



Philosophy of Education

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Introduction

African Christian University's (ACU's) principal aim is to explore and express being united in love to the glory of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ in all things, inspiring and equipping God's people faithfully to fulfill their part in the grandest story of all, God's history-encompassing project of bringing glory to Himself through exalting Jesus Christ and summing up all things in Him. ACU's Purpose/Approach/Vision Statements articulate in general terms how we envision responding to this aim.

The following account of ACU's philosophy of education builds on those statements and explains how the university understands the specific role it is given within God's comprehensive plan for humanity and history. First, we explain our commitment to God's Word as the inerrant source for our understanding of God's will and our calling as an educational institution. Then, we consider the grand narrative of God's actions in His creation, particularly those features of God's creative work most relevant for grounding a Reformed Christian approach to higher education. Finally, in the remainder of this account, we work out the implications of God's grand project in history for ACU's specific task.

This document is a modification of the philosophy of education statement of [Covenant College](#) (Lookout Mountain, Georgia, USA), and arises from their actual practices and convictions, which we fully affirm as representing our philosophy as well. This document presents our ideals and goals regarding the importance of working out our Reformed theology and worldview in the classroom, on committees, in our disciplines, and in the larger community of Africa and the world. To specify our educational philosophy in such terms does not imply that ACU can live up to its own philosophy in all respects. In fact, the statements of our goals can make our failures rather obvious. Nevertheless, our philosophy of education does reflect the shared understanding of the boards, administration, faculty, and staff that unifies our university community in its educational role and the task of fulfilling it.

We believe that, as an articulation of this understanding, this statement will provide helpful guidance to the university's senior administrators as they carry out their responsibilities, to individual faculty and staff members as they pursue their callings in this place, to committees of the faculty and the faculty assembly as they direct the academic work of the university, and to future colleagues as they seek to understand and participate in the educational mission of the university.

Rather than being seen as the final word on our philosophy of education, this statement of our beliefs should be viewed as a platform from which inquiry will continue as the university engages in the ongoing project, articulating more clearly, concisely, and completely the philosophy of education of ACU.

I. God's Word: Our Rule

Every member of ACU's administration, faculty, and staff aims to have his or her work informed by and conformed to God's Word. We are convinced that the Bible is God's Word and that its human authors were carried along by the Holy Spirit and preserved from error. While the Bible's principal message concerns the kingdom of God, it makes claims which touch on every area of life and every academic endeavor. It is thus the ultimate rule for everything we do at ACU.

God's Word is clear about many things, but faithfully applying it to our work as educators requires both supernatural intervention and natural diligence. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit's work of illumination in our hearts and minds, opening our eyes to the truths set forth in Scripture. The Word faithfully preached is an ordinary means by which the Holy Spirit challenges and comforts us, not only as followers of Christ, but also specifically as educators and students. Along with these supernatural means, the Holy Spirit's work develops in us a zeal to read the Scriptures carefully, to hold each other accountable for our growing conformity to Christ, and to investigate the many ways in which the study of general revelation can inform our understanding of God's Word. Our handling of Scripture is thus a corporate responsibility that we take seriously.

The Word of God undergirds and shapes our philosophy of education in at least four ways. First, it sets before us the way we should go, directing our steps in God's way of blessing and recommending fruitful practices, habits, and lines of inquiry. Second, it warns against foolishness and wickedness, constraining our behavior for our good and setting helpful limits on our speculations. Third, God's Word offers principles to guide our work and our life together, so that we might clearly express the love of Jesus Christ in all our endeavors. Fourth, the Bible reveals the big picture of what God is doing in the world. Scripture details God's actions and purposes in His interaction with His creation and His creatures; this grand narrative provides the context for our understanding of the place of our life and work as a Reformed Christian university in God's world.

II. The Grand Narrative

God Himself tells us in the Scriptures that the ultimate purpose of His creative activity is His own glory. The exaltation of Jesus Christ is the history-encompassing means by which that purpose is fulfilled. He is the Alpha and Omega, through Him all things were made, in Him all things hold together, and the end of history will be reached when all things are placed under His feet. Christ's preeminence is the central fact of history, the focus of God's story in creation, and a fitting motto for any earthly endeavor. The key to interpreting God's action in history is Christ's exaltation, and the project of summing up all things in Him comprehends all creation. Although the project unfolds in time and passes through phases, it all happens under the rule of God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the glory of Jesus Christ.

The progressive unfolding of this single purpose began with the creation through Jesus Christ of all things out of nothing. The creation was brought into existence to be the stage upon which the Triune God, the Master over all creation, would work out the drama of the exaltation of Jesus. This stage the whole creation was initially both orderly and without blemish or evil.

From its inception, the whole of creation is continually sustained by Christ by the Word of His power. And His sustaining providence displays two kinds of orderliness which were evident from the beginning. One kind consists in His regular maintenance of natural things in ways often referred to as laws of nature although they are not laws to which He must submit. The other kind of orderliness is found in the Master intentions for the way His moral creatures are to relate to Him, to each other, and to the physical world. Although He gave form to some of these relationships from the beginning, the full realization of this orderliness depends upon human discovery and development.

