

EPILOGUE

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This special edition concludes the second year of Grand Canyon University's (GCU) initiative to integrate faith and learning. In its publication, GCU highlights the process of shaping the faith and learning initiative from foundational conversations into proactive integration. The first year (Year 1) featured enriching dialogue about the nature and significance of the Christian worldview. By year's end, those discussions grew into workshops in which various colleges engaged in discipline-specific conversations about integration. Faculty members discussed challenges and opportunities related to the initiative, particularly in connection with instruction within their respective academic disciplines. Faculty shared insights that informed the direction of our second year (Year 2) through their participation in the Doctrinal Statement Survey.

AN EXPANDED VISION FOR INTEGRATION

Much of the momentum generated during Year 1 continued to stir conversations on campus throughout the summer months as plans for Year 2 began to take shape. During the summer, GCU President Brian Mueller began to cast vision for expanding the faith-learning initiative to include an integration of faith and work. This vision was initially articulated during a chapel session in June and an urban ministry forum in late July 2014. By the time faculty came together at the start of fall semester, Mueller's vision had taken full shape and was offered in the form of a five-point plan which was expounded at length during the university's fall kickoff event.

To begin the 2014-15 school year, Mueller presented the faculty with a biblical and theological rationale for the inclusion of work in the faith-learning initiative. The biblical framework, he argued, is too often truncated within evangelicalism in a way that emphasizes the personal dimensions of salvation. While individual dimensions are important, an overemphasis on personal salvation sometimes causes us to neglect the more comprehensive plan of God outlined in the Scriptures. Whereas some limit their focus to the fall of humanity and redemption offered in Christ, the biblical narrative

actually moves from creation to the fall and then to redemption and the restoration of the entire created order. With the larger framework in view it becomes obvious that God's redemptive plan entails both the regeneration of individuals and the re-creation of the universe as the biblical story culminates in the full restoration of the heavens and the earth.

In a way that drew heavily on the Reformation tradition and contemporary theological dialogue, Mueller asserted that men and women are called by God to join in the work of restoring creation through their unique vocations. Thus, the call of God extends to the workplace and we can rest assured that our work matters to God. As we labor to serve one another we are ultimately honoring the God of the universe and doing so within the framework of our unique personalities, gifts, talents and the opportunities God provides as we move along particular career paths. For this reason, each person created in the divine image may choose to find his or her purpose within the grand purposes of God.

President Mueller explained that these understandings are not merely theoretical proposals but will indeed result in concrete actions that will transform individual lives and entire communities. In other words, just as the work of faculty to integrate faith and learning in the classroom can change lives,

the Christian worldview also bears the potential to change local community dynamics when lived out consistently within one's vocation. Continuing, he articulated the practical aspects of his vision for GCU and the surrounding neighborhoods by outlining five major steps GCU is already taking to make this vision a reality in Phoenix's West Valley:

1. GCU will grow its ground campus to 25,000 students and graduate 5,000-6,000 students per year in biology, computer science, information technology and other STEM-related areas providing significant human resources to the local economy. These graduates will enter the workforce with a sense of calling, purpose and a desire to serve.
2. The university will continue to exemplify Christian service by coordinating efforts with local leaders and authorities that will make the neighborhood safe again.
3. GCU will continue to grow as a business and will plant other businesses in its immediate vicinity to create jobs and employ residents.
4. The university intends to help raise educational levels among people in the local community by working to support nearby schools.
5. GCU has committed to a partnership with Habitat for Humanity that will lead to the transformation of 700 homes in the local community. This work will be carried out in conjunction with the support of tax contributions from GCU and many volunteers from GCU's campus.

This five-fold plan represents an institutional commitment to lead the GCU community forward in the initiative to integrate of faith, learning and work.

FACULTY DIALOGUE AND DEVELOPMENT IN YEAR 2

GCU's faculty moved into the Year 2 of faith-learning integration with a quiet enthusiasm for the vision of its executive leader and immediately began to respond to his expanded vision. In light of the added emphasis on work many were quick to recognize and embrace the potential of carrying out daily work with a renewed sense of vocational calling and God-given purpose. Year 2 would result in major strides toward fuller integration as instructors grappled with the challenges of combining knowledge of God with their subject matter expertise. In some cases

this combination seemed natural and progressed rather easily, but in most cases additional training and dialogue proved necessary.

