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**MODELS OF FAITH AND LEARNING IN THEATRE AT COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES AFFILIATED WITH CHURCHES OF CHRIST: SELECTED CASE  
STUDIES**

by

**CATHERINE L. PARKER**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2014

MAJOR: THEATRE

Approved by:

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Advisor

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation is a case study of theatre programs at three liberal arts colleges within the Churches of Christ faith tradition: Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College. It will examine their “model of faith and learning” and examine how their theatre departments operate out of that model. A “model of faith and learning” refers to the particular way an institution of higher learning that is sponsored by a religious tradition relates in practical terms with the world of the faith tradition and the world of academics and scholarship. The model varies with the institution, the sponsoring religious tradition, and the working relationship between the two.

Two general points of view have been defined in the literature. The first is what has been called the “add-on” or “values-added model,” in which academic studies take place alongside of Christian ethos and persons, terms defined below. At the other end of the spectrum, the “integrated” approach involves some measurable degree of integration in the classroom between the worlds of faith and academics. This study will examine the relationship between the heritage of Churches of Christ and each of the given institutions and how each model relates with the discipline of theatre. The purpose of the first chapter is to introduce the general nature of that relationship, review the literature as it relates to the relationship, and then return to the relationship in light of the literature reviewed.

### **Liberal Arts Education**

Since this is a study of a particular type of liberal arts institution, it is necessary to first define a liberal arts education. The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines liberal arts education, or liberal education, as follows:

Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. The broad goals of liberal education have been enduring even as the courses and requirements that comprise a liberal education have changed over the years. Today, a liberal education usually includes a general education curriculum that provides broad learning in multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in a major. (“What is Liberal Education?” par. 2)

The term liberal comes from the root word *liber*, meaning free man. Hoyt Hudson, author of *Educating Liberally*, explains, “A liberal education is a freeing education; it frees a young person from something and for something. It frees him, or should free him, from ignorance, intolerance, and superstition, from narrowness and parochialism. It frees him for citizenship in the realm of the intellect” (qtd. in Heffner 18). With the exception of a growth period between 1955 and 1970, liberal arts education as such has experienced a decline over the last hundred years. The economic downturn of the early twenty-first century accelerated this decline by leading many liberal arts institutions to redefine their historic identity. Keohane argues, nevertheless, that liberal arts education is not outdated; on the contrary, it is particularly relevant to learning in the twenty-first century. In today’s rapidly changing world, it is important for students to possess a broad education, particularly one in which they not only learn a specific subject but also how to learn in general. Second, an education that “hones the mind, teaching focus, critical thinking, and the ability to express oneself clearly both in writing and speaking” provides learning skills that are essential regardless of career path (Keohane par. 10). Third, a liberal arts education is one of the most effective ways to prepare students to function in a democracy, which is even more important today as new democracies are emerging world-wide and established democracies face

“increasing levels of self-examination. Fourth, a liberal arts education cultivates both the intellectual and creative faculties. Finally, Keohane argues, a liberal arts education joins students to a historic community of scholars in a tradition based on the capability of education to free the mind (Keohane par. 12-15). Of course, these arguments justifying the value of a liberal arts education are not new; they are cited here to demonstrate that scholars continue to believe in their relevance, especially amid the often bewildering changes taking place in the contemporary world.

### **Christian Liberal Arts Education**

Now that the mission of liberal arts colleges and their relationship to the contemporary world have been defined, the next step is to define a Christian college within this context. Christian liberal arts colleges share many of the same educational values as their secular counterparts. Arthur F. Holmes explains that if a liberal arts education is the education of the whole person, both an exercise in freedom and a preparation for life, then it undeniably has a place within a “Christian conception of persons created in the image of God” (28):

Liberal education provides an opportunity to steward life more effectively by becoming more fully a human person in the image of God, by seeing life whole rather than fragmented, by transcending the provincialism of our place in history, our geographic location, or our job. (36)

Defining the specific nature and scope of such an ideal is a more problematic task. For some faith-based institutions, the practical outcome is little more than a tenuous awareness of the historical tradition from which the institution was founded. Others demonstrate a compelling belief that devotional and spiritual activities, such as chapel attendance, missionary enterprises, and campus devotionals should exist alongside traditional academics. Moreover, the faculty, staff, and administration of still other Christian colleges attempt to be visible models of Christian behavior for their students. In some institutions, furthermore, faith assumes an even more active

role within the classroom, such as praying before class or the reading of Scripture in class. A few institutions view Christian faith as something actually woven into the fabric of the educational enterprise, whereby the academic disciplines themselves are to a greater or lesser degree influenced directly by the Christian faith.

How the academic community interprets the relationship, i.e., between the sponsoring faith tradition and the academic enterprise, often elicits strong opinions about the appropriateness of this relationship. The inherent tensions between an institution's commitment to faith on one hand and to academic rigor on the other have proven, in certain cases, to be irreconcilable, resulting in several universities dissolving their original faith-based foundations. A major work assessing various trends in religious higher education is James Burtchaell's *Dying of the Light* (1998). Burtchaell traces the stories of sixteen schools representing seven religious colleges that have divested themselves of their initial Christian foundations. Important American universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, for example, were founded on the principles of Protestantism but subsequently became secularized. Of course, not all schools followed this path. Douglass Sloan explains a phenomenon occurring at many Protestant institutions that did not secularize, a phenomenon he terms the "two realm theory of knowledge," in which faith coexists comfortably with academics. On one side, he explains, are the "truths of knowledge," which are empirical truths and scientific facts. On the other side are the "truths of faith, religious experience, morality, meaning and value" (Sloan ix). While this model allows both truth systems to coexist, Sloan points out that faith and knowledge may coexist only if separated by a "deep abyss."

However, in *The Idea of a Christian College* (1975), Arthur F. Holmes disagrees with what he calls the "two spheres" model of Christian education and suggests that the worlds of

faith and academics need not be so estranged at Christian colleges. The idea should not be “simply to offer a good education plus biblical studies in an atmosphere of piety” or to “train people for church-related vocations” or for the “social and extracurricular benefits” (Holmes 5):

Its distinctive[ness] should be an education that cultivates the creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture. [...] The Christian college will not settle for a militant polemic against secular learning and science and culture, as if there were a great gulf fixed between the secular and the sacred. (6-7)

Providing counter-examples to Burtchaell’s position, Robert Benne studied six schools that have not only maintained their Christian ties but have also maintained more than a nominal connection between faith and learning. In *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Tradition* (2001), Benne identifies three components of a Christian tradition that are “publically relevant” in colleges that have “kept the faith”: *vision*, *ethos*, and *Christian persons* (6). Benne uses these three categories to analyze his own selection of six Christian colleges (Calvin College, Wheaton College, Baylor University, Notre Dame University, St. Olaf College, and Valparaiso University). *Vision* is “Christianity’s articulated account of reality.” It is “comprehensive,” “unsurpassable,” and “central;” it is “the umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted” (Benne 6). *Vision* arises out of the Bible and the long history of the Christian church. It is the intellectual tradition specific to each form of Christianity, one which articulates, among other things, “a theory about how revelation and reason are related” (Benne 7). *Ethos* is the way in which faith is actually lived, the “way of life.” It includes public worship and prayer, sacramental acts, religious music, liturgical expressions, moral actions, service, and rules for Christian living (Benne 7-8). Benne’s *Christian persons* are those involved in the day-to-day planning and operation of such institutions, including the governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and



students. Together they implement the vision and ethos and maintain the relevance of those ideals within the college (Benne 8).

Vision, Benne argues, is the most crucial ingredient to sustaining these institutions and inhibiting them from inclining toward secularization. However, Benne finds that vision is also the single component that is most often lacking in Christian institutions, including those institutions with a strong faith-based ethos and a significant number of persons who adhere to such a religious commitment. He explains:

One would think, then, that theology would be amply employed by Christian colleges and universities to articulate their identity and mission, to stipulate the relation of revelation and reason in their particular tradition, to gather a theology department in which its members would gladly carry that vision on behalf of the school and the faculty, to construct a curriculum, to elaborate a public justification for the school's ethos, and to provide a Christian intellectual tradition with which the whole school in its many departments could engage. Sadly, however, this is where most schools historically have been the weakest. (15-16)

If a critical mass of active Christian believers from a particular religious heritage are employed and enrolled at the institution to sustain its religious mission, the college will continue to be a Christian institution related to that specific religious heritage. Without a theologically-grounded vision, however, many colleges, even those that continue to maintain strong ties with their founding denomination, tend to adopt this so-called two-sphere model in which a strong religious ethos exists alongside of but separate from a secular education (Benne 17). To put this in more practical terms, in the two-sphere model, minimal practical engagement occurs with theological reflection in various academic disciplines, even in religious studies. The institution is identified as a particular form of Christianity by its ethos (chapel, service projects, moral codes of behavior, etc.) and its ability to attract and retain a sufficiently sizable, like-minded constituency to sustain at least minimal ties to that particular ethos. Such colleges are not necessarily destined to secularize, Benne says, but they will be “colleges in which real Christian presence is ‘added-

on' to the main intellectual tasks," and such a school, "even if nominally Christian, will look like education anywhere else" (37).