The successive acts of the Master's drama are dominated by covenantal relationships between Him and His covenant servants. The first of these servants, Adam and Eve, were made in God's image, invited to delight in serving Him, and charged with exercising faithful dominion as His representatives in the world: to govern the creation without dominating it, to tend it without exploitation, to unfold its potential, and to enjoy it. In these activities human beings, as God's stewards, through investigation, come to realize how all their activities extend the myriad expressions of their fellowship with God. This exercise of dominion serves the Master's ultimate end by anticipating the perfect rule of Christ. All human work is ultimately to be for Christ's glory.

Adam and Eve were equipped in mind, spirit, and body for the task given to them. Created in the divine image, they were endowed with reason and the capacity for study; they were prepared to search out the

diversity and complexity of the created order and to discover its laws and norms. As moral agents they were empowered to recognize the value in creation and even to assign value in the Master's name. Their imaginative and creative powers were also essential to the exercise of faithful dominion. Although the exercise of these powers required effort, it was a delightful labor. Because they were created to be active servants of the Master, their faithful work was both a duty and a joy.

Our first parents were also created in such a way that their necessary connections and interactions with the creation would generate cultural contexts and life situations that demand meaningful interpretations. As a part of active stewardship, their descendents divide their work into disciplines according to their gifts, develop the social institutions required for flourishing, and create artistic works to express the full range of human experience.

For reasons known only to Him, it pleased the Lord to have the drama of Jesus Christ's exaltation develop through the rebellion of His first covenant servants. Adam and Eve's willful eating of the forbidden fruit plunged all of humanity and the whole of creation into a fundamental struggle between two principles. One principle seeks to honor the Master's reign and is life-giving; the other is opposed to it and brings death. Although the integrity of the created order was not destroyed by the fall, every aspect of creation has been adversely affected by the resulting antithesis in which each individual and every relationship participates. The struggle between the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world is manifest in both institutions and individual lives. Even for Christ's own, the conflict between the new redeemed nature and the old sinful nature is a persistent part of earthly life.

The good creation suffers from corruption and disease. Structurally sound objects, processes, relationships, and institutions have been distorted. The moral norms for human cultural activity that God established for creation are no longer perfectly followed. Men and women who are supposed to be servants of God seek instead to serve themselves. Their efforts to exercise dominion by developing institutions and unfolding the potential in creation are plagued by rebellion against God's law. However, although the effects of the fall pervade all human activities and relationships, God's will is not thwarted because even rebellious creatures and distorted structures unwittingly serve His purposes in the grand demonstration of His perfections.

All human creativity is a gift from God and as such reflects the nature of our Creator and glorifies God. We are sub-creators, imitating our Creator, using the raw materials He has placed in the world. However, all human works, whether by believer or unbeliever, are marred by sin. The form of any human creation is never perfect, and the purpose of human work often strays from the revealed purposes of God. Further, all human work is finite and to some extent fleeting: paintings fade, cultures and languages die, cars break down, and corporations go bankrupt. Nevertheless, the ideas and artifacts of human history deserve our study and enjoyment; as blessings flowing from God's common grace, the products of human endeavors are often insightful, beautiful, true, and useful. Those who enjoy these blessings should also be aware of their Source and be led to repent and to acknowledge God's kindness.

Having permitted the fall, the Lord God graciously provides for the fallen world. This provision is evidenced through both common grace and special, saving grace. God, in mercy, graciously restrains the effects of the fall, delays final judgment, and enables fallen creatures to exercise their remaining powers in productive ways. Because these blessings extend to all humans and even all of creation they are rightly called common grace.

Also He is undertaking to deliver a portion of creation completely. The purpose of this deliverance like the purpose of the fall and the workings of common grace is the final exaltation of Jesus Christ, to the glory of

God. In human history and in eternity, Jesus is exalted in the working out of the redemption that He accomplished for the elect. Those who are drawn to Christ share the responsibility to carry the good news of His work to the ends of the earth. Just as the cultural mandate directed Adam and Eve to glorify God by exercising dominion over all of creation, Jesus' great commission sends His people to proclaim His glory and salvation to every tribe, nation and tongue.

Jesus purchased the redemption of His people by His perfect obedience, His suffering and death on the cross, and His resurrection on the third day. The establishment of the kingdom of God, the redemption of His people, takes place over time. Until the consummation, Christ's people share in His ongoing work and in His suffering. They work to make His universal reign visible, aware that the temporal fruit of faithful efforts is subject to reversal and decay. They share in His sufferings even as they struggle to put off the old self and put on Christ, growing in humility, zeal for the truth, faithfulness, and love. The Spirit's work to renew their hearts and minds, however, is permanent. All these effects in the lives of His people and the results of their actions bear witness to Christ's present rule and point to the summing up of all things in Him.

