2006

The relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development: Challenge and support at a college of the church

Eric Bradley Braun

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CO-CURRICULUM WITH

STUDENT FAITH DEVELOPMENT:

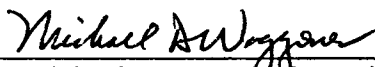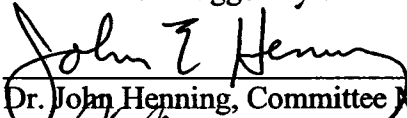# CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT AT A COLLEGE OF THE CHURCH

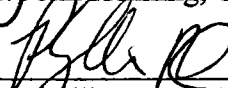A Dissertation

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

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May 2006

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CO-CURRICULUM WITH

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CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT AT A COLLEGE OF THE CHURCH

An Abstract of a Dissertation

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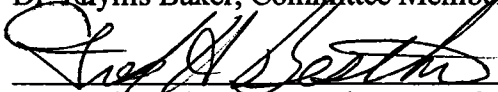
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Doctor of Education

Approved:

Michael A Waggoner

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May 2006

ABSTRACT

Luther College (Decorah, IA) is a liberal arts school of 2550 students that has been affiliated with the Evangelical Church in America since 1861. Its mission includes a higher calling to help students connect faith with learning, freedom with responsibility, and life's work with service. The college co-curriculum includes more than seventy campus organizations, seventeen intercollegiate sports, thirteen music ensembles, a comprehensive work-study program, and numerous community connections. Amidst these chaotic activities and events, relationships, and challenging learning environments, student faith is developing. Administrators at the college do not seem to understand the significant relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development. The purpose of this case study is to describe, understand, and assess how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church.

James W. Fowler's stages of faith model and Sharon Dolaz Parks' extension of Fowler's model into higher education help to inform and guide the research. Other faith development scholarship also provides student affairs professionals with methods for understanding the college student as a person of faith. With the recent resurgence in values-based education in the United States, now is the time that college administrators seriously consider matters of student faith development when creating, implementing and assessing co-curricular programs at their higher education institutions. This is especially important at a college of the church, which must be diligent in its efforts to distinguish itself from other institutions in the highly competitive educational market place of today.

Twenty junior and senior class students were nominated to participate in qualitative interviews. The interview format was divided into four distinct sections: demographic information, college of the church perceptions, co-curricular commitments, and faith development experiences. Interview findings were categorized into a two-tier model, which includes challenges to student faith development, and supports for student faith development at a college of the church. Practical improvements for student affairs practice and future research efforts in faith development are discussed in the concluding chapter of this study.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Robert Martin Arndt whose sense of humor and not-so-subtle encouragement helped get me through the challenging first year of the doctoral program. Marty died in our Decorah, Iowa home on November 26, 2002, after a difficult but courageous battle with cancer. My family and I were blessed to have Marty and Helen Arndt spend the last months of his life with us. God bless Marty. He is truly loved and will not be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge those individuals who made the completion of this dissertation possible. First and foremost, I recognize my loving and supportive wife, Sarah A. Braun, who provided me the privilege of attending classes two nights a week over the span of three years of our marriage. During that time she not only encouraged me to complete the requirement for the degree program, but also raised our two sons, Noah (10) and Isaac (7). I would also like to express my gratitude to my loving and generous parents, Fred and Marguerite Braun, who instilled in me the importance of higher education and a passion for lifelong learning. I also acknowledge the sincere dedication, honest feedback, and enthusiastic support of my doctoral dissertation committee. Committee chair and academic advisor, Dr. Michael Waggoner worked tirelessly to help me shape this dissertation from its inception through publication and beyond. Dr. John Henning and Dr. Phyllis Baker provided much expertise and insight into qualitative data analysis and presentation. Dr. John Besthorn offered practical writing advice and expertise in matters of spirituality. Dr. Calvin Phillips gave me gentle nudges when I deserved a firm boot. Dr. Carolyn Bair got me off the ground and running with the topic of student faith development before she got away. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues at Luther College who provided the recommendations, release time, support, and the administrative leave that I needed to get through the program: Dr. Ann Highum, Dr. Bob Felde, Dr. Bill Craft, Dr. Rick Torgerson, Barb Post, Renee Bay, and numerous Residence Hall Directors, Resident Assistants and other student employees in the Residence Life Office at Luther College. I could not have done it without you.

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INTRODUCTION

Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) is an undergraduate liberal arts institution of

2550 students. Affiliated with the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) for nearly 150

years, this college of the church offers more than sixty academic majors and pre-

professional programs. Luther students participate in seventy campus organizations,

seventeen intercollegiate sports, thirteen music ensembles, a comprehensive work-study

program, and in numerous other community activities and events (Luther College,

2004a). These cultural, social, recreational, musical and faith-based activities are an

integral part of the residential living-learning environment at Luther College.

Founded in 1861, the earliest mission of the Lutheran seminary was to educate the

sons of Scandinavian immigrants for parish ministry and religious education in local

schools. Since its earliest days, the college and the church with which it is associated

have undergone tremendous growth and transformation. Today, Luther College is one of

twenty-eight ELCA colleges and universities in the United States. In its current capacity

to serve as an extension of the church within the domain of higher education, "Luther

College has a higher calling – to help students connect faith with learning, freedom with

responsibility, and life's work with service" (Luther College, 2004b). The faculty and

staff are committed to upholding the long-standing core values of faith and learning

through the distinctive liberal arts curriculum and the college's co-curricular programs.

Luther faculty, staff and the Board of Regents continue to strengthen the college's

reputation for undergraduate scholarship and its national ranking among selective liberal

arts institutions. However, it appears that fewer resources are being made available to nurture the spiritual lives of its students. While the college administration has added programs and personnel that enhance student learning outcomes and bolster institutional success, there seems to be less willingness to allocate time, money and staffing towards student faith development. Although it no longer graduates Lutheran pastors for lives of ministry and community service, the college has recently reclaimed the central importance of faith and values as one of the school's five strategic imperatives for the new century (Torgerson, 2002). Given that faith and learning are still its core values, explicitly stated in the college mission statement, and implemented through the college's strategic plan, now is the time to call into question the institutional commitment to student faith development at Luther College.

<div align="center">Student Affairs Context</div>

College student development has long been a concern of student affairs professionals who have advocated for the education of the whole student, including his or her intellectual, emotional, physical, social, vocational, economic, aesthetic, moral and religious identities since the early days of the profession (American Council on Education, 1937/1994; 1949/1994). While administrators at public institutions have had good reasons to avoid it, student faith development remains a relevant role for faculty and staff at private colleges. Given the mission of church-affiliated institutions, "the content of religious education would appear, superficially, to focus more on the process of meaning-making than does the content of secular education" (Hiebert, 1993, p. 10). One of the primary challenges that campus administrators face is applying faith development

theory to effective student affairs practice (Cureton, 1989). Recent faith development scholarship (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986, 2000; Westerhoff, 1976) has provided practitioners with some useful methodologies to assess and to understand college students as people of faith (Barr, et al., 1990). Given these scholarly advancements and the renewed interest in values-based education in recent years, it seems timely that student affairs professionals now seriously consider issues of student faith development when creating, implementing and assessing student affairs programs.

<div align="center">Higher Education Context</div>

Since the founding of Harvard College in 1636, religious practice, moral instruction, and student faith development have been an integral part of the fabric of the higher education curriculum in the United States. "At its very inception American higher education had a clearly defined role in developing individuals who would both think and act morally" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 335). While the early church-related colleges were free to determine the religious content of their curricular and co-curricular programs, constitutional law generally prohibited public institutions from such practices. The *First Amendment* to the *United States Constitution* forbids Congress from making any "law respecting the establishment of a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (*Charters of Freedom*, n.d.). Since that time, the separation of church and state has since become a hallmark public education in America.

Over time, many private colleges have followed in the footsteps of their public counterparts by removing religious education from their prescribed curricula. Others have also removed specific denominational influences from the mainstream influence of

campus life. "Direct curricular approaches to the development of student character and moral sensitivity became less evident, and faculty became more concerned with the logic, language, and literature of their own disciplines than with broader questions of human values and morality" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 336). Mandatory attendance at daily chapel, mid-week Eucharistic, and Sunday worship have all but disappeared from the co-curriculum at most higher education institutions. It was often left to the chaplainry or to a handful of student outreach groups to deal with the perceived void of student faith development in collegiate life.

In more recent times there appears to be a renewed interest in promoting religious practice, character development, and student faith development in both private and public higher education. "Today, many students are coming to college as believers in some faith; participating in practices such as community service, meditation, or yoga; and seeking answers to questions of purpose, mission, and values" (Jablonski, 2001, p. 3). A few private institutions have capitalized on these changes by marketing required course offerings in religion and philosophy as a core aspect of a distinctive and value-filled liberal arts education. Public institutions also appear to be taking a softer approach towards the campus outreach efforts of national religious groups and the proselytizing practices of diverse faith traditions on campus (Wells, 2003). In addition, there are other indicators that the student affairs profession is growing more comfortable infusing matters of faith into what, until recently, was considered a value-less co-curriculum (Laurence, 1999). The importance of student faith development seems likely to reemerge as an integral part of collegiate life in the United States (Barr, et al., 1990).

Problem

Research on how higher education affects student values, student moral development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Terenzini, 1995) and student character development (Kuh, 1997) has been well documented in recent decades. Research in this area continues to gain prominence in notable student affairs publications like the *Journal of College and Character* (n.d.) and *Spirituality in Higher Education* (Higher Education Research Institute, n.d.). Fewer researchers, however, have given more than lip service to student faith development within the context of higher education (Gillespie, 1988; Gribbon, 1977; Westerhoff, 1976). Efforts to understand the interplay of and outcomes from the collegiate co-curriculum and student faith development are even more difficult to find (Beers, 1999; Hoffman, 1994; Houghton, 1994). It appears that this dissertation is the first effort to describe, assess, and understand the relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development at a college of the church.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church.

Framework

Student faith development has become an area of significant interest in recent scholarly research, student development theory, and student affairs practice. A review of the related literature in the second chapter of this study provides the conceptual framework needed to support this study's main constructs while addressing its research

question. In the first section, the scholarly efforts of its main contributors and critics of faith development are reviewed. The place of faith development within student development theory is then located. The first section closes with an analysis of the scholarly efforts to incorporate faith development into student affairs practice. In the second section, significant studies that address the influence of the co-curriculum on college students and deficiencies in finding faith development outcomes are addressed. In the final section of the second chapter, the literature that addresses the distinct place of church-related colleges within the American higher education system is reviewed. Since this case study was conducted at an ELCA institution, the role of the Lutheran college or university is given special attention. It is through this combination of faith development scholarship, supported by the research addressing the impact of the co-curriculum, and facilitated within the unique environment of a college of the church that the conceptual framework necessary to support the advancement of this study is best understood.

<div align="center">Research Question</div>

Stake (1995) remarked that, "Perhaps the most difficult task of a study is to design good questions, research questions that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much" (p. 15). In qualitative studies, the process of developing good research questions is broader and more robust (F. Besthorn, personal communication, December 5, 2004) via a constructivist philosophy that assumes reality is "multilayer, interactive, and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 396). Although I entered into this study with *a priori* assumptions about the case, it was understood that the research questions and the nature of the study

evolved as the sample members were interviewed, data were collected, and data analysis took place. This study will begin with the overarching question that will direct my efforts to address the research problem. The overarching question is how and to what extent does the co-curriculum contribute to student faith development at a college of the church?

<div align="center">Parameters, Population and Sample</div>

The parameters for this study were established according to Huck's (2000) basic questions regarding research design. First, what is the population to be studied? Second, how will a sample be drawn from that population? Third, what characteristics of the sample will be studied? Finally, in which ways will the data be collected, analyzed, summarized and presented?

In response to Huck's first question, the population included all Luther College students who meet these four criteria:

1. They were enrolled for the spring 2005 semester, making their status that of a current student at the college. All Luther College students who were previously enrolled, or those who plan to enroll at a future date were excluded.

2. They earned 60 or more academic credits before the fall 2004 semester, giving them a class status of junior or senior student. All first-year and second-year students were excluded because they had fewer experiences with the college co-curriculum, thus providing them less time to reflect on their faith development.

3. They lived on campus for the spring 2005 semester. Living on campus made them more knowledgeable about the co-curricular activities and events, influential relationships, and campus learning environments than students who lived off campus.

4. They participated in at least three different official Luther College clubs or
   organizations. Participation made them more aware of the impact of the co-
   curriculum upon their academic and social lives than those who were not engaged in
   co-curricular activities.

The sample for the study was drawn from an eligible population of almost 1500 students.
Through a purposeful sampling strategy known as expert-nomination, "the
recommendation of knowledgeable experts for the best examples" (McMillan &
Schumacher, 2001, p. 402) was obtained in January 2005. Student affairs professionals
from the departments of College Ministries and Student Life, and faculty from the
Philosophy and Religion Department nominated 40 students as representative examples
of diverse faith development at Luther College for this study. Twenty of the forty
nominated students volunteered to participate in qualitative interviews.

Initial contact with the nominees was made via letters of introduction to the study.
A follow-up phone call was made to the nominees' residence hall rooms a few days after
they received their letters. During the phone calls, I provided further instructions for
participation in the study, and asked the willing nominees to schedule a one-hour
interview with me. At the interview, participants were reacquainted with the rationale for
the study and asked to sign the appropriate consent forms. Interviews were conducted
and audio taped during the spring 2005 semester. The interviews were transcribed during
the summer 2005 semester.

The data were analyzed, categorized and reduced via commonly accepted
qualitative research procedures. Through inductive reasoning and the use of the constant

comparative methodology the interview transcriptions were scrutinized, searched for negative cases, and debriefed with the assistance of the Luther College Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. The data were then summarized when the standard of saturation was achieved (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). During the spring 2006 semester the study was written up utilizing thick descriptive accounts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as is customary with qualitative research.

Design

Case study design was utilized for this study. "A case study examines a bounded system or a case over time in detail, employing multiple sources of data in the setting. The case may be a program, event, activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and place" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 36). This particular case included the experiences of Luther College junior and senior class students who were nominated as examples of diverse student faith development by faculty and staff members during January 2005. The case study was inherently biased by the sample selection strategy and the qualitative nature of the research design. The case was not meant to be representative of all students at Luther College, any other college of the church nor other higher education student populations. The procedures outlined by the Graduate College, the University of Northern Iowa's Institutional Review Board and the Luther College Human Subjects Review Board were completed and approved prior to formal data collection.

Definitions

The following terms and definitions were used to inform this study:

1. *Faith.* Fowler (1981) writes that faith is a "complex subject matter, edged around with mystery" (p. 33). Universal in nature, faith is the "activity of making meaning that all human beings share" (Parks, 2000, p. xi). For the purpose of this particular study, faith is defined as "an individual's commitment to a set of values and beliefs about reality" (M. Waggoner, personal communication, October 22, 2004).

2. *Faith Development.* Fowler (1981) theorizes that individual's progress through six stages of faith development. This is an integrated system of operations of thought and values that leads to "equilibrated constitutive-knowing of a person's relevant environment" (p. 31). For the purpose of this study, I will define faith development as "the process through which an individual's commitment to a set of values and beliefs about reality passes with the result of confirmation or alteration" (M. Waggoner, personal communication, October 22, 2004).

3. *Co-curriculum.* In this study, I will use the term co-curriculum to include activities and events, influential relationships, and campus environments that are sponsored, advised, or monitored by student affairs professionals, and that are joined by students (Beeney, 2003). Activities and events include but are not limited to athletics, religious worship, musical and dramatic performance, and other events not formally connected to the college curriculum. Relationships may include interpersonal connections between students and student affairs professionals, students and faculty, and between students themselves. Campus environments include but are not limited to facilities like the student union, residence halls, and other indoor and outdoor meeting venues on the residential campus. Intentionally excluded from this list are the formal classroom and

other settings that are associated with the college curriculum that lay beyond the scope of this study. I will not utilize the more commonly used term *extracurricular activities* because it implies separation from the curriculum.

4. *Student Affairs Professional:* One who commits to the obligation to consider each student as a whole person and to conceive of education as including attention to the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development as well as the intellectual development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). In this study, the term *student affairs professional* will be used inter-changeably with *student affairs staff, student affairs practitioner, student services staff, student services practitioner*, and *college administrators.*

5. *Student Development.* "The theories and practices related to college student learning and growth. Student development theory involves the intellectual, emotional, cultural, moral, physical, and interpersonal dimensions of student life" (Brown, as cited in Delworth & Hanson, 1989, p. 16).

6. *Student Involvement.* Astin (1993) defines student involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to an experience. Physical energy in the co-curriculum includes actions such as attending organization meetings and volunteering for committee work. Psychological energy involves behaviors such as thinking about the organization outside of meetings and talking to peers about the organization (Beeney, 2004). Astin's research incorporates these ideas into a comprehensive theory that considers the student development outcomes associated with student involvement (or lack of it) in matters of collegiate life.

7. *Campus learning environments.* According to Strange and Banning (2001), campus learning environments are made up of four components: the physical condition, the aggregate characteristics of the people who inhabit them, the organizational structures related to their purposes and goals, and the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and culture of a particular environment. For the purpose of this study, campus-learning environments will be used interchangeably with living-learning, residential, and co-curricular learning environments.

8. *Case study.* For the purposes of this particular document, a case study is defined as a bounded system or a case over time in detail, employing multiple sources of data found in a setting (Stake, 1995).

9. *College of the Church.* "Institutions of higher learning that: (a) want to be and aim to be church-related, (b) a college that makes a proper provision for religion in all its dimensions, (c) puts their values and those of their church into recognizable operation, (d) are able to count on their church's understanding of the educational task, (e) receive tangible support from their church, (f) inform and illumine their denomination on all matters that would appear to be relevant or useful and must welcome being informed and illumined in return, and (g) know why they want to be so related" (Parsonage, 1978, p. 73).

10. *Co-curricular Challenge.* A co-curricular challenge to student faith development is any co-curricular activity, relationship, or environment at a college of the church that causes a student to experience discomfort in, uncertainty about, or formulate questions in a manner that enhances or advances his or her faith.

11. Co-curricular Support. A co-curricular support to student faith development is any co-curricular activity, relationship, or environment at a college of the church that causes a student to experience comfort in, certainty about, or disregard questions or concerns in such a manner that enhances or advances his or her faith.

Significance

This study has made three contributions to the body of knowledge and practice within the student affairs profession. The primary contribution was to fill a gap in the student development literature that has significantly understated the important place of faith development theory in the body of literature (Evans, et al., 1998). This effort has linked faith development theory to existing student development theories that explore faith development, student involvement and campus environments. Second, this study has complimented and extended the research of Fowler and Parks by developing a qualitative methodology that was designed to describe, assess and understand student faith development at a college of the church. While other researchers have used qualitative research design in their studies at a college of the church (Bolen, 1994; Cumings, 1997; Cureton, 1989; Gordon, 1992; Haggray, 1993), none has attempted to understand the relationship of the college co-curriculum with student faith development. Finally, while there is a growing body of literature that describes one or more aspects of collegiate life at religious colleges (Beers, 1999; Cumings, 1997; Fenneberg, 2003; Gordon, 1992; Harding, 2003; Houghton, 1994; Newman, 1998; Reese, 2001), there have not been scholarly efforts to examine an ELCA institution. In addition, no other research has intentionally connected faith development theory to co-curricular life on a college or

university campus. It is my intention that this study encourages new scholarship in student faith development at other church-related colleges and universities, as well as at those affiliated with the ELCA

Study Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is that its findings cannot be generalized to other higher education institutions, college student populations or even to the co-curricular experiences of other students at Luther College. Generalized knowledge is not an appropriate outcome for qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The data collected, analyzed, and interpreted has provided a rich description of student faith development at a college of the church for the twenty participants involved in this study, and is limited to the specific attitudes, perceptions and experiences of those participants as interpreted by the researcher.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the

current research on student faith development in higher education. The contributions of

its main scholars (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986; 2000), and others who have critiqued their

efforts, follows. Student faith development is then located within student development

theory as a way to emphasize its importance within the academic discipline. The first

section concludes with a summary of applications of student faith development theory to

student affairs practice. In the second section, studies that have attempted to address the

impact of the college co-curriculum on student faith development are discussed. Special

consideration is given to campus environments and their relationship to student learning

outcomes. In the third section of the literature review, the role of a church-related college

within the American higher education system is examined. This section closes with the

particular contributions of Lutheran higher education. Finally, the small body of

literature examining student faith development at a college of the church is reviewed. It

is this combination of student faith development scholarship and practice, supported by

the relationship of the co-curriculum to student learning outcomes, extended through the

unique environment at a college of the church, that completes the conceptual framework

necessary to support and further advance this study.

<u>Fowler's Faith Development Theory</u>

In *Stages of Faith* (1981), James W. Fowler laid out a comprehensive theory of

faith development. Fowler understood faith to be a human universal, the making of

meaning which is best understood through four basic interpersonal tenants: relationship, knowing, identity, and imagination. Influenced by Erikson's (1963) psychosocial stage theory, Piaget's (1969) ideas on cognitive development, Kohlberg's (1969) model of moral development, and Levison's (1978) life cycle eras, Fowler theorized that human faith unfolds via a predictable and universal stage process throughout the entirety of the human life span. These six recognizable stages are related to each other both hierarchically and sequentially. Each successive stage builds upon and incorporates the previous faith development stage. A new faith development stage begins to emerge when a person becomes aware of the limitations of the previous stage, and then seeks to move beyond the previous stage. I here provide a brief summary of the Fowler's model.

Undifferentiated or primal faith is the pre-stage that begins before a young infant acquires language and other communication skills. It is a predisposition during which the infant learns to relate to him or herself, to others and their common reality. Based upon the infant's experiences and relationship with its primary caregiver(s), patterns of trust or mistrust towards itself, others and reality bias future faith development. In the first stage, intuitive or projective faith, the individual is typically four to eight years old. Meaning is made and trust is established through intuition and imitation. In stage 1, fact is not differentiated from fiction because symbols are taken for their literal and exact meanings. The divine is understood via anthropomorphic and magical images. The young child begins to understand him or herself as separate from others towards the end of the first stage of faith development.

Stage 2, mythic or literal faith, typically occurs when an individual is ages seven through twelve years. During this time of affiliation with others, the individual joins family groups or faith communities, learning their lore, legends, and language. There is a keener sense of the self as a member of the collective group of others. Reality is understood in literal stories and myths. The divine being is pictured as a presence with human characteristics and patterns of behavior.

Stage 3 is synthetic or conventional faith. This typically begins around the age of twelve and lasts through young adulthood for many individuals. For many, stage 4 lasts for the remainder of their adult and through their mature lives. Meaning is associated with that of popular convention. The individual often responds faithfully to the expectations and judgments of significant others. He or she lacks autonomous judgment to act fully as an individual. While an individual may experience a division of life into different segments, these pieces may also impinge on the individual's ways of knowing and relating to the world. Family, friends, school, work, recreation and worship provide a variety of meaningful perspectives, but they may also come into sharp conflict with each other. Synthesis between competing forces can occur when an individual finds balance among the competing conventional expectations. The transition to stage 4 comes when an individual can no longer tolerate being different when they are with different groups, or when they realize that they cannot hand the making of their meaning over to even the highest authority.