### **Theatre in Liberal Arts Education**

Now that a definition of a liberal arts education has been established and the various models of Christian liberal arts education have been identified, exploring the study of theatre studies in a liberal arts college is necessary. Theatre educator Hubert C. Heffner listed a number of ways in which theatre studies can contribute to the aims of a liberal arts education, including developing both critical and creative abilities, improving communication skills, imparting an understanding of history and philosophy, encouraging a desire for learning, and generating self-knowledge (18). Theatre studies, Heffner contended, can be a valuable component in a liberal education regardless of the students' career path:

My contention is that when such enterprises are properly taught and properly coordinated with other disciplines, studies in theatre and drama, in addition to professional training, offer an unusually effective kind of liberal education and are therefore justified for large numbers of students who will never become professional theatre people. (18)

So significant is theatre studies to the ideal of a liberal arts education that it is, as Thomas H. Gressler characterizes, "the essential liberal art." He sums up this philosophy in his book, *Theatre as the Essential Liberal Art in the American University* (2003): "Educational theatre at the college level has the natural and intrinsic potential to be the most powerful, effective, and integrative discipline in the entire lexicon of the liberal arts courses. Indeed, it has the potential to be the Essential Liberal Art" (1). Gressler makes four claims for theatre studies: 1) Theatre is the essential liberal art because it is the most wholly integrated liberal art. 2) Theatre is based naturally on two of the most influential educational theories (see below). 3) Theatre is the only discipline that requires students to consciously and publicly deal with their emotional lives. 4) Theatre provides one of the most lifelike educational experiences, for its method of working is

very similar to the work methods of the real world, with all its project-orientation, compromise, relativism, and collaboration (27-33). By “wholly integrated art” he means both that “theatre touches on nearly every liberal arts discipline” and that theatre “requires the integration of knowledge from other fields into the knowledge of the various theatre sub-disciplines” (27). The educational theories on which Gressler bases his thinking are David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory and Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory. From these theoretical perspectives, Gressler supports his four claims by identifying the value of selected core courses typically found in a liberal arts theatre curriculum (acting, scene design, make-up, stage management). These courses, he argues, promote the development of the whole person through both personal and career preparation.

As a further point, a recent paper published by the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Rationales Task Force of the Advocacy Committee, “Theatre Studies in Higher Education: Learning for a Lifetime,” provides a comprehensive vision statement for a liberal arts education in theatre. The following is the opening paragraph:

An education in theatre and performance studies gives students useful tools to contribute to and create positive changes in the public as well as the private sphere. Theatre in higher education creates not only strong theatre artists and articulate theatre educators, but also effective public leaders and compassionate visionaries in all professions. (par. 1)

ATHE addresses the benefits of theatre courses that utilize both “intellectual and experiential investigation” as preparation for careers as theatre artists and educators. But the value of theatre does not end there. ATHE also addresses the “life skills” gleaned through a liberal arts theatre program and reasons that those life skills are considered by many educators as excellent preparation for many other professions. Furthermore, ATHE argues that theatre education is an excellent career preparation with broad applicabilities: “Theatre in higher education answers today's market demand for skills in creative, critical, and collaborative thinking” (Rationales

Task Force 2). Finally, ATHE argues that a theatre education improves students' cognitive abilities as a whole. The report cites Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, explaining that theatre touches on each type of "intelligence": linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Rationales Task Force 2).

Additional support for ATHE's position can be found in an article that appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in 1997 calling for academic theatre departments that may have shifted their focus to professional preparation to rethink how they train artists and return to theatre education's inherent liberal arts goals:

Once more common in higher education, this [liberal arts] model sought to produce graduates who not only were well trained and possessed a professional work ethic, but also were intellectually rooted in the thematic traditions and common practices of Western theater. They took as their vocation the attempt to translate universal truths into stories and plays that would resonate for the people of their own time and culture, in the broadest sense. (Loughlin B4)

The article makes an effective argument that theatre studies can be an exceptional component of a liberal arts education, for students pursuing both theatre and non-theatre-related vocations as well as for the development of integrated and authentic selfhood.

### **Theatre in a Christian Liberal Arts Education**

Theatre departments in church-affiliated liberal arts college share similar objectives and a similar educational theatre philosophy as those of liberal art institutions. In an article entitled "Educating the Whole Person through Theatre," Michael Stauffer of Wheaton College, an Evangelical liberal arts college, explains that "the processes and practices used in educating our theatre students spring from a deep commitment to the education of the whole person—mind, body, and soul" (7). The goal, he says, is to produce a "liberally educated graduate, whether as a theatre professional or a doctor, a lawyer or a service worker" (Stauffer 7). Stauffer references a meeting of twenty theatre professors from the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities

(CCCU) who collectively agreed that emphasizing the education of the whole person is a first priority. “This kind of education,” they believed, “moves beyond the facts and test scores of a typical liberal arts education” and “pre-professional training” (Stauffer 7). Developing the whole person means employing a “system of values” to assist the student in the shaping of his or her “moral identity.” Stauffer asserted that theatre fulfills this kind of education through an “integrative” perspective, and by creating a “context for shared meanings to be explored and understood,” theatre students gain a sense of the community of human beings and an awareness of that reality in global terms (8). In a Christian context, moreover, this work “should support and even facilitate Christ’s mandate to support those in our community who are hurting in body and spirit, to help realize Shalom [peace] in the world” (8). He went on to say that “theatre serves as a laboratory, expanding what it means to be deeply human” (10). Engaging in interpersonal dialogue via participation in theatre studies encourages students to explore different viewpoints and fosters community-building competencies such as empathy, active non-judgmental listening, and courage to encounter the unknown (10).

Christian liberal arts colleges, nevertheless, have at least one obstacle to overcome with which their secular counterparts do not have to deal. This could be described as, at best, a suspicion of theatre in the specified religious heritage, and, at worse, outright disapproval of it. Anne Berekeley explains that it was precisely this Protestant anti-theatrical prejudice that kept theatre studies out of universities until the latter part of the nineteenth century (77). Though theatre studies has its own place as part of the curriculum in church-related colleges, anti-theatrical sentiment continues to have an influence on the study of theatre, especially in Protestant institutions with Puritan lineage. Edmund S. Morgan says that a key ingredient to understanding the animosity towards theatre is Puritan understanding of the relationship between

reason and emotion. Puritans are said to believe that God created man with a “commanding reason, to which his emotions naturally acquiesced” and that with Adam’s fall the emotions rebelled, “taking delight only in the things of this world, and subduing the reason in pursuit of them” (Morgan 344). According to this belief, human reason is privileged over emotion, and human beings must, basically, restrain the emotions. Through the emotions, the argument goes, Satan gains access to the soul, and in the Puritan view, theatre is among the chief offenders in this respect.

### **Theatre in Church of Christ Affiliated Colleges**

This introduction has shown that Christian liberal arts colleges, like their secular counterparts, aspire to educate the whole person. They are, of course, sponsored by specific forms of Christianity, and their institutional character is dependent upon the specific nature of their relationship to the *vision*, *ethos*, and *Christian persons* of their sponsoring belief system. Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated that the study of theatre at a liberal arts college fits firmly within the educational goals of such enterprises. Since the particular approach to the study of theatre at church-affiliated institutions depends significantly on a given institution’s model of faith and learning, understanding the nature of the sponsoring religious body is essential, including the particular ways in which an institution interprets the nature of the relationship between faith and learning.

In its present form, the Church of Christ is one of three distinct religious groups descending from a Christian reform movement known as the American Restoration Movement of the early nineteenth century, which was led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. The American Restoration Movement, also called the Stone-Campbell Movement, began with a plea for the unity of *all* Christian believers under the sole authority of Scripture. Campbell and Stone

called for such unity because, in their view, divisions within the Christian church were the result of allegiances to “man-made” creeds. Each individual, they believed, should approach the biblical text without the aid of formal clergy, formal belief systems, or formal denominations, and come together as one, thereby “restoring” New Testament Christianity without division imposed by denominations. Stone and Campbell worked independently until 1832, after which they combined their like-minded reform efforts. The Stone-Campbell movement and its followers (called “Disciples” or “Christians”) increased throughout the nineteenth century but eventually divided into three individual denominations, though many would resist using that term. The officially recognized date of the first division is 1906, when the U. S. Census Bureau listed Churches of Christ as a denomination separate from the Disciples of Christ (Garrett 606). Another division occurred in the mid 1950’s when the Independent Christian Churches separated themselves from the Disciples of Christ (Garrett 649). Thus, the Stone-Campbell Movement eventually produced the Churches of Christ, the Disciples of Christ, and the Independent Christian Churches.

While the Churches of Christ officially acknowledge no history except that of the first century, or so-called “primitive,” Church as described in the New Testament, C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes demonstrate the influences of other, often unacknowledged, antecedents. In *Discovering our Roots* (1988), Allen and Hughes trace four historical “roots” of the Church of Christ: 1) Biblical documents of the primitive church, 2) John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli’s Restorationist line of the Reformation, 3) the Enlightenment attitudes emergent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and 4) the American Restoration Movement of Barton W. Stone, the Campbells, and Walter Scott. Each of these lines has had an influence on the ways in

which the Churches of Christ operate educational enterprises in general and theatre studies in particular.

Because of the ahistorical, anti-creedal, non-denominational ideals of the American Restoration Movement, and because of the emphasis placed on individualistic interpretations of Scripture, Churches of Christ have no central office or governing body that determines theology, policy, or even practice. In theory, each individual congregation is a body governed independently by selected “elders,” who endeavor conscientiously to employ only Scripture as their guide. Most members of the Churches of Christ even resist the label of “denomination” and the concept of “theology” since both words imply the use of human (i.e., extra-biblical) sources. As a case in point, some prefer church(es) of Christ with a lower case “c,” as this designation is not intended as a denominational label such as “Lutheran” or “Catholic” but, rather, their identification as the one and *only* church, Christ’s church. Arguably, the Churches of Christ have developed a distinguishable belief system by means of expectations and pressures within their given constituencies, shared religious language, and common history. Similarly, congregations follow familiar patterns in their worship services: i.e., weekly observance of “the Lord’s Supper,” adult baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins, and, perhaps most notably, a cappella singing during worship services.