The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is essential in the lives of God's people, and at the heart of the Spirit's transforming work is repentance. In the renunciation of their rebellious desire to be like God, they acknowledge that they, once His good creation made in His image, are also fallen sinners being remade in Christ's image. Repentance is more than sorrowing over individual sins, it is seeing them in light of God's law through the work of Jesus Christ, and desiring to turn from disobedience to obedience. His law, through Christ written in the hearts of His people, is exemplified in a persistent desire to love mercy, to do justice, and to walk humbly before God. This sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit results in a desire for obedience that pervades every activity, producing effects that are evident even to unbelievers. Led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, God's people endeavor to embody the power of the gospel to change lives and bring peace.

The Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission are the Master's coordinated commands. Both serve the one end of history: God's glory through Christ's exaltation. Indeed, while every human action is a mixture of faithful service and self-service, all human work is done in the sight of the Master and is thus spiritually significant. Because earthly masters typically measure success by visible output, it is tempting to think that the ultimate Master does as well. The Scriptures, however, call believers to imitate Christ, deny themselves, take up the cross, and wait patiently for God to accomplish His purposes. It is appropriate to be encouraged when faithful effort is visibly used by God; yet Christ's people delight first in faithfulness to the Master's revealed will and are sustained by the Spirit's comfort and presence even in the midst of suffering and disappointment.

Although Jesus Christ's reign began with His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, the full realization of His reign and the fulfillment of His exaltation are yet in the future. The Master's grand narrative that began with creation and continued through the fall and the first fruits of Christ's redemptive work will conclude with the consummation: the summing up of all things in Christ. In a cataclysmic final act this world and all the effects of sin will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. Persistent rebels will be condemned. This world will be succeeded by the new heaven and earth; a new order will surpass the pre-fall world just as our resurrection bodies will surpass our corruptible earthly bodies. Human efforts to develop the latent potential in the original creation will be evident in the new reality, but they will pale next to the glory of Jesus. After He judges all things, history will be complete. Jesus will be perfectly exalted, and He will turn over all things to the Father.

Until that final consummation of all things, God's servants look forward to the fulfillment of the Lord's designs with eager anticipation; they marvel at His mercy and condescension and take delight in doing His bidding while they wait. Though faithful service involves effort and even disappointment, they know that they have been called to represent the Master and His purposes, and they know that His ultimate victory is certain.

III. ACU's Narrative

A. Our Ultimate Purpose

It is in the Master's grand narrative that ACU finds its own place of service to the Kingdom. As a university in a world corrupted by the fall, but experiencing God's common grace and saving grace, our educational task is to inspire and equip Christian students to be faithful stewards of their God-given abilities. This task must be based on a proper relationship to the true and living God, for knowledge and wisdom begin with the fear of the LORD.

ACU seeks to contribute to building up the universal Church, the body of Christ, the locus of God's activity in the world. As a whole, the church has the task of nurturing the entire spiritual life of every believer and of preparing and encouraging all believers to engage the world as Christ's ambassadors. The church and family have direct responsibility for encouraging faithfulness to God. ACU supports their efforts by identifying and nurturing, in our students, the spiritual, academic and social skills needed to exalt Christ. The faculty and staff accept the responsibility to be disciplers, mentors, teachers, and leaders in the lives of ACU's students. The university serves student, family, church and the country primarily in two ways: (i) through faculty exercising their academic gifts in their various disciplines, and (ii) through providing a spiritually and Biblically rooted educational environment designed to nurture students as followers of Jesus Christ, Christian scholars, shapers of culture, and productive stewards in every area of life.

All of ACU's programs are designed to prepare God's people to be faithful stewards of their academic gifts, faithfully exalting Jesus Christ. This is accomplished by searching out the riches of the created order unfolding the latent potential in the natural, aesthetic, and moral world. In addition Christ is exalted as we work to build up the body of Christ and united in the love of Jesus, to serve the needy, fallen world by proclaiming the gospel of peace, by performing deeds of mercy, and by pursuing justice. ACU emphasizes the integration of faith and learning as it helps students develop talents for use wherever the Lord leads them. Thus, guided by the mind of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they are prepared to contribute holistically in many different contexts such as academic work in graduate and professional programs, church life, the family, the arts, businesses, schools, the government and civic organizations, the justice system, and community development efforts. Because Christ's exaltation is advanced wherever image-bearing dominion is exercised, training godly, faithful stewards requires the nurturing of talents in all of the academic disciplines, from anthropology to zoology.

After leaving ACU, students will have numerous opportunities to increase the usefulness of their talents and to serve others as Christ's instruments. In an increasingly diverse, interconnected, and spiritually open world, ACU prepares students whose abilities to integrate faith and learning allow them to seize these opportunities, to appreciate the value of all kinds of work, and to imaginatively envision new ways to work for the kingdom of Christ.

The task of selecting opportunities and focusing their efforts requires wisdom, and for believing students the local church is an essential source of guidance. Therefore, ACU encourages students to see the vital connection between the faithful use of their talents and the life of a local church. Students thus are encouraged both to use their gifts to contribute to the vast array of human ventures like business, communications, the arts, or politics and to embrace the fellowship, guidance, and ministry of the local church.

B. Our Role as Stewards

Equipping students to be faithful stewards starts with recognizing the broad range of talents, dispositions, and relationships for which they will be held responsible. Each student has a unique set of intellectual, interpersonal, creative, and spiritual abilities.