Fowler's stage 4 is known as individuative or reflexive faith. It usually does not begin until after age 18, but often emerges during an individual's mid-thirties or forties.

For many adults, Fowler's stage 4 is never achieved. Stage 4 brings autonomous faith and a new awareness of life's paradoxes and polarities: individual versus community; particular versus universal; relative versus absolute; self-fulfillment versus service to others; autonomy versus heteronomy; feeling versus thinking, and subjectivity versus objectivity. An individual's faith attempts to balance and make sense of these tensions. The individual now may stand alone, or may join a group based on reflection experiences rather than mere acceptance.

Stage 5 is called conjunctive faith. It may not occur until midlife, if it occurs at all for a person. The paradoxes and polar tensions from the stage 4 are now embraced and affirmed. Life is lived comfortably with ambiguities. This stage is not relativism, but recognition that an individual's position cannot be an absolute truth. The individual willingly enters dialogue knowing that his or her way of making meaning may again change. The stage 5 individual is now interdependent with new empathy for the human family, not just for the immediate community.

Stage 6 is universal faith. Fowler recognized that there are very few people who lead lives as a transforming presence in the world. These rare examples include Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Gandhi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. For such individuals, the self is replaced by a sense of the divine being. The stage 6 individual makes the divine being available in such a way as to transform the present reality into one of future transcendence. Universal faith is the final stage of faith development according to Fowler's (1981) faith development theory.

Parks' Extension of Fowler

In *The Critical Years* (1986) and *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams* (2000) Parks

supported and extended Fowler's faith development theory by adding a seventh stage to

his faith development model. She located this stage between Fowler's adolescent (stage

3) and young adulthood (stage 4) stages. Parks theorized that as the individual transitions

from synthetic-conventional faith into individuative-reflective faith that he or she

develops from young adult, through a tested adult to a mature adult. Parks also suggested

that four complex processes play themselves out during this time of life. First, forms of

cognition refer to the ways that individuals know themselves, the world and the divine

being. They move from dualistic, authority-bound thinking through unqualified

relativism to a probing, tested, and convictional commitment to knowledge. Second,

forms of dependence refer to the locus of authority in a young adult's life. Individuals

move from a fragile dependency through confident dependency into interdependency.

Third, forms of community involve social groups that surround the individual. From a

mentoring community, through a self-selected group to open communities, the

individual's faith matures via his or her interactions with others. Fourth, the role of

imagination refers to the formation of a dream or metaphor for an individual's life. In

addition to the complex processes, Parks highlighted five common imaginative roles in

the young adult: conscious conflict, period of pause, new perspective, a repatterning of

life, and new understanding. Through attention to the four processes and five

imaginative roles, student affairs professionals may foster a "mentoring community of

imagination" (1986, p. 21) as a means of encouraging student faith development within

higher education. Finally, Parks (2000) believes that, "Young adulthood is rightfully a time of asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams" (p. 5). Her extension of Fowler's theory of faith development has received much attention and many accolades from academic researchers and practitioners alike.

Further Faith Development Scholarship

Fowler's faith development theory has been widely debated and, at times, repudiated in academic and professional circles. Initial applications of his theory to practice were made in the fields of pastoral care, religious education, theology, and other related social sciences (Fox, 1995). In more recent years, the paradigm has been applied to the fields of psychology, nursing, geriatrics, social work, business management, public policy, law and social ethics (DeNicola, 1993). Today, Fowler's model is the theoretical focus of more than five hundred scholarly works. While most of the faith development scholarship has focused on Fowler's literary contributions, there have been other faith development efforts that have moved beyond the scope of his body of work.

Wilber's (1977) full-spectrum of consciousness model is divided into ten stages. Grouped into prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal phases of development, Wilber theorized that human development might ultimately lead an individual to transcendence beyond the human body, "to experience a wider and deeper connection with all beings and the universe" (p. 187). Wilber's model is comprehensive and complex because it addresses faith development at both the individual and societal level, offering a transpersonal perspective on the shared developmental processes. Wilber's model has not received much attention in higher education circles.

Gribbon (1977) created a simple model of faith development that integrates four styles of faith into a generic process. In stage 1, sensory faith, children touch and interact with their parental figures, the world and the divine being as a means of developing faith. Stage 2, affiliative faith, takes place during the early schooling years when the older child learns the faith stories of the nurturing community. During stage 3, searching faith, the young adult goes through periods of questioning, experimentation, acting against the community, and forming ideological commitments. In the final stage, owned faith adults make commitments and choices that strengthen both the individual and the nurturing community. Gribbon's faith development model preceded that of Fowler's, but also received little attention from the scholarly community and higher education practitioners.

Gillespie (1988), in a similar model, suggested that faith development correlates with a typical human life cycle. In early childhood, an individual borrows faith. In middle childhood, the individual begins to develop a reflective faith. During early adolescence, the individual converts to a more personalized faith. Later in adolescence, it evolves into an established faith. In the young adult, faith is then reordered. Reflective faith becomes the hallmark of middle adulthood. The lifespan is completed in older adulthood through resolute faith. Gillespie's theory came on the heels of Fowler's model. As a result, it had a minimal impact in faith development scholarship.

Benson and Eklin (1990) focused their efforts on adult faith development in ministries. They found eight core dimensions of adult faith: trust, security, integration, growth, life-affirming values, social justice, and service. Their findings were collapsed into two overarching themes: vertical faith or commitment to God, and horizontal faith or

service to other people. While their model has often been used to analyze the impact of congregational and church ministries upon mature adults, it has not been applied to the higher education community and student affairs practice.

Stokes' (as cited in Vanlue, 1996) research on adult faith development discovered several important themes. First, life crises stimulate faith development. Second, young adults and also those approaching their midlives often rethink their existing faith structures. Third, involvement with social issues and concerns appears to enhance adult faith development. Finally, non-traditional forms of education often lead to greater levels of faith development. Stokes built upon Fowler's efforts by focusing upon the adult faith development of students attending seminary. Like Benson and Eklin, Stokes' model has not had much impact beyond professional ministry. It has not impacted higher education.

Critiques of Fowler's Theory

Some faith development scholars (Cannon, 1988; Furushima, 1983; Isasi-Diaz, 1996) have all questioned Fowler's main assumption that faith development universal. In a study of twelve Jodoshinshu Buddhists in Hawaii, Furushima (1983) recorded ten stage indications, some of them philosophical and others cross-cultural that went unaccounted for by Fowler. Cannon's *Black Womanist Ethics* (1988) examined faith development from the historical perspectives of African-American females. Her work demonstrated how, "Black women live out a moral wisdom in their real-lived context that does not appeal to the fixed rules of absolute principles of the white-oriented, male structured society" (p. 4). Isasi-Diaz's *Mujerista Theology* (1996) considered the faith development of Latina women. Mujerista theology is liberation theology that "does not take seriously

the religion of the people but seems to prefer the doctrines and dogmas of the church" (p. 75). These researchers and others view faith development of underrepresented groups through a different lens than Fowler's paradigm. Thus while his theory of faith development has broad acceptance across scholarly disciplines and professional fields, it is not without severe limitations. Despite the often-heard concern about its universal application, Fowler's model continues to provide a useful foundation for student development theory and practice within student affairs. "It is a classic example of that which is at once both a brilliant explication of the universal and an almost intuitive explication of the particular" (Hiebert, 1993, p. 28). Fowler's theory has withstood more than twenty years of criticism and continues to be the pinnacle of faith development theory, research and practice.

<u>Faith Development in Student Development Theory</u>

Student development theory has its origins in the disciplines of psychology and sociology when the two were first applied to the college and university setting in order to make sense of human development during the adolescent years. In the 1920s and 1930s, early theories of college student development focused on vocation and attempted to match students with work place identities. As a way to connect these theories to practice, student affairs administrators drafted the defining statement of their academic discipline. "The Student Personnel Point of View" (American Council on Education, 1937/1994; 1949/1994) focused their varied efforts on the "whole student to reach his or her full potential and contribute to society's betterment" (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 6). While practice in student affairs boomed during 1940s and 1950s, few notable theoretical

contributions were made during that era. In the 1960s, however, student development theory proliferated. Scholars like Sanford (1967), D. Heath (1968), R. Heath (1964), and Feldman and Newcomb (1969) were among the first to investigate how individuals matured during the college years. By the 1970s, the profession's organizations moved to create a unifying philosophy from among the competing student development theories. It proved too difficult to incorporate the diverse practices from admissions, financial services, residence life and other student services with prolific theory bases into a single conceptual framework. While those efforts failed, an academic discipline known today as student development was born. Since that time, the theory has been divided into four theoretical families: psychosocial and identity development theories, cognitive-structural theories, typologies, and person-environment perspectives.

Psychosocial and identity development theory examines the personal and interpersonal lives of students. Based upon the work of Erikson (1968), psychosocial development makes sense of the life span. Individuals are confronted with dilemmas that need resolution before they can move to the next stage in life. Once resolved, individuals experience a significant change in the way they think, feel, and behave. Perhaps the most well-known student development theorist in this category is Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) who theorized that college students mature as they move through seven vectors of psychosocial development. Latter theorists have expanded Chickering's theory by examining the psychosocial identity development of diverse student populations: women (Josselson, 1987); African Americans (Cross, 1991); whites (Helms, 1993); and homosexuals (D'Augelli, 1994; Cass, 1979). Cognitive-structural

theories attempt to demonstrate changes in the way people think but not what they think. These theories stress the influences of heredity and the environment in students' cognitive development. Individuals move though fixed, sequential stages as they intellectually adjust to their environments. Influential scholars of cognitive-structural theory include Perry (1968), Kohlberg (1969), and more recently, King and Kitchener (1994). Typology theories focus on the ways certain types of people relate to the world around them. Typologies assume that an individual, representing a specific type, brings unique, positive contributions to each situation (Evans, et al., 1998). Influential student development typology theorists include Kolb (1984), Holland (1985), and Myers (1987). Person-environment theories build upon Lewin's (1936) assumption that behavior is a factor of the interaction between a person and the environment. Rodgers (1990) believed that student affairs practitioners should concentrate their attention and efforts on "criteria for deliberately designing environments that facilitate development" (p. 32). The basic premise within person-environment theory is that effective learning will occur when the environment is appropriately adjusted to support an individual's learning style. Strange and Banning (2001) have argued for safe and inclusive campus learning environments to meet the needs of today's diverse student learning styles.

In addition to the four traditional categories, organizational theories, student success theories, the development of social identities, and developmental synthesis theories have only recently been added to the student development theory taxonomy (Komives, et al., 2003). These theories have focused on newer and more diverse learners in higher education as the shift in American demographics has brought non-

traditional students into colleges and universities. Student development scholars are still trying to figure out how they will fit into the existing body of literature in the field.

Those who have studied the traditional theoretical families within student development would recognize the many parallels that they have with Fowler's faith development theory. These include the theoretical constructs of "maturation, making sense, composing meaning, ordering relations, and activity that transforms being, knowing, and doing" (Rutledge, as cited in Astley & Francis, 1992, p. 359). Fowler's (1981) theory also builds upon the works of established student development theorists like Piaget (1969), Erikson (1968), Kohlberg (1969), and Levison (1978). Yet, even in current student development textbooks, faith development has either been significantly underrepresented (Komives, et al., 2003), or it has been entirely overlooked (Evans, et al., 1998). The efforts of Fowler (1981), Parks (1986; 2000) and other faith development theorists deserve more attention from student development scholars and practitioners alike. As Haggray (1993, p. 23) remarks,

> If student services professionals wish to study the implications of faith development for practitioners, the applicability of Fowler's theory may be useful in understanding the student as a whole person. Cognitive, psychological, sociological, typological and environmental theories provide the foundation that strengthens the work of Fowler. If practitioners are to accept what supports their views on developmental change, they must be willing to be informed by Fowler as he speaks to the faith development issues of a person's life.

The time has come to recognize the important place of faith development theory within the discipline of student development, noting its origins among highly-regarded theorists and valuing its potential to explain the development of the whole student as exclaimed early in the history of the student affairs profession.

Sanford's Theory Applied to Student Faith Development

Nevitt Sanford's (1967) longitudinal study of Vassar women was an early attempt at understanding college student development, but it has had a profound impact on student affairs. His study provided credible evidence that students changed during their college years, and that the collegiate environment had an affected student development. Sanford's simple constructs of challenge and support have since made a major contribution to the field of student development theory. He suggested that an appropriate balance of challenge and support must be present for appropriate development to occur. Sanford argued that if there was too little challenge took place during the college years that a student may feel safe and comfortable. Unwilling to be challenged a student might be delayed in or stop development altogether. Too much challenge, Sanford believed, could produce a maladaptive response to the college environment. The amount of challenge that a student should be able to cope with should be contingent upon the amount of support that is available in the campus environment. Therefore, the amount of challenge and support that each student needs varies on his or her personality, background and previous experiences in similar environments. Creating that appropriate balance of challenge and support within the college co-curriculum is an important facet of the student affairs profession. It is also an essential part of a student's continued success at a higher education institution. Constructed nearly 40 years ago, Sanford's theory remains relevant today.

Although Sanford thought broadly about student development, I believe that his theory applies to student faith development at a college of the church. Through

interviews with twenty Luther College students, I found that student faith development requires an appropriate balance of challenge and support within the co-curriculum. Too much challenge, as experienced by many freshmen in the required Introduction to New Testament course at Luther College, has pushed many first year students into maladaptive responses to the campus environment. Examples of such responses include withdraw from co-curricular activities, alcohol abuse, and a temporary loss of faith. Too much support, like over-involvement in College Ministry programs, has kept other students feeling safe, comfortable or secure in their campus environments. That level of support has retarded, or in some cases, completely stopped a student's faith development process. If the application of student faith development to Sanford's theory is credible, then the appropriate co-curriculum at a college of the church must blend a wide array of challenges to and supports both to keep students from feeling threatened in their faiths and to keep nudging them to a deeper level so that their faiths continue to develop.

Faith Development Applied to Student Affairs Practice

It was not until Parks (1986) extended Fowler's theory (1981) into the higher education arena that much attention had been given to its relevance for student affairs practice. The earliest applications were made in college ministry. Rutledge (as cited in Astley & Francis, 1992) suggested eight ways to incorporate faith development theory into student affairs programming. First, campus ministry offices should offer programs that correspond to the different faith development stages. Second, opportunities for students to develop relationships with others from diverse religious and social backgrounds should be offered. Third, volunteer service should be made available in

order to provide an impetus for faith development. Fourth, mentoring sessions between students and older adults who serve as faith development guides should be made available. Fifth, student personnel should enhance campus life and offer leadership opportunities as a means of promoting student faith development. Sixth, campus ministers should provide counsel for students as they transition from one faith stage to the next. Seventh, students should be exposed to images and stories from other faith traditions. Finally, there should be small and ideologically compatible communities as vehicles of putting faith into action.

Chamberlain (as cited in Astley & Francis, 1992) also discussed the implications of faith development for a campus ministry programs. He suggested three courses of action. First, that campus ministers assist students in their cognitive shift from text literalism to symbolism. Second, that "faithing communities" (p. 350) allow students to express their own faith journeys while listening to those of others in a trusted and supportive environment. Finally, that the campus community includes a sense of belonging and a supportive context for developing peer and appropriate role model relationships.

Beyond campus ministries, Houghton (1994) examined the application of faith development theory by chief student affairs officers at institutions associated with the Christian College Coalition. She found that although there was unanimous agreement that their institutional missions fostered faith development, there was little evidence that Fowler's theory was being used to support student affairs programming there.

Other scholars have measured faith development outcomes as a result of student participation in co-curricular programs. Hoffman (1994) studied 20 first-year students at a Jesuit college. He examined the relationship between participation and non-participation in a structured retreat program with respect to cognitive development, moral judgment, and faith development. The results of the study did not provide statistically significant evidence that student participation in the retreats was associated with change in any of the three areas. Beers (1999) examined the relationship between a short-term study abroad experience and faith development with 171 students at a Christian university. The control group stayed on campus during the term, while the experimental group studied abroad. The data indicated no statistically significant differences between and the pre-test and post-test scores on three different spiritual indices. However, Beers did find significant changes in individual test items relating to accepting individuals with different religious beliefs for those who studied away from campus. Qualitative data also indicated the study abroad participants developed in their relationship with the divine being and in service to other students. Finally, Erwin (2001) utilized faith development theory to address issues of spirituality in counselor preparation programs. Her application provides interventions for supervisors that may foster faith development in counselor-trainees.

While these and other attempts to apply faith development theory to student affairs practice have been of some use, none of these has had a lasting impact on the profession. As a result, it might be concluded that faith development is too theoretical to incorporate into higher education practice. It might also be argued faith development

theory is fraught with too many potential limitations to deserve a more thorough

consideration. Yet another person might argue that none of these efforts has determined

the appropriate campus learning environments necessary to apply student faith .

development theory into effective practice. If the latter were actually the case, this study

would benefit from a deeper understanding of the higher education environments within

which faith development can flourish.

Campus Environments

Student affairs professionals have long assumed that the college co-curriculum

impacts students in significant ways. Many college administrators value the co-curricular

contributions they make to support the academic mission of their institutions. However,

as some scholars (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Strange & Banning, 2001)

have collected and summarized the literature concerning the impact of the co-curriculum

on college students, their findings have both surprised and disappointed student affairs

practitioners. In *How College Affects Students*, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, p. 624)

have written:

> From one perspective extracurricular involvement may be seen as a more
> formalized manifestation of one's interpersonal involvement during college.
> Thus, part of its impact may stem from an individual's participation in an
> influential peer culture. This may explain why extracurricular involvement has a
> positive impact on educational attainment. As a group, students who frequently
> participate in extracurricular activities tend to enter college with relatively high
> educational aspirations. Consequently, they may constitute a peer culture within
> the institution, a culture whose group norms tend to accentuate the educational
> aspirations of participating members.

According to these scholars, peers and peer cultures significantly impact everyday

student affairs practice. The authors were unable to uncover evidence to suggest that co-

curricular involvement impacts student faith development. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) did conclude that the overall college experience impacted students' religious attitudes and values. As students develop from freshmen to seniors they become "less orthodox or fundamentalist in religious orientations, somewhat more skeptical about the existence and influence of the Supreme Being, somewhat more likely to conceive of God in impersonal terms, and somewhat less favorable toward the church as an institution" (p. 280). In addition, they found that the net effect of college on students' religious attitudes and beliefs indicates that the level of educational attainment is "positively and significantly related toward religious attitude change toward the secular" (1991, p. 292). It was also found that specific with-in college sources of influence were important. Within the co-curriculum, their findings suggest that "where one lives and the general ambience of an institution is related to change in religious values" (1991, p. 314). In other words, those students who lived in residence halls increased their likelihood of a shift toward no religious preference by their senior year, while those students who lived at home had the opposite effect. Finally, Pascarella and Terenzini found that "where faculty and students espoused greater commitments toward a religion, the institutional climate appears to support the maintenance of students' initial religious commitments over the four years of college" (1991, p. 315).

In *What Matters in College*, Astin (1993) synthesized three decades of research from a data set containing more than 20,000 students and 200 participating institutions. His findings suggest that student involvement impacts nearly all aspects of their cognitive and affective development (Beeney, 2003). The three types of involvement that most

impact college students are academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and

involvement with peer groups. And out of those three, Astin (1999, p. 363) states that,

> Every aspect of the student's development – cognitive and affective,
> psychological and behavioral – is affected in some way by the peer group
> characteristics, and usually by several peer group characteristics. Generally,
> students tend to change their values, behavior, and academic plans in the direction
> of the dominant orientation of their peer group.

Astin believed that through the effective use of peer groups, higher education institutions

could substantially strengthen their impact on all aspects of student development. If

Astin's findings are valid, peers may also impact each other in the areas of student faith

development.

In *Educating by Design* (2001), Strange and Banning reframed important earlier

research on campus learning environments. The authors state that the there are four key

components of all campus environments: physical condition; aggregate characteristics of

the people who inhabit them; organizational structures related to their purposes and goals;

and the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and culture of

the environment. The physical environment influences behavior in one of three possible

ways. First, from the position of architectural determinism, "behavior to a large extent is

determined in a direct, causal, and mechanistic manner" (p. 13) by the environment.

Second, through the lens of architectural possibilism, the physical environment may set

limits on, but does not restrict behavior. Finally, via architectural probabilism, behavior

has links to the environment. The aggregate environment reflects the impact of the

characteristics of humans who inhabits it. Aggregate environments are categorized into

two broad types. The first is demographic, which includes inhabitant characteristics like

gender, age, and racial-ethnographic composition of inhabitants. The second is psychological, which includes inhabitant personality types, interests, and learning styles of the composition of the inhabitants. The organizational environment is characterized by planned, systematic, and organized structures that affect functioning. Organizational environments can be understood in relation to constructs like complexity, centralization, formulation, stratification, production, efficiency, and morale. These constructs determine how rigid or how flexible an organizational environment may be. Finally, constructed environments recognize the influence of constructs like environmental press, social climate, and campus culture as "participant perceptions, impressions, and systems of meaning making in understanding the nature of campus environments" (p. 106). Constructed environments are about meaning making for students on the college or university campus. While Strange and Banning (2001) do not address the impact of campus learning environments on student faith development, they do recognize that student affairs professionals should first understand the components of campus environments before shaping them towards intentional learning outcomes. Likewise, if student affairs professionals are going to create programs that impact student faith development, they must first recognize the nature and design of campus learning environments and then learn to modify them towards specific faith development outcomes.

After reviewing the body of literature that attempts to address the impact of the co-curriculum on college students, I have been unable to find conclusive evidence suggesting that student faith development is either enhanced by co-curricular

programming or advanced through specific campus learning environments. Despite the lack of convincing data, numerous researchers have indicated that the influence of student peer groups impacts both personal development and student learning outcomes. Thus, if student faith development is again to be of importance within the college co-curriculum, it is most likely to be advanced through student-to-student relationships. It may also be advanced in a college of the church environment that is specifically fostered to development student faith.

<div align="center">College of the Church Institutions</div>

Despite the longevity of their research in higher education, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that very "few studies have shed any light on the effects of various kinds of colleges on changes in students' religious attitudes and values" (p. 303). What they did find were greater than expected decreases in conventional religious affiliation and religiosity among students who attended selective schools, particularly prestigious, non-denominational colleges. Other researchers found that attending a Protestant, Catholic, or all-men's college tended to suppress changes in religious affiliation. In addition, "while Catholic school attendance also tended to retard declines in religiousness, somewhat greater slippage was associated with Protestant college attendance" (p. 303). Overall, it can be generalized that attendance at a secular institution showed greater declines in religiosity, while enrollment at a church-affiliated colleges tended to produce small increases in religious affiliation. Despite these findings, there has been no definitive conclusion that attendance at a college of the church or any other

type of religious higher education institution enhances or advances student faith development.