The following four-year liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States identify themselves as Church of Christ affiliated institutions:

Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas (est. 1906)

B.F.A. in Acting, a B.F.A. in Design/Technical Theatre, a B.F.A. in Directing, a B.F.A.

in Musical Theatre, and B.F.A. in Theatre Education

Crowley’s Ridge College (est. 1964)



No formal theatre program

Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama (est. 1942)

B.A. in Theatre with general, performance, or technical emphasis, a B.A. in Music Theatre, and a B.A. in Theatre Education

Florida College in Temple Terrace, Florida (est. 1946)

No formal theatre program; annual fall and spring theatrical productions

Freed-Hardman University in Henderson, Tennessee (est. 1869)

B.A. in Theatre Design and Production, a B.A. in Theatre Performance

Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas (est. 1924)

B.A. Theatre, a B.A. in Drama/Speech for Educators

Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee (est. 1891)

B.F.A. in Musical Theatre, a B.F.A. Acting Track, a B.F.A. Directing Track, a B.A. in General Theatre, a B.A. in Theatre Ministry, a B.A. in Theatre Education

Lubbock Christian University in Lubbock, Texas (est. 1957)

B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies with Emphasis in Theatre Education

Ohio Valley University in Vienna, West Virginia (est. 1958)

No formal theatre program; annual fall and spring theatrical productions

Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (est. 1950)

B.S. in Theatre Performance

Pepperdine University in Malibu, California (est. 1937)

B.A. in Theatre Arts, a B.A. in Theatre and Media Production, a B.A. in Theatre and Music, and a Secondary Teaching Credential

Rochester College in Rochester Hills, Michigan (est. 1959)

B.A. and a B.S. in Theatre

Southwestern Christian College (est. 1948)

No formal theatre program

York College in York, Nebraska (est. 1956)

B.A. in Theatre

What follows below is a closer examination of the particular ways in which the heritage of Churches of Christ influences the aims of higher education as such at these institutions. In 1997, Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian published *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success*, a study of fourteen universities representing seven Christian traditions in an attempt to “address the relation between faith and learning from the founding of the institution to the present” (2). For their study, they selected universities with both “strong academic reputations” and those that “continue to work within the context of their historic faith commitments” (*Models* 2). Their book includes a chapter written by Hughes entitled “What Can the Church of Christ Tradition Contribute to Higher Education?” In it he examines the possible assets and liabilities that Churches of Christ bring to higher education. First, he explains the historic vision for non-denominational Christianity, a principle that was at the heart of the American Restoration Movement. He explains that Alexander Campbell, under the influence of “Baconianism” (i.e., the earliest form of the scientific method), believed that “Christian union could best be achieved if Christians would abandon the creeds and particular doctrines that divided them and unite on those principles of primitive Christianity clearly taught in the New Testament” (*Models* 402). Campbell believed that creeds and theological interpretations of Scripture were humanly constructed and divisive. If individuals approached Scripture without the aid of a creed but, rather, by means of scientific study of Scripture, Campbell fully expected that

all believers would interpret Scripture in the same self-evident way. Accordingly, they would then put aside the prescribed creeds that divided them and achieve unity through restoration of the forms and practices of the first century church (*Models* 403). It became clear, however, that all Christians did not interpret Scripture in the same self-evident way. As previously mentioned, the Restoration Movement initially divided in 1906 into the “Disciples of Christ,” which focused on the unifying ideals of the American Restoration Movement, and “Churches of Christ,” which focused on the forms of early Christianity. However, Hughes explains how the goal of restoring non-denominational Christianity of the ancient Church is actually a “two-edged sword.” On the one hand, the Churches of Christ claimed simply to be Christians, “nothing more and nothing less” under the authority of Scripture alone; on the other hand, the idea emerged that the Churches of Christ were not a denomination but rather had literally reproduced early Christianity “in all its perfections” (*Models* 403). The Church of Christ denied that it had a real “history” or “tradition” except the scriptural account of the first century church. “Denominations” were human constructions, while the Church of Christ was “the true church of the apostolic age” (*Models* 404). In other words, some who belonged to the Churches of Christ began to think its members were literally the *only* true Christians. Hughes notes that while present-day members of the Churches of Christ do not, by and large, hold to these exclusivist claims, this inference continues to affect Church of Christ colleges.

Indeed, this “non-denominational ideal” is actually an asset the Churches of Christ can conceivably bring to higher education, that is, if it is understood as an “ideal” and “process” rather than an “accomplished fact” (*Models* 411). Hughes suggests ways in which the non-denominational ideal supports higher education:

This [non-denominational] vision can provide strong supports for Christian higher education since it summons believers to question their own traditions and presuppositions

and to measure them at every step along the way by the biblical standard. The nondenominational ideal of the Churches of Christ can thus help sustain the relentless search for truth that characterizes serious higher education. (*Models* 405)

Another potential strength for Church of Christ institutions arises from their firm commitment to Scripture. Though historically, Hughes says, this “preoccupation with the biblical text as a legal pattern often obscured the Bible’s theological core,” he nevertheless suggests that the legalistic emphasis is changing. Campbell’s scientific approach to Scripture led directly to the creation of a hermeneutic (method of interpreting Scripture) that approached the Bible in order to discover its divine commands and examples. In recent years, as Hughes points out, there has been a shift within Churches of Christ towards the broader theological themes found in Scripture, a shift that has helped create “a climate in which a theological worldview can develop and which can help sustain the enterprise of Christian higher education in ways that were not possible for previous generations” (*Models* 405).

A third potential strength arises from the Churches of Christ’s emphasis on rational inquiry. This principle has deep roots in the Enlightenment and particularly the philosophies of John Locke and Francis Bacon. Historically, according to Hughes, Churches of Christ “have consistently prized reason over emotion and logic over speculation” (*Models* 405). As evidence of their commitment to such learning, Hughes cites the early history of the leaders of the American Restoration Movement founding the earliest institutions of higher education. The first, Bacon College (after Francis Bacon), was founded in 1836, and Bethany College was the second, founded in 1840 by Alexander Campbell. Hughes mentions several other colleges related to the American Restoration Movement, and he references various scholars who exemplify the best of the Movement’s quest for non-denominational Christianity and the search for biblical truth (*Models* 406).

Hughes next outlines the liabilities that the Churches of Christ potentially bring to higher education. First, while this tradition has produced numerous intellectuals, many of whom have established institutions of higher learning, anti-intellectual forces have, nevertheless, also been at work. This is largely due, Hughes says, to the reluctance of many members of this belief system to see themselves as part of a formal tradition: “While they study history and culture, for example, they often fail to see how they themselves are products of the very history they study” (*Models* 407). They dismiss their historical roots in the Movement of mid-nineteenth century America and the philosophical and theological worldview out of which that Movement emerged; instead, they have defined themselves exclusively as the restored first century church whose only creed is the Bible. Without an acknowledged history and culture and systematic theological thought to accompany them, the obvious suggestion is that the world is effectively divided into two mutually exclusive realms. Hughes explains: “On one hand stood the realm of the sacred, defined by the naked and unadorned biblical text. On the other hand stood secular culture which embraced everything else” (*Models* 407). This division exists because, as Hughes explains, “One does not think about God in a systematic way, but rather takes what the biblical text says about God at face value” (*Models* 408). Theology, conversely, “involves systematic thought about God and the way God relates to humankind and the world” (*Models* 408). Without systematic theological reflection, educators do not have the scholarly means to relate the biblical text to other academic disciplines. After all, the Bible has nothing to say about those other disciplines, which are, therefore, left to fall under the secular realm.

Given the lack of systematic theological reflection in their history, the model of faith and learning at Churches of Christ colleges essentially consists of two characteristics: 1) encouragement and preservation of mutually-agreed-upon moral values, and 2) an institutional

context where one hundred percent of the faculty and a significant majority of the students are members of Churches of Christ. “With a world effectively divided into sacred (biblical) and secular spheres,” Hughes states, “little else could be done” (*Models* 408). The resulting gulf between secular and sacred has had an overwhelmingly negative effect on theatre programs operating within these colleges. In this model, aesthetics “typically have been pushed outside the bounds of the church and therefore outside the sphere of the sacred” (*Models* 409-410). While it is true that opportunities for arts education do exist within Church of Christ related institutions, nonetheless, such opportunities are fraught with tensions resulting from the perceived theological gulf separating faith and the arts. Hughes explains the situation further:

This means that fine arts programs at colleges and universities related to Churches of Christ seldom foster artistic creativity in ways that invite serious theological reflection on the creative enterprise itself, or in ways that allow self-conscious integration of artistic creativity with theological imagination. This continues to be an intensely practical problem for artists of all kinds — painters, sculptors, thespians, and even musicians — who work in institutions related to Churches of Christ. (*Models* 410)

Nor does the intellectual heritage of Churches of Christ tradition provide an environment conducive to development of the imagination, a condition that is detrimental to the educational objective of developing of the “whole human being.” With such a categorically rational approach and an associated suspicion of the imagination, Churches of Christ can claim very few home-grown artists of any kind. According to Hughes, this combination of constraints is harmful to the academy at large:

[I]magination and theological reflection, in the context of a particular tradition, are the crucial ingredients for the creation of a theoretical model that might sustain and give long-term direction to Christian higher education. Because Churches of Christ, for the most part, have lacked these ingredients, higher education in this tradition has evolved with no well-defined theoretical model. (*Models* 411)

Thus, a serious problem arises when attempting to reconcile the specific Christian mission of the college with a liberal arts academic mission.