Pre-tertiary educational and social experience typically identifies and strengthens many of these gifts, granting students a sense of accomplishment and often a realization that they are responsible to use their gifts well. Such awareness is fostered in many students by believing parents who are seeking to raise their God-given children to be God-honoring adults. Church communities have also contributed to this effort, supporting the parents comprehensive work, while focusing on spiritual development. ACU seeks to further students holistic spiritual growth, through nurturing academic, moral, and professional development. Every aspect of university life affects students spiritual lives, and our primary service to parents, the church, and society as a whole is the academic and spiritual development of our students. This task is most effectively entrusted to professors who have been trained extensively in various subjects of disciplined inquiry and practice, who share in the Reformed Christian worldview, and who value and can effect the integration of faith and learning.

As many of our professors are coming from other countries and cultures, they are committed to effectively serve in a cross-cultural environment by developing their understanding of the culture of Zambia and the African worldview to the best of their abilities. This challenging task requires the commitment of the corporate university body to engage and assist in their effort, being understanding, long-suffering, quick to forgive, and seeking opportunities to encourage the development of strong, cross-cultural relationships. Our prayers in such a grand petition to unite us in love to the glory of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ will undoubtedly drive us towards this goal through the enabling of God's Holy Spirit.

To be faithful stewards of expertise in their subject areas, professors seek to be involved in the on-going discussions of their disciplines. In addition, in order to effectively communicate their expertise in Zambia, professors seek to develop their understanding of the culture in which they are engaged so they may effectively communicate the Biblical worldview in the african context. Their educational work involves initiating students into the labors and joys of these disciplinary traditions, at the same time showing students how to serve Christ through their work.

While acknowledging the importance of disciplinary expertise, ACU recognizes that all of creation functions as an integral unity because all was created by the One God. The academic disciplines have grown up of necessity to set manageable boundaries on individual inquiry, but the tendency of academics to isolate themselves within their disciplines cannot do full justice to the integral nature of God's world. For this reason ACU encourages not only disciplinary specialization but also wide-ranging discussion and scholarship across different fields of study as we seek to understand God's creation in all its interdisciplinary relations.

Fundamentally, our concern for a holistic Christian education recognizes that faithfulness with academic gifts cannot flourish in isolation. The spiritual and social conditions of students are also important to the university. Students with withered spiritual lives or poor social skills are unlikely to exercise their abilities to serve the church and society in a way that exalts Christ.

Through its [chapel programs](#), [discipleship program](#), [student labor program](#), [campus life](#), [practical service opportunities](#), [apprenticeship program](#) and health services, ACU seeks to nourish all the spiritual and social aptitudes needed to support the God-honoring use of academic abilities. These aptitudes include a love-exemplifying, Christ-centered work ethic in capacities for leadership, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills, artistic expression, and academic prowess. The administration, faculty, and staff believe that all university programs, curricular and co-curricular, should work together to provide students with opportunities for growth, opportunities to develop their edifying love in encouraging one-another, offer guidance, and exemplify models worthy of imitation. Students who are surrounded by faculty and staff who are growing in love through humility, faithfulness, and zeal for the gospel, find it natural to see their academic and spiritual lives as a single project and to experience growth themselves.

It is generally expected that professors are concerned with their students academic talents and other related abilities. But conscientious faculty and staff know that the scope of Christian education entails much more; they aim to encourage their students to think, love, and act rightly.

Shaping students mental vocabularies and active affections means more than getting students to know the right answers. At ACU, we recognize that a complete love and total submission of ourselves to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, at the mercy of the Holy Spirit in working out our sanctification, is the foundation to transforming our lives to God-glorifying, Christ-like service. The commitment of every member of the university to faithfully seek and encourage one another in this passion is paramount. In addition, the shaping of conceptual commitments and driving motivations is at the heart of the faithful development of academic gifts. Our faculty is deeply committed to Scripture as the informing and guiding authority that must shape all of our concepts and affections. To put on the mind of Christ means we must enter into an active process of learning what it means to think, love, and act in accordance with Scripture. In this sense, faithful stewardship of one's conceptual commitments and driving motivations is not only an academic but also a spiritual task. Faculty, staff, and students share the responsibility of being conscientious stewards of God's Word engulfed in His love. This means that all involved must live out a life of careful attention to what the Bible says, in submission to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, searching out and applying it to their work both inside and outside the classroom, that the love of Christ would be clearly evident in all they do.

At the same time, ACU's professors are particularly sensitive to how the spirit of the age exerts its influence on everyone's thinking including their own. We teach students how to test the worldviews of our age and earlier ages against Scripture. For students, often this process of becoming aware of these cultural assumptions involves examining and questioning their own habitual mental framework and affections their worldview. In our cross-cultural context, the open communication between professors and students is

critical to assure that bringing the light of Scripture to expose the darkness of our world and culture is accomplished through unity in purpose to see God's glory shine throughout Africa, and to the rest of the world. As professors seek to contextualize their teaching, the encouragement of student interaction greatly enables understanding to best accomplish the task.