Faith Development at a College of the Church

Few scholars have conducted research on student faith development at a college of the church. Cureton (1989) examined the faith development of 165 students at a small, Midwestern, Christian liberal arts college. He attempted to validate the claim the notion that Christian college graduates differ from those of secular institutions because of the integration of faith within the curriculum and co-curriculum. Although he was unable to support that notion, Cureton's findings indicated that students who had an interest in the spiritual dimensions of their own lives also considered themselves religious or spiritual. Haggray (1993) studied five students at a small, Midwestern, Christian liberal arts college to understand how they described their own faith development journeys. He found that Fowler's four tenants of faith as identity, imagination, knowing, and relational were appropriate constructs for their experienced, but failed to conclude that the college of the church enhanced student faith development. Bolen (1994) also interviewed five first-year students at a small, Midwestern, Christian liberal arts college. He found that the perceptions students had of their parents also affected other areas in their own lives. He also claimed that Fowler's theory provided a conceptual framework for his students' perceptions about their own lives, although the model did not provide useful insight into the ways student resolved conflicts with their parents. In these three studies, I found some evidence that Fowler's theory was an appropriate framework for understanding student faith development at a college of the church. What I was unable to discover was

that the environment at a college of the church significantly impacted student faith development.

<u>Lutheran Higher Education</u>

Few people understand the nature of Lutheran higher education institutions. Some recognize them as Christian colleges that were founded by clergy in order to promote Lutheran theology and practice. Others view them as institutions where the majority of students enrolled are affiliated with the Lutheran Church. Lutheran colleges and universities are also seen as private institutions that are not open to students of other Christian denominations or of other faith traditions. According to Christenson (2004), however, the Lutheran college has the "essential task of a university in a way informed by Lutheran theology, particularly as it shapes an understanding of what it means to be human (Lutheran anthropology), the enterprise of knowing and learning (Lutheran epistemology), and our understanding of community" (p. 11).

Christenson argues that Lutheran colleges and universities are unique in the ways they teach, foster learning, form a sense of community, and relate to themselves, their students and to the world. From the unique Lutheran perspectives of anthropology, epistemology, and community, these colleges and universities of the church are distinctive from other institutions in the American higher education system. The Lutheran anthropological perspective applies four principles about what it means to be human. First, humans are of value because of their unique relationship to God. Second, humans are called by God to be stewards to others while being unique individuals. Third, humans are inherently sinful because they deny their own creation, which leads to

separation and alienation from God. Finally, despite their sinful nature, humans hope for a better future. Lutheran epistemology is the study of knowledge guided by a particular theology. The dominant secular epistemology proposes that there is a distinct difference between knowledge and belief and a separation of the self as knower from the world that is known. From a Lutheran perspective, knowledge should be approached "critically, self-critically, suspiciously, self-suspiciously, experimentally, openly inviting a variety of voices, boldly and humbly, relating knowledge to full personhood and contexts of action and community" (Christenson, 2004, pp. 97-98). Put more simply, humans require a holistic approach to knowledge that involves a theological perspective. Community is the place where anthropology and epistemology are realized and worked out in relationship. Community is made up of both geography and persons with a common focus, heritage, belief or purpose. "Community is a very valuable thing, where it already exists, and a thing worth working hard to achieve where it does not. In many colleges and universities it is the most valuable thing they have, more valuable than endowment, famous faculty, and new buildings" (Christenson, 2004, p. 178). Through its unique perspectives on human anthropology, epistemology, and community, Lutheran higher education has made a significant contribution to the modern academy that continues to assume that colleges of the church are not really interested in the truth, but in promoting and preserving a common set of beliefs or practices. Lutheran higher education is shaped by a long tradition that is "neither closed, parochial, nor antirational, but open, free, fearless, respectful of other views and faiths, and thoroughly devoted to the whole truth" (p. 1).

Lutheran Faith Development

Although Fowler's faith development theory has been widely embraced by

scholars from many Christian traditions, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Catholics would

rather promote the specific notion of spiritual formation than a universal theory of faith

development. In response to such criticism, Fowler wrote:

> Lutherans and Calivinists particularly have been slow to embrace this sort of work
> because with some conviction and some reason they believe that in some ways
> Christians can claim the word faith in a unique and singular way, and that others
> have to use the category of religion (as cited in Parks, 1996, p. 15).

In *A Lutheran Examines James W. Fowler,* William O. Avery (as cited in Astley &

Francis, 1992) states that the Lutheran focus on justification of God's grace through faith

lacks an emphasis on sanctification. "Lutherans are so concerned that Christians hear the

free gift of the gospel that they are suspicious of all attempts to prepare for or to grow in

this gift as examples of works' righteousness" (p. 126). For this reason, the author

believes that Lutherans must move beyond Fowler's understanding that faith is created by

man and not freely given by God. Lutherans should focus on the importance of baptism,

which includes the ideas of selfhood and one's life as a baptized person of faith.

By setting Fowler's theory within the context of baptism rather than in faith

development terms, Avery believes that there are many benefits to be gained. First, faith

development theory provides Lutherans with a language for their common faith

experiences. Second, faith development theory allows for a broader Christian perspective

and care within pastoral counseling. Third, Fowler's model provides a lens to

understanding how different people change in their faith journeys. Fourth, the six stages

make our human experiences real and common. Fifth, faith development links theology

to the social sciences. Sixth, faith development may eventually help push society toward a new cultural evolution. If this shift were to occur, the Lutheran Church and other faith traditions could redefine themselves in light of Fowler's faith development paradigm. In conclusion, Fowler's theory of faith development enhances the Lutheran justification of grace through faith by focusing believer's attention on what it means to live and grow as a Christian in the world. Within this context, student faith development is an appropriately considered within the context of Lutheran higher education.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature related to student faith development, college of the church environments and Lutheran higher education. After summarizing the main scholarship in each of these areas, I have drawn three conclusions about the relationship of the co-curriculum on student faith development at a college of the church. First, Fowler's theory is an appropriate model for describing, assessing and understanding student faith development. While the model has some limitations, previous research indicates that faith development deserves serious consideration from student development theorists and student affairs practitioners alike. Fowler's faith development has theoretical and practical application in higher education. Second, much scholarship regarding the impact of the co-curriculum stresses the influence and impact of peer-peer relationships and the impact of peer groups. In addition, student-faculty relationships in which faculty and students share faith conversations or worship experiences also seem fruitful for consideration. These two relationships may be instrumental in enhancing student faith development at a college of the church. Third, it appears that campus

environments can be shaped or designed in ways that contribute to student development. Colleges of the church offer distinctive campus environments that may enhance also student faith development in ways that have not yet been researched and understood. In conclusion, I believe that it is this unique combination of student faith development scholarship and practice, supported by the practical contributions of co-curricular activities, events and relationships, extended through campus earning environments at a college of the church that complete the conceptual framework necessary to support and advance this study. With the research foundations in place, I now turn to an appropriate methodology to understand the relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development at Luther College.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research question that this study was designed to address is how and to what extent does the co-curriculum interact with student faith development at a college of the church? To answer that question, this chapter provides a discussion of the nature of the research design, student population and sample selection techniques, the data collection and analysis procedures, and other methodological and ethical issues related to this successful completion of this study. The chapter concludes with my personal reflections over the methodology before segueing into the study's findings.

Quantitative Design Considerations

In planning for this study, I had intended to utilize a quantitative research design. That approach included a sophisticated analysis of several sets of Luther College student assessment data. After a prolonged conversation with the Director of Institutional Assessment and Research and my dissertation committee chair, it was determined that a quantitative approach would not be an appropriate design for several reasons. First, the data were not robust enough to provide richly detailed descriptions necessary to describe the diverse arena of the college co-curriculum and the individual experiences of student faith development. Second, the student participants in the institutional assessments had not consented to the release of individual data profiles from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Consortium for Institutional Research (CIRP), and the College Student Survey (CSS), national surveys in which Luther College students regularly participate. Finally, the creation of a composite profile from three complex data

sets would have been extremely time-consuming and cumbersome to develop, analyze and interpret in an accurate fashion. Given these three severe limitations to the study methodology, the use of a quantitative research design was thus eliminated.

Qualitative Design Considerations

After the use of a quantitative methodology was ruled out, the appropriateness of a qualitative research design for this study became evident for three specific reasons. First, it had been successfully used in earlier research efforts that examined other aspects of student faith development at a college of the church (Bolen, 1994; Haggray, 1993; Hoffman, 1994). While other researchers (Beers, 1999; Cureton, 1989; Heibert, 1993) explored student faith development via quantitative research design, they reported limited success uncovering statistically significant findings among complex research variables. Cureton (1989) actually concluded that the primary method for measuring faith development should be a qualitative instrument. Second, the nature of the institutional assessment data from the three national surveys did not directly connect to and address the theoretical constructs of student faith development and the co-curriculum. While there were test individual items that measured students' religious practices and scored their specific beliefs, the standardized assessments generally could not provide data to demonstrate numerical measurements of faith development among the Luther College student body. Finally, the very nature of the research question directly lent itself to a qualitative methodology. To describe, assess and understand the complex relationship between the college co-curriculum and student faith development through statistical analyses would have been a daunting task even if relevant data had actually existed.

Given these three severe limitations, it was appropriate and necessary to utilize a qualitative research design for this study.

Case Study Design

There is some disagreement among research scholars about how to define a case study. In the simplest of terms, Stake (1995) considers the case to be the specific object of study. Yin (1994), on the other hand, believes that case study is a specific research methodology. For the purpose of this particular study, a case study was defined as a bounded system existing over time, consisting of multiple sources of data found in a setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001), a definition that falls more in line with Stake's definition than with Yin's.

I approached the case with the explicit understanding that its setting, subjects, and design were all socially constructed and naturally biased by both the researcher and participants. In our interactions, we ascribed both individual and shared perspectives to the Luther College co-curriculum and to our understanding of faith development throughout the qualitative interviews. This case study was also bound by the confines of time and place – it was undertaken during the spring 2005 semester at Luther College. Finally, this case study provided a specific snapshot in time of a specific group of people and circumstances. It cannot and should not be generalized to circumstances, students, and institutions beyond the confines of this study.

Site Selection

Spradley (1980) offers five guidelines to scholars when selecting a research site: simplicity, accessibility, unobtrusiveness, permissibleness, and frequently recurring

activities. Simplicity refers to social settings with the least amount of complexity. In this particular study, the social setting was the Luther College co-curriculum, which included any activity or event, relationship or campus environment that was found outside of the academic classroom. The co-curriculum was further reduced by what the participants themselves stated as meaningful and impacted their faith lives. Generally, the college co-curriculum is a complex construct, but I broke it down into simpler categories to make it manageable for data analysis. Second, accessibility refers to the opportunities for the researcher to understand and relate to the dynamics of the case. As the Director of Residence Life at Luther College for eight years, I had immediate and open access to the participants in this study. My professional position also provided me regular access to the multiple components of the college co-curriculum. The case study was readily accessible to both the study participants and to me. There were no accessibility limitations to the case other than inaccurate recall of past co-curricular and student faith development experiences. Third, unobtrusiveness refers to a minimal amount of distraction caused by the researcher within the social setting. To take an unobtrusive stance, I asked participants to facilitate interviews in either the Residence Life Office or in another place of their own preference. While I was concerned that a sixty-minute interview would impinge upon their busy schedules, none of the participants expressed a concern about giving up an hour of their personal time. Overall, the study proved to be unobtrusive. Fourth, permissibleness refers to the ability of the researcher to gain access to the social setting. Following formal approval of the University of Northern Iowa's Institutional Review Board and Luther College's Human Subjects Review Board, official

permission to the social setting was granted. Informal access to the participants required me to provide a good rationale for participation in the study (via the letter of invitation) and the development of strong rapport with participants prior to facilitating the interview. Although I did not know many of the students who volunteered for the study, all of them knew who I was through my professional position and duties at the college. Finally, frequently recurring activities refers to the participants' interactions in the social setting. My eight years as an employee of Luther College provided me practical experience, institutional intuition and professional insight into the on-going events with students in the co-curriculum. During that time, I had numerous conversations with many students about their faith development and had been involved in activities that had supported or challenged them in their faith lives. I was also aware that student faith development took place in all corners of campus throughout a wide array of activities and events, among diverse relationships and in many different campus environments. Given that the site was simple and accessible and that my presence was generally unobtrusive and permissible, I was confident that reoccurring faith development activities could be understood if I was able to select an appropriate student population for this study.

<div align="center">Study Population</div>

Those eligible to participate in this study included Luther College students who were enrolled during the spring semester 2005; who had earned 60 or more credits before the spring semester 2005; that lived on campus; and who participated in three or more recognized clubs or organizations at Luther College. I selected these particular population criteria for several specific reasons. First, it was important to limit the size of

the population in order to make the study sample manageable. Students were not enrolled were ineligible because they were difficult to reach. Students who had earned less than 60 academic credits were primarily freshmen and sophomores. These students had less experience with the campus co-curriculum than did those who had earned more credits. Second, I believed that students who lived on campus had considerably more experience with the co-curriculum and had more and deeper relationships with their peers in campus environments than those who lived off campus. Third, students who participated in three or more college clubs or organizations were generally exposed to a wider array of activities and events, influential relationships, and campus environments than students who were less engaged in their co-curriculum lives. Finally, I believed that these four criteria sorted out students who would not be a representative example of student faith development at Luther College based on some on my findings in the review of the literature.

<div align="center">Study Sample</div>

A list of nearly 1500 students who met the study population criteria was generated via the campus database. As the Director of Residence Life at Luther College, I was granted open access to the database information in order to contact the study population. The larger population was then narrowed to a smaller, more manageable sample to interview. Limiting research to any sample is an arbitrary decision because it separates a part of the population from what would otherwise be fully integrated and complete population (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). However, without drawing a smaller sample from

the population, this study could not have been conducted in a manner that is consistent with qualitative research design.

The strategy used for narrowing the sample was known as reputation-case, a methodology by which participants were selected based upon the "recommendation of knowledgeable experts for the best examples" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 402). This methodology was deemed appropriate because it was an effective way to select a manageable and information-rich sample from a large and relatively unknown and unmanageable population. Faculty from the Luther College Philosophy and Religion department and student affairs staff from the College Ministries and Student Life departments served as the experts and nominated 40 student participants in January 2005. The nominators were instructed how to select eligible participants via the Sample Nomination Criteria (Appendix A). The criteria that nominators were provided included:

1. Students' names must appear on the population list. These students are eligible to participate in this study based upon their knowledge and experiences with the college co-curriculum.

2. Faculty and staff must be aware that these students have spent time and energy reflecting on their own faith development.

3. Faculty and staff must be aware that the students have been involved in one or more community service experiences either on or off campus.

4. Faculty and staff must be aware that the students have had a variety of interpersonal relationships with Luther community members or with members of the Decorah community.

5. Students do not need to be actively involved in campus ministry, faith-based, or spiritual activities, although participation may be evidence of an expression of student faith development.

6. Students do not need to be members of a particular sectarian group or denomination.

While this list of criteria used to identify diverse examples of student faith development was not exhaustive, it provided sufficient guidance to the Luther College faculty and staff to accurately nominate forty students for the study sample.

Sample Demographics

During the first part of the qualitative interview, participants were asked for eight pieces of demographic information: pseudonym, gender, age, academic class, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and religious practices. These twenty students were evenly divided among men and women. Forty-five percent were 21 years old, 40% were 22 years old, and the remaining were older than 22. The oldest participant was 25. The mean age of all participants was 21.5 years. Participants were also evenly divided with half having junior class standing and the other half having senior class standing. Two-thirds of the sample (65%) said that their race was Caucasian, while the other third (35%) identified themselves as people of color: three were "other"; two were "Black"; and one was "Asian." American nationals comprised 80% of the sample. The remaining 20% identified themselves as Jamaican, Somali, Ghanaian, and South Korean. Sixty percent of the participants claimed a religious affiliation with either the ELCA or the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. The remaining 40% had at least a loose affiliation with

the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the Brethren, the Covenant Church, and other non-denominational Christian churches. One student was raised Muslim. Two others claimed no specific faith tradition. In the final demographic category of the first section of the interview, participants noted their religious practices. Seventy-five percent attended formal worship services. Another 40% engaged in study of religious texts (e.g. a Bible study). Thirty five percent noted that they have daily conversations with a divine being. Thirty percent participated in some college ministries programs either on campus or in the local community. Finally, three students claimed that they had no regular religious practices at all.

Prior to the qualitative interviews, I anticipated that the participants, like the greater student body at Luther College, would be skewed toward the following demographics: women, 21 year olds juniors, and Caucasian Americans of Lutheran heritage. I was pleased to discover that there was a disproportional representation in the sample in all of the demographic categories with the exception of race (75% Caucasian) and ethnicity (80% American). Given that 10% of the student body has identified itself as students of color (7% international students) these demographic skews are not surprising. What was surprising was that 40% of the sample considered themselves non-Lutherans at a college of the church. While the student population has stayed steady at 50% Lutheran, I anticipated that the sample would be biased toward Lutheran students and their faith development activities. I was also astonished that 15% claimed no specific religious practices at all. This particular finding provides some circumstantial evidence towards Folwer's assumption that faith development theory is universal. On the other

hand, 75% of the sample attended formal worship, 40% engaged in on-going text study, and 35% say that they pray, meditate or converse daily with a divine being. These are practices that are commonly associated with students from mainline Christian faith traditions. While the intentional sampling process utilized in this study could have brought forth a homogeneous participants pool, it did not. I believe that the twenty students interviewed were not diverse not only in their demographic composition, but also in their faith development experiences. While this small sample cannot be representative of the larger student body at Luther College or beyond the campus, it provided rich and fruitful data for understanding the intersections of the co-curriculum and student faith development at one particular college of the church.

<u>Data Collection</u>

I was granted access to the study participants through the human subjects research processes at the University of Northern Iowa's Graduate College and Luther College prior to January 2005. Experienced researchers know that it is necessary to get more than formal approval when conducting qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). Therefore, I took the following steps in order to ensure that effective rapport was developed with the study participants. First, I made initial contact with nominees by way of the Participant Invitation Letter (Appendix B). That letter was delivered to student campus mailboxes in February 2005. The letter was clear, welcoming and succinct. Second, I made a follow-up telephone call to the nominees' residence hall rooms a few days after the invitation letter was mailed. During that phone call, I invited students to participate in a 60-minute interview either in my private office located in the student

union or in a location of their choice. If the nominees did not return my telephone message, then I followed up with them via email, requesting that they schedule an interview time and location with me. If the letter, phone message and email all failed to solicit a response, then I crossed the nominee off of my eligibility list. Third, at the scheduled interview I reacquainted participants with the purpose of the study, the interview format, and also addressed any questions that they had concerning all aspects of the research. I found that the nominees generally had very few questions and were eager to participate in the study. Fourth, I asked students to read, sign and return the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). I also reminded students a few times that their participation was optional, and that they could stop their involvement in the study at any time prior to or throughout the interview process. Students were also notified that their interviews would be audio taped, but that they must select a pseudonym to be used in the interview. While there were a few questions about the nature of confidentiality, most of the nominees gladly singed the consent forms and agreed to participate in the study. Finally, I thanked students for their participation in the study as a final step in establishing rapport before the interviews began. Rapport was easily established through this protocol.

The method for collecting data was the semi-standardized interview (Berg, 2001). The interview consisted of a single page of predetermined questions and follow-up prompts. "These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress" (2001, p. 70). The Interview Protocol Guide (Appendix D) listed the predetermined questions and follow-up prompts. Extended duration, multiple sections, and personal interaction between the

participants and the researcher (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) characterized the nature of the interview. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length. A few went longer than that, and the shortest interview lasted only about 45 minutes. They were divided into four separate subsections, which included questions pertaining to participant demographics, college of the church information, co-curricular knowledge, and faith development experiences while at Luther College. Finally, the interviews were conducted at times, and if requested, locations suggested by the students themselves. The semi-structured interview format was comfortable for both me and for the participants.

A paid assistant transcribe the twenty qualitative interviews during the summer 2005 term. I utilized both line and page numbers to assist with the data analysis and interpretation procedures. After the interviews were transcribed, I verified their accuracy by providing all of the participants with a copy of their transcript. Participants were asked to review the written transcripts and email appropriate modifications or deletions back to me. None of the participants replied with transcript revisions, additions or deletions. Several of the students who participated in the study were appreciative of the fact that they had a written record of the conversation, a short diary of their faith development experiences. The interview transcripts were ready for data analysis by the fall 2005.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Once the participant interviews had been transcribed by a paid assistant and returned to me, I began to formulate the data analysis procedures. Not sure where to start in that process, the documents initially just occupied space in my desk while I waited for

an extended period of time to give them sufficient time and attention. During the fall

break, I began the data analysis by listening to the taped interviews. After a preliminary

review of each recording, I listened to each interview again while simultaneously reading

through the typed transcript to check for accuracy. In that process, I found and corrected

a few small typing mistakes made by the paid assistant. After reading through each

transcript one more time, I then refined the basic steps of my data analysis plan, knowing

that it was likely to evolve throughout the process. Over the course of the second half of

the fall 2005 semester, data analysis proceed slowly via these five overlapping and

closely-related steps: organizing the data into broad themes; coding the data into specific

chunks; testing the data for new understandings and searching for alternate explanations;

writing the findings into a comprehensive document; and then reducing the document

into a manageable summary of the findings. Ultimately, the summary of findings became

the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

In the first step of the data analysis, I organized the interview transcripts into the

four broad themes that came directly out of the interview protocol questions: participant

demographics, college of the church information, co-curricular knowledge, and student

faith development experiences. I then broke down the interview data down further into

individual participant responses from each of the items asked in the structured interview.

From those itemized remarks, I was able to construct some broad themes. I

reconstructed these themes into the preliminary outline of a theoretical model that

demonstrated college student faith development. While the themes and the model were

useful in summarizing the data into descriptive categories, they were only superficially

organized and shallow in meaning. I was encouraged by the qualitative research specialists on my dissertation committee to dig deeper into the interviews and to find commons sets of responses and outliers that transcended the initial data groupings.

In the second step of the analysis procedure, I coded the interviews into smaller and more specific data chunks. This process involved re-reading the interview transcripts, reworking the preliminary categories, and reducing them down into distinct and meaningful subcategories, definitions and codes. While this is a commonly accepted method of data analysis, the idea of breaking down the overall findings into challenges to and supports for student faith development did not come to me until I began to see similar stories emerge from the preliminary data categories. As I meticulously coded the data, I slowly began to realize that there were co-curricular activities that the participants believed had challenged their faiths, while there were other events that supported their faiths. As I dug deeper into the transcripts and divided the data into more definitive chunks, I saw that the co-curricular programs that the participants had described were actually three larger components of the co-curriculum: activities and events, relationships and campus environments. Each of those components, in turn, contained specific programs, people or campus contexts that challenged student faith, supported student faith, or did both simultaneously. I also noticed that a few of those components actually fell outside of the college co-curriculum by definition. While they were important in the faith development experiences of students surveyed, these extra-curricular components were not considered for the study. They were coded as "others" and separated from the co-curricular components. Yet other sections of the interviews were reduced to

autobiographical information or were coded as outlying statements because they did not fall into the basic challenge and support categories. By the end of the second step of the data analysis process, I had converted the four basic themes two overarching categories and 51 specific subcategories, only four of which fell outside of the overarching challenges to and supports for student faith development.