To facilitate discussion and respond to input from the faculty, a number of new programs were implemented by the academic leadership team. Dr. Hank Radda approved a "Lunch and Learn" series devoted to faculty-led dialogue about the integration of faith, learning and work. In coordination with the other deans the present author, who serves as Dean of the College of Theology, along with the academic community launched a series of lunchtime gatherings that featured key leaders from each of the colleges. At each event a member of the faculty shared ways in which he or she currently integrates the Christian worldview into classroom instruction. These meetings also involved a short presentation from the Dean of Theology related to a single aspect of the biblical narrative. Featured presenters included:

- Cindy Seminoff (College of Science, Engineering and Technology)
- Michael Kary (College of Fine Arts and Production)
- Ben VanDerLinden (College of Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Dr. Moronke Oke (Colangelo College of Business)
- Lisa Bernier and Ben Vilkas (College of Education)
- Dr. Sherri Spicer (College of Nursing and Health Care Professions)

This forum allowed faculty members of various disciplines to interact with their peers about the content of their presentations and deepen their understandings of effective ways to integrate within the context of a particular discipline.

A new Faith and Learning speaker series launched in spring 2015 under the direction of President Mueller, Dr. Radda, and the Dean of Theology. Dr. Paul Copan of Palm Beach Atlantic University in Palm Beach, Fla., offered an inaugural series of presentations that focused on the challenges of pluralism and the impact of Christianity on Western culture. Dr. J.P. Moreland visited campus in the late spring to present on integration and the Christian college and to explore the relationship between neuroscience, consciousness and the human soul. These events afforded the faculty

multiple opportunities to sit under leading Christian thinkers and to interact with both men via question and answer sessions.

CLARITY AND DIRECTION FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S LEADERSHIP

In addition to increasing opportunities for training and dialogue, the university's leadership also began the process of crafting clear statements about the nature and manner of faith-learning-work integration at the institutional and collegiate levels. A final draft of a statement about the integration of faith, learning and work was developed in collaboration with key stakeholders at the university in anticipation of a rollout early in the fall of 2015. Similar statements related to key ethical positions are also in development and should be available to the larger university at about the same time. These statements represent an attempt by the university's leaders to provide clarity about the institution's Christian identity and mission but also reflect key aspects of developing conversations among the faculty and the many departments that support efforts within the classroom.

Furthermore, in order to begin the process of moving integration beyond its current focus on instruction, an effort to develop a process for curricular integration is well under way. Key leaders within the colleges, curriculum design and development and faculty specialists are working diligently under the Provost's leadership to finalize and implement a process that will facilitate consistent integration of the Christian worldview across all colleges. Once complete, this design process will help ensure that GCU graduates grasp the significance of the Christian worldview and its value for their particular discipline and vocation.

Final year-end efforts will focus on the completion of current projects and on gathering feedback from those who participated in this year's dialogue, training and integration-related projects. As in the prior year, members of the faculty are being surveyed on a number of topics including doctrinal understanding and their personal experience with the initiative to integrate faith, learning and work. This data will drive conversations during the summer within the academic and executive leadership teams as preparations are made to move the conversation forward in the next academic year. By this point the faculty's voice has begun to emerge in powerful

ways that are aligning with the overall vision of the leadership team.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE COMING YEAR

Leaders within the administration and the faculty have clearly begun to grasp the power of the Christian message and its potential to transform the campus and the West Valley. By simply offering faculty and staff the opportunity and freedom to collaboratively dialogue, dream and ask God to change lives, the university's leadership team has opened the door to enormous possibilities. And the university's faculty and staff have responded to these opportunities and this new found freedom with enthusiasm, a cooperative spirit and a series of collaborative efforts.

As the initiative moves into a third year (Year 3) it will be imperative to build on the progress and momentum of previous years. The process of integrating the Christian worldview into the curriculum will begin in earnest during the 2015-2016 school year. Year 3 will also see greater attention on the integration of faith and work within the classroom and faculty training sessions. To date much of the conversation has been carried out at the university leadership level, as was true in Year 1 of the initiative, to integrate faith and learning. During Year 3 it will be necessary to begin guiding faculty and students toward a deeper understanding of vocational calling within their particular career fields.

Finally, in Year 3 much of the conversation and burden for sustaining this initiative will shift to the colleges and leaders within each academic area. Faculty members will work to articulate a philosophy of integration that comports well with the unique characteristics, exigencies and opportunities afforded by their particular academic disciplines. Revised processes and practices will follow closely behind and other departments will need to join the conversation in order support the work of the faculty and student learning. In fact, with the university's emphasis on integration within the workplace, it is virtually inevitable that all academic and non-academic departments will begin to take greater ownership of this ongoing conversation as all areas begin to embrace and exemplify the principles of the Christian worldview.

While much work remains to be completed, the initial two years of faith integration at GCU have

proven immensely encouraging. As the initiative matures and the scope of the project expands, anticipation and enthusiasm is likely to increase. On a campus as busy and fast-paced as GCU's it will be challenging to maintain the focus necessary for deep and meaningful integration long term. Nonetheless, the university as a whole has made such incredible strides in this process to date that it has become difficult to imagine that the velocity of the integration process can be slowed at this point. God willing, the entire GCU family will continue to grow in its understanding of the gospel and its desire to see the Lord Jesus honored in all that is done and said on the campus in years to come. *Soli Deo Gloria.*