Our desire to follow God's will in our thinking, loving, and acting requires both discipline and humble submission. Students are encouraged to bring God's Word to bear on all the claims they encounter in their relationships and studies; even the claims made by their disciplers and teachers need to be tested, and every appeal to Scripture by students is taken seriously by disciplers and professors. The educational process becomes a mutual sharpening in love within the body of Christ as students are encouraged to share their own insights relating Scripture to creation and the needs of a fallen world.

Through this active engagement with Scripture and with their professors teachings, as well as through personal reevaluation of their own habits of mind, heart, and will, ACU students learn that taking responsibility for their conceptual commitments, affective motivations, and behavioral habits is a foundational part of faithful stewardship of their academic gifts.

Further, the conscientious application of God's gifts involves translating Christ-like thought and affection into godly action and holy living. Since the fall, faithful stewardship includes putting off rebellion, ungodliness, and indifference in our own hearts and joining together to fight injustice and to counter the effects of the fall within our society. The struggle against our own sinfulness is most effectively pursued within the local church. In the pursuit of justice, however, the Christian community can join with sympathetic or cobelligerent secular organizations in a [variety of projects](#) designed to establish social structures that will, through mercy and humility, bring healing and other anticipations of Christ's reign in the consummation, to the culture with which we interact. ACU's faculty and students seek to use their lives and academic gifts for service of all kinds, with all kinds of people, to enlighten, confront and conform the culture to every righteous end that glorifies God and brings honor to Christ.

C. We Pursue Our Purpose in Obedience

ACU does not presume to undertake its educational work on its own authority or without oversight. The governance structure of ACU is framed by the authority structures put in place by the constitution of the institution. The university's Board of Directors, primarily responsible for the oversight of financing and purpose of the university, and Board of Trustees, responsible for the operation of the university, have the ultimate authority and primarily exercise their control through the creation of policy and through the selection of the university chancellor. The Boards, which are responsible for maintaining ACU's fidelity to its mission, are appointed according to the university's constitution. Their oversight of the policies, personnel, and spiritual vitality of ACU is active, engaged and prayerful in submission to the Word of God under the direction of God's Holy Spirit.

As described in [the university constitution](#), the chancellor exercises supervision and control of the university as a whole and of all the educational departments of the university, prescribes the courses of study, and selects the teaching faculty and administrative staff, reporting all of his selections and recommendations to the Board of Trustees, under the Board of Directors, for its approval. Nonetheless, the chancellor looks to other members of the institution for recommendations of personnel and policy for his

consideration. The chancellor is responsible for receiving and reviewing recommendations from the faculty and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees concerning programs, personnel, policy and practice in all academic areas, and to inform the academic administration and faculty of actions of the Board of Trustees relative to these recommendations.

A special relationship exists between the faculty and the chancellor. The faculty has a primary concern in the academic program of the university and makes recommendations through the academic administration to the chancellor regarding academic programs, policies, and personnel selection. The faculty has an advisory influence in matters of logistical concern to the academic program such as buildings, budgets, and scheduling. Within the bounds of institutional policies, faculty members determine specific classroom matters such as the designing of assignments and the assigning of grades. The faculty has a primary influence in matters of academic program and policy. As is appropriate, due to their training and experience in their disciplines, faculty members have a primary influence in academic matters and are responsible to transmit to students the standards of excellence, significant accomplishments, and traditions of inquiry in their disciplines.

The administration, faculty, and staff of ACU willingly exercise their authority in submission to the Word of God and under the oversight of the university's Board of Trustees and Board of Directors, praying that the Holy Spirit will lead and superintend their work.

We affirm that the Bible is the final authority because it is the very Word of God. As the ACU educational community is committed to serve the Master's grand design of exalting Christ, every professor and senior administrator embraces the inerrant and infallible Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. We recognize that the responsible handling of God's Word in love requires discipline, information, and mutual accountability; through such accountability the Spirit leads God's people into truth. This truth contains not only God's intentions for history and His will for our lives, it also makes assertions which have implications for every area of human inquiry and endeavor. Therefore, submission to God's Word in love is the essential basis of ACU's approach to its educational task.

Convinced that the university's [Faculty Affirmation of Faith](#) and [Core Values](#) fairly establish the biblical guidelines for guiding and overseeing the university, the senior administration and the faculty of ACU share a common commitment to their use. These standards guide and constrain the work of the university only insofar as they express and specify what the Scriptures teach; their authority never equals that of Scripture. Even so, conscientious commitment to them informs and establishes boundaries for the life of the university.

New faculty members and senior administrators are examined on their understanding of the university's [Faculty Affirmation of Faith](#), [Core Values](#) and [Philosophy of Education](#), and the extent of their conformity with it. In addition, every year each faculty member subscribes to the system of doctrine presented in the university's confession of faith, core values and philosophy of education. By taking seriously this process of examination and yearly subscription, the faculty and administration are united in a shared understanding of what God requires of His covenant servants and the life that believers are supposed to build together. Because the confession of faith, core values and philosophy of education express an especially high view of the authority of Scripture, this process of examination and subscription also helps to ensure a commitment to submit everything to God's Word. Submission to the authority of the Bible in this way will help keep ACU faithful to its mission.