In the third step of the data analysis, I tested the data for new understandings and explored alternative explanations. In practical terms, this meant that I had to justify my coding system to a number of people. Members of my dissertation committee challenged me to reexamine the loose-fitting definitions, and asked me to spell out the coding chart in more clarity. By doing that, I merged codes that were not separate and distinct from others, and dropped other codes that had little support from the interview data. The Director of Institutional Assessment and Research at Luther College, my peer reviewer, also asked me several questions about the data chunks. His questions helped me strengthen the coding definitions and also tease out data that neither challenged nor supported student faith development at the college. With his encouragement, I also revised the literature review with theory that supported my findings. Finally, I had to explain to some colleagues not familiar with my work how I saw the data sorting itself out in my findings. In total, their feedback helped to refine the data coding process in a manner that was significantly improved and more sophisticated than when it had begun. By the time I had finally completed the second step of chunking the data into specific codes, I had enough analysis to bring the separate sections together into the first draft of a comprehensive document.

Step four of the data analysis involved integrating the findings into a meaningful document. The original draft of that document was 190 pages in length. While it was certainly comprehensive, it was not organized in a readable and logical format. Making it meaningful for my dissertation committee meant reducing the analysis into shorter sections. With the encouragement of the qualitative research specialists on my committee, I created one section that highlighted twenty individual student faith development narratives and a second that explained three co-curricular components that both challenged and supported student faith development. By the time I had reduced the data analysis into a meaningful summary, it was only 60 pages long and much easier to read. After making a few more adjustments, I then organized the codes into a two-tiered model. Tier one (Figure 1) lists the challenges to student faith development. Tier two (Figure 2) lists the supports for student faith development. The model provides a tool that can be used by student affairs professionals to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development. Once the threshold of saturation (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992) had been achieved, the data analysis procedures were concluded and I moved forward with my interpretation of the findings.

<div align="center">Validity</div>

The study sample was selected purposefully. Therefore, it cannot be generalized to similar higher education institutions, student populations, or even to the experiences of other students at Luther College. The design is valid to the extent to which its interpretations and application is mutually meaningful to the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001. Despite this limitation, I employed several

strategies designed to enhance the validity of this study. First, the data were tape recorded in order to reduce inaccurate transcription and improper coding of the interview data. Second, each participant was asked to review his or her interview transcript as a way of checking their accuracy and making revisions. Third, I sought out negative cases as a way to challenge reoccurring patterns of observations, behaviors, and other findings. Fourth, I also secured the assistance of a peer reviewer, in this case the Director of Assessment and Institutional Research at Luther College. Finally, I assumed and maintained a stance of critical reflexivity by constantly assessing my own roles and actions throughout the entire research process. These five steps help improve design validity and increase the robustness of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were considered during each phase of the research process. The standard concerns of participant anonymity and data confidentiality were addressed in the formal consent processes of the Graduate College and the Institutional Review Board at the University of Northern Iowa and the Luther College Human Subjects Review Board. Of greater ethical concern were the dual roles that I assumed as a researcher and student affairs professional in the same institutional setting. As a researcher, I was obligated to maintain the confidentiality and remain non-judgmental of the student participants and their co-curricular experiences. As the Director of Residence Life, I was obligated to report and to act upon student violations of ethical conduct codes, college policies, or state and federal laws. Since these dual roles could have led to a conflict of interest during the implementation of this study, I instituted five basic ethical safeguards.

First, students were notified in writing and by word of mouth that participation in the study was voluntary. They could have withdrawn from it at any time for any reason. Second, participants chose pseudonyms, assumed names used to protect their true identities. They were also notified that their age, race, ethnicity, religious background, and academic status would be recorded and made public in the publication of the study. Third, I made every effort to protect the confidentiality of student participants through standard research protocols, unless there was convincing evidence that the information they shared was harmful to themselves or to others in the campus community. If that were the case, and it did not actually occur, I would have made an immediate referral of the student to the offices of Student Life, Counseling, or Campus Security at Luther College. Students who would have demonstrated the potential form harm would have been immediately withdrawn from participation in the study. Fourth, the dual roles of researcher and professional and the potential for conflict were clearly articulated to the participants. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions about my roles. Finally, I informed the students that the purpose of this study was to describe assess and understand the relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development at a college the church, and not for other unidentified or secretive purposes. Through these five proactive and protective steps, I anticipated that most, if not all, ethical concerns were addressed prior to the signing the Participant Consent Form.

<u>Methodology Summary</u>

The population eligible to participate in this study included 1500 Luther College students who met four specific criteria: they were enrolled during the spring 2005

semester; they had earned at least sixty academic credits by the beginning of the fall 2004

semester; they lived in campus residence halls during the spring 2005 semester; and they

had participated in three or more official college clubs, athletic teams or student

organizations or activities during their first two years at the college. The sample was

selected from the larger population with the assistance of the Philosophy and Religion

faculty, College Ministry staff, and Student Life professionals. Willing faculty and staff

nominated 40 students whom they believed were diverse examples of student faith

development at Luther College. These were six criteria by which the faculty and staff

selected the participants: they were aware that these students have spent time and energy

reflecting on their own faith development; they were aware that the students have been

involved in one or more community service experiences either on or off campus; they

were aware that the students had a variety of interpersonal relationships with other Luther

students, staff or faculty, or local community members; they were informed that students

not need to be involved in campus ministries, faith-based, or spiritual activities, although

such participation could have been evidence of student faith development; and they were

informed that students did not need to be members of a particular sectarian group or

denomination. The 40 nominees were then invited to participate in the study, although

only 20 students volunteered to participate in qualitative interviews. The semi-structured

interview was divided into four sections: demographic information, college of the church

expectations, co-curricular involvement, and faith development experiences. The

qualitative interviews were audio taped for future data analysis. Interviews were

completed by the end of the spring 2005 semester. The transcripts were completed

during the summer 2006 semester. Data analysis took place over the period of the fall 2005 semester. The findings were written up over the spring 2006 semester.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The qualitative design was imperative to addressing the research question. A case study was appropriate given the limitations of other qualitative methodologies. The sampling technique created a strong pool of eligible participants. The semi-structured interview design, after a few revisions, provided much information in the following areas: demographics of the participants; college of the church expectations and perceptions; co-curricular activities, relationships and environments; and overall student faith development experiences. The data analysis techniques evolved as interview transcripts were collected, coded, and categorized, but the procedures were designed to yield many fruitful findings. While there are not any significant changes that I would make to the study methodology, future researchers may benefit from the following suggestions.

First, I would have kept an accurate field log. A log is typically used to revise interview questions or techniques and to record observations of the participants or of their patterns of responses. As I eagerly conducted the qualitative interviews, I neglected to take additional field notes. I did make adjustments on the fly to the order of the interview questions and to my interview techniques, but did not do so in a manner as to document their success. I also found that I took interview notes on the interview protocol guide that served as a substitute for the field log. In retrospect, I would have taken more time following the interviews to reflect not only upon participant replies to my questions, but also on the nature of the interviews themselves. Second, although data analysis is an

evolving process in qualitative research, I suggest that future researchers think through the process in much more detail than I did before starting the process of transcript analysis. Data analysis can be quite complicated and especially time-consuming without a clear direction in mind. I ultimately found that I had to reread and analyze the interview transcripts in six different ways in order to find a method that made sense to the readers. Finally, I strongly recommend that future scholars and student affairs practitioners continue to scan the student faith development literature for appropriate data collection and analysis methodologies as studies in student faith development and similar areas of research are being continuously developed. While it was an invigorating intellectual exercise to create a new methodology, the process of data analysis took considerably longer than I had anticipated. Ultimately, the study methodology provided interesting and fruitful findings about the relationship of the co-curriculum with student faith development at a college of the church.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributed to student faith development at a college of the church. To help address that question, this chapter provides the reader with a summary of the findings which is divided into five sections. The first section summarizes the demographic information from the sample of twenty students who participated in faith development interviews. The second section conveys their reflections about Luther as a college of the church. The third section highlights the experiences of the interview participants with co-curricular activities and events, relationships and campus environments. The fourth section of this chapter reformats the overall findings in this study in a two-tiered model which includes co-curricular challenges to, and co-curricular supports for student faith. The two basic tiers in the model are further divided into three categories: activities, relationships, and environments. An explanation of the mechanisms that either challenge or support student faith development from the perspectives of the participants is provided within each of these categories. The fifth section addresses the most significant findings in the study. The chapter concludes with a brief summary before segueing into the items for discussion and implications for future practice in student affairs and research in student faith development.

<u>Demographic Information</u>

The semi-structured interview format used with study participants was divided into four parts. In the first part of the interview, students were asked for eight pieces of

demographic information: pseudonym, gender, age, academic class, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and religious practices. The sample of twenty students was evenly divided among men and women. Forty-five percent were 21 years old, 40% were 22 years old, and the remaining 15% were older than 22. The youngest was 20 and the oldest was 23. The mean age of all participants was 21.5 years old. They were also evenly divided among academic class with half maintaining junior status and the other half achieving senior status. Two-thirds of the sample (65%) identified their race as Caucasian, while the remaining 35% identified themselves as "other": four as "Black"; three as "multiracial"; and one as "Asian." American nationals comprised 80% of the sample. The remaining 20% identified themselves as "other": they are Jamaican, Somalian, Ghanaian, and Korean. Fifty percent of the participants claimed a religious affiliation with the Lutheran Church. The remaining 40% stated an affiliation with the following denominations: Roman Catholic, Church of the Brethren, United Methodist, Covenant Church, or a non-denominational church. One student was Muslim. Two students claimed no specific religious tradition at all. Seventy-five percent of the sample regularly attends formal worship services. Forty percent engages in a regular study of religious texts (e.g. Bible study). Thirty-five percent claimed that they have daily prayer or conversations with a divine being. Thirty percent actively participate in Luther's College Ministries programs. Three students claimed that they had no regular religious practices at all. Aggregate demographic information for the twenty student participants in this study is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Aggregate Demographics

Gender	Male	Female			
	50%	50%			
Age	21	22	Other		
	45%	40%	15%		
Class	Junior	Senior			
	50%	50%			
Race	Caucasian	Other			
	65%	35%			
Ethnicity	American	Other			
	80%	20%			
Affiliation	Lutheran	Other			
	55%	45%			
Practices	Worship	Study	Prayer	Ministries	No Practices
	75%	40%	35%	30%	15%

I had anticipated that the study sample, similar to the aggregate demographic composition of the student body at Luther College, would be skewed toward the following categories: females, 21-year olds, juniors, Caucasians, Americans, and those affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Male and female students were evenly represented, as were students with junior class and senior class standing. The mean age of the participants was 21.5 years, which was expected given that the student body is traditionally 18-22 years old. Three-quarters of the participants were Caucasian. The overall racial composition of the student body is nearly 90% Caucasian, so students of color were over-represented in the study. In addition, 80% of the participants were American, although the international student body represents less than 10% of the total. The race and ethnicity biases in the sample were not unexpected. What I found surprising were the demographic findings from the final two categories: religious affiliation and religious practices. While 55% of the sample stated an affiliation with the Lutheran Church, the remaining 45% represented several different traditions: Catholic (15%), Methodist, Church of the Brethren, Covenant, and a non-denominational Christian church. One student was Muslim, and another student claimed no religious affiliation at all. At a college of the church where slightly more than half of the student body is Lutheran, I had anticipated that the purposeful sampling technique would have generated a larger pool of Lutherans as examples of student faith development. Religious practice findings were even more interesting. Three-quarters of the sample regularly attend formal worship at a home congregation, a church in the local community, or even on campus. Forty percent participate in a Bible study or devote regular time for their own

study of other religious texts (e.g. the Koran). One-third of the participants pray, meditate with or talk with a divine being on a daily basis. Thirty percent stated that they participate in college ministries, although I suspect that the actual number is higher because of co-curricular findings in the proceeding section of the interview. Other religious practices included: tithing, working at church camp, teaching Sunday school, and trying to live a life like that of religious leaders. Finally, three out of the 20 students said that they had no religious practices at all.

Overall, the demographics of the study participants were representative of the student body at Luther College in most areas. They were less representative of the Luther student body in their religious affiliation and in their religious practices. By this I mean that the Lutheran student voice was not as dominant as it could have been in the study. The participants spoke on behalf of seven different sectarian and two religious traditions. In addition, there was a wider spread of religious practices than I anticipated among this group of participants. Many of them mentioned that they were engaging in two or more religious practices, while three of them reported that they had none at all. While this relatively small student sample (Table 2), and cannot represent the larger student body at Luther College, or reflect the composition of another higher education institution, it does provide some fruitful information for an interpretation of the intersection of student demographics and faith development at one particular college of the church during one snapshot in time and place.

Table 2

Participant Individual Demographics

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Religious Affiliation
Bob Hernando	Male	22	Caucasian	American	No Affiliation
Sheeba Johnson	Female	23	Black	Ghanaian	Catholic Church
Andy Anderson	Male	22	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Rebecca John	Female	21	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Besma Bakaya	Female	21	Black	Somalian	Muslim
Fred Smith	Male	21	Asian	Korean	Lutheran Church
Elizabeth Orchid	Female	21	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Wayne Chestnut	Male	22	Multiracial	American	Non-denominational
Jerry Hall	Male	21	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Minnesota Woman	Female	22	Multiracial	American	Catholic Church
Joe Smith	Male	21	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Katie Anderson	Female	21	Caucasian	American	Covenant Church
Francis Baker	Male	22	Caucasian	American	Catholic Church
Pamela Ann	Female	21	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Jennifer Johnson	Female	22	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Andrew Jackson	Male	21	Caucasian	American	Methodist Church
Taylor Johnson	Female	22	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
David Brandt	Male	20	Black	Jamaican	Brethren Church
Joanna Smith	Female	22	Caucasian	American	Lutheran Church
Dee Norway	Male	20	Black	American	Lutheran Church

<u>College of the Church Findings</u>

In the second part of the qualitative interview, study participants were asked six specific questions about Luther as a college of the church. The first question asked why they chose Luther, and why they selected a Lutheran college. Question 2 inquired how their experiences there had been like they expected them to be, and how they had been different than they had expected them. Participants were then queried how they thought Luther was like other colleges, and how they thought it was different than other colleges. The fourth question inquired as to what the participants liked about Luther, and what they disliked about it. Question 5 invited the students to share whatever else they wanted to about their experiences at the college. In the final part of this section of the interview, participants were invited to share their plans following graduation from Luther College. College of the church findings were analyzed and subsequently reduced into four common themes: expectations, surprises, disappointments and future plans.

<u>Expectations</u>

Prior to arriving on campus, 35% of the student sample expected that they would meet a lot of people. One in four students expected that they would also develop intellectually. Three of the twenty students actually had no expectations for their college experience. Only two participants said that the found collegiate life to be exactly what they expected it to be. While these numbers are not statistically significant, they do reveal a pattern when the findings are taken as a whole.

Luther College is considered a moderately selective liberal arts college that tends to attract bright and intelligent students, but this group did not seem to have given much

thought to their collegiate lives before they arrived on campus. The participants in this study did not seem to have high expectations of Luther College and their future experiences there. According to the most recent edition of its annual report on the best liberal arts colleges, *U.S. News and World Report* (2006) slipped from the second to the third tier of private American higher education institutions. While the fall in rank can be related to a recent adjustment in the scoring system, this group of students may reflect a broader trend in admission at Luther College. These students may not necessarily have high expectations for their college careers. While this particular finding seems to run contrary to what I assumed I would find among the student body, it raises some important questions. Why would only one-third of the sample consider that they would meet a lot of people? Why would only one-quarter of the sample consider that they would develop intellectually? Why would three out of 20 students have no expectations at all? Is Luther College really an institution that attracts curious students and students with high aspirations for their lives? While I do not know the answer to these questions, I would rather reframe this finding in another way. Perhaps rather than judging this group of students for flawed expectations before entering college, it would be beneficial to understand what they actually found after arriving at Luther. I will now turn to those meaningful experiences that either surprised study participants or disappointed them at a college of the church.

<u>Surprises</u>

While I did not ask the study participants to comment upon specific surprises that they encountered while at Luther College, there were a few worth mentioning that I

discovered through the data analysis procedures. Four students found the academic programs were more challenging than they had anticipated. Three were surprised that the academic programs challenged their faith. Two of the twenty students mentioned each of the following surprises in their interviews: that their career plans had changed; that their worldviews had expanded; and that time management was a consistent struggle for them. One international student experienced culture shock after arriving on campus for the new student orientation program. Generally, I found that this group encountered few surprises at Luther College. Those experiences that were surprising tended to be related to the rigor of the academic program and not to the challenges of the college co-curriculum. Therefore, in addition to having relatively few expectations in their collegiate lives, this group seems to have encountered few surprises as well.

Disappointments

The participants in this study encountered very few disappointments in their collegiate lives. The lack of diversity among community members was the most commonly voiced disappointment, although four of the twenty students noted it as a significant problem at Luther College. The consensus among this subgroup was that the institution was open and embracing of difference, but that it had much work to do in recruiting diverse faculty, staff and students. Perhaps contradicting that disappointment, 45% of the sample said that they valued the relationships that they had developed with faculty and staff. Six students also commented on the strong sense of community at the college. Four students stated how friendly people were at Luther. These comments seem to reveal a tension that may be inherent in a place like Luther. Founded upon a specific

sectarian mission, the college may do well in recruiting members of the greater Lutheran Church, but seems to fall short in fully welcoming others whose life experiences fall beyond the parameters of its particular mission. While creating a diverse community is an important part of Luther's mission, the dream has yet to be fully realized. For the four students who have realized that living in a diverse community is an important aspect of their higher education, that missing component seems to be a significant disappointment.

A less obvious disappointment, but one that I am sensitive to as a college administrator at Luther College, was the lack of mention of specific student affairs professionals by students in the interviews. In summary, only one student in this section of the interview stated that student and college administrator relationships were strained. Beyond that comment, what is important to note here is what I did not find in the data analysis. I believe that students' relationships with college administrators are the exception to the rule when it comes to Luther's perceived strong sense of community. The college pastors, a residence hall director, a security officer, an athletic trainer and the Dean of the College were the only administrators mentioned in the interviews. This finding begs the question -- what are the roles of student affairs professionals and other college administrators in development of student faith on campus? Should programs that support faith development be left to College Ministries or should student affairs professionals be more actively involved in them? Should the Philosophy and Religion faculty continue to challenge students in their faith beliefs and practices or should college administrators assume a larger role in that area? Should student affairs professionals be more intentional in their programmatic efforts, in developing relationships with students

and in creating campus environments? Or should we step back even further and allow student faith development to occur when, where and how it may on campus? These are but a few questions that I will attempt address in the final chapter of this study.

Future Plans

Despite their articulated lack of high expectations, the shortage of surprises, and the few disappointments they encountered, this group of students had very clear career plans following commencement from Luther College in May 2005. Sixty percent of the sample planned to attend graduate school within the next year or two. Thirty percent of those involved wanted to pursue professional ministry careers. Twenty-five percent were planning on careers in education. Four students wanted to pursue careers in social work or non-profit agencies. Only one student (of junior class standing) had no clear plans following commencement. This group of students seemed to be called to lives of service to others. They planned on using their Luther College education and experiences as a stepping-stone into graduate programs or careers that typically ministered to the needs to other peoples. This group of students was graduating with high expectations for themselves. Noticeably absent from the list of future plans were careers in business. Since the third largest major at Luther College is business management, I had anticipated that there would have been more of a calling to that vocation. None of the students I interviewed, however, indicated that they would be starting their own businesses or entering the corporate sector after commencement. This finding may give guidance to student affairs professionals as they discuss with students their sense of vocation and life choices following graduation from a college of the church.

<u>Co-curricular Findings</u>

In the third section of the qualitative interview I asked participants seven

questions about their co-curricular experiences at Luther College. The first question

addressed where they lived on campus, and how living in that place affected them.

Question 2 inquired which campus activities they were involved in. The third question

queried what leadership positions they had held. The fourth question asked students to

describe memorable campus events or programs they had attended. Question 5 focused

on campus relationships. The sixth question asked about meaningful environments. The

final question was encouraged students to discuss any other activities, relationships, or

environments that had been important to them at Luther. I found that their replies to

these questions fell into three broad co-curricular components: activities and events,

relationships and campus environments.

<u>Activities and Events</u>

The participants were involved in 41 different and a total of 141 activities.

College Ministries programs were mentioned 19 times. Residence Life, Student

Activities Council, and the Recreational Sports Program each had seven citations. An

impressive list of 27 campus leadership positions was also tallied. There were multiple

roles for students in Residence Life (8), College Ministries (7), and the Student Activities

Council (4). I am aware that nominators who worked with participants in their roles as

faculty and student affairs professionals biased the sample. Despite the biases, it should

be pointed out that this group of students was heavily involved, if not over-involved, in

their co-curricular lives. The level of student involvement begs the question of whether

or not the sample over-extended itself. With demanding academic and co-curricular schedules, I am puzzled how these students found time for rigorous faith examination. Given that the nominators selected this group based on what they perceived as credible evidence of student faith development, the campus culture of busy-ness, therefore, may actually encourage or enhance student faith rather than retard its development. Regardless of what actually does occur, it is a fair summary to state that this group of senior and junior students was very engaged in their co-curricular lives at Luther.

Relationships

Relationships with both faculty and staff and their relationships with other peers on campus were clearly important to the participants in the study. They tended to view the faculty and staff members as intellects, mentors and advisors in academic and co-curricular endeavors. Campus peers, on the other hand, were seen as colleagues in shared developmental endeavors. Relationships with administrative staff, again, were rarely mentioned although the Dean of the College, a pastor, a security officer, a residence hall director and an athletic trainer received some recognition. While it was encouraging to learn that students find their relationships with faculty and peers as meaningful, it was somewhat disheartening to learn that student affairs professionals seem to play an insignificant role in student faith development at Luther College. Administrative staff often functions as disciplinarians, financial accountants, behavioral critics and policy enforcers. Despite the fact that there was little mention of student affairs professionals in the co-curricular findings in this study, there is no reason to believe that they also cannot

interact with students as educators, supportive supervisors and ministers to faith development.

Environments

Thirty-five percent of the sample lived in Farwell Hall in single-sex residential clusters that house thirteen upper class students around a common living space. Farwell residents noted the benefits of living in smaller, more intimate student communities where fellowship opportunities frequently occurred. Five of the participants lived with up to five other students in Baker Village townhouses which contain private bedrooms and a common living room and kitchen. Baker Village residents enjoyed the autonomy of living apart from their peers, but were also concerned about their separation from the larger community. Twenty percent lived in Dieseth and Miller halls, twin high-rise towers built on the edge of campus during campus rebellions and protests of the 1960's. Towers house one-third of the student body and most of the sophomore class at Luther. Towers residents were concerned about lack of privacy, excessive noise and the lack of a sense of community there. Overall, students living in the upper-class residence halls comprised three-quarters of the sample. The remaining one-fourth lived in Brandt, Olson or Ylvisaker halls because they were acting as Resident Assistants in the first-year student halls. These participants noted the energy, excitement and the struggle for autonomy and identity that consume much of the freshmen experience.