How are liberal arts college theatre programs to function, not just without a theological foundation for integrating faith and the arts but also while simultaneously facing such a strong historical bias against the arts? The practical model for theatre education that has developed out of this religious tradition's historical identity is a values- or morals-based model, one that depends not on theological reflection, but upon character building and Churches of Christ uniqueness. Therefore, theatre programs at Churches of Christ institutions must find a way to operate within the prescribed morals and values of their given institutions. In other words, theatre programs utilizing this "separate but equal" model can justify their existence only inasmuch as they serve to reinforce, or at least not cause offence to, the values on which the institution depends for its basic identity. Depending on how narrowly or broadly these values are interpreted, many of the great works of theatre of the ages could conceivably be considered incompatible or even oppositional. Theatre programs at Churches of Christ institutions are thus placed in the position of striving to serve two very different and exacting masters. This sort of "dual consciousness" is apparent whenever theatre programs attempt to select plays for production that are necessarily part of a broadly liberal arts academic theatre program while meeting the requirements posed by a narrowly moral model of education.

Dale A. Jorgenson has written the only comprehensive study that analyzes historically the effects of the American Restoration Movement on aesthetics, entitled *Theological and Aesthetic Roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement* (1989). He explains how the two-fold mission of the early American Restoration leaders — the unity of all believers *and* the restoration of New Testament Christianity — ultimately resulted in an irreconcilable tension that profoundly affected the role of aesthetics within the Movement (Jorgenson 18). The underlying assumption beneath the American Restoration idea was that if the Bible were to be read with an open mind

(that is, rationally, without the external opinions and creeds of various denominations imposed upon them) then all true believers would arrive at the same conclusions and, therefore, unite in fellowship. As part of this assumption, positions on issues not specifically addressed in Scripture, such as the arts, were intended not to be binding, and members were free to form their own opinions about them. Jorgenson explains that Alexander Campbell and his father Thomas (who wrote the original document from which the history of the Movement is dated) made the clear distinction between matters of faith based on direct biblical instruction and matters of opinion with no apparent scriptural command. The Campbells advocated “unity in matters of faith, liberty in matters of opinion” (Jorgenson 19). Almost immediately after this, the American Restoration Movement became polarized into conservative and progressive camps, which, as has been discussed, eventually separated. Conservatives placed emphasis on the restoration of the primitive church through unequivocal biblical commands and examples, even at “the expense of fellowship [...] and unity;” while progressives emphasized the more conciliatory aspects of Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*, along with the ecumenical spirit espoused by Barton W. Stone, the other leader of the Stone-Campbell Movement (Jorgenson 23-24).

While such differences developed almost immediately after its emergence, the American Restoration Movement was initially able to withstand formal division. Jorgenson suggests that this initial unity was the direct result of the first generation of leaders and their implicit understanding that unity should prevail, and though they differed on matters of opinion, they did not break fellowship over them (247). Jorgenson concludes that the second generation of leaders became more scrupulous over matters of opinion, making uniform agreement about these matters more important than the earlier quest for unity. In his book *The Churches of Christ* (2001), Hughes explains that Moses Lard, a second generation leader in the Restoration Movement,



proposed the now well-known solution referred to as the “three-fold hermeneutic,” describing the process whereby Christians search the Scriptures for a “command,” “example,” or “necessary inference” (*Churches* 54). “Explicit commands” and “clear examples” had long been understood by the Disciples (i.e. persons associated with the Restoration Movement) to be authoritative. The “necessary inference” provided a theological method for “paying special attention” to what is implied in the Biblical text, thereby providing rationale for guidelines over matters not found in Scripture (*Churches* 54). In any case, the apparent silence of Scripture on many “secular” issues was the main subject of disagreement and provided the rationale for the first formal separation within the Movement (Jorgenson 254):

The way in which these [second generation] leaders understood the Disciples shibboleth, “silence of the scriptures,” affected the way they viewed other theological questions. Some believed that a church was free to act in any way it chose on matters not expressly commanded or prohibited in the scriptures; others held that if the scriptures did not expressly mention a matter, the churches had no right to take any kind of action. (Jorgenson 259)

Second generation leaders “sought a religious conformity through both the words and silences of scriptures” (Jorgenson 334), and their way of interpreting the silence of Scripture had serious consequences in the matter of aesthetics. Jorgenson’s thesis is that, due to these leaders, the Stone-Campbell Movement’s quest to unify all believers under the “ancient order” of New Testament Christianity was transformed into a “rage for doctrinal conformity;” the result was “aesthetic suffocation” of artistic creativity and “aesthetic poverty” for the Movement in general (326).

In the twentieth century, Stone-Campbell colleges gradually introduced studies in art, music, literature, music, and theatre. While this was “helpful for young people who want to develop their artistic talents in a Christian context,” Jorgenson argues, “some Stone-Campbell

heirs have chosen to remain ignorant of and aloof from both the generative power and the difficulties inherent in Disciples thought as it relates to art” (306). He continues:

Their solution has been similar to that of the business person who tries to separate the ethical demands of the Monday to Saturday workplace from the other-worldly ideals of the Sunday sermon. Hence the Christian artist can try to perform as a performer and worship as a Christian. The early Stone-Campbell movement was poorer because of its paucity of music and art. In the same way, the latter-day artist is deprived of power by a schizophrenic-like separation between artistic talents and Christian beliefs. (306)

The inherent tensions resulting from the two irreconcilable aims of the Restoration Movement have shaped the pedagogical approaches in the fine arts at all Churches of Christ institutions. An example of how one major university theatre program operates within this challenging relationship can be found in *Theatre and Hegemony in the Churches of Christ: A Case Study Using Abilene Christian University Theatre* (1997) by Stan C. Denman. Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony suggests that “the strength of a hegemonic order is found in the slow indoctrination of ideas through religious, academic, and cultural institutions, not from the explosive force of a political coup” (Denman 6). Applying Gramsci’s theory, Denman argues that the Church of Christ functions as a hegemonic force to restrain theatrical activities at that institution, keeping them within the boundaries of strict religious ideologies. He says that “[t]he Puritan heritage of the American Restoration Movement and its historical taproot in Scottish Common Sense Rationalism had left a legacy of suspicion and animosity between the church and the theatre” (2). The theatre, still exiled from the sacred sphere (e.g. its absence from formal worship), is a result of the Church’s lack of a formal aesthetic philosophy, which in turn has been used there to promote a “Bible-based morality” (174). This hegemony, he says, is evident in the current practice of censoring scripts not only at Abilene Christian University but also at other conservative Protestant institutions. This practice, Denman argues, amounts to “dramatic proof-texting” of the Christian worldview (100). He argues further that “the creation of an aesthetic,

well grounded in both theory and theology, will be possible only when the dominant ideology of the traditional Church of Christ hegemonic order is significantly altered” (174).

Restoration scholars agree that the authority of Churches of Christ seems to depend on contradictory goals: 1) Restoration of the forms and practices of the New Testament primitive Church and 2) the unity of all true believers in Christ. Furthermore, the so-called hegemonic order of Churches of Christ rests on lingering assumptions of the Enlightenment and utopian hopes that all believers will unite under a common understanding of Scripture. As the Churches of Christ confront the ever-changing realities of the twenty-first century, some of those early assumptions are being seriously questioned.

### **Churches of Christ in “Crisis”**

As a result of sweeping changes taking place in present-day society, “[it] is by now a commonplace that Churches of Christ are suffering a severe identity crisis,” Richard Hughes writes (“Reclaiming a Heritage” 129). That crisis, he says, is rooted in the “widespread skepticism of the Enlightenment foundation of our culture. One might therefore ask how a nation or a church, founded on modern principles, can survive in a postmodern age” (129). The problem of identity centers on the collapse of the modernist sentiment that gave rational support to the search for a universally “correct” way to live. For a large part of its history, the American Restoration vision was defined by “polity concerns, patternism, legalism, and even exclusivism.” Hughes says, “[W]e have associated those themes with the [R]estoration vision for so long that we hardly know how to conceptualize that vision in any other way [...] and so we are left with no usable past, no clear identity, and no meaningful legacy” (“Reclaiming a Heritage” 29). Today, many within Churches of Christ have rejected the entire American Restoration vision, seeing no real-world way of coming to terms with it. Is the survival of Churches of Christ,

therefore, in jeopardy? *The Crux of the Matter: Crisis, Tradition, and the Future of Churches of Christ* (1997), co-authored by professors from Abilene Christian University, explains the question this way:

We used to know what “we all believed” in Churches of Christ. But now, some of our defining characteristics appear to be up for grabs. Who are we if we are not who we have always been? In every era, there has been more diversity than we have recognized at the time, but the present days seem to hold special difficulties. For some, our identity is at stake – which is to say our focus, our future, our fellowship. (Childers 19-20)

Logically, Churches of Christ college theatre programs are also affected by these changes, and, perhaps, they could even be agents of such change themselves. Perhaps the hegemonic order, as Denman calls it, is itself in the process of changing.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with the task to understand the educational philosophy of theatre programs at Churches of Christ colleges. A review of the literature suggests several conclusions:

1. A Christian liberal arts education is, like its secular counterparts, an education of the whole person.
2. A Christian liberal arts education is based on a philosophy of learning that flows directly from the way in which the sponsoring institutional tradition views the relationship between faith and knowledge.
3. A Christian liberal arts college operates on a model of education which may be either a “two-sphere”/ “add-on” model or an “integrated” model, depending on how the institution conceives of the three components as related to the Christian tradition (vision, ethos, and Christian persons).

4. Churches of Christ colleges seem to be operating on the two-sphere model, and thus with a fragile overall vision, but also with a strong ethos supported by a large constituency of members of Churches of Christ.

5. While the heritage of the American Restoration Movement and the tradition of Churches of Christ are not favorable to the exploration of aesthetics, most institutions sponsored by Churches of Christ continue to support theatre programs.

6. Churches of Christ are in the midst of a period of intense self-examination and redefinition.

A review of the literature also raises some significant questions:

1. Given the manifest tensions at the very heart of the identity of Churches of Christ, for what reason were the theatre programs at these institutions initially created?

