risk of Secularism

**Problem/Need** – To minimize the risk of a drift toward secularism at the Christian university.

**Benefits and Success Criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Expected Outcome / Benefit</th>
<th>Target / Achievement Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avoidance of a drift toward secularism</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Secularism – as defined by various variables in an annual survey”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “Likert scale”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: &quot;tbd&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Clearly defined hiring practices that assure the hiring of only Christian applicants.</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “% Christian faculty and staff”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “percent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “100%”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “100%”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Faculty that are loyal to a Christian worldview and dedicated to integrating the Christian faith with learning.</td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “Likert scale”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Standards of competence for university professors.</td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University financial solvency</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Credit Rating”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “Standards &amp; Poors rating”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “A+”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “AA”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adherence to biblically based behavioral standards for faculty, students, and staff.</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Adherence”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “Reported Violations to Code of Conduct”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Communal devotions</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Worship &amp; Prayer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>U. of Measure: ex. “Times per Week”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Current Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project Deliverables/Requirements

- As University administrators, we will recognize the factors that lead to a trend toward secularization.
  - Internal references to religion and higher education are viewed with confusion or hostility
  - Religion is viewed as an emotional need rather than truth
  - A move to exclude religion and the Bible from the curriculum
  - An emphasis on academic freedom at the expense of religious devotion
  - Adoption of a more universal moral standard
  - Less emphasis on Christian traditions and more emphasis on inclusiveness of minority opinions
  - Hiring of non-Christian faculty
  - Offering tenure to faculty
  - Separation from sponsoring churches or denominations
    - A move away from educating ministers
    - Lack of sufficient committed university-aged Christians in the population to sustain enrollment
  - Faculty become more distanced from behavioral and devotional enforcement
  - Removal of devotional duties and behavioral restrictions
  - Theology and religion become the exclusive domain of the seminary
  - The institution’s religious identity become circumstantial, indirect, and finally unidentifiable
  - Loss of religiously-centered trustees in favor of influential alumni
  - Marginalization of religion in favor of maturing academic disciplines
  - Day-to-day policies and procedures fail to enforce the religious vision statement and bylaws
  - The influence of religious sponsors is replaced by the influence of the accrediting institution
  - Chapel migrates to convocation, which migrates to assembly, which migrates to dissolution
  - Faculty who believe that faith in academics is inappropriate
  - Christian staff and faculty who are intimidated by their academic peers

- As University administrators, we will define institutional imperatives so that:
  - Faculty and staff understand, support, and assimilate the Christian imperative in hiring practices.
  - Only Christian faculty will be hired.
  - Faculty are not tenured.
  - Christian identity should influence and impact every aspect of education and student life.
  - The mission statement is clearly linked to Christianity and religious goals.
  - The core curriculum of religion courses represents a minimum of 10% of any degree program.
  - The Christian worldview permeates all learning through the integration of the Christian faith into each course.
The highest level of competence is required and supported from all professors in their professions.

- As University administrators, we will work to maintain financial solvency without relying upon outside sources of revenue.
- As University administrators, faculty, and staff, we will adopt and enforce community behavioral restrictions such that temptation to sin is minimized.
- As University administrators, faculty, staff, and students, we will perform regular community devotional duties to God, including worship and group prayer.
- As University administrators, we will appoint trustees who are Christian and agree to the University mission statement.
- As University administrators and professors, we will encourage the freedom of expression. Students will be encouraged to express their feelings and ideas.
- As University administrators, we will define measures of secularization and watch for trends in that direction.
**Problem/Need** – To create an authentic Christian community in an online environment that is as effective as a face-to-face environment in achieving student spiritual formation.