The residence halls received most of the comments concerning important spaces on campus. There seem to be two reasons for this response. First, student rooms are seen as private sanctuaries, places of solitude and isolation from the larger community. These

rooms provide a quiet and comfortable place to allow students space from the constant

chaos of the co-curricular life that surrounds them. A somewhat contradictory response,

the residence halls also provide social gathering spaces for the development of peer

networks and social outlets. In that regard, the residence hall lounges, hallways and

foyers are loud, busy and engaging spaces for students. If not adequately designed and

monitored, they also encourage inappropriate student behavior and erode community-

building efforts. Another meaningful environment is the Center for Faith and Life

(CFL). It is generally quiet, a place for students to be calm and meditate. Chapel

services take place in the CFL on a daily basis. Most of the memorable programs

mentioned in section two of the interviews were held there because the CFL is home to

the main auditorium. It is the gathering-place for many academic rituals (e.g.

convocations), co-curricular programs (e.g. student orientation), and the offices that

traditionally sponsor faith development activities – hence its name. There is something

about the CFL and its small prayer chapel that encourage meaning to be fashioned

through a diverse variety of academic, religious and social events. It inspires students to

worship, reflect over their lives and give thanks for their many blessings.

<div align="center">Faith Development Findings</div>

In the previous sections of this chapter I have focused on findings from the first

three parts of the semi-structured interview. This section will discuss findings from the

fourth part of the interview, as well as provide a summary of the findings from all parts of

the data analysis. I organized the faith development findings into a two-tiered model.

Tier one (Figure 1) lists the challenges to student faith development. Tier two (Figure 2)

lists the supports for student faith development. The two-tiered model is supported by interview excerpts that describe the participants' experiences with each challenge or support. The model should be used by student affairs professionals as an analytical tool to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church.

Challenges to Student Faith Development

For the purpose of this study, I have defined a challenge to student faith development as any co-curricular activity or event, relationship, or environment at a college of the church that causes a student to experience discomfort in, uncertainty about, or formulate questions in a manner that enhances or advances his or her faith. Activities and events at Luther College are comprised of two subcategories: speakers and programs. Programs are further divided into those sponsored through College Ministries and those that funded by the Lilly Sense of Vocation Program. Relationships are divided into two subcategories: faculty and staff-student, and student-to-student relationships. There are four specific environments that challenge student faith development at Luther College: Center for Faith and Life; residence halls; college of the church environment; and the sense of community. Other challenges that lie beyond the confines of the co-curriculum, but also impacted student faith development include: Bible of church camp; transition event; traumatic event; separation event; classroom experiences; value or belief; personal reflection; diversity of community; and institutional politics. While I will not review each and every challenge that was found in the transcript analysis, I will touch upon several that both the participants and I found particularly meaningful.

Activities

    Speakers

    Programs

        College Ministries

        Vocational Program

Relationships

    Faculty and Staff-Student

    Student-Student

Environments

    Center for Faith and Life

    Residence Halls

    College of Church

    Sense of Community

Other Challenges (Beyond the Co-curriculum)

    Bible or Church Camp

    Transition Event

    Traumatic Event

    Separation Event

    Classroom Experiences

    Value or Belief

    Personal Reflection

    Diversity of Community

    Institutional Politics

Figure 1. Challenges to student faith development.

<u>Speakers</u>

A wide variety of speakers are typically brought to the Luther College each year through the Students Activities Council, Campus Ministries, Diversity Center, Dean's Office and other academic and student life departments. Some presenters speak on current political issues. During the presidential election season, for example, John Kerry's speech helped move him ahead of the other contenders in the Iowa primary. Supporters Michael Moore and Rosie O'Donnell made a guest appearance to rally support on behalf of Kerry. Cornell West, Newt Gingrich and Sharon Dolaz-Parks have all spoken on issues of diversity and its effect on community. Because Luther is a college of the church, speakers often use the podium to discuss issues of faith within the context of their areas of expertise. For the students who attend these activities and events, the speeches can be meaningful. Taylor, a 22-year old senior, recalls a confrontation between a Holocaust speaker and a member of the audience.

> She [a Holocaust speaker] came and I think one of the things that made it most memorable was the person that stood up and asked questions during it and I was just…I'd never met someone that had said those things about the Holocaust, that had denied its existence or said that it wasn't that way. I just remember how upset that the speaker got and how she just didn't even know what to tell the man. And I think it was the first time where I'd ever seen, like, just outright prejudice or denial of prejudice. It was kind of an eye-opening experience.

Taylor's experiences with the speaker are not unique to her. Dee, a 20-year old junior remembers how hopeful he felt when hearing an African-American speaker talk of his friendship with a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

> I think he [the speaker] attended Howard University and actually his lecture was about the Ku Klux Klan, how he was a black man, interviewed them, and he actually built a friendship with someone from the Ku Klux Klan and still keeps in contact with this guy today, was able to persuade him to change his ways without

actually trying to make him change his ways. So I was like, "Huh! I guess there is hope!

Dee, an African-American student concerned about the lack of diversity on campus drew hope and inspiration from a speaker who overcame significant personal obstacles in his lifetime. While the college can afford to bring in a big-name speaker only once or twice throughout an academic year, most of the campus speakers are long-standing members of the Luther College community. Joe, a 21-year old junior remembers one such chapel service in which he disagreed with one of the college pastors.

> Sometimes I'll go to church on campus or I'll go to chapel and I suppose that's not a certain pastor but it could be a member of the faculty. And I'll listen to those. Honestly, I don't always agree with what they say so I kind of, you know, look in my mind and, you know, "Why am I disagreeing with this?" And sometimes they just. Yeah, so it's really made me think about that. It's kind of influenced me in looking at the Bible to maybe not look at it so literally.

While not every speaker moves students to immediate action in their lives and careers, the impact of their words and actions can provoke disbelief, hope, despair or serious disagreement in a way that challenges students to develop in their faiths.

College Ministries Programs

College Ministries may be a stand-alone office in the Center for Faith and Life at Luther College, but its programs pervade the entire campus community. Pastor Mike Blake, department head for the past 15 years, has many important responsibilities: coordinating daily chapel; advising the Student Congregation Council; working with Outreach leaders; mentoring pre-seminary students in the Diakonos program;

coordinating the Lilly Sense of Vocation programs; and collaborating on recruiting and partnering efforts with the Admissions Office. Pastor David Valdez provides several complimentary roles: coordinating Wednesday Eucharist and special worship services; advising the Focus planning group; mentoring key student leaders; overseeing Church Youth Fest; administering the office budgets; and being responsible for a college presence at ELCA events. Pastor Amy Zink Larson is responsible for an equally heavy load of programming efforts: coordinating Sunday worship, mentoring other student leaders; advising Diakonos; overseeing church group visits events; and coordinating student catechism. This vast array of programming is designed to provide students with a support network for their faiths. However, some of the activities and events that come out of the office can be challenging and move students to develop in their faith lives in directions that were unanticipated. For example, Katie, a 21-year old senior discusses her initial encounter with College Ministries as a first year student at Luther College.

> I had come from just, like, being involved a lot in youth group. And there's so many more organizations in College Ministries here that it was really hard what to pick to be involved in. So that was actually really exciting to see all the things that they're doing and the ways that faith are expressed on campus. Sometimes we differ in views like social justice versus relationship with Christ, but other than that, I don't think anybody really predicts how college will turn out until they get there so they have all their faith based off of high school. And you get to college and it's a totally new experience and I think you learn and grow from all the experiences, whether or not you grow parallel to the school or a little different but I still think, oh well, positive outcome.

While Katie may have disagreed with the focus of the programs she was involved in, she did come to recognize that College Ministries had helped her faith develop into a more mature faith than in was during her high school years. To take that

reflection a step further, Katie also commented on the Focus programs she

attended during her first year at the college.

> I'd say something like Focus has been very memorable. That was the first thing that I was really excited about at Luther was the student fellowship and my freshman year, I kind of got frustrated with some of the speakers after all and I stopped going, either because they were just, like, so…they really didn't have a point other than, like, a pep talk. It's a good message but you know, every week you kind of want something different. So I kind of stopped going my freshman year but then at the end of the year starting going again and they had a meeting for anyone who was interested in planning the speakers. I thought this would be a good way to share some of my views and I was the only person who went so I ended up being the leader for the next year, kind of by default.

Not only did Katie's faith benefit from her worship through Focus, but she also

took the initiative to help other students have supportive faith experiences as a

Focus student leader. Pamela, a 21-year old junior, recounts how much energy

there is at a typical Focus meeting, and how she has been challenged in her faith

through the weekly worship service.

> I guess just the atmosphere at Focus and the environment and they have…it's the biggest worship service on campus. And it's student-led and there are tons and tons of students that you would not normally see at chapel or Eucharist or even Sunday morning worship, but they come to Focus 'cause there's something drawing them there. And just, I think the singing. Just praising God with all the different songs and having the prayer and the reading from the Bible and the speakers are usually incredible and really challenge people to think.

While many of the College Ministries programs are designed to support Luther students

in their faith development journeys, others, like Focus, can be challenging and help move

students to a more mature expression of their faiths. Whether or not they are designed to

do so, College Ministries programs have pushed these and other students outside of the

faith comfort zones into a place where they struggle to find meaning and answers to some

of life's biggest questions. In so doing, their faiths develop.

Faculty and Staff-Student Relationships

It has often been said of Luther College that it has a strong sense of community.

At the heart of the community are the bonds that develop between faculty, staff and

students. Perhaps most meaningful and often discussed in the qualitative interviews are

faculty and staff-student relationship. Students see the faculty and staff in many different

roles. Some are viewed as mentors, advisors or counselors. Others are thought of as

colleagues in the learning endeavor. Yet other students engage them in meaningful

friendships. Regardless of which model students utilize to interact with the faculty and

staff, these relationships can be very challenging and have a significant impact on student

faith development. Minnesota, a 22-year old senior explains one such relationship.

> The first class that I took was with a professor named Melanie Jackson-DePauw, and she teaches in the religion department. I took Intro to the New Testament and she pretty much told me...she didn't physically tell me but she taught me that it's okay to question the Bible and to want to learn about the historical aspects of the stories and the contexts in which they were written. Whereas before, when I...like, growing up, I was just told that the Bible is the work of God and you need to believe everything in it and, like, no questions are really allowed. And so, she pretty much just opened the doors of questioning for me, which was really good 'cause I've always wanted to and I've always had all these questions but never really had a venue that I could express them in and feel comfortable with.

Minnesota's faith was challenged by her relationship with a religion faculty

member who encouraged Minnesota to question her beliefs and to express her

doubts in the classroom setting. Dee, a 20-year old junior, had a similar

experience with the same professor in a different setting. Raised in a

theologically conservative church, Dee remembers:

> Melanie Jackson-DePauw, someone like that who is just like, powerful creature or whatnot you know what I mean? Just really passionate, knows her stuff. But, you know, clearly two things that the Missouri Synod church just really doesn't

support: women pastors or, you know, homosexuals in the church. And I'm just like, this is ridiculous. You know, they're genuine people, they're God's people, I don't get what the difference is and I couldn't support Missouri Synod so I was like, I just don't believe I'm a part of that church. I'm there because my parents made me go. And clearly, from that point on, I was trying to find direction.

Minnesota and Dee are but two and many examples of how students have been challenged to rethink re-evaluate and rediscover their faith while engaging in important relationships with faculty and staff members at a college of the church.

Student-Student Relationships

The student-student relationship solicited more response from the participants than any other challenge to student faith development. Friendships that develop in the formal classroom and across the co-curriculum can be both challenging and supportive at the same time. Participants often refer to these student-student relationships as the most significant challenge that their faiths have encountered to this point in their lives. Wayne, a 22-year old senior who is openly gay, explains how his relationships have helped him develop an identity with which he has long struggled much of his life:

My friend, last year we went to a conference, the two of us. And we were friends before but just going to this conference just made us, like, the month afterwards we couldn't go a day without talking to each other. It felt weird and then, again we went to the same conference but brought a lot more people with us. Just that experience of going through ideological changes with people is really, really something striking. Or just you know people that I randomly talk to. Either socially, like at the bar or at some event. Sometimes I have a conversation about sexuality that just sticks in my head, you know, from a person, and just, you know, those relationships, you know, they make who you are.

While Wayne's struggles are noteworthy because he is openly gay at a conservative college of the church, heterosexual relationships can be equally as

challenging for students. Rebecca struggled for several years with her boyfriend

who challenged her Christian beliefs because he considered himself agnostic.

> My boyfriend's agnostic. He doesn't know if he believes in it or not. And he'll ask me questions when he gets into his faith mood and I never know how to answer them. And that really bothers me because I want to be able to answer it but at the same time I'm so, like, open to everyone else's interpretation that I don't want to force my views upon him or make him uncomfortable. And it's hard for me to explain how I feel. Because I'm very, I need facts to support it. And, like I said, I did my whole challenge thing and that was enough for me. And I think that bothers me more than anything else is that it's hard for me to support it. Although I know that if anyone challenged me on it, I'd be able to stick with it because I believe in it that much.

While she didn't feel like she could provide answers to all of his many questions,

Rebecca and her boyfriend have remained together and continue to challenge each

other on their beliefs despite their close relationship. Jerry, a 21-year old junior

and future seminarian, also likes to challenge his peers. Jerry never seems to back

down from a discussion of faith and vocation as it relates the sciences.

> I'm in the class with a ton of people. But, I mean, it's kind of funny sometimes. You see them; they're so focused and so incredibly career-oriented. And then there's me and I have really no idea what I'm really going to do. I mean, I'd love to go to seminary but that's not like, if I don't go to seminary then I'll…"I'm not going to survive, it's going to be the end of life" by any means. It's really fun. I kind of get a chance to challenge them before they get into their field because if they can, I guess, if I can challenge them in a sort of philosophical manner and if they can still kind of come out with it, saying, you know, Yeah, I still want to do this, I'm still rock-solid in my decision. They're going to be even more so, I think, and I think there's just so much [break] there's not enough challenging, we don't challenge our students enough and to…are they actually pursuing their vocation? You know, we are extremely challenged by, you know, academics, but we're not really challenged vocationally.

While Wayne, Rebecca and Jerry all approach their peers differently; they have

faced many challenges and have come out stronger in their faith on the other end.

Wayne seems to have reconciled being gay and Christian. Since graduating from

Luther College, he has become employed at another college of the church.

Rebecca and her boyfriend got married. They seem content despite their

theological differences. Jerry is in his final year at Luther. He plans on attending

seminary and finding a way to reconcile his religious beliefs with his passion for

the sciences. All three have faced significant challenges from other students and

have developed into stronger believers of their faith traditions.

Traumatic Event

Some students experience traumatic events while studying and living at college.

An illness or an injury can hinder a student's academic and co-curricular progress.

Breaking up with a significant other may also bring on difficult setbacks for students.

The death of a friend or family member has, on many occasions, led to a leave of absence

and an eventual withdrawal from college. With the onset of a traumatic event, not only

do academic progress and social engagement slow or even cease, a student's faith may be

severely tested. Pamela, a 21-year old junior, was challenged by several traumatic events

that all took place within a short span of time during her freshmen year at Luther College.

> One of my friends died in a car accident and another really awesome guy from my
> church had a heart attack and almost died, but then he didn't, and I thank God. As
> far as academics, it was the hardest year, which completely stressed me out and
> friends were shifting again. One of my best friends kind of started drinking and I
> didn't want to do that so I felt like I was losing her and just was a very difficult
> year. I think I almost lost my faith that year.

Like Pamela, Rebecca, a 21-year old junior, also faced a traumatic event. The

death of a loved one during her college years delivered a serious challenge to her

faith. Rather than losing it, the death forced Rebecca to reevaluate both what and

who were important in her life

My boyfriend's grandmother passed away. And the last time, we actually saw her the last day she was alive together. And when you left the nursing home where she was at, he said that, he's like, "I don't even know if she's going to remember me, you know, after she dies." And I was like, well, 'cause we had this whole conversation about whether people have souls or not. 'Cause he's all like, he's a science major so it's like, it's all chemical hormones; you know, reactions, etcetera. And I was like, "Well if she's going to remember you there's gotta be something that goes on past this." And, you know, just thinking of that and thinking about how I feel about my own grandparents who have passed away, you know, made me just think that, just reinforced it for me that there is something there. There is something more that moves on and, I mean, I wouldn't really say it was like a big changing experience but it definitely reinforced it and pushed it that much further for me. And anytime that we have challenges like that. I think the hardest thing for me to experience is when I'm reminded of all the things we've done in the past that has hurt people.

Pamela and Rebecca experienced traumatic events during their early years at Luther College. Injury, illness and death are all have the potential to push students to turn to faith to find answers to some of life's biggest mysteries. Perhaps the biggest mystery of in student faith development is why a traumatic event may eventually encourage students to further develop after they have felt so close to losing faith.

Classroom Experiences

While an analysis of student faith development within the classroom experience lies beyond the scope of this study, it often challenges the faith of those students living, interacting, and learning outside of the academic arena. Luther College students are required to take two philosophy and religion courses during their career at the college. In many cases, Introduction to New Testament and Introduction to the Bible are courses that immediately challenge students to rigorously examine their faiths. As many of the study participants stated in their interviews, these courses and others like them radically altered

their faith perspectives. Dee, a 21-year old junior, reflects back to his first year

experience in a Luther College religion course.

> It [faith] has definitely been challenged a lot more through the classroom
> especially. I've never been challenged and even in high school we just never had
> any historic, challenge the Bible historically or anything but coming to Luther and
> sitting in a classroom and really taking in what they're showing me and, you
> know, shocking, almost devastating. But then that's when I knew that I was
> learning. 'Cause it made me nervous.

Dee was nervous because his classroom experience challenged what he was raised

to believe in church. Elizabeth, a 21-year old senior, had a similar classroom

experience in a required course she took her first year at Luther College.

> Well it [Introduction to New Testament] totally just shook my faith from what it
> was. And so I didn't want to continue taking religion classes when I felt like I
> pretty much had no faith to base anything on anymore. And everyone in the class,
> everyone I talked to experiences that to a point. And some people are able to just
> get up and just keep going and other ones are just knocked to the ground for a
> long period of time like I was.

The classroom experience affected Elizabeth so completely that she dropped her

religion major and switched vocations away from ministry. She is currently a

second year graduate student at a regional law school. Francis, a 22-year old

senior, was one those students who got up and kept going after his religion

courses knocked him down. He was aware that students would be severely tested

through a scholarly interpretation of the Bible, yet he knew that classroom

conditions actually broadened his faith in the end.

> I know there are a lot of people who say. You hear that you take Intro to the
> Bible and half of the students fall away from their faith or something. Well, I
> don't know. I see God at work in the world and that's what allows me to keep
> believing. That's really all that I...maybe that's a bit simplistic but that's a good
> bit of what I need to maintain my belief. And I think the only other development
> is that, and I don't know when this really happened but I've ceased to see myself

so much as Roman Catholic and more as a Christian who belongs to the Roman Catholic community.

Rather than fall away from their faith, Dee, Elizabeth and Francis emerged from their classroom challenges stronger in their faith traditions than when they first enrolled in class at Luther College. The religion and philosophy classroom experience seems to one of the strongest challenges to student faith, yet it also has

Value or Belief

Many students begin their college careers with a core set of values or beliefs that went unchallenged during their high school careers. These values may include religious or ethical beliefs that were imparted to them by their parents, teachers or members of the clergy. This group of students seemed sometimes shocked at how their belief systems crumbled when they encountered challenges at an educational institution that was reported to be an extension of their home congregation. For example, Sheeba, a 23-year old senior, explains her belief in helping others in need has helped her faith.

> When someone asks me to do something, I don't say no because I just feel like I'm helping, I'm sharing, and who knows what ever message is going to come through to me through that small action. I firmly believe in, do unto others as you have them do unto you, since I love to help people. It's not that I'm doing it for rewards, but I know that whatever I'm doing now is going to help me in the future. Because whatever lessons and experiences I'm having now, when I go out there and I'm all alone and there's no one around and I don't have this support group, then I can internalize and go. This is what happened, I've grown from this, this is the message I got, how is it going to help me now when I move forward?

Unlike Sheeba who values serving others, Wayne, a 22-year old senior, remembers challenging a peer as a way of reconciling his sexual identity with his faith tradition.

> I remember, my sophomore year telling a girl that her brother was going to hell for being gay, I mean, it was very vivid, very vivid. We were in the cafeteria, I know I was eating; I know what the girl looked like. I mean, it was such a vivid picture 'cause it was just like I was being hypocritical because if my own sexuality but then hypocritical 'cause who am I to say you're going to hell or not. But definitely, and I do use the word "liberal" very liberally but I've gotten a little more progressive in my faith issues.

While Wayne seems to have worked out conflicts with his sexuality and faith,

Andrew, a 21-year old junior, takes a more practical approach others. His set of

values informs him that paying attention to other will pay back dividends later in

his life.

> Well, my father taught me when I was young that you want to give everyone you encounter 100% everything that you have and that it'll pay off in the future. Whether you know it or not, striking up a conversation with a person one day and then seeing them later in your life at a time when maybe you need someone just to talk to, it'll pay off. So I think every relation that you come across, whether it is your hall janitor or whether it be your supervisor or whether it be a community member that you see in a gas station, whoever you encounter, you want to make a lasting impression and a positive impression and show them that you truly take interest in them. 'Cause one day you're going to come upon them in a time that you need something.

Sheeba, Wayne and Andrew have all altered their belief systems since coming to

Luther College. While their core values may still be in place and guiding them

through their daily lives, alterations have taken place through their co-curricular

experiences. Sheeba still helps others, but not at the expense of becoming

isolated from her peers. Wayne has stopped challenging homosexuality and has

come out as gay at a college of the church. He now embraces those he once

ridiculed. As for Andrew, he has softened in his payback approach. He pays

attention to others out of Christian love and not necessarily because they can be of

future assistance to him.

Summary

In this section I provided a brief overview of co-curricular challenges to student faith development at Luther College. Through an analysis and organization process of the interview transcripts, I have demonstrated that the participants encountered tests, trials and tribulations in a wide variety of activities, relationships and environments on campus and beyond. Such challenges are often uncomfortable, painful or can even be traumatic for the students involved in these experiences, but they can help facilitate positive growth and maturity in their faith lives. Through a diverse combination of co-curricular activities, relationships and environments at a college of the church (Figure 1), student affairs professionals may provide appropriate support to help shattered students regain, rebuild and develop stronger faiths.

Supports for Student Faith Development

For the purpose of this study, a support to student faith development is defined as any co-curricular activity or event, relationship, or environment at a college of the church that causes a student to experience comfort in, certainty about, or disregard questions or concerns in such a manner that enhances or advances his or her faith. Activities and events are comprised of speakers and programs. Programs are further divided into those sponsored through College Ministries, and those that funded by the Lilly Sense of Vocation Program. Relationships are divided into two categories: faculty and staff-student, and student-to-student relationships. There are four environments that support student faith development at Luther College: Center for Faith and Life; residence halls;

college of the church environment; and the sense of community. Other supports include activities, relationships, and environments that lie beyond the confines of the co-curriculum, but also impact student faith development. I found eight other supports: Bible or Church camp; an internship; classroom experiences; nature or outdoors; family members; values or beliefs; reflections; and a student's church or congregation. Figure 2 on the next page shows the tiered model that identifies co-curricular supports for student faith development at a college of the church. While I will not review each and every support that was found in the transcript analysis, I will touch upon several that the participants found particularly meaningful.