2. On which model of faith and learning are these departments currently operating, and how do their models relate to the larger mission of the institution?

3. What questions, if any, have arisen in theatre departments at these colleges concerning the relationship between faith and academics in both curriculum and performance?

4. In what way are theatre departments being influenced by the professed crisis taking place in the Churches of Christ?

5. Are there differences among working philosophies of the various institutions, or do they all operate on the same basic philosophy?

6. Are there differences among institutional constituencies (faculty, staff, students, administration, alumni) regarding the mission of the theatre programs and even the institutions themselves?

These are the major questions this dissertation seeks to answer. Chapter Two outlines the methodology of this study. Chapter Three introduces the basic governing ideals for Church of Christ related colleges. Chapters Four, Five, and Six examine Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College according to Benne's description of their *vision*, *ethos*, and *Christian persons*. Chapter Seven contains the results of the survey employed for this study. Chapter Eight contains the case study summaries, survey analysis, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between faith and learning and theatre programs at institutions associated with Churches of Christ. This study utilizes a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative methods as defined by Creswell (2003):

[A] *qualitative* approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both.

[A] *quantitative* approach is one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e., cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.

[A] *mixed methods* approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (e.g., consequence-oriented, problem-centered, and pluralistic). It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. (118)

According to Neil M. Agnew and Sandra W. Pyke, “A recurring dilemma for researchers in the social sciences is how to represent individual reality while at the same time deriving meaningful generalization” (166). To address that dilemma, this particular study combines the qualitative approach of a case study with the quantitative approach of a survey in a *mixed methods* approach.

In his book *Case Study Research: Design Methods* (1994), Robert K. Yin explains that case studies are an ideal strategy when “‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (1). Additionally, according to Kathleen B. DeMarrais and Stephan D. Lapan, “case study research can involve the close examination of people, topics, issues, or programs. [ . . . ] Case study researchers examine each case expecting to uncover new

and unusual interactions, events, explanations, interpretations, and cause-and-effect connections” (218-219).

The questions posed in this study are, therefore, ideally suited to a case study approach. More particularly, the methodology in this study involves a “multiple case study” approach, which is often considered “more compelling” than individual case studies (Yin 45). However, Yin cautions against naively using sampling logic with regard to multiple case studies:

A fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalization as the method of generalizing the results of the case. This is because cases are not “sampling units” and should not be chosen for this reason. Rather, individual case studies are to be selected as a laboratory investigator selects the topic of a new experiment. (31)

Yet, while case studies are typically not generalizable, it has been suggested that “generalizability is quite possible when based on several studies of the same phenomenon” (DeMarrais and Lapan 219). In some regards, this is a study of the same phenomenon, namely, the relationship between faith and learning and theatre programs at institutions related to Churches of Christ.

Additionally, to strengthen the generalizability of the individual case studies, a survey methodology is employed. An advantage of the survey method is that the results are generalizable to the larger population (Nardi 59). A survey method also allows the researcher to obtain large samples of subjects not possible with a case study methodology alone (Agnew and Pyke 201). Nardi explains that “[q]uestionnaires are ideally suited to assess what people report they believe because feelings and opinions are not readily observed and easily measured with other research methods” (64).

The questionnaire for this study is designed to identify the beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions of various constituency groups affiliated with the three selected institutions. These questionnaires are self-administered through an online delivery method:



Self-administered questionnaires are best designed for (a) measuring variables with numerous values or response categories that are too much to read to respondents in an interview or on the telephone, (b) investigating attitudes and opinions that are not usually observable, (c) describing characteristics of a large population, and (d) studying behaviors that may be more stigmatizing or difficult for people to tell someone else face-to-face. (Nardi 58-59)

Nardi's findings suggest that response rates for mailed surveys tend to be about 20-30% (59). However, researchers have found better response rates with online distribution. Additionally, online programs also code the data, reducing the possibility of operator error (Nardi 60). Thus, researchers are less likely to influence the outcome of respondents' answers to the questionnaire, an outcome that "allows for more standardization of the questions and an increase in the reliability" over other qualitative methods (Nardi 59). A drawback to this approach, however, is that uniform questions and fixed responses "limit how much researchers can adjust for cultural differences, clarify misunderstood items, or explain ambiguously worded questions" (Nardi 59). Although Nardi also notes a potential drawback with online surveys, that is, the possibility of inequities among respondents in regard to computer access (60), in itself this is not a significant concern with the population targeted for this survey, most of whom are members of a campus community with ample computer access.

A clear advantage to the survey method for this study is its potential to yield data from a large number of subjects. Two types of questions are used in surveys, open and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions allow for fewer variations in responses than open-ended. Answering closed-ended questions is quicker for respondents, and coding is simpler for researchers. Because most closed-ended questions are not easily answered with "yes" or "no," a more effective measure of closed-ended questions utilizes an intensity scale, the most common of which is the Likert scale. Devised in 1932 by Rensis Likert, this scale uses a five-point rating system: "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "neutral," "somewhat disagree," and "strongly

disagree” (Nardi 66). Ranking questions in this way is useful to measure a preference of “which comes first but not to measure how much distance is between each item; however, ranking more than five to ten items can be problematic for the respondent (Nardi 72). Open-ended questions are a reliable way to obtain respondents’ own words and ideas; the researcher codes the responses according to key ideas, words, or phrases (Nardi 65). The drawback to the open-ended approach, however, is that subjects tend to answer fewer of them because of the amount of time involved.

In summary, this study combines a multiple case study methodology with a self-administered questionnaire. The components of the case study portion include archival research, interviews, and a theoretical perspective. It is generally agreed that reliance on more than one method of inquiry is generally agreed to provide increased credibility for the study:

Use of multiple data sources and multiple research methods is recommended by qualitative researchers. They believe that, because different methods reveal different aspects of the multifaceted reality of the phenomenon under investigation, only a multiple-method approach will yield maximal understanding. Additionally, a triangulation strategy, assuming some overlap in the results, is seen as enhancing validity and hence confidence in the researcher’s findings and her or his construction of reality. (Agnew and Pyke 169)

Kathleen B. DeMarrais and Stephen D. Lapan also suggest the use of triangulation, that is, utilization of “multiple sources of data” and “multiple methods for each question,” such as documents and records, interviews, and direct observation (228-229). Implementing the survey method provides opportunities for such triangulation.

This study involves three institutions – Pepperdine University, Lipscomb University, and York College – three of the fourteen colleges and universities affiliated with Churches of Christ. These three were selected, in part, due to the variety of locale (South, West, Midwest) and diversity of size, age, constituency, academic mission, and church working relationships.

Lipscomb and Pepperdine are universities, but each has significantly different constituencies. Lipscomb University, founded in 1891, is located in the central hub of the “Bible Belt” and maintains a close relationship with Churches of Christ. Pepperdine University, founded in 1937, is located in Malibu, California, well outside of the Bible Belt, and historically more loosely associated with Churches of Christ. Its Seaver College is a liberal arts unit within the university and home to the Theatre Department. York is a liberal arts college located in York, Nebraska, founded in 1890 by the United Brethren Church but closely affiliated with Churches of Christ since 1956.

No major study has been conducted about the theatre departments at these three institutions. This study contributes to the body of literature on 1) the relationship between theatre and Christianity, 2) the philosophy of liberal education in theatre, and 3) the philosophy of faith and learning in theatre. The findings are relevant to the colleges and universities related to the Restoration Movement but most relevant to those related to Churches of Christ. Furthermore, the findings in many ways should be useful to researchers interested in the subject of faith and learning in theatre at any Protestant institution of higher education.

The case study of each institution employs archival materials such as memoirs, histories, yearbooks, catalogues, webpages, articles, and personal interviews to provide data regarding the development of the mission of the institution in general and of the theatre program in particular. Agnew and Pyke explain: “In many instances you don’t have to observe behavior directly to know what has occurred; you only have to observe the marks, tracks, spoor, or deposits it leaves” (167). Archival research relies on this type of information, both textual and physical, often obtained through a technique referred to as content analysis. As the authors explain, “content analysis requires detailed, objective, and systematic observation of verbal and symbolic

communications” (Agnew and Pyke 181). They also suggest that archival research is best employed in combination with other methods in order to “enlarge the validity of our observations” and to “provide auxiliary information about the adequacy of such data in terms of biases affecting what was recorded and what was retained” (Agnew and Pyke 185).

In this study, the archival research is classified according to the criteria identified in Robert Benne’s book *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (2001). Benne identifies three components of a Christian tradition that must be “publically relevant” in Christian colleges and universities in order to retain their Christian affiliations: *vision, ethos, and Christian persons* (6). Here the methodology uses theory as an interpretive strategy to organize the data collected from artifacts. A possible application of “theory in mixed methods research is the use of a *theoretical lens or perspective* to guide the study” (Creswell 136). In this study, Benne’s categories provide an interpretive lens through which to view the data according to models of Christian higher education.

Next, personal interviews were used to obtain information not available from archives. Interviews are useful strategies to collect more detailed answers, but they also run the risk of being influenced by interviewer bias. This is especially the case in face-to-face interviews where non-verbal communication may reinforce desirable answers and vice-versa (Agnew and Pike 200). Interviews for this study were collected via e-mail and telephone. The interviews were used to gather specific information about each school’s unique philosophy of faith and learning, particularly how its philosophy relates to the respective theatre departments. Responses from theatre faculty provide the most current information about these theatre programs. The case study methodology, then, draws from archives and supplemented with personal interviews, all viewed through the lens of a particular theoretical perspective. This methodology is then used in

combination with the survey method, which also utilizes Benne's theoretical perspective in its design.