**Benefits and Success Criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Expected Outcome / Benefit</th>
<th>Target / Achievement Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Significant percentage of online students participate in a cohort</td>
<td>&lt;&lt;How will we know we achieved the benefit?&gt;&gt;  &lt;br&gt;Target Variable to be Measured: “Participation”  &lt;br&gt;U. of Measure: ex. “persons”  &lt;br&gt;Current Baseline Value: “5%”  &lt;br&gt;Target Baseline Value: “55%”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Authentic Christian community</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Positive progress on spiritual formation”  &lt;br&gt;U. of Measure: ex. “Spiritual Assessment Inventory” or “Becoming Established Assessment” – Appendix A  &lt;br&gt;Current Baseline Value: “tbd”  &lt;br&gt;Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Significant interaction among members of the cohort</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Time devoted”  &lt;br&gt;U. of Measure: ex. “Hours per week”  &lt;br&gt;Current Baseline Value: “tbd”  &lt;br&gt;Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clear rules and policies</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Developed and communicated”  &lt;br&gt;U. of Measure: ex. “Yes/No”  &lt;br&gt;Current Baseline Value: “tbd”  &lt;br&gt;Target Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mentoring relationships</td>
<td>Target Variable to be Measured: “Number of Mentors”  &lt;br&gt;“Number of Mentees”  &lt;br&gt;“Time span of mentoring relationship”  &lt;br&gt;U. of Measure: ex. “Persons”, “Months”  &lt;br&gt;Current Baseline Value: “tbd”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Target Baseline Value: “tbd”

Project Deliverables/Requirements

- Groups of 10 or less students, led/facilitated by an alumni, student, or professor
  - Coordinators for groups of fifties, hundreds, and thousands (10 or less of these groups for each coordinator)
- Learning cohorts who share background, life situation, and personal lives
  - The cohorts carry forward from one semester to another
- A sense of authentic Christian community
  - Leader/facilitator as a person of faith
  - Facilitator leads the studying of Scripture
- Significant and regular interaction between students
  - Opportunities to pray together, worship together, participate in group devotions
- Rules and policies regarding accepted community behavior
- Development of trust, respect, and support among members
- The solicitation of feedback from students on how to develop and improve a sense of community (Appendix C)
- Opportunities for members to mentor others
- Use of gamification to encourage desired behaviors and actions
Project #4 – Committed Integration of Faith and Learning

**Problem/Need** – The development of a Christian worldview that provides context and coherence for all aspects of life and learning.

**Benefits and Success Criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Expected Outcome / Benefit</th>
<th>Target / Achievement Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Increasing indicators of Christian worldview among students | “How will we know we achieved the benefit?”

Target Variable to be Measured: “Worldview”
U. of Measure: ex. “Barna Survey”
Current Baseline Value: “11%”¹²⁹
Target Baseline Value: “Mean of 5”

| 2  | Active and engaged alumni who mentor students | “Participation”

Target Variable to be Measured: “Participation”
U. of Measure: ex. “Number of Mentors” and “Persistence of Mentors”
Current Baseline Value: “tbd”
Target Baseline Value: “tbd”

Project Deliverables/Requirements

- Students, staff, and professors with a Christian worldview
  - Measured using questions from Barna’s definition of Christian worldview: The person with a Christian worldview holds all of the following are true:
    - Absolute moral truth does exist
    - The Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches
    - Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic

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- A person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works
- Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth
- God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.\(^\text{130}\)

- Professors who trust in the revelation of Scripture and use it to validate their curriculum
- Professors who cultivate loving relationships with students
- Professors who demonstrate a personal relationship with God
  - Self-revelation
  - Encourage talk of integration
  - Demonstrate dedication to integration
  - Encourage students to articulate their perspectives and speak transparently
- Prayer and integrative assignments in class
- Online spiritual life directors and prayer leaders
- Active and alumni students who mentor students

\(^{130}\) Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Falwell, Jerry, Jr. “Commencement Message.”


APPENDIX A

Spiritual Assessment Inventory

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APPENDIX B

Becoming Established Assessment

BILD International

APPENDIX C

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners assesses the satisfaction and priorities of online learners. It is designed to measure how an institution performs and helps to document overall institutional effectiveness. Research indicates that low satisfaction scores contribute to student attrition. Improvements made following analysis of survey results cause increases in student satisfaction, higher retention and graduation rates, and increased alumni contributions. Administering the survey and following through with improvements demonstrates to students that the institution cares about their perceptions and online experience.\footnote{Julie L. Bryant, “Assessing Expectations and Perceptions of the Campus Experience: The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory,” New Directions for Community Colleges 2006, no. 134 (2006): 25.}

May 18, 2015

John M. Norris
IRB Exemption 2222.051815: A Program for Persistent Integration of Faith and Learning in a Christian University Online Environment

Dear John,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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