Activities

    Speakers

    Programs

        College Ministries

        Vocational Program

Relationships

    Faculty and Staff-student

    Student-Student

Environments

    Center for Faith and Life

    Residence Halls

    College of Church

    Sense of Community

Other Supports (Beyond the Co-curriculum)

    Bible or Church Camp

    Internship

    Classroom

    Nature or Outdoors

    Family Members

    Value or Belief

    Reflection

    Church or Congregation

Figure 2. Supports for student faith development

College Ministries Programs

The *College Ministries Mission Statement* (n.d.) suggests that there are three

appropriate ways to serve the campus community and the church: "telling the story of

God's active presence in the world; building relationships of spiritual formation and

mutual service; and embracing the creative tension of faith and learning" (2005). As they

diligently work to support students in their faith lives, the three college pastors find

themselves playing a variety of roles, including the empowerment of students to minister

to others in the community. Ministry leadership positions are met with a great deal of

enthusiasm by students. Andy, a 22-year old senior, explains more about the

departmental philosophy in student leadership:

> The most important program...College Ministries -- it's such a great program
> here. The organization and just the, by what I mean by organization is that it is
> totally, it's not about one senior pastor, it's not about one person who's in charge
> of ministry but it's about students and laypeople and the pastors are all equally
> responsible for ministry and that the pastors just have a great understanding that
> there is no seniority and that it's all equal and that God is the true leader of the
> ministry, that there is no solid leader but that the students have a great opportunity
> to [IA] take part in what the ministry is doing and that you don't see hardly any
> college congregations. I mean, they don't call themselves congregations, it's just
> kind of a few clubs and different things but the students just have such a say in
> what they want to do with their ministry. And that, I mean, you don't see that and
> I didn't expect that when I came here but when I saw just the organization, the
> different opportunities, the Global Concerns group are affected by College
> Ministries, I mean, every single aspect of this campus in a way, is affected by
> College Ministries and we make sure that we reach ourselves out there and put
> ourselves out there and really listen to people about what they want in their
> ministry and the Outreach teams are amazing, the worship here gives several
> opportunities to worship and it's just amazing so I can't praise enough just how
> the ministries program is...the amazing job that they do, doing God's ministry
> here is just huge.

Joe, a 21-year old junior, provides some insight into the Outreach

program, which encourages older students to pair up with younger students to

provide encouragement and growth within the college's Christian community.

> It's [Outreach] like a Bible study but along with that we try to match two people up, like, an older and a younger person of the same gender and then encourage, like, conversations about your faith and [IA]. Almost, almost like a mentoring program but not that formal or, like, it's just kind of getting into a position where you can talk with somebody you might not know that well about things you might not be comfortable with, like, your friends. And also to get younger people assimilated into a, like, a Christian community a little bit. Because sometimes you come in and you don't know anybody, you don't really have your place and so, what, that's the idea of what we do.

Andy and Joe were both inspired by several of the College Ministries programs

despite the challenges each has faced in other campus activities, relationships or

environments. When I last interacted with them, both Andy and Joe were still

serving others out of the context of the department's mission statement.

<u>Faculty and Staff-Student Relationships</u>

The faculty and staff at Luther College tend to be talented and hard-working

professionals within their fields of study or expertise. Yet many faculty and staff find

time to mentor students in the faith traditions of the college and church. Perhaps the most

well-known faculty member is Weston Noble, a world-renowned choral director who

retired from Luther after more than 50 years of service to the college. Andy, a 22-year

old senior, reflects upon his initial meeting with Mr. Nobel:

> Initially, just his sincere faith and just the first time that I talked to him. He didn't ask me about music, he didn't ask me about anything, he said...he asked me about life and why I'm here, and I told him. He told me...I really opened up to him and I don't know why, I just kind of opened up about what was going on in my life and he was just really receptive and shared his own experience with that. He just

gave me this huge hug at the end and it just was amazing for me. I was sold at that point.

Taylor, a 22-year old senior, speaks equally as highly of Betsy Emerson; the

women's cross country team coach for the past 18 years:

> I think that the bond of the cross-country team, like, the women on that team is so close and Betsy is such an amazing leader. Like, she really has that whole team, like, so committed to each other and they are so supportive of one another and so strong as a group that they really are great and totally supportive, like through everything. And Betsy's just amazing, so like, it's kind of like another family. And she brings in quotes and she'll talk about all kinds of things. We just kind of, I guess it influences faith because you're so grateful to have that other community to be a part of and that you're just so blessed to know these women that it can't help but give you faith in people.

Like Andy and Taylor, Pamela, a 21-year old junior, told of her affection for Lyle

Halverson, a campus security guard who assisted her through a surgery and

helped her find employment at the college Information Desk:

> He's a security guard and I just got to know him last winter but he, when he drove me around when I was on crutches, he took the time to get to know me and now I work at the information desk and we see each other every day. He asks me how I'm doing and talks to me about God and stuff so he's a neat guy.

What makes these faculty and staff members so appreciated is that they have been

able to create and foster on-going relationships with students that support their

faith development.

Student-to-Student Relationships

According to this group of students, their own peers provide much of the

inspiration for their faith experiences. Peers interact with their peers in the classroom,

the residence halls and all over campus on a 24 –hour per day schedule. While peers can

be challenging, they can also be equally encouraging because they, too, are experiencing

faith development. Sheeba, a 23-year old senior, has a tight group of Catholic friends to whom she can give over her worries through ease prayer and conversation as the need arises:

> It's amazing how we all have that Catholic background. But it's helped a lot, because we'll sit down and we'll pray. I remember the first time I brought it up, "I was like, let's pray." It's uncomfortable, because you're not sure how your friends are going to exactly accept you, but it's amazing. There are times when I'm talking and we'll be like, "Let's put it to God." It's just a way to help each other, because there are things that I know that I'll be like, "Ah, God's not listening to me right now," and my friend will come, and we'll be talking, and we'll be talking about God. Just through that three-second or five-minute conversation, you're like, "it doesn't matter. God will see me through." It's just friends, or there are some staff members, and we'll be talking and they'll also reaffirm it. So, I guess for me it's just basically conversation, see how people also relate their life to God, so that kind of also helps your belief system.

Unlike Sheeba who relies on a group of similar peers, Taylor, a 22-year old senior, depends upon a more intimate friend with whom she can share the struggles of her faith.

> Well, I told you about that guy at the beginning. We're actually...he's my boyfriend now and we've been dating for, like, three years and he's just played a significant role in my faith. He took a year off and worked as an intern pastor in the Grand Canyon last year. And just hearing his stories about being out there and just being able to talk about faith and talk about God and talk about the struggles that happen with faith and how, you know, I'm struggling with my class and he's struggling with not necessarily...he's struggling with being here, actually.

Taylor admits that they both struggle with their faiths and with being at Luther College, but with each other as support units, Taylor and her boyfriend are growing together. Dee, a 20-year old junior, found a friend who has been through some traumatic events in the past few years, but has managed to role model a strong faith to him throughout that time.

She's like a sister to me and I think that her strength is unbelievable. Just all that she's gone through in the past in the years she's been here. Maintained a really good academic standing and her parents going through a divorce and whatnot. She's still...she doesn't take it out on anyone. She's still a very kind person, very...if anything, a lot of people would bail, you know what I mean? And that is why she doesn't [IA] so I guess growing closer in her faith in a time like that and to be so young and understanding, that's amazing to me.

Center for Faith and Life

Worship in the CFL includes daily chapel, Wednesday Eucharist, Sunday

ecumenical worship, plus a whole host of other special events including weddings,

funerals and baptisms for community members through the College Ministries Office.

Performances in the CFL include speakers, plays, and other musical promotions through

the Campus Programs Office. Dee, a 21-year old junior, discusses the dual purposes of

the Center for Faith and Life – for worship and performance:

> Not just worship services but some of the amazing concerts, some of the amazing speakers that they've brought in that space, you know. Like Soweto Gospel Choir and to see, just to see that was just marvelous. [IA]. I don't know, the CFL, definitely. Christmas at Luther concerts when all the students get together like that and have a candlelight service and all these voices are singing, that is one, or maybe four if you count all the [IA] I mean, you know, just everybody's united, you know, for one purpose, you know, music for God and that's, you know, pretty awesome.

For Pamela, a 21-year old junior, the prayer chapel, which is located in the back

of the building, seems to preserve a mystical power. She has prayed there in

privacy during the separation of her parents, and more recently before her

boyfriend proposed to her:

> It's so peaceful in there and there's barely anyone in there. It's very significant to me with my parents and also right before I got engaged, I didn't know it was coming up and I prayed so long the night before and, about that, so that was kind of neat.

While Dee and Pamela have their unique reasons for appreciating the Center for Faith and Life, Taylor, a 22-year old senior, explains some of the mystery and awe of the place:

> The CFL is…I guess it's an awesome building. Not like awesome but like awe-inspiring. I like that building. I like…it kind of just has a sense of peace. And like people in there sit in there and you just feel like you have to be quiet. You can't talk too loud in the CFL! And so it's always interesting to go in there for performances 'cause it's a completely different atmosphere than it is on Sunday morning and stuff.

The CFL was noted by many students as one of the most supportive places of faith on the Luther College campus. Not only does it lie at the heart of the physical campus, but also in the hearts of many within the campus community.

Residence Halls

The residence halls inspire faith development in two very different ways. First, as the home for student bedrooms, the halls are seen as a place of shelter from the co-curricular storm. Students can lock themselves away from others, pray or meditate and find a release from their academic stressors. On the other hand, the residence halls provide community support and a gathering place for group discussions, Bible study and other forms of worship. Jerry, a 21-year old junior, explains the benefit of living in a complex environment:

> So, also another environment that's really important is, obviously, the residence halls. And it's very important that there are place where people are, primarily studying, that they have these coves where you can come on in and you can sit down and concentrate. And not be disturbed. But it's not the same as an academic building if there was a place where you only study. Because you are kind of in an island within, I guess, in like, a study hall or something. You're kind of in an island of, you know, studious rigor amongst, you know, an ocean of, you know, social…of your living environment. So, that's, I mean, it may seem like, you know, that's segregation but it's not really. But it's not really. It's kind

of like an island, more. So you can't really escape from that without kind of being in your living environment. I think those are probably the two…those are where I spend most of my time.

Sheeba, a 23-year old senior, enjoys the company of her peers most of the day, but has an

opportunity to unwind when she returns to her room in the evening:

> Because that [residence hall room] is where I am alone and I can think. I don't have the everyday pressures of life and you can refocus and you can readjust; you can just relax. I usually put on music and I just sit down and just think. I mean, I think solitude [break] I'm also a big person on solitude as well because I think that sometimes we get caught up and lose our way and we forget who we are have other people define us but then if you sit down and you think and you concentrate on what you need to focus on and who am I and then your answers will come to you. And I think as you keep practicing this then you don't have to have other people define you anymore. You know what you stand for. I think my room is the best place for me to do that.

Both Sheeba and Jennifer, a 22-year old senior, suggest that their residence hall

rooms can help define who they are. For Sheeba, the time alone in her room helps

her connect with God. For Jennifer, her single room has given her space and

autonomy to develop more as an individual than as a member of a collective

community:

> Currently I live in Larsen. I've enjoyed living there. I do have several friends that live on my floor so I've appreciated having kind of a community close by, closer friends. I also have a single room, which has affected me a lot in the sense that I have the freedom to be able to kind of be my own person or develop a little bit more independently.

These three comments were echoed by many others in the study sample. They

believe that their residence halls helped initiate them into Luther's community

through floor meetings, educational programming and social functions with floor

mates. As they matured, these students found that they needed fewer outlets and

more privacy and autonomy. They chose to live in smaller hall communities and

with fewer roommates as upper class students. And while the residence halls

continue to support student faith development on campus, they provide

individuals with supportive environments for individual growth as well.

Sense of Community

How does one define a sense of community at a college of the church? There

could be many definitions, and all could have equal validity depending upon whose

perspective was being evaluated. In this section, I will offer three different perspectives

on the sense of community at Luther College. Elizabeth, a 21-year old senior, looked at

the college because of its Lutheran heritage and enrolled here because of its community:

> And so I only looked at ELCA Lutheran colleges for that reason 'cause I figured
> I'd do religion in undergrad and then I chose specifically Luther College just
> because of the feel of community. I came down for an entire weekend, visited a
> friend for a night and then did an admissions visit and then went to classes on
> Monday and just loved it by the time I left.

Pamela contrasts Luther to other colleges based on her perspective of its strong

community. She believes that the campus was set up in order to promote

community interactions. Regardless of whether or not that belief is true, Pamela

has found the community she sought out after high school:

> But it, I think it's [Luther College] different because of the community aspect and
> I heard in this survey last year or two years ago that the way that Luther is set up
> is on purpose. Like, all the paths have to cross and meet so we're constantly
> bumping into people and in community. And I've learned that to be very true,
> which is important to me in college, so I think Luther has a very strong sense of
> community.

Jennifer, a 22-year old senior, understands that increasing diversity at Luther

College can create adversity. Yet, in the midst of controversy, she has faith that

the community can prosper through open contact and communication:

> I think there's a strong sense of friendship and support even in the midst of diversity. I mean, at Luther there's certainly controversies that go on but feels like, I know, I think the "Luther Bubble" a lot of times gets a negative, a negative reputation. I think it can also be a positive thing in the sense that there's kind of a community cohesiveness. Kind of a strong sense of people being able to communicate with each other.

The sense of community that is often mentioned by students, staff, faculty and guests of Luther College can be both challenging and supportive of student faith development.

Bible or Church Camp

Students often spend the summer away from Luther working at Bible or church camps. In their roles as counselors, students are role models in faith for younger campers and other camp staff. While these summer experiences can be challenging, they are usually seen as supportive – as times of faith renewal or growth. Bob, Joe and Pamela each had positive faith experiences while working at summer camps. Bob, a 22-year old senior, explains:

> But, also a lot of that [faith] has come from working at the camp in the boundary waters where I was exposed to people who genuinely believed the scriptures, so that was really enlightening to talk to someone who really believes in what they're reading and have a pretty developed sense of faith. That has done a lot for me -- discussions and one on one conversation.

Joe, a 21-year old junior, now reads the Bible less than he used to. In class he learned how to analyze it as a series of historical documents from many disconnected authors. When Joe returns to his summer counseling position, however, his perspective changes:

> But then when I go back to camp, it's more the Bible is our basis for everything. So I guess it's kind of influenced a little bit of how I look at the Bible but really making me think more about that and it doesn't [break] the way it ended up

influencing me was kind of making me look at the book like it was less important, which, I don't read the Bible on a regular basis but I wish I did and I think it is a good thing and I think the way Luther made me think of the Bible, not so much that I should read it but that it's not as important and it shouldn't be looked at in such a way.

Pamela, a 21-year old junior, discusses how summer Bible camp pulled her

through a traumatic event in her life – the separation of her parents:

It's gone up and down a lot because the summer before I came here I worked at a Bible camp so I was on fire, of course. Then I come here and it was pretty good for awhile and everything, but like I said, when my parents separated and then decided to file for divorce, it took a big hit and lots of questioning. But I was able to go from there because I worked at camp again and just kept praying and going and then worked, or did an internship at my church which was amazing just to be in that leadership and to help and see the stuff that goes on in the background.

While summer camp experiences fall outside of the college co-curriculum they do

influence it and the students who interaction in its activities, relationships and

environments. Bible or church camp seems to provide a well-needed boost to

student faith development after the stresses of a long academic year for Luther

Students.

Nature or Outdoors

Luther College is set in the beautiful Upper Iowa River Valley. Surrounded by

scenic bluffs and woodlands, Decorah Iowa offers a variety of outdoor recreation

opportunities. Enthusiasts can hike, bike, fish, hunt, and canoe just minutes from the

college campus. For Luther students, the natural settings not only offer recreation, but

are also an important source of inspiration for their faith lives. Joanna, a 22-year old

senior, discusses how she communes with God while in the outdoors:

My faith is influenced by nature. By this time when everything was about nature and experiences in God in nature and so just campus and the beauty of it. But

then, and the sunsets and the trees on the hill over, you know when you look out from the Caf, like, that way, up on the hill. So a lot of things about nature. And then, just, I think, also, the history of it, like the trees that are so old and the buildings that are so old and just really thinking about all the people who have walked through these buildings and walked by these trees and whatever it may be and knowing that they were in college, too, and they struggled with their faiths, too, and it might not be the same as me and might be in a different context and obviously a different time and place, or, same place, different time, but somehow that has strengthened me, I think.

Bob, a 22-year old senior, who claims allegiance to no organized faith tradition,

but finds nature his source of spiritual fulfillment and awe, states that nature

brings his closer to his creator:

Well, that's just one place I feel I'm able to feel a little closer to God, not in a [break] I suppose it just allows you to kind of free your thoughts from the hectic ness of life here, I feel like a lot of times you get disconnected when you go through all the motions; nature can get you a little closer to God sometimes.

Andrew, a 21-year old junior, likes to be outdoors with his friends, engaging in

conversation and inspiration no matter what the location:

And of course in Decorah there are so many beautiful nature trails and parks and I've gone to a lot of…numerous times I've gone with friends to have really neat discussions at one of the various hiking trails or parks. Just that the beauty that lies within Decorah, that the town offers many places. Going out and sitting on the 50-yard line of the football field at night, looking at the stars. There are just a lot of places that Decorah has to offer. Like, offer places where you can have good experiences and good discussions with others and those have really affected me. Now, if I ever encounter a time when I really need to just go and let emotions out, I know that I have many options and I can go to any of those places.

While colleges cannot relocate to more beautiful settings, many were founded by

people of faith in some of the country's most pristine and ideal natural settings.

Students are often attracted to these places because of the very beauty they

possess. When they find time and motivation to move outdoors, students also

find that the natural settings of their institutions can provide incredible support for their own faith development.

Summary

In this section, I presented some of the most commonly found supports for student faith development at Luther College as described in the participants' own words from their qualitative interviews. Through an analysis and organization process of the interview transcripts, I have demonstrated that the participants encountered support for their faiths in a wide variety of activities, relationships and environments on campus and beyond. Such support can often be too comfortable or provide too much security for the students involved in these experiences, but they can also help facilitate positive growth and maturity in their faith lives. Through a diverse combination of co-curricular activities, relationships and environments at a college of the church (Figure 2), student affairs professionals may provide appropriate support to help shattered students regain, rebuild and develop stronger faiths. The focus of the findings will now shift from their collective co-curricular experiences to the most significant findings in the study.

Significant Challenges and Supports

The final section of this chapter focuses on the three important and specific components of the co-curriculum at a college of the church: College Ministries programs; faculty and staff-student relationships; and the overall environment at a college of the church. These three areas are significant because they both challenge and support student faith development at Luther College. Participants in this study commented on them frequently. In addition, these co-curricular components also cut across institutional

boundaries to impact student faith development within the curricular life. They are

presented here in a student narrative format in order to demonstrate how the faith of some

of the participants has developed since encountering them. This section closes with a

special analysis of the faith development within the context of the classroom, an area that

lies beyond the scope of the co-curriculum but also affects student faith development.

College Ministries Programs

Andy Anderson is a 22-year-old male senior. He is Caucasian, American, and a

member of the Lutheran Church. Since becoming involved in College Ministries, Andy's

faith has been challenged through his position as the Deacon of Worship on the College

Ministries Council. His charge is to help accommodate different worship opportunities

for different people who worship in different ways. Getting community members to

volunteer to lead worship is "probably the hardest thing that I've ever had to do," Andy

says without reservation. The challenge has been stressful, but it has also led Andy to an

important discovery about his faith. He now believes that he was called by God to serve

others in this position, and it is something that he hopes to do more of in the future.

Andy intends to pursue leadership ministry when he graduates from Luther College.

> A lot of things that I've been focusing on as I've grown into ministry have been
> how do I help others be leaders in the ministry and how do I equip them and how
> do I just help God move through me. That's not me telling them what to do, but
> it's helping them realize what God wants them to do in leadership.

This calling to leadership ministry has reinforced Andy's decision to pursue a liberal arts

education at Luther despite great personal and financial sacrifice for him and his family.

His current goal is to "live every single day as my last and to live it for God, for his

ministry, and to touch as many people in my life as I possibly can and to not miss an

opportunity to do that." Andy is surely on his way to doing just that thanks to the opportunity he had through his position as the Deacon of Worship.

Jennifer Johnson is a 22-year-old female senior. She is Caucasian, American, and Lutheran. Jennifer's father is a Lutheran pastor. She was very active in her high school youth ministry program. Jennifer intentionally sought out a college of the church and selected Luther because of its strong student ministries and special education program. College life has been a wonderful experience for Jennifer. Her faith has been exposed to a variety of people and religious philosophies. She states that Luther College has a strong sense of community despite its diversity. She has spent the past several years trying sort out which beliefs are her own and which are from her family. Jennifer is heavily involved in College Ministries programs. She is an active member of Outreach, a Christian clowning team, and Diakonos, a college pre-professional program for students going into the ministry. She is considering attending seminary or joining an ELCA Global Missions program in Latin America after graduation. Jennifer does not credit one supportive person, but instead mentions a "wonderful network of people that I just, you know, they've all been great relationships. So those…have all been very meaningful to me." Jennifer's faith has grown substantially since participating in College Ministries.

Katie is a 21-year-old female senior. She is Caucasian, American, and is a Lutheran. Katie has been very involved in Campus Ministries programs at Luther College. When she first arrived, Katie was amazed at the variety of programs that were offered. She was also surprised that the campus did not host an evangelical Christian group like Crew, Intervarsity or Navigators. She does not, however, attend Sunday

worship there because she disagrees with the doctrines. She was raised Catholic, but starting questioning her faith at a young age. She started attending Methodist church services at age 14 and attended a church camp shortly thereafter. Although she's at a Lutheran college, Katie's currently attending the Covenant church in Decorah. While Katie has enjoyed her experiences with the College Ministries programs, she has decided to move beyond them because she has a more conservative theology than she sees being practiced at Luther College.

Andy Anderson is a 22-year-old male senior. He is Caucasian, American, and a member of the ELCA Church. Andy originally attended Augsburg College, but dropped out after going through a year of traumatic personal experiences including a separation of his parents. He transferred to Luther College after taking off a year "to reset his faith." At Luther he immediately got hooked into College Ministries programs, started attending chapel, making friends and became a member of the Congregational Council. About the Luther community, Andy stated, "I would have never thought that a college campus would be just that open and comfortable so it's been really good." He is disappointed to have had only two years of his college career at Luther College. His College Ministries experiences have helped Andy renew his faith to the point that he is now considering a professional career in ministry.

These five students have each brought a unique faith background with them to Luther College. Each connected with the people and programs in College Ministries in a different way. Yet all five of them have been both challenged and supported through the department in ways that were unforeseen and unpredicted by them. As they prepare for

graduation and an eventual vocation, these five students have seen their faiths grow and develop thanks, in large part, to their experiences with the College Ministries programs at Luther.