D. The Means by Which ACU Pursues Its Purpose

1. Student Labor Program

Every student has responsibilities to perform various services on campus. These work responsibilities serve various purposes:

- (a) This allows the maintenance and operational expenses of the university to be lowered, enabling lower tuition costs passed on to students.
- (b) This helps the university to operate as a more self-sufficient institution in producing many of its own consumables, again, lowering the costs passed on for the student's benefit.
- (c) This achieves an important benefit to the university effort in the discipleship of students in the Biblical worldview. Opportunities for collaborative work efforts offer opportunities for spiritual growth and social conflict. Social conflict creates circumstances through which those responsible for discipleship (including faculty, staff and administrators as a whole) are afforded opportunities for the practical application of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit in individual student's lives. This important work is core to the Holy Spirit's development of the Biblical worldview in renewing the mind and transforming the life of every student to the Christ-like, God-glorifying standards of the Scriptures.
- (d) This physical labor as servants of one another combats the natural sin nature of man to become "puffed up" with knowledge during the education process (Psa 107:12; Prv 29:23; 1 Cor 4:10-13).
- (e) This offers opportunities to help students develop a good work ethic (Psa 128:2; Prv 19:15; 21:25; Col 3:23; 1 Thes 4:11; 2 Thes 3:8-12).
- (f) This offers each student the opportunity to grow in their love for one another in deference to self through working for the good of the body as a whole (Neh 2:18; Eph 4:28).

2. Discipleship

ACU faculty, staff and administration all play a critical role in practically displaying and teaching the understanding and application of God's Word and Christian principles in moral and ethical issues of life. This is carried out on a continuous basis throughout campus life. Every activity offers opportunities for discipleship in these principles. Some of these discipleship opportunities are structured for such purposes (such as the work-study program of which all students are a part), but others simply occur as a consequence of daily life as each individual, through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit, seeks to encourage others to love and good works, and edify and admonish others in accordance with the Scriptures to God-honoring righteousness.

ACU faculty, staff and administration recognize the organizational structure of which each is a part, established to assure that every student is individually nurtured through discipleship by specific individuals. Discipleship is highly regarded as the fundamental avenue for transformation to the Christian worldview by the guiding work of the Holy Spirit through the direct, practical application of God's Word to every student. The process clearly relies on the God-honoring testimony of all committed to the overall, life-transforming goal of the university.

3. Apprenticeship

ACU faculty and administrators strive to discover professionals who can mentor students through apprenticeship opportunities. They develop relationships with Christian professionals working in Zambia who are demonstrating both a clear, God-honoring, Christ-centered testimony in their lives, and who are known and respected for their Christ-like work ethic in their professions. While they may not be aligned with all of the standards affirmed in the university's confession of faith and core values, they must hold to the evangelical biblical standards of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, the authority of God's inerrant Word in the life of believers, not neglecting the meeting together of believers through the local church, and have a known testimony supporting their faithfulness to living in a God-honoring manner.

Through these relationships, opportunities will be afforded approved student's to develop practical skills in their discipline of study by working alongside these Christian professionals. The Christian testimony of these professionals will allow student's to experience the practical out-workings of the Christian faith in the context of their profession. The purpose of the program is to introduce the student to the necessary skills and real challenges facing those working in their discipline of study, and to challenge the student to assess the application of their bible-based discernment skills to problem-solving and innovative creativity to the needs in their field of study in Zambia. Faculty supervision and prayer assures the student's preparation before the apprenticeship, and focuses their growth and learning opportunities after the experience. The practical application of the Christian epistemology to real-life experience prepares the student for living out the Christ-like life at the highest levels of their discipline for their service as Christ's ambassadors in Africa.

4. Practical Service

ACU faculty, staff and administrators seek out opportunities for students to serve in outreach ministries to exalt Jesus Christ in the community, in Africa and the world. The Department of Practical Christian Service evaluates and recommends opportunities for Christian service that will best represent our aim to be united in love to the glory of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faculty supervision and prayer assures student preparation before the outreach, and focuses their growth and learning opportunities after the experience. These practical works of service demonstrate the application of biblical truths, through God's grace, to Christ-like service in good works that glorify God and enable the student to apply their spiritual gifts in serving others and experience the leading of the Holy Spirit as God prepares them for life-long service to His glory. These opportunities unite the student's for God's service as they experience serving others in the unity and love of the Holy Spirit. These opportunities are sought in combination with churches or organizations seeking to glorify God through evangelism and other Christian service to the community.

5. Scholarship

a. Faculty Responsibility

ACU faculty members pursue scholarship in many ways and use a wide variety of instructional techniques and strategies to inspire and equip students to be stewards of their academic gifts, but this diversity rests on

a shared conception of university instruction and a common commitment to holding every idea up to the light of Scripture. Although ACU's professors are accredited experts in their fields, they are life-long learners, who model Christian scholarship for their students by continuing to develop and exercise their own gifts in love in serving their academic disciplines, the church, and society as a whole. Professors work together to fulfill these obligations. In the love of Christ, they encourage each other in their work, seek out each other's expertise, and pray with and for each other and for their students.