Each school was asked to distribute a Likert-style questionnaire and an information sheet to all faculty, staff, administration, current students, alumni, and parents of students through e-mail. The questionnaire, intended to be completed online within a five to ten minute time frame, is an attitude assessment instrument on the subject of the relationship between theatre and the faith tradition at the given institution. All the questions are closed-ended, including demographic questions, ranking questions, and Likert five-category scaled questions. This instrument is designed to reveal the values and opinions about relationships between faith, learning, and theatre of those involved in the institution. For example, respondents ranked statements such as "Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution," and "The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand others and themselves." Following the questionnaire, opportunity was provided for any additional comments respondents wished to give. Participants remain anonymous, identifying themselves according to the constituency groups listed above; other demographic identifiers include age, gender, religious affiliation, and level of education. The research information sheet and questionnaire may be found in Appendices A and B.

Requests to participate in the study were sent to Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College, along with the questionnaire and research information sheet, on September 10, 2013. The questionnaire was then distributed through campus e-mail to all York College faculty, staff, administrators, and students on September 23, 2013. The questionnaire was distributed through campus e-mail to all Lipscomb University faculty, staff and administrators, and students on January 10, 2014. The questionnaire was not sent

to distribution lists of alumni or parents of students at York or Lipscomb. Therefore, respondents from among these categories were *also* members of the campus community as faculty, staff, administrators, or students. The request for mass distribution of the questionnaire was not approved by Pepperdine University due the large number of requests for access to their population. Dr. Gary Selby, Director of Faith and Learning, then agreed to distribute the survey to students enrolled in several sections of methodology courses at Pepperdine during the fall 2013 semester. Additionally, the survey was distributed to several personal acquaintances who also shared it with others who had connections to Pepperdine. Therefore, Pepperdine respondents are not representative of the cross section of the population as described.

Data were collected between September 12, 2013 and January 21, 2014. This survey data are analyzed for similarities and differences. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used to describe differences between groups, and a Correlation Coefficient is used to describe relationships between variables. Benne's categories – *vision, ethos, Christian persons* – are used to categorize the data. This way, data gathered from the questionnaires are promptly comparable to data gathered from the case study methodology. Together, these findings yield a comprehensive picture of the model of faith and learning that is at work within the institutions and the theatre departments, and the research conforms to the “mixed methods” approach as described by Creswell.

### CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF CHURCH OF CHRIST COLLEGES

Since the early years of the Restoration Movement, its leaders have been active in the formation and support of liberal arts colleges. The educational philosophy of the early Restorationists, particularly Alexander Campbell, has had a significant influence on colleges affiliated with Churches of Christ. In his article “Whatever Happened to Alexander Campbell’s Idea of a Christian College?” Thomas H. Olbricht, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Religion at Pepperdine University, explains that present day Church of Christ colleges follow the “basic commitments” of Alexander Campbell’s Bethany College founded in 1840 (204). Understanding Alexander Campbell’s model of faith and learning is, therefore, important to this study because his ideals permeate the Church of Christ approach to Christian education at Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College.

For Campbell, education was essential to understanding the Bible: “Alexander Campbell’s interest in repositioning American education was subordinate only to his interest in restoring the New Testament church. In fact, for Campbell, the two are inextricably related; in his thinking, Christianity can flourish only where people are literate” (Olbricht 189). This emphasis on learning is due to Campbell’s firm belief that faith in God is a direct result of a rational understanding of Scripture. Campbell expressed his philosophy of education in the *Millennial Harbinger*, the influential journal he published between 1830 and 1870, devoting an entire series to the subject of education. In 1836 he wrote,

We, indeed, as a people devoted to the Bible cause, and to the Bible alone, for Christian faith and manners, and discipline, have derived much advantage from literature and science, from schools and colleges. Of all the people in the world we ought then to be, according to our means, the greatest patrons of schools and colleges. (“Literary Institutions – No. 2” 377)

The distinction that characterized Bethany College was that the Bible was studied as a textbook. Indeed, the Bible was taught daily as an academic course at Bethany without aid of theology or creed because Campbell believed that the Bible should be taught “not as abstract and speculative truths, as in our human creeds or catechisms, but as other true sciences are taught – inductively” (“Schools and Colleges” 171). Olbricht explains that Bethany was unique among European and American universities in this approach:

The Bible was taught in European universities in the theological curriculum and in American seminaries prior to this time as an academic subject, but it was not required for those who took an undergraduate college degree. The American pattern, with the founding of Harvard in 1636, was for the president to lecture on the Bible at early morning chapel, much in the manner of Campbell teaching his Bible class, but those were devotionals and the students were not examined on the scriptures as they were for their other courses. (199)

Campbell’s inductive approach to Biblical study at Bethany College, furthermore, reflects the ecumenical aims of the initial Restoration Movement. In 1836, Campbell wrote that both “scholastic theology” and “theological” schools are counterproductive to the “return to ancient original [C]hristianity” and “are now the principle engines of keeping up and extending the withering influence of rival sectarianism all over the world” (“Literary Institutions – No. 2” 375-376). The rationale behind founding these colleges was the unity of all believers through adherence to the primitive pattern of the New Testament church, that is, the Restoration ideal, and the goal was to defend Christianity against “infidels” (“Literary Institutions – No. 2” 376). As further evidence of his ecumenical vision, Campbell provided that Bethany’s College Hall be used for Sunday worship and led by denominational ministers. Moreover, he saw to it that ministers of any denomination could attend Bethany without paying tuition (Young 28-29). The commitment to studying the Bible without theological, creedal, or denominational influence was the basis for Campbell’s vision for higher education.



Alongside the inductive study of Scripture, commitment to a liberal arts curriculum was the second integral part of Campbell's vision, which he outlined in another issue of the *Millennial Harbinger*:

Education, with me, is the proper development and direction of the human powers. It is not merely the simple communication of the knowledge of letters – of the names of things – of the rules of art, or of the outlines of the whole circle of science. It is the proper training, the full development and cultivation of the physical, intellectual, and moral faculties. (Campbell qtd. in Young 31)

According to Campbell, God authored two books, the “Book of Revelation” (the Bible) and the “Book of Nature,” and the study of both is within the purview of the Christian college (Olbricht 191). Unlike other Christian institutions of higher learning that were founded for the sole purpose of religious training for their clergy, leaders of the Restoration Movement founded liberal arts colleges for education of the whole person (Young 27). Campbell's intention for Bethany was as a “literary and scientific institution, founded upon the Bible as the basis of all true science and all true learning” (qtd. in Young 29). Because Restorationists did not differentiate between clergy and laity but rather believed in a priesthood of all believers, they advocated for education for everyone. Its purpose was to shape its graduates for family, civic, *and* church life. In the Bethany College charter, Campbell stated that the purpose of education is “to raise up a host of accomplished fathers, teachers of schools, teachers of colleges, teachers of churches, preachers of the gospel, and good and useful citizens, or whatever the church or state may afterwards choose to make of them” (“A New Institution” 449). If education is preparation for a life of service to family, church, and society, a logical corollary is that it should be available to everyone. Toward that end, in fact, Campbell argued in 1835 for the education of women: “Mothers are of necessity and of right the first teachers. How important, then, that they themselves have been well educated. On them physically, intellectually, morally, chiefly depend

the destinies of the whole race” (“Education – No. 5” 255). For Campbell a “moral” education is at the heart of the educational enterprise. While common practice in colleges in the nineteenth century was to draw from Greek and Roman classics for moral instruction, Campbell looked only to the Bible:

With us education has primary regard to the formation of habits, more than to the acquisition of knowledge; more in teaching a person to use himself rather than in teaching him to use the labors of others. We define education to be the development and improvement of the physical, intellectual and moral powers of man, with a reference to his whole destiny in the universe of God. (qtd. in Olbricht 196)

Thus, education consisting of scientific study of the Bible alongside a liberal arts curriculum for *all* was the vision for moral training and preparation for life.

In Campbell’s thinking, however, all subjects of study were not equally important. He rejected the use of the classics for moral instruction, for example, and he regarded literary studies as subordinate to scientific studies. His relegation of the classics to a subordinate position in the curriculum is another example of the legacy borne by Church of Christ institutions. Campbell made disapproving comments regarding the arts in his commencement address to New Athens College in 1828, saying that, in contrast to languages and literature, science is useful and practical: “[A] literary man of high attainments will necessarily possess much valuable information in the study of ancient and modern dialects of thought; still we must plead that person is greatly inferior to the man of science in point of really useful and practical knowledge” (“New Athens College” 505-506). Campbell also disparaged the study of the classics in his first major essay on education: “A few years are devoted to the dead languages and mythology of Pagan nations, frequently to the great moral detriment of the student, and seldom much to his literary and intellectual advantage in acquisition of real knowledge” (qtd. in Olbricht 196). Campbell intended for the curricula at Bethany to be different from that of other colleges: “The

immoral and profane poets and writers would be excluded, and selections of only what is rational, moral, and subservient to good taste and criticism be substituted for the demoralizing and unrestricted readings and studies too often tolerated, if not enforced in literary institutions” (“A New Institution” 448). Accordingly, the challenges faced by study of the arts at Church of Christ colleges began at Bethany.