<u>Faculty and Staff-Student Relationships</u>

Taylor is a 22-year-old female senior. She is Caucasian, American, and Lutheran. Despite the pain and long recovery process after her athletic injury, Taylor's received a great deal of support from her athletic trainer and the cross-country coach. "I would say one the most meaningful (relationships) would be with the athletic trainers. I spend a lot of time down there and definitely really respect and admire them for the work that they do, and just how much they help all the athletes who are injured." After leaving Luther, Taylor hopes to be admitted into a physical therapy program at the nearby Mayo Clinic. "I think my faith has kind of been like a roller coaster. Definitely in college. I came into college with a very childlike faith." Later on Taylor says, "I'm not very sure where it is going to head actually. It's kind of been an up and down semester. One minute I think I have it figured out and the next, (Professor) Rue punches all kinds of holes in my arguments." Even if she can't quite make sense of her theological beliefs, Taylor has faith that her injury happened according to God's plan. Her plan is to minister to other athletes the way her trainer ministered to Taylor during her time of recovery.

Dee Norway is a 20-year-old male junior. He is Black, American, and Missouri Synod Lutheran. On the other hand, Dee loves the support he gets from the Luther Diversity Center. "The people make themselves available. And even from a distance, they're so supportive." Dee credits the college pastors for supporting his faith. "But all

three of them, Pastor Deanna, Pastor David, Pastor Mike, really embraced the idea of a gospel choir, and the fact that they're so sincere and so willing to make worship, like accessible to people who come from different backgrounds other than Lutheran and, you know, whatnot. They're just always looking for new extensions or whatnot of, you know, expressions or, you know, faith, your love of God, you know what I am saying? I really like that." Dee says, "I still say my faith is under construction, but it's not dead. I am always looking for new ways to group and I know that fellowship is a very important part of it. And I'm going to worship services regularly. I think that fellowship sustains outside of the church. That's where I'm at right now." Dee has come a long way in his faith development since coming to Luther. He has some wonderful talents to offer the world when he leaves.

Jerry is a 21-year-old male junior. He is Caucasian, American, and an ELCA Lutheran. Jerry considers himself a deeply spiritual person. He is also very intelligent and passionate about the sciences. Many people have told Jerry that he cannot be a serious scientist and also be a person of faith – the two contradict each other. Yet, Jerry has spent the past few years at Luther seeking to integrate faith and scientific beliefs into his worldview. He hopes to attend seminary and become a lay minister to the scientific community. The academic faculty at Luther College often challenges Jerry's faith.

> I think what makes my relationship with my professors so meaningful is because you see these people who are just incredibly brilliant in their field and they have extremely high degrees. And at the same time they're willing to take time out of their day to talk to; to really, just the interaction with faculty and students is just. I don't know…I mean they're really open to talking to students about anything, really.

He rattles off a list of chemistry, biology, mathematics professors and other faculty who have challenged his to dig deeper into his studies. Perhaps Jerry's main faith support is his own intellectual curiosity. Jerry has gone out of his way to learn more about his Lutheran tradition by studying scripture and other religious texts in an academic sense. He sees apparent contradictions. He understands the role of the church throughout history not always been positive. Jerry understands that his Lutheran faith is also not without flaws. "When you look at the bigger picture as opposed to just the words you realize how important the words and texts are and how they've affected how you relate to the world."

Taylor, Dee and Jerry have all benefited from their relationships with Luther College faculty and staff. Each has had connected with a campus professional over a matter of faith. For Taylor, faith was built upon her relationship with an athletic trainer after a serious injury. For Dee, faith was developed through the networks he forged with the staff in the Diversity Center and College Ministries. Jerry's faith was challenged by several key faculty members in the sciences, but then supported through his own efforts to reflect upon some of the contradictions he sees in organized religion. Each of these students was both challenged and supported through the intimate relationships that they forged with faculty and staff at Luther College.

<u>College of the Church Environment</u>

Francis is a 22-year-old senior. He is Caucasian, American, and Roman Catholic. In high school, Francis was very active in Catholic music and ministries. He explored a select group of colleges that had strong choral music traditions and Latin language

programs in order to continue his service to the church. One of three finalists, Luther College was the place where he felt most at home. To Francis, it did not matter that the college was Lutheran. It did matter that he could pursue his music and classical languages with intensity and rigor. He likes that his peers are intelligent and hard working. He believes that most of the faculty teach well and find ways to collaborate on research with students. Despite the fact that he is not convinced that the administration knows what it is doing; Francis has had an excellent academic and social experience at Luther. He hopes to pursue a doctorate degree in choral conducting in the near future. He would like to teach at a place like Luther College. Francis finds himself in conflict with his Catholic faith tradition and his academic learning experiences.

Besma Bakaya is a 21-year-old junior. She is Black, Somalian, and a practicing Muslim. Besma Bakaya is one of fewer than thirty Muslim students who study at the Lutheran college of 2500 students. She is attending Luther because her sisters graduated from the college while she attended high school in the local community. Besma didn't seem too concerned that it was a college of the church. "I just liked the school, I liked the people. I was like, 'I'm going to come here." She has never been uncomfortable being a Muslim at a Lutheran school. "I guess I kind of expected that a little, to always be explaining my faith, but the people, they seem

Wayne is a 22-year-old male senior. He considers himself multiracial, American, and a non-denominational Christian. Wayne attended Luther because of its outstanding vocal music program and strong financial aid package. He recalls that, "it didn't really cross my mind about the religious affiliation." Wayne is a gay student who came out

during his freshman year at Luther. While the college is a Reconciled in Christ Congregation, meaning all are welcomed to take communion and worship, it is still a conservative institution in many ways. Luther is Christian college that has long-standing theological disputes with homosexual practice and will not ordain gay and lesbian pastors. It is also located in rural Iowa, a region that is both politically and socially conservative. Coming out at Luther can be both a supportive and challenging experience to any student's faith. The primary challenge for Wayne has been his own struggles with his sexual identity. "I grew up very, very faithful. I…when I was younger I did want to become a pastor. My father was a pastor. So I grew up in the church. I grew up in the church and so, therefore, was surrounded by the message of God and Christ…grew up Christian." At one point in his high school career, Wayne told another student that her gay brother was going to hell. Wayne is now openly gay. "And then dealing with my sexuality, I definitely pushed my faith in what I believed and how I believed and why I believed and so. Going from a home to school, my faith really, probably really strengthened." Wayne's sexual and Christian identities will continue to come in conflict with each other. Wayne credits the support of his faith to two student organizations and the peers with whom he associates in them. He has made strong allies through PRIDE, a student-run organization that advocates for People for Rights, Inclusion, and the Diversity of Expression. He has also made many supportive friends through SAC, the Student Activities Council, where he held several leadership roles and spent much of his free time outside of class. As a result of those experiences, he would like to begin his career in the field of higher education student affairs, and eventually work into public

policy or politics as an adversary to hate crime legislation. "My faith. My faith has been tested, we'll say. Being a queer person, faith has a lot of impact on your life." Although Wayne hopes to impact other lives as an educator and advocate, he has to sort out his own feelings and faith before moving on to the next step in his life.

Francis, Besma and Wayne have come from very different religious and social backgrounds to the same college of the church. Francis sought out Luther because he wanted to pursue classical languages and learn ancient Catholic worship services. Besma was raised a Muslim in Africa. She came to Luther to be near her sister. She was not even aware that it was a Lutheran college. Wayne was raised in a highly conservative non-denominational church. Wayne is gay and struggling to integrate his faith with his sexual identity. These three students have found that their faiths have all grown at a college of the church that is overtly Lutheran in heritage and in its current mission. The overall college of the church environment seems to have challenged and supported these students in appropriate ways so that they have learned about other faith traditions and have grown in their own.

The Classroom Experience

Andrew Jackson is a 21-year-old junior. He is Caucasian, American, and attends the United Methodist Church. Andrew's faith was primarily challenged by what he learned in the classroom. He stated that "it's a lot more challenging academically than you think…but that's a good thing." Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Introduction to the New Testament, and Introduction to the Old Testament were courses that "challenged my faith and if it weren't for those classes, I don't think I would be as far as I am now in

my faith because they encouraged me to challenge what I've been taught and to develop a self-search, so to speak, of what I should be doing." Despite the rigorous academic challenges, Andrew is also heavily involved in co-curricular activities on campus, several of which are sponsored by College Ministries: Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Focus, Bible studies, Andrew Jackson entered college as a Biblical literalist and has evolved into an open-minded Christian believer. "The Lutheran aspect had nothing to do with it. I basically just, I could see there was a lot of faith development and for me it's all about the development." His main purpose in life is to treat others with what he calls "the heart of God." Andrew speaks of the diversity of religious traditions and worship that he has witnessed on campus, and believes that serving others with the heart of God which means "as long as you are accepting of others, whether you agree with it or not, I think that's what's going to get you into heaven, if there is such a place. At this point, I still believe in heaven." If the path to salvation is taken by good works, then Andrew will find his way there.

David Brandt is a 20-year-old male junior. He is Black, Jamaican, and a member of the Church of the Brethren. David came to Luther College because it was the only school that accepted him. He arrived from Jamaica with few expectations for the place other than it would be a more mature environment than his high school. He has since focused his time and efforts primarily on his academic program, but has found some time to participate in intramural sports, join the Black Student Union, and be a Resident Assistant for two years. David's primary challenge at Luther College has been academics. He refers to his first year Paideia course as an example of how his faith was

challenged. The course required David to do a great deal of reading and writing, two skills that he struggled with in high school. His professor "encouraged (him) a lot and I worked with him a lot to improve my writing skills." Towards the end of the course, the professor encouraged him to write about his faith. "I thought he was joking, but it turns out he was being very serious. He thought I would do a good job of it. So if it wasn't for him, I don't think I'd be writing today."

Joanna Smith is a 22-year-old female senior. She is Caucasian, American, and Lutheran. The very programs that provided so much of her high school identity ultimately challenged and broken down her immature faith in college. Joanna says that, "a lot of the college ministries things I…sophomore year, questioned a lot more things and I was going through a big process of growth and questioning and I kind of toughed it out the rest of my sophomore year, " she says. By the beginning of her junior year at Luther, Joanna stopped participating in co-curricular activities altogether. She spent much of her final two years at Luther playing ultimate Frisbee on the library lawn. Joanna believes that her classroom experiences have given her the tools to have confidence in her faith. "I'm a religion major and so a lot of the religion professors and I are tight…they're willing to open up and share their struggles and listen to yours and learn with you." Joanna believes that the library lawn environment and the sense of community that it engenders have provided her support for her faith. "Favorite thing about Luther. Favorite thing about Luther. I say it on every (admissions) tour I go on. Library lawn. It's my favorite because, to me, if definitely exemplifies Luther for me and all that I love about Luther. " I kind of worship when I feel like it, when it's…whenever, I don't

necessarily do set devotions or anything like that. It kind of comes and goes as I need it."
"I think that it's not going to stand still, like, I've been given the tools to keep it moving
and instead of letting it stand static and continually looking at what's going on and how it
influences the world." Like her favorite activity of ultimate Frisbee, Joanna is constantly
on the move.

Katie was very excited to take Introduction to the Bible, but felt that her faith was
seriously challenged because she was one of few people who came into the course with a
literalist interpretation of the Bible. "So I had a lot of discussions with professors and
students which was good. I mean, it really challenged my faith. I think I read my Bible
more outside of class than anybody else", she says. She thought that additional study
would build her faith rather than break it down. The academic challenges did reinforce
her belief that she had to have her faith foundation in Christ. Katie main interest at
college has been her academic program. Her relationships with faculty have guided her
path through Luther College. She often finds them in available in their offices,
sometimes until late at night. "And then I see a lot of them at church, too, which is a
great way to get to know them and their families." "Faculty-student relationships are
some of the most meaningful because my main focus is academics.... And with that
comes getting to know the professors as well so that's kind of where I've spent the most
time." "I guess my faith changed because I didn't really take things quite so literally in
the Bible. I really learned to use other scholarly sources and develop my faith in a more
academic setting rather than simply just a church setting." So while her faith has been

challenged both in and outside of the classroom, Katie has seen it grow throughout her entire stay at Luther College.

Elizabeth Orchid is a 21-year-old female senior. She is Caucasian, American, and Lutheran. Elizabeth's first religion course also shook her faith. "And so I didn't want to continue taking religion courses when I felt like I pretty much had no faith to base anything on anymore. And everyone in class, everyone I talked to experiences that to a point. And some people are able to just get up and just keep going and other ones are just knocked to the ground for a long period of time like I was." Her faith has been rocky ever since despite the fact that she really enjoys the strong academic challenges she receives in her psychology classes. Elizabeth has found an unexpected and a strong role model in her faith journey, the Luther College swim coach. Coach Huber often tells the team, "God's here [holding his hand high], my family's here [moving his hand down] and swim team's here [his hand held lower]. And he'll kind of do that prioritizing right from the beginning so they kind of know where they (the swimmers) fall. And so just being involved in that program and working with him probably influenced my faith the most because he's definitely not a hypocrite in any way and has had a decent faith for so long, like the kind of belief system that I really want to get." She is trying to get off the roller coaster ride and have a constant faith. "I'm trying to just build more of a base that's maybe taking little steps at a time of what I believe but then wanting it to be like a constant belief, a daily thing, and so I'm just trying to get into some daily practices. After taking her first religion course, however, Elizabeth decided to drop her religion

major and focus her energy on a psychology major. She planned on attending seminary, but has since enrolled in law school.

These students had their faiths both challenged and supported in the academic classroom. Several of them reported that they had come from a church that supported a more literal interpretation of the Bible. The prescribed course work at Luther takes a more scholarly approach to the religious texts. This learning process can be very challenging and often disruptive to students' faith lives, but it can also strengthen their faiths in ways that they had not anticipated. The relationships that students forge with the faculty can also be very supportive. Knowing that faculty goes through similar struggles and has some of the same unanswered questions as they can help students rebuild shattered faiths. The classroom experience seems to have a strong impact of student faith development, especially at a college of the church were several course may be required.

Summary of Significant Findings

In this chapter I presented several findings from my analysis of twenty student faith development interviews conducted with Luther College juniors and seniors during the spring 2005 semester. These findings include a demographic profile of the sample, information about a college of the church, aggregate student experiences within the co-curriculum, and a two-tiered model for assessing student faith development at Luther College. I found three major co-curricular components that both challenged and supported student faith development among this group of participants: College Ministries programs; faculty and staff-student relationships; and the overall environment at a college of the church. Although it lies beyond the scope of this scope of this study, the formal

classroom experience also significantly impacted student faith development, especially in required philosophy and religion courses. The reader will now turn to the final chapter of this dissertation for both discussion items and the implications for future research in student faith development and practice in student affairs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The overarching research question in this study is how and to what extent does the co-curriculum contribute to student faith development at a college of the church? To continue to address this question, it is first necessary to summarize the findings of the study. As presented in the fourth chapter, the findings were divided into four broad categories: participant demographics, college of the church information, co-curricular knowledge, and student faith development experiences. This chapter discusses the implications for improved student affairs practice and scholarship in faith development.

The demographic information from the sample of twenty student participants generally represented the larger student body at Luther College. Three demographic categories were evenly divided amongst the participants: gender, age, and academic class standing. Students of color represent only 10% of the college community, but comprised 35% of the sample so they were over-represented in the study. In addition, Americans make up 90% of the student population at Luther, but accounted for only 80% of the study sample so they were underrepresented in the study. While the current student community at Luther College is slightly higher than 50% Lutheran, 55% of the study participants identified as Lutheran. The remaining 45% were affiliated with other Protestant traditions (20%), Roman Catholic (15%), Muslim (5%) or held no religious affiliation (5%). It should also be noted that the sample participated a wide variety of religious practices that included: worship (75%), religious text study (40%), prayer or mediation (35%), college ministries programs (30%) and several others practices that

unique to one individual. Three students claimed that they did not have any religious practices at all. While the demographic information did not reveal significant findings, it is helpful to student affairs professionals to know that a conventional student body at one college of the church seems to engage in multiple religious practices. This finding may help diversify the intentional efforts of college administrators at colleges of the church as they plan, implement and assess student faith programming on their campuses.

Findings related to college of the church information were difficult to synthesize, but I found a few meaningful patterns among the interview transcripts. Forty percent of the sample enrolled at Luther College specifically because it is a Lutheran college. This subgroup of students specifically sought out a distinctive type of higher education. The study sample had other reasons for coming to Luther beyond its religious affiliation. Five enrolled there in order to pursue a specific academic major. Five students sought admission because the college community felt like their home community. Five more received excellent financial support at an institution whose comprehensive fee recently exceeded $30,000 per year. Finally, four students came to Luther specifically for its music programs. It appears that many of these twenty students attended the college not only because it is Lutheran, and also because of its outstanding academic and co-curricular programs. Once they had enrolled at Luther College, 45% liked the relationships that they had established with faculty and staff. Thirty-five percent had met a lot of people, while 30% felt like the college had a strong sense of community. Five students stated that they had developed intellectually while at Luther. As they progressed closer to graduation from the college, 60% were going on to graduate school, 30%

wanted to enter professional ministries, and 25% were going into educational careers. Overall, the study participants seemed to be as concerned about their faith lives as they were about other aspects of collegiate life and beyond. Given that the college's core values of faith and learning are central to its mission statement, this group of students appears to have made the right decision in attending a college of the church.

Findings related to co-curricular experience and knowledge demonstrated that the participants were heavily involved in both campus activities (141 activities) and student leadership roles (41 roles). These junior and senior students resided in six campus residence halls: Farwell (35%), other halls (30%), Baker Village (20%), while 15% lived in first year student halls and served as Resident Assistants. The most meaningful campus events and programs were brought in through the Center Stage Series, which hosts monthly performances in the main auditorium in the Center for Faith and Life. The CFL was also mentioned as a meaningful environment, not only because of the high quality of the performances in the auditorium, but also because it is home to the College Ministries Office and a private prayer chapel. Many students also mentioned the residence halls as important environments because they not only provide solitude and privacy in a busy co-curriculum; they also provide gathering places for peers to interact and socialize or study. Finally, the participants pointed out that there were two particularly important relationships on campus. Student-student relationships are meaningful because peers go through similar developmental experiences together. They appear to offer support and feedback through difficult co-curricular and academic challenges. Faculty and staff-student relationships are also meaningful, but for different

reasons. They seem to provide academic advisement and vocational guidance to students. While mentioned in very few interviews, relationships with college administrators do not seem to be as meaningful to this group of students. These findings are important to student affairs professionals because they provide evidence that student faith develops across the campus in a wide variety of co-curricular and academic programs, relationships and environments.

Student faith development findings fell into one of two broad categories: challenges to student faith development, and supports for student faith development. I have created a two-tiered figure that shows practitioners which activities, relationships, environments, and components that lay beyond the co-curriculum challenged student faith development, and which ones supported student faith development for this group of students who attend a college of the church. Three significant co-curricular components both challenged and supported student faith at Luther: the College Ministries programs, faculty and staff-student relationships, and the overall environment at a college of the church. The formal classroom also seemed to have a strong relationship with student faith development, but it and other experiences fell beyond the particular scope of this study. While these findings were intriguing, college administrators would benefit from additional discussion, interpretation and an intentional linkage of the findings to improved practice in student affairs.

<div align="center">Linking Findings to Practice</div>

What is important to recognize among these findings is that faith development among this group of students did not necessarily take the shape of traditional and

orthodox Lutheran practice. One might assume that a relatively homogenous student body would engage in the similar religious practices and have comparable faith development experiences, but that was not the case. These findings lend credibility to the notion that student faith develops through a wide array of activities, relationships and environments both on campus and beyond its traditional confines. As I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, student affairs professionals have the opportunity to enhance student faith development by planning, implementing and assessing numerous diverse religious and spiritual programs with different members of the college faculty and staff within multiple and diverse campus environments. Faith development as it has been traditionally framed at a college of the church must not be left solely to the religion and philosophy faculty and campus chaplainry to foster. Students appear to make meaning experiences in many corners of the college campus amongst many different community members. Student affairs professionals must, therefore, move out beyond their traditional boundaries and challenge and support students in the development of their faith where, when and how it is intersecting with the co-curriculum.

The college of the church was traditionally constructed to be the extension of the church into higher education with the important purpose of passing along a specific faith tradition to the next generation of believers. While the findings in this study do reveal that there were intentional efforts to encourage Lutheran spiritual formation though both academic and co-curricular programs at Luther College, many of the students who were actively involved in those programs have also been seriously challenged and, in some cases, severely disrupted in their faith development. These negative developmental

experiences seem difficult for first-year students enrolled in the prescribed religion and philosophy courses at Luther College. Many who came from a congregation that encouraged a more literal interpretation of the Bible were tested by historical and contextual interpretations of the Biblical texts in the classroom. A few of the students reported that they fell away from their faiths, or that their beliefs were substantially weakened as a result of the classroom experience. Therefore, rather than conceptualizing the college of the church environment as one that exists to perpetuate a particular faith tradition, college administrators are encouraged to link it to improved practices which reframes its mission in a developmentally-appropriate series of challenges to and supports for student faith development. The old notion that Lutheran institutions graduate better Lutherans needs to be rethought. This study seems to reveal a slightly different notion, and that is that this Lutheran college graduates more fully developed student believers from among a wide variety of Christian and other faith traditions.

The college co-curriculum is also a wide and deep arena of intentionally designed programs that are implemented for the advancement of student development. There seem to be endless opportunities for students to engage in meaningful activities, relationships and environments on campus. Yet, students do not often have the time and energy to be involved in each aspect of campus life. They need appropriate advisement in order to make intelligent choices about how to manage their limited resources. Student affairs professionals may benefit their student clients by mentoring them towards appropriate decision making. In reviewing the two-tiered model (Tables 3 and 4) practitioners are informed of the co-curricular components that impact student faith development. Beyond

the model, I found that three components appear to enhance student faith to a greater extent than do the others. College administrators should instruct students that college ministries programs, faculty and staff-student relationships, and the overall environment at a college of the church seem to both challenge and support student faith in ways that promote its development. In other words, attending a college ministries event, engaging in a mentoring relationship with a faculty or staff member or immersing oneself in an environment specific to a college of the church (e.g. the Center for Faith and Life at Luther College) are all advisable uses of students' limited energy and time. These three co-curricular components appear to have a greater impact on student faith than do the others. By stressing engagement in these specific co-curricular components, student faith may develop more efficiently and effectively than through the haphazard or piecemeal approach students typically take toward the co-curriculum.

I have reframed these findings as a way to re-conceptualize the traditional co-curriculum at a college of the church. If student affairs professionals are to take seriously their long-standing calling to promote student religious identity, what is now called student faith development, then they must now understand and design and shape campus living and learning environments in a developmentally appropriate fashion for the students who live and learn there. This also means that the overall college of the church environment should be understood as a vast opportunity for students to engage in their development of their own faith tradition. Rather than leave faith testing to the faculty and faith encouragement to chaplainry, college administrators should create programs and policies, engage in mentoring relationships and design learning environments that

challenge students to question their own faith traditions. This also means that co-curricular advisors must help students to effectively manage their time by attending and pursuing leadership roles in activities, relationships and environments that both challenge and support student faith development. It is within this new conceptual framework that student affairs practice at a college of the church will be improved. To that end, the next section provides suggestions for improved practice.