Professors are also committed to advancing their understanding of the national culture and their ability to communicate in the national language to be fully and effectively engaged in the cross-cultural challenges of their work. They are encouraged to utilize any resources available to continue developing these skills. As with their academic responsibilities, professors share resources and encourage one another in these challenges, seek out others to assist them, and pray with each other and with students for continued growth and development for God's glory.

Integral to all classroom education is the concern to help students relate their academic obligations to the rest of their lives. While the church and family are primarily responsible to model for students how to be faithful church members, spouses, parents, and friends, the university faculty models for students how being faithful academicians translates into faithfulness which influences other areas of communal life. In these multi-faceted roles, faculty members accept their obligation to be worthy as mentors and disciplers, displaying spiritual and academic maturity.

Faculty members are expected to stay current with developments in their disciplines. They also need to contribute to these developments through writing, artistic production and performance, research, conference attendance, and continued contact with colleagues at other institutions. As much as possible, they bring this professional involvement into their classrooms, showing students that effective teachers are themselves continually developing their academic gifts.

This understanding of the professor's role and obligations entails several important implications for the way ACU professors relate to each other, their students, and course material:

Professors recognize that all of their work is spiritually significant and must be approached prayerfully before and during class. Praying with and for students is both a privilege and a necessity.

The only infallible standard of truth is God's Word, and professors embrace the responsibility to bring the Scriptures to bear on all their work. This means studying the Bible on their own with the concerns of their discipline in mind and incorporating what they learn in their teaching. It also means talking openly with their students both in and out of class about all the ways that Scripture informs their scholarship, striving to communicate in the most effective manner, and listening carefully to the insights that their students have about God's Word.

In the effort to induct students into the practice of Christian scholarship, our faculty members emphasize the collegial nature of this task, respect the work of other professors and departments, and develop an appreciation for the importance of cross-discipline dialogue, knowing that all truth is God's truth.

Professors do not see themselves as oracles who possess all the answers; they are learners as well. Instead of treating students as perpetual novices, professors want to see students become independent learners and junior colleagues capable of making significant contributions. Professors are mentors raising up the next generation of Christian scholars, equipping them to use their abilities to serve the church, their academic disciplines, and the world beyond the university.

Because academic experience and training have equipped professors with expertise in their disciplines, the faculty refuses to see teaching as mere facilitation and values-clarification. In other words, professors and students are not academic equals. Professors appropriately set expectations for students to meet, and teach truths necessary for students development. In doing so, professors encourage student expression and listen carefully to students while seeking to challenge them. Professors promote standards for excellence in writing, reasoning, and rhetoric, always submitting everything to the judgment of Scripture.

Professors are committed to sound doctrinal teaching and to forming in students the skills necessary to be discerning about the ideas they are encountering in their studies. Teaching discernment means taking into account students readiness to make productive use of texts, ideas, and opportunities that are academically and spiritually challenging.

Professors are committed to studying the works of human cultures because they believe that God is glorified and His truth is often proclaimed in these works, both directly and indirectly. Even now, all truth is His truth, all beauty reflects His beauty, and all excellent work done by humans, despite the marring effects of sin, shows forth the excellence of God. In studying the works of Christians and nonbelievers, we help our students to appreciate and understand them, as well as to critique and evaluate them. We attempt to expose the unfruitful works of darkness as well as to hold on to the good.

Professors must demonstrate a competence in assessing all knowledge in their field through the mindset that if true, it will reveal the preeminence of Christ to the glory of God, and work arduously to discover such God-glorifying revelations. At the same time, professors should teach students in the critical evaluation of material in their field such that worldly presuppositions based on faulty reasoning of darkened, unregenerate minds may be exposed. Such discernment is a skill demanded by the mature believer, skilled in the use of the Word of righteousness (Heb 5:13-14).

Significant to ACU's understanding of academic excellence for both faculty and students is a desire to faithfully serve Christ. This means working diligently, carefully, and well; such work will produce results that show adequate mastery of the subject being studied. For some students, diligence and care will result in work that meets very high standards. Because ACU is blessed with many talented students, it is appropriate to ask a great deal from them. But rigor is not an end in itself; pursuing academic excellence for the sake of being known for excellence would be mere vanity. ACU always emphasizes that the stewardship of gifts serves the grand project of exalting Christ.

b. The Core Curriculum

Important implications of our approach to Christian education are reflected in the concept of the core curriculum. During the course of their academic studies, students must choose to focus on a particular area of study in order to develop the basic skills needed for a successful apprenticeship in their chosen major. While these choices are important and necessary, many of the skills and understandings that students need are common across the disciplines and are the focus of the core curriculum. Therefore all students are required to take a set of courses designated as the core.

This curriculum serves student growth in at least seven ways:

Foundational to all goals of ACU is that every opportunity is afforded to each student to fully understand man's hopelessness in sin leading to death, the free gift of faith in Christ to salvation, and re-creation to

eternal life in Christ. Nothing else can effect a student if this relationship to God as heavenly Father is not first reconciled through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as justification for sin.