Dale A. Jorgenson, author of *Theological and Aesthetic Roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement*, explains that of all the literary forms, Campbell had the least regard for fiction. His biographer Robert Richardson wrote,

For fiction, indeed, he had no taste whatsoever; and though he conceded, in this respect, a certain license to the distinguished poets, he used in after years often to express his wonder that anyone could take interest in works of mere invention, such as romances, when they knew, perfectly well, that not one of the things related ever happened. (qtd. in Jorgenson 220)

Not surprisingly, Campbell often spoke out against the theatre. On one occasion, he received a letter from a reader, Samuel Dennis, asking whether Christians are allowed certain “indulgences,” such as a ball room, the dance party, or the theatre (415). In this letter, Dennis explained to Campbell that while he knew of “no direct commandment” in the Scripture against these activities, he found them at odds with “the true spirit and tenor of the New Testament” (415). To this query, Campbell responded, “We abjure all such worldly, carnal, and sensual practices as the ‘works of the flesh,’ and feel assured that all who delight in such amusements are not fit for the kingdom of god; therefore [...] they ought not be retained as members of the church” (416). The refrain “to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent” had been the initial way that Disciples maintained unity of belief while simultaneously allowing freedom of individual opinion regarding matters not addressed in the Bible. Yet in this case, Campbell resorted to his own “interpretive” reading of Biblical silence as prohibition. The

Bible says nothing against the theatre, or any other “indulgences,” yet Campbell censured those who participated in such activities.

Performing and literary arts held no importance in Campbell’s philosophy because to him they lacked practicality and, moreover, they contributed to acts of immorality. In his view, the humanities were a more appropriate focus of study than even classical learning because he valued practicality so much (Jorgenson 152-153). As Jorgenson explains, however, Campbell eventually made concessions at Bethany, and, ironically, its humanities curriculum came to be centered on the classics (Jorgenson 165). This was largely due to the influence of A. F. Ross, Professor of Languages and Ancient History, one of the four original professors of Bethany employed until 1857. On opening day of Bethany College, Ross gave an introductory address titled “The Importance and Utility of Ancient Classics.” In it, he acknowledged that his discipline had “undergone the searching scrutiny of the reformer” and that some would have the subject removed from the curriculum because the “utilitarian spirit of the age” had determined that it was “a useless waste of time and intellectual energy” (Ross, A. 3). In direct opposition to Campbell, Ross defended the study of the classics. First, he argued that study of the classics improves one’s intellectual faculties, such as the exercise of memory, application of judgment, understanding of relationships, and the improved usage of our own language (Ross, A. 8). He argued, secondly, that the understanding of ancient languages is useful in comprehending ideas across disciplines and, most importantly, even for understanding the Bible. Furthermore, Ross argued that the study of the classics contributes to the improvement of one’s moral faculties because the classics provide example from which to teach the difference between virtue and vice. Moral lessons, he believed, were revealed in “poetry, history, and eloquence” (Ross, A. 14). Even studying that which is considered “obscene” or “immoral” can serve as an opportunity to

“strengthen the discriminating power of the moral faculty by exercise” (18). Ross also argued that the conduct expressed in the classics is often more “moral” than that the many biblical accounts of a sinful humanity badly in need of redemption (Ross, A. 21). Ross finally argued that human progress was halted in the Dark Ages specifically because the classics were virtually unknown to everyone except a select group of clerics (Ross, A. 24).

Interestingly, Ross’s defense of the study of the classics acknowledged the necessity of connecting the study of language and literature to Campbell’s emphasis on utility and moral education. Jorgenson speculates that Ross’s address is “a defense of his discipline from the very criticism his new college president had earlier articulated” (Jorgenson 165). He offers the following critique of Ross’s address:

It is against this framework of philosophical logic, a theology that “speaks where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent,” and an American pragmatism which measured all learning on a scale of utility rather than for its intrinsic or terminal worth that A. F. Ross had to justify his Department of Classics. It also formed the environment for future instruction in all the arts, poetry, and fiction. (165)

Ross was able to shape the classical learning curriculum at Bethany College, and eventually twenty courses involving classical Greek and Roman subjects were offered (Jorgenson 168). Though not in agreement with Campbell’s vision, Ross was able to succeed in his goal by grounding his educational vision in both practical and moral terms. The classics were indeed studied at Bethany, but in the words of Jorgenson, “development of the imaginative and creative faculties or the cultivation of sensitivities to aesthetic phenomena” was not a part of the curriculum (174). Campbell’s views regarding the study of classical texts and Ross’s justifications are significant to this study because they are both applicable to drama and theatre education, which also requires utilitarian and moral justification to exist today at Church of Christ schools. Theatre as an academic discipline did not yet exist in institutions of higher

learning in the nineteenth century, but the heritage of Alexander Campbell's philosophy of languages, literature, and the arts provides the foundational assumptions that currently influence the curricula, personnel, students, and operations of theatre programs at Church of Christ colleges.

While Campbell's goal for both the Restoration Movement and for Bethany College was to promote Christian unity, growing tensions over the participation in "missionary societies" and the use of instrumental music in worship led to a division, officially recognized in 1906, that profoundly influenced later educational enterprises and aesthetics. The progression of the Restoration Movement resulted in unanticipated conflicts between two groups that interpreted Campbell's original aims differently, resulting in the aforesaid separation of the once unified Restoration Movement into the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. The Churches of Christ emphasized adherence to the forms and practices of the early church, and the Disciples of Christ (also known as Christian Churches) emphasized the unity of all Christian believers. Bethany College remained affiliated with the Disciples of Christ and remains so to this day. Douglass A. Foster, who presented his paper "Learning and Faith Through the Eyes of Our Heritage" at the Christian Scholars Conference in 2001, explains: "Our approach to higher education in Churches of Christ were forged in the bitter fights that resulted in our separation from the Christian Church/Disciples [...]. We 'lost' virtually all the movement's institutions of higher education in those early fights and basically had to start all over again" (Foster 54). The oldest extant schools affiliated with the Church of Christ, such as Lipscomb University and Freed-Hardeman, were "shaped by the fights already in progress" (Foster 54). These factors served as a rationale for those among Churches of Christ who established colleges to hold firmly to strict biblical principles they felt had been forsaken by the Disciples.

In spite of the division that began almost immediately after Campbell's death, his philosophy of education, as practiced at Bethany College and promulgated through the *Millennial Harbinger*, influenced an entire generation of Restorationist leaders who would later identify with Churches of Christ. The first such college was Franklin College, founded in 1845 by Tolbert Fanning. Fanning spent the summers of 1832 and 1836 on preaching tours with Alexander Campbell, who, according to Olbricht, "no doubt influenced his [Fanning's] vision for a college" (200). Following the tour, Fanning spent many days with Campbell in his home at Bethany College, an experience that awakened his interest in establishing a Christian college (Young 37). Franklin College, however, was unable to withstand the financial and political challenges of the Civil War and closed in 1866. Yet in its short existence, Young explains, Fanning and his students exerted a distinctive influence on the development of "every college which has been established by members of the Churches of Christ" (34). Perhaps Franklin's most influential graduate was David Lipscomb, who, along with Bethany College graduate James A. Harding, founded the Nashville Bible School in 1891, which later became Lipscomb University, the oldest surviving Church of Christ institution. In fact, all Church of Christ colleges established in the twentieth century can be traced through their founding leaders to men who were educated at Nashville Bible College. In this way, all colleges affiliated with Churches of Christ have maintained commonalities that have been passed from generation to generation.

Following 1906 division, most members of Churches of Christ believed that Bethany College "had led one wing of the [R]estoration [M]ovement into 'digression' when the college had grown large and powerful" (Young 117). Concern over the possibility of one leading college assuming too much authority over the Church resulted in efforts to establish a small self-governing Christian college in as many communities with sufficient local Church of Christ

contingencies to support one (Young 116-117) Furthermore, the need to protect the one *true* church from apostasy resulted in a unique relationship between schools and the Churches of Christ who supported these schools. Young identifies two distinctive characteristics of the Churches of Christ that consequently continue to influence the institutions they sponsor. The first is congregational autonomy; each local congregation operates independently with complete authority and without inter-congregational organizational leadership (Young 33). The second is that no large centralized office oversees the affiliated schools. Young describes the ensuing relationship between the Church and the affiliated colleges as “close” but not “organic” (33). A relationship that causes a college to come under church control or vice versa would not fit within Church of Christ understanding of the nature of the Church as defined in the New Testament (Young 33). Young explains further,

[E]ach of these colleges has been marked by a definite independence from any church organization. It is the result of a conviction of the members of the [R]estoration [M]ovement that no other institution should do the work of the church, nor should any organization be over, or organically connected with, the divine organization of the local church. Hence, while these schools were controlled indirectly by the faith and patronage of the membership of the Churches of Christ, this control was never through any organic connection between the church and the colleges. (205)

While both the Church and the college recognize the mutual benefits that each brings to the other, an unintended byproduct of this arrangement is the covert mutual suspicion that sometimes manifests between Church and college. The “two fundamental dangers,” Young notes, are that the colleges may eventually control the Church, nullifying what is understood to be the “New Testament pattern” of local Church leadership. Conversely, “too wide a gulf” may develop between the colleges and the Churches, possibly leading the college to abandon the “fundamental principles which the Bible teaches” (330). To hold sponsored colleges accountable to Church teachings, Church of Christ affiliated colleges have developed the following strategies to



maintain their respective independence while holding each other accountable: 1) each college is operated by a board of trustees composed of members in good standing in Churches of Christ; 2) the majority of Church of Christ colleges employ faculty members strictly from within Churches of Christ; 3) every sponsored college emphasizes the study of the Bible as a textbook as part of the curriculum (Young 205-206). These characteristics continue to define the relationship between the Churches of Christ and their affiliated colleges.

Today the general educational philosophy advocated by Alexander Campbell continues in force at all Church of Christ colleges and universities. His philosophy was passed to Bethany College graduates who then carried on Campbell's vision to subsequent schools. Olbricht explains, "The academic heirs of Bethany College have to a large extent continued the vision in that first, the commitment is to a basic liberal arts and sciences curriculum and supplemented by certain programs emphasizing skills, such as agriculture, education and business" (201). This described model fits Benne's definition of an *add-on* or *two-sphere* model of education as described in Chapter One, whereby liberal course of studies exists alongside Christian *ethos* and within an institution operated by *Christian persons*. In this model, Benne says, there is little interaction between academic disciplines and the sponsoring Christian faith tradition even in courses in religion. With its intentional avoidance of theological or creedal interpretation of Scripture, the described Church of Christ college model fits Benne's definition.