Improving Student Affairs Practice

The litmus test for any study is the impact that it has on improving practice within its particular field. This study is intended to improve student affairs practice at a college of the church by encouraging college administrators to foster faith development opportunities for students at their institutions. To achieve that intended outcome, I offer several practical recommendations for improved practice under the broader umbrella of co-curricular activities and events, community relationships, and campus environments. In reading these suggestions, student affairs practitioners will discover a wide variety of practical ideas that may stimulate student faith development at their institutions. While the list is not meant to be exhaustive, it is a place to begin to reclaim the original mission of the student affairs profession in educating the whole student, including his or her religious identity or unique experiences in faith development.

Co-curricular Activities

The participants in this study were actively engaged in co-curricular activities and events. As previously noted, they were involved in 41 different and a total of 141 programs. They also filled 27 student leadership positions on campus. These statistics

reveal the reported co-curricular findings. It appears, however, that the list could have been underreported since the participants were only asked to comment on the meaningful activities and events. Given that college students tend to lead a busy existence on campus, I recommend five strategies which student affairs professionals may utilize to encourage student faith to develop among the chaos of everyday co-curricular life.

Consider Student Load

College students carry heavy loads. With increasing costs and decreasing aid programs, there is increasing pressure on students to graduate early from college. Many students at Luther carry more than the recommended 16 hours of academic credit, and each year more are petitioning to carry the maximum load of 20 academic credits. There has also been an increase in recent years in the numbers of students working on and off campus. In addition, students are also seeking more internship opportunities, pursuing additional campus leadership positions, and involving themselves in a host of activities and events in order to distinguish themselves from their peers for graduate school admissions or for future employers. With these added commitments and pressures, there comes less time to achieve personal and developmentally-appropriate goals. Student affairs professionals should discourage students from overloading themselves and lighten their schedules. Less stress leads to a healthier outlook and more productive existence for students. With lighter loads, students may also find time, energy, and space necessary for personal reflection. Refection is an essential exercise that college administrators can promote to encourage student faith development. Helping students to reconsider their heavy loads may actively promote student faith development.

Encourage Selective Involvement

Students are often not selective about the activities and events in which are involved. It is not unusual for first year students at Luther College to commit themselves to five or more organizations during the fall activities fair. While finding their social niche on campus is often a process of trial and error, many students become overwhelmed with their excessive commitments during this time of identity development. Over-commitment may lead some to withdraw from campus life, suffer in the academic pursuits or isolate themselves from their peers. Student affairs professions should advise students to be selective about their co-curricular commitments. Encouraging students to engage in activities that both challenge and support their faiths should be good advice. For example, the Focus program at Luther College provides students with informal worship opportunities through fun and fellowship with their peers, but also offers speakers whose messages can challenge student faith. By attending a Focus event on Sunday evenings, students may start each week with a balance of faith challenge and support while being selective about their commitments for that week. Encouraging selective engagement in co-curricular life may run contrary to Astin's (1993) findings on student involvement, but it also prevents students from experiencing the stresses of being over-whelmed in an environment that encourages engagement in learning both in and out of the classroom.

Promote Provocative Speakers

Students are often required by faculty to attend lectures given by prominent speakers on campus. Luther community celebrations like the opening convocation, the

Center Stage Series performances, and year-end commencement bring speakers who often deliver controversial messages from the podium. At a college of the church, these speakers are encouraged to raise ethical concerns, ask difficult questions and pose challenging dilemmas to students. Audience participants often engage speakers through open question and answer sessions. Student affairs professionals should promote and attend these lectures and celebrations. In addition, college administrators should follow-up with student participants by providing comments, observations and stimulating questions that contribute to the academic mission of the institution. This provides students with additional food for thought for those who are willing to continue the dialogue. Promoting provocative speakers may challenge some students to question their faith, while others may feel supported in their belief systems. While the educational or developmental outcomes of listening to a provocative speaker often go without any formal assessment, it is merited for student affairs professionals utilize informal assessments by addressing student participants with questions that encourage them to reflect on their own values and beliefs as they engage those presented by the campus speakers. While the speakers may extol values that run contrary to the institutional mission, engagement in a values-filled dialogue would promote faith development.

Encourage Vocational Preparation

Students may not understand that their co-curricular lives prepare them for future vocations. The college campus is a fertile training ground for young adults who will attend graduate degree programs or go into the workforce in the upcoming years. Assuming a campus leadership position is one obvious example of how students begin to

prepare themselves for their callings after college. Student affairs professionals should educate students that their co-curricular endeavors provide them with marketable experiences and employable skills and aptitudes. Department supervisors may shape student workplace habits and values. College administrators can also refer students to the college career center as a way of shaping co-curricular experiences into a more formal assessment of their vocations. This is especially helpful for first and second year students as they often forget vocational plans in order to focus on immediate academic obstacles. As designers of the co-curricular experiences, it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to also prepare students for life beyond the confines of campus.

Focus on Faith Development

Students have opportunities to attend co-curricular events each and every day at Luther College. Many of these programs are intended to help students develop intellectually, while others promote their emotional, physical or social development. Others are geared toward student faith development. Student affairs professionals should concern themselves with the education of the whole student which includes all aspects of his or her development, even in the area of faith. Despite the public or private nature of a higher education institution, "The Student Personnel Point of View" (American Council on Education, 1937/1949) informs practitioners that they should concern themselves with the education of the whole student, including his or her religious identity. At a college of the church, administrators may have institutional support to encourage students to attend religious and spiritual programming. Faith development should continue to be a focus for college administrators at all types of colleges and universities.

Co-curricular Relationships

Faculty and staff-student relationships appear to have a significant impact on student faith development at Luther College. Forty-five percent appreciated the quality of faculty and staff-student relationships on campus. This finding indicates that almost half of the students in the sample were engaged in meaningful relationships with college professionals. To contrast this find, one student reported that college administrators were inaccessible to students. In addition, very few student affairs professionals were named by students in the study. Those who were named included an athletic trainer, a security officer, a residence hall director and the Dean of the College. The vast majority named were faculty members. While it hard to interpret these findings, it appears that college administrators do not connect in the meaningful ways that faculty do with students. If that is actually the case, then I offer four suggestions to improve co-curricular relationships between college administrators and students that may appropriately promote faith development at a college of the church.

Overcome Student Resistance

Students are often motivated by course requirements, assigned advisee roles, intellectual curiosity or by other reasons to engage faculty in meaningful relationships. They do not have the same sets of motivations for seeking out college staff members. As a matter of common practice, student affairs professionals often seek out students for reasons of program participation, financial accountability, or in order to address inappropriate behavior. The motivation behind these relationships is often negative and not viewed by students within a developmental context. Student affairs professionals

should work diligently to overcome student resistance in order to engage them in meaningful relationships. At a college of the church, the academic mission of the institution may include student faith development. If college administrators are going to overcome their traditional roles on campus, then they must reduce reach out to students in positive and proactive ways. This does not mean giving up traditional responsibilities like student judicial affairs, but instead reframing such duties in ways that enhance student development and offer opportunities for challenge and support in student faith.

Encourage Student-Student Relationships

College students probably do not realize that the relationships that they have with their peers help to facilitate a number of critical learning outcomes. Astin (1993) is clear on that point. He emphatically acknowledges that peers are one of the most significant factors in college student engagement theory. In this study, students viewed each other as friends and colleagues in common developmental experiences. While there was some mention of students engaging in religious discussions with each other, not one participant seemed to recognize that their faith had developed because of these student-student interactions. Therefore, it behooves student affairs staff to encourage relationships among college peers in order to promote important learning outcomes, including student faith development. While this may seem like a trivial exercise in an environment that already fosters interactions among college peers, it does provide students with an incentive for reaching out to others within the context of their faith traditions.

Mentor Students in Faith

Students are often not their own best advocates. Several in this study believed that they had fallen away from their faith since attending a college of the church. Others felt that their busy schedules prevented them from regular worship and religious study. Without the support of their home congregations, students can go unsupported and unchallenged in their faith development throughout their entire college career. Student affairs professionals should engage in faith mentoring relationships with students. While this may sound like proselytizing, it is not, nor should it be. To mentor a student in his or her faith development process means asking serious questions in a safe and supportive environment. It also means leaving out value judgments and allowing students to fall short in their developmental efforts. Mentoring in faith may mean inviting them to a provocative speaker, offering them a ride to worship, discussing meaningful topics over lunch, or it may mean involve another form of outreach. Mentoring students in faith is a role that has been traditionally played by college ministers, but it does not have to be. According to Fowler (1981) faith development is part of the universal human experience. Mentoring a student in faith, therefore, is akin to teaching him or her about an academic discipline or a life skill. Student affairs professionals should not shy away from mentoring opportunities with students, but find an appropriate method for assisting them in their own faith development.

Mentor Colleagues in Faith

Students do not often get the opportunity to see faculty and staff mentor each other, especially in matters of faith. While one participant in this study reported that he

saw faculty and staff interact at his church, none of the participants mentioned that they were aware of a faith mentoring relationship among college employees. Student affairs professionals are encouraged to engage in faith mentoring relationships with other faculty and staff at their institutions. This can be done via casual conversation, or it can be accomplished in a more formal programmatic setting like a new a new faculty orientation. Regardless of the setting, faith mentoring is appropriate role modeling for students. For students to understand that college faculty and staff can have professional differences of opinion, but also share a common religious tradition demonstrates how valued faith is among their community of elders. Such role modeling may, in turn, help facilitate faith development among college peers who may have a more difficult time setting apart their differences and worshipping together.

Co-curricular Environments

Certain campus environments at a college of the church enhance student faith development more than others do. In this study, student participants mentioned that the following environments were particularly meaningful to them: residence halls, the Center for Faith and Life, and the outdoors. While these three environments received a lot of comments from the sample, three out of the twenty students interviewed believed that specific places did not impact their faith development. They felt that their faith was not bound by place, but rather could be fostered in any environment. Given these somewhat contradictory findings, I offer three recommendations to student affairs professionals when it comes to creating and promoting environments that enhance student faith.

Consider Policy and Practice

Students do not usually consider institutional policy and practice when it comes to utilizing campus environments. They often occupy buildings after official closing hours. They tend to ignore occupancy rates of spaces devised to protect them. They often fail to reserve rooms for their own use even though other official business may occur there. Student affairs professionals should be thoughtful, and perhaps a little forgiving, about institutional policy and practice within campus environments if they want to foster faith development in places that students find meaningful Rather than closing the college ministries offices at the end of each workday, staff may consider leaving them open for student use in the evenings. Rather than insisting that students make facilities reservations for private study sessions or group discussions, encourage them to use residence hall lounge spaces that do not require an advance notice. Rather than using classrooms for only academic purposes, allow students to utilize them for Bible study or other philosophical meetings. These and other attempts to be flexible and understanding with student programming efforts in campus facilities encourage faith development. Student affairs professionals should be willing to appropriately forgo policy and practice when the outcomes seem to enhance student faith development on campus.

Consider Challenge and Support

Students do not intentionally consider how campus environments enhance faith development. Some environments, like the college chapel, may challenge students to critically examine their faiths. Other environments, like student rooms, may encourage students who are struggling in their faiths. Student affairs professionals should be aware

that there are certain campus environments that both challenge and support student faith development. The residence halls can bring students together for religious programming, but can also provide splendid isolation for spiritual growth. The Center for Faith and Life at Luther College challenges students with its provocative programs and supports them with its community worship ceremonies. If the overall college of the church environment seems to be in tune with the institutional mission statement promoting student faith development, then college administrators should consider the implications of each activity, relationship and environment as one that may both challenge and supports students as they seek a higher calling in their lives.

Consider College of the Church Environment

Often students enroll at a college of the church with the impression that the campus environment is similar to other higher education institutions. They may realize that the college mission statement has a denomination bias or that the College Ministries programs play a more prominent role on campus. They may also be aware that there are required courses in philosophy and religion. However, they may not be aware that the college of the church was originally designed to enhance student faith development. Student affairs professions should remember that these environments were established to promote people of faith, often into parish ministry or religious education. In that light, student faith development seems to take place in almost every corner of campus because it was designed to do so. College administrators would be wise to consider the environment at a college of the church as wide array of appropriate opportunities and

contexts to help students develop in their faith lives. At such institutions, faith development may also be an explicit part of the college mission statement.

<u>Faith Development Scholarship</u>

In the first chapter of this study, I emphasized the need to fill a gap in the rapidly growing body of student development literature. Student faith development has long been excluded from or minimized within the academic discipline. With the recent resurgence of values education in the United States, the gradual decline of the separation of church and state in public institutions, and the focus on faith within the current Presidential administration, there is a renewed interest in promoting student faith development in student affairs practice and scholarship. This seems especially important at colleges of the church that may be struggling to redefine them in a highly competitive higher education marketplace.

In this study I presented a methodology that compliments and further extends the scholarly efforts of Fowler (1981), Parks (1986, 2000) and others in the arena of faith development. Fowler's stages of faith model provided appropriate foundation that allowed me to describe, assess and understand student faith development at a college of the church. A qualitative research design was imperative to address the impact of the co-curriculum on student faith development. Case study methodology was appropriate given the limitations of the study sample and the nature of the research question. The sampling technique created a strong pool of participants whom demonstrated credible evidence of student faith development. The semi-structured interview provided new knowledge in the following areas: student demographics, college of the church expectations, co-

curricular findings, and student faith development experiences. I presented the faith development findings in a two-tiered model that listed specific challenges to and supports for student faith development at a college of the church. This study also contributed to small body of research concerning a college of the church, and more specifically, an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America higher education institution. While I generated new faith development scholarship and additional research about a college of the church, there is still much for future scholars to consider in these and other areas of study.

<u>Further Consideration in Faith Development</u>

The first area for further consideration is the examination of student faith development within the formal college classroom. This case study was limited to an examination of the co-curriculum at Luther College. Although several participants discussed a few of their many experiences in the philosophy and religion courses, they were not asked to address student faith development in the academic arena. I would recommend that future student faith development research focus on the impact of the curriculum upon student faith development at a college of the church. To take that a step further, it would be interesting to compare and contrast student faith development that occurs within prescribed courses versus elective courses. If colleges of the church are still interested in promoting people of faith, it would seem logical to assess whether their core philosophy and religion courses are doing just that.

A second area for future study is the formulation of a faith stages model of college student development. Such a model should be more tightly connected to the work of Fowler (1981), Parks (1986, 2000) and other scholars whom have built upon

their theories. While it was my intention to build upon Parks' extension of Fowler's six stages of faith theory, the findings did not lead me to serious consideration of an expanded stage model for faith development during the college years. If student faith development were a universal experience, then it would be a tremendous benefit to student affairs practitioners to have a practical model in their hands in order to guide students through their academic and co-curricular lives on campus. The caveat to utilizing such a model is each participant would develop along the same timeline as the others.

The third area for additional study involves comparative research on colleges of the church and other religious higher education institutions. Comparing and contrasting the impact of the co-curriculum at various Protestant, Catholic and non-Christian colleges and universities could prove to be a rewarding endeavor for those interested in understanding student faith development within a broader higher education context. Given the current openness to values education and the competitive market for religious institutions, the climate for collaborative research efforts seems cooperative. A joint research study would be likely be welcomed by other colleges of the church.

A final consideration involves the possible reclassification of student faith development within the current body of student development literature. Where it is actually classified, faith development is typically indexed within the psychosocial and identity development family. I believe that student faith development impacts more than just the personal and interpersonal lives of students. It also deserves to be considered within the person-environment family, which assumes that behavior is a factor of the

interaction of a person and the environment. This is especially apparent when studying the impact of the co-curriculum on faith. Student development scholarship is rapidly growing with the recent influx of non-traditional student learners in higher education, so the time to reclassify the body of relevant literature within the discipline has arrived.

Concluding Thoughts

As a student affairs practitioner who works at Luther College, I found that this study was both immensely frustrating and rewarding. Perhaps the most frustrating finding was that college administrators, with the exception of college ministers, seem to play a very limited role in enhancing student faith development on our campus. In some cases the practices and policies of student affairs professionals appear to slow or even cease appropriate faith development among the student body. This frustration can be addressed through study and understanding of student faith development research and best practices in the field. It may also be addressed via a thorough understanding of the college's mission statement. Perhaps the most rewarding finding was the student faith development seems to be taking place across campus in a wide variety of activities and events, relationships and environments. How, when, where and by whom student faith development occurs is often a mystery for student affairs practitioners. Yet when we sensitize ourselves to the challenges to and supports for student faith development, we become empowered to create appropriate policies, engage in mentoring relationships, and design environments at a college of the church that enhance student faith development.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE NOMINATION CRITERIA

You have been selected from faculty organization advisors and staff members in the departments of Philosophy and Religion, College Ministries, and Student Life to help select students to participate in a study that is designed to assess the impact of the co-curriculum on student faith development at Luther College.

Eric Braun, Director of Residence Life at Luther College and a doctoral student at the University of Northern Iowa, requests your assistance in nominating a sample of twenty students to be interviewed for this study. I will meet with you individually in January or February to answer any questions that you may have about the study.

In the spaces provided at the bottom of this page, please write down the names of up to ten junior and senior students whom you believe are examples of *student faith development* at Luther College. You should already have some level of familiarity with these students. In addition, the students you nominate must meet criterion #1 and at least one of the remaining four criteria (#2-#5) listed below:

1. Students' names must appear on the population list. These students are eligible to participate in this study based upon their knowledge and experiences with the college co-curriculum.
2. Faculty and staff must be aware that these students have spent time and energy reflecting on their own faith development.
3. Faculty and staff must be aware that the students have been involved in one or more community service experiences either on or off campus.
4. Faculty and staff must be aware that the students have had a variety of interpersonal relationships with Luther community members or with members of the Decorah community.
5. Students do not need to be actively involved in campus ministry, faith-based, or spiritual activities, although participation may be evidence of an expression of student faith development.
6. Students do not need to be members of a particular sectarian group or denomination.

The following are juniors and senior students whom I believe are diverse examples of *student faith development* at Luther College:

1. _____   6. _____
2. _____   7. _____
3. _____   8. _____
4. _____   9. _____
5. _____   10. _____

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

[Name]   [Date]
[Student Post Office #]

Dear Name,

Greetings! My name is Eric Braun, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational
Leadership program at the University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls). I am currently in
the process of identifying students for my dissertation research. You were identified as a
possible participant by a faculty, staff, or student affairs professional at the college.

The purpose of my research is to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent
the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church. I
intend to select 15-30 Luther junior and senior students to interview for this study.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be involved in a 90-minute interview.
During the ten minute pre-interview, you may ask me questions about the study. If you
agree to continue, I will ask you to complete an Informed *Consent Form*. The first phase
of the interview will focus on your unique faith development experiences and should take
approximately 45 minutes to complete. The second phase of the interview will explore
your co-curricular experiences at the college. It should take 40 minutes to complete.

With your permission, both phases of the interview will be audio taped and transcribed to
facilitate the gathering of accurate and complete data. You will have the opportunity to
review the interview transcript for the purposes of accuracy and clarification. All forms,
tapes, and transcripts will be coded and altered with pseudonyms (alias names) prior to
discussions with the dissertation chair and other committee members. This is done in
order to keep your identity confidential.

I will be calling you in your residence hall room to see if you are interested in
participating in this study. If you are interested we will schedule an interview session in
a location of your choosing. Prior to that call, you may also wish to review the enclosed
Participant Consent Form. It is yours to keep.

Should you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at
(563) 387-1330 (in the Residence Life Office) or brauneri@luther.edu, or at 382-3830 (at
home after 5:00 p.m.). You may also contact the dissertation committee chair at the
University of Northern Iowa, Dr. Michael Waggoner at (319) 273-3350 or
mike.waggoner@uni.edu, or the Coordinator of the Human Subjects Review Board at
Luther College, Dr. Julie Potter at (563) 387-1254 or potterju@luther.edu for more
information. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to talking to you
soon.

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA and LUTHER COLLEGE
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Relationship of the Co-curriculum with Student Faith Development
at a College of the Church
Investigator: Eric B. Braun

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa and Luther College. These institutions require that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The following information is provided to help you made an informed decision whether or not to participate in this study.

Nature and Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church. Data from the study will be used to assess the effectiveness of faith development policies and programs at Luther College.

Explanation of Procedures: Participants will be involved in a 90-minute interview. The investigator will ask the participants questions about demographic information, student faith development experiences, their involvement with and feelings about Luther College and its co-curriculum.

Discomfort and Risks: Participants may feel some discomfort knowing that their interviews will be audiocassette taped and transcribed, but each will be given a pseudonym, an alias identity prior to the interview. Interview transcripts will be kept confidential. Once interview audiotapes have been transcribed, they will be destroyed. Interview transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer in my private residence. Transcripts will be shared with the dissertation chair, committee members and the Director of Assessment and Institutional Research at Luther College.

Benefits: The potential benefit of this research includes the improvement of faith development programs, policies, and practices at Luther College.

Confidentiality: The summarized findings with no identifying information may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference. This *Informed Consent Form* and the interview audiocassette tape will be kept separate so that participants cannot be identified. At no time will any person other than the investigator have the *Informed Consent Form* and audiotape.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time or to choose not to participate at all, and by doing so, you will not be penalized or lose benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participants will not receive any benefits or compensation.

Questions regarding this study may be directed to I, Eric Braun, (563) 387-1330, or to the Dissertation Chair, Michael Waggoner, Ph. D., and (319) 273-3350. Subjects may contact the Graduate College, University of Northern Iowa, (319) 273-2748, or Julie Potter, Ph. D., Chair, Luther College HSRB, (563) 387-1254, for answers to questions about the nature of research and about the rights of human subjects.

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated

above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I

acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age

or older.

_____   _____   _____

(Printed Name of Participant)   (Signature of Participant)   (Date)

_____   _____   _____

(Signature of Investigator)   (Signature of Advisor)   (Date)

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE

Opening Statement
The purpose of my research is to describe, assess and understand how and to what extent
the co-curriculum contributes to student faith development at a college of the church.

Section One: Demographic Information
1. Name   First: Last:
2. Gender   Male   Female
3. Age   21   22   Other:
4. Academic Class   3   4   Other:
5. Race   Caucasian   Other:
6. Ethnicity   American   Other:
7. Religious Affiliation   Lutheran   Other:
8. Religious Practices

Section Two: Faith Development Information
1. Tell me about faith. What else would you like me to know?
2. How has your faith changed since you were a child? Do you have other examples?
3. How has your faith changed while you have been in college? In what other ways?
4. What programs at Luther College have influenced your faith? Are there more?
5. What people at Luther College have influenced your faith? Are there others?
6. What places at Luther College have influenced your faith? Can you think of others?
7. What else would you like to tell me about your faith? Have we covered everything?

Section Three: Co-curricular Information
1. Where do you live on campus? How has living in that place affected you?
2. What campus activities have you been involved in, or are currently involved in?
3. What memorable campus events or programs have you attended? Why?
4. What campus leadership positions have you held, or do you currently hold?
5. What campus relationships are most meaningful to you? Why are they meaningful?
6. Which campus environments are most important to you? Why are they important?
7. Which other activities or events, relationships, or campus environments have been
   important and meaningful to you?

Section Four: College of the Church Information
1. Why did you choose Luther College? Why did you choose a Lutheran College?
2. How have your experiences been like you expected them to be? How have they been
   different than you expected them to be?
3. How do you think Luther College is like other colleges? How is it different?
4. What do you like about Luther College? What do you dislike about it?
5. Is there anything else that you would like me to know about your experiences here?