From this foundation, the emphasis is on equipping students to effectively discern truth from error, right from wrong, God's thoughts from man's depravity by skill in handling the Word of Righteousness – the Scriptures – in assessing all things. Hebrews 5:12-14 teaches that it is this practiced skill that brings the disciple of Jesus Christ to maturity through the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming their minds (Romans 12:2).

The core curriculum nurtures the academic skills and presents background knowledge needed for achievement in all the specialized disciplines. The learning experience in core courses involves critical reading and discussion, analytic thinking, and evaluative writing on a broad range of cultural, historical and contemporary issues across all disciplines of study. These activities are intended to sharpen and deepen students skills in Biblical discernment while sharpening their intellects in grammar, rhetoric and logic – the classical trivium foundational to learning. The foundational importance of this educational trivium is well-expressed by Dorothy Sayers in the need to recover [“The Lost Tools of Learning.”](#)

The broad overview of academic disciplines will reveal Christ's preeminence in God's creation as a whole, and will enable student's to develop critical thinking skills in assessing falsely-called knowledge corrupted by Satan's deceptive influence through unregenerate men with misguided presuppositions in order to sharpen the student's discernment. Such skills will equip them to faithfully provide God-glorifying leadership in a fallen world.

The broad scope of the core acquaints students with the rudiments of many different disciplines and offers students opportunities to reflect on the wide-ranging ways that God works within His magnificent creation. Such a panoramic view is important not only for a more complete Christian understanding of the world, but it also serves as a spring-board for many students to discover how their own interests and talents fit into the full spectrum of God's calling for His people. This in turn helps students to make better-informed choices about how to narrow the development of their academic gifts.

The interdisciplinary nature of the core helps students to see connections between disciplines. Also, they learn how knowledge which seeks to be faithful to God's creation reflects an integrative worldview which is not fragmented but is unified and interrelated, such that our religious commitments are a connecting and underlying thread through all our knowing, being, and doing.

The content of the core, a wide-ranging historical-cultural understanding of the relation of faith to the world, also aids in preparing students to serve in many communities and to meet a diversity of needs that they might not have otherwise recognized.

c. Focusing on a Major

For students who are ready to specialize, the teacher-student interaction becomes even more intentionally an apprenticeship relationship. Students need to see how disciplinary specialization will enable them to use their gifts to glorify God, to unfold the potential in creation, to serve the church, and to serve society as a whole. They will learn much of this by imitating the ways that professors in their disciplines use their gifts for these ends. Advanced courses apply the tools of the various disciplines to issues confronting both the

church and the world. Students come to see how believers and nonbelievers in their discipline can shed light on pressing problems. They confront the ways that their disciplines depend upon the expertise of others in working toward solutions. And often, by watching the work of their professors, students see the difference that Christians can make by working in their chosen fields. Student-apprentices prepare to work on their own by following the pattern of their professors, who accept the task of stewarding their academic gifts in a way that pleases God and is worthy of their students' imitation.

6. Campus Life

The goal of producing graduates who are faithful stewards of their gifts has implications that touch on every area of university life, particularly for students in the traditional program. The residence life program pursues group identity in love and encouragement of one-another, personal development, and team-building strategies that complement the academic mission. The athletic program encourages and honors love and faithfulness more than victory, and the university works to see that athletic participation enriches academic and spiritual development. The mentoring model is also evident in the work-study, practical service, and apprenticeship programs where students learn Christ-like servanthood by imitation in a variety of activities. Every program at ACU aims to show students that all involved are fellow servants of a single Master working for the single end of being united in love to the glorify of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

7. Chapel Program

The opportunity for corporate worship of our Creator-God through prayer, praise and proclamation of the Word is central to ACU's mission. The chapel program is a blessed opportunity to be challenged and grow in the understanding of God's will and purpose. The well-equipped faculty, staff and administrators all share in the privilege of leading in these forms of worship, especially concentrating on the expositional teaching of God's Word according to Reformed tradition. Outside guests are also invited to lead and participate with the university community in worshipping our gracious God corporately. We strive to exemplify a worthy example to students of the function of spiritual gifts and sincere application of the Word of Righteousness in the corporate worship of our Lord and Savior.

IV. Conclusion

ACU, as a Christian higher education institute, is committed to performing its role in God's purpose of exalting Jesus Christ as Lord. God has graciously delivered ACU's administration, faculty, staff, and students from the futility of living to serve any other master. As a collective body of rescued sinners, ACU is dedicated to inspiring and to equipping students to become faithful stewards of their academic gifts in the love of Christ to the glory of God. This faithfulness will be evidenced as they contribute toward Christ's exaltation by loving God, delighting in their work, unfolding the potential in the created order, and serving the church and society as a whole. To be part of God's grand strategy in this way is a unfathomable privilege, and ACU is thankful for the part it is allowed to play in this glorious drama: to teach and model the fact that, in all things, we are united in love to the glory of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.