Campbell's two-sphere model of Bible study alongside a liberal arts curriculum for the chief purpose of the moral development of the human being continues, as does the Restoration heritage of marginalizing the role of the arts in practical and moral education. Yet without external control to create and monitor policies, each institution operates more or less independently; therefore, each college's particular method of operation is the exclusive product

of the viewpoints of its leaders, the vision of its founder(s), and the specific constituency it serves. The next three chapters will explore Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College and study how each one exemplifies their own relationship between faith and learning and how that relationship influences the academic discipline of theatre.

## **CHAPTER 4: LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

David Lipscomb and James A. Harding established Nashville Bible School in 1891. Lipscomb, an 1849 graduate of Franklin College, the first Church of Christ college, and Harding, an 1869 graduate of Bethany College, met in 1889 when Harding was a guest in the Lipscomb home while attending a religious debate in Nashville (Young 83). At that time, the two of them began discussions about founding a Bible school. After two years of planning, Nashville Bible School opened in the fall of 1891, operating out of rented facilities. In the school's third year, a plot of land was purchased that became the home of Nashville Bible College until 1903. In 1901, Nashville Bible College was incorporated under the leadership of a Board of Trustees chaired by David Lipscomb (Hooper 306). When Lipscomb died in November of 1917, the faculty petitioned the Board of Trustees to change the name of the college to honor the legacy of the man whose vision was responsible for founding the school. As a result, Nashville Bible College became David Lipscomb College in 1918 (Young 91). Now established as Lipscomb University, the school has a sixty-five-acre campus located in the Green Hills area of Nashville, Tennessee, with over four thousand undergraduate students and fifteen hundred graduate students (*Lipscomb University Catalog* 10). Lipscomb University is the oldest surviving university affiliated with Churches of Christ.

### **Historical Vision**

The vision for Lipscomb University was articulated primarily by its primary benefactor, David Lipscomb, and secondarily by his founding partner, James A. Harding. The announcement published on June 17, 1891, in the *Gospel Advocate*, a periodical for which Lipscomb served as editor, articulates this vision:

It is proposed to open a school in Nashville, in September next, under safe and competent teachers in which the Bible, excluding all human opinions and philosophy, as the only rule of faith and practice; and the appointments of God, as ordained in the scriptures, excluding all innovations and organizations of men, as fullness of divine wisdom, for converting sinners and perfecting saints, will be earnestly taught. The aim is to teach the Christian religion as represented in the Bible in its purity and fullness; and in teaching this to prepare Christians for usefulness, in whatever sphere they are called upon to labor. Such additional branches of learning will be taught as are needful and helpful in understanding and obeying the Bible and in teaching it to others (qtd. in Young 83-84).

Lipscomb and Harding shared the belief that not enough Disciples (the designation applying to *all* persons associated with the Restoration Movement until the 1906 division) were equipped to meet the growing needs for evangelism. Without sufficient schools, Disciples were attending “denominational institutions” and seminaries; providing an alternative, therefore, became Lipscomb and Harding’s mission (West 290). The school was to teach the Bible without theological aid and alongside the liberal arts.

Two significant factors unquestionably influenced David Lipscomb’s vision for Nashville Bible College: first, the educational philosophy of Tolbert Fanning passed on to Lipscomb when he was at Franklin College, and second, the conflict over interpretation of Scripture that resulted in the permanent division of the Restoration Movement in 1906, resulting in the two distinct “denominations:” Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ. Franklin College (1845-1865) was the first college established by members of the Restoration Movement in the South, located five miles east of Nashville. Franklin was a liberal arts college (Garrett 310) based on strict Restorationist principles, with chapel held as often as twice daily (Hooper 37). While Bible classes were taught to all its students, Tolbert Fanning, founder and president of Franklin, subscribed to Alexander Campbell’s original ideas regarding literal, “scientific” interpretation of the Bible, making that idea the central focus of the college. Fanning, in fact, was opposed to any knowledge or experiences of God outside of the study of Scripture. His philosophy was then

imparted to the students at Franklin College, most pointedly to David Lipscomb, who enrolled in Franklin College in 1846 and graduated in 1849 at the top of his class (Hooper 42). In 1851, Lipscomb was even granted a Master's degree, which was probably more honorary than real, as was typical at that time (Hooper 56). Then, when Fanning resigned as president of Franklin in 1857, David Lipscomb was appointed to the Board of Trustees while his brother William, who had also attended Franklin, in addition to their brother-in-law N. B. Smith, collectively assumed administrative leadership (Hooper 60).

At a time when young men joined the Civil War efforts instead of thinking about college, Franklin College faced severe financial hardships; the administration decided, therefore, to temporarily suspend operations in 1861. Subsequently, on October 2, 1865, Franklin College reopened, but only for four weeks; on October 28, 1865, a young boy accidentally started a fire in the administrative building, causing irreparable damage (Young 50). David Lipscomb, primarily through the *Gospel Advocate*, repeatedly asked for financial assistance, but following the Civil War, people in the South simply did not have the resources to help the college rebuild (Young 50). After the fire, Franklin College never reopened. The permanent closing of Franklin College became a driving force behind Lipscomb's aspiration to establish another Church of Christ college somewhere in the South.

Besides his association with Franklin College as a student and board member, the second major influence on Lipscomb's vision for Nashville Bible College was the growing conflict among the Disciples over missionary societies and instrumental music that eventually led to the formal division. In 1849, a group of Disciples formed the American Christian Missionary Society. An ensuing controversy centered on the ways and the degree to which autonomous congregations could cooperate with one another. Lipscomb opposed the American Christian

Missionary Society on the grounds that it was “unscriptural and usurped the work and authority of the local church” (Young 23). He did not oppose cooperation among the churches in principle, but he strongly contended that churches should not unite into larger bodies governed by associations because such associations inevitably lead to denominationalism (Hooper 167).

Lipscomb’s second point of contention was the use of instrumental music in worship, a position based on the same Scriptural principle: “Both, concluded Lipscomb, were the end result of a change in the interpretation of the plea of the Restoration Movement; each was simply an attempt to introduce things not commanded by God” (Hooper 168). As rural areas became more urbanized, particularly in the North, and Disciples became wealthier, members became interested in using instruments in worship (Hooper 167). The Disciples’ path toward division became more and more apparent as organs were increasingly introduced in congregations throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century,

These two matters clearly separated the viewpoints of Fanning and Lipscomb from those of Alexander Campbell, who supported both missionary societies and the use of instrumental music in worship. Campbell, in fact, endorsed the use of musical instruments in worship services at Bethany College, the school he himself had established (Hooper 159). The *Gospel Advocate* (Lipscomb’s journal) and the *Millennial Harbinger* (Campbell’s journal) became public forums where each faction argued for or against these issues, based on their interpretations of Scripture. Fanning and Lipscomb “held to a literal interpretation of the Bible and believed strongly that it must be followed explicitly to please God” (Hooper 58). Therefore, from the perspective of Lipscomb, the apostasy of Campbell and Bethany College heightened the urgency to establish a college that represented what he believed to be the true Restoration vision.

In addition to missionary societies and instrumental music, another progressive development with which Lipscomb took exception was the professionalization and training of preachers. Following the Civil War, churches in Northern cities began the practice of hiring professional preachers. In Lipscomb's view, preachers should not be paid and preaching was not a *profession*; rather, the preparation of preachers was the responsibility of individual congregations. For these reasons, Lipscomb believed that the emphasis and training at the Disciples' newly-founded College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky (1865), too closely resembled the training of professional clergy (Hooper 134). Furthermore, its president, John W. McGarvey, favored missionary societies (Webb 228). Lipscomb believed that preacher training leads to sectarianism which, in turn, leads to denominationalism. Rather than preacher training, Lipscomb believed that an "education should be concerned with teaching a person to think," leading individuals to search the Bible for truth rather than relying on a specific theological perspective (Hooper 135). Furthermore, because preachers should not be compensated, Lipscomb believed that "the most hurtful thing a church could do to a young man would be to send him to school for several years, training him to be a preacher without providing him with a skill or some special ability for making a living" (Hooper 133). This developing emphasis on a trained professional clergy was another reason that compelled Lipscomb to establish a liberal arts college with Biblical instruction to prepare all students, clergy or otherwise, for life in all its various manifestations.

The impetus for forming a new college thus grew out of these circumstances. Lipscomb and Harding were determined to establish a liberal arts college, though their selection of the name Nashville Bible College resulted in some confusion. To some, the name *Bible* in the title conveyed "preacher training." The Lipscomb University website explains, "Despite their choice

of name for the institution, both men were eager to extend to an underserved region the type of education they had received — a broad-based liberal arts curriculum presented in a Christian context” (“Expanded History”).

The irony of Lipscomb’s seemingly contradictory beliefs did not escape the notice of his critics. On one hand, he opposed missionary societies and Bible colleges on the premise that they undermined congregational authority; on the other hand, he advocated church cooperation through his own Nashville Bible College. Critics pointed out his inconsistency in opposing “Bible colleges” while advocating Christian education at his school; the difference between the two eluded them. Lipscomb opposed Bible colleges for their emphasis on the training of preachers. Lipscomb did not oppose the education of preachers in principle; he simply did not believe it was required. He, like both Campbell and Fanning before him, believed that the Bible should be an integral part of any person’s education and that each individual should decide how to use that education (Hooper 236). Lipscomb wrote extensively on this subject, clarifying his unique vision of a liberal arts education alongside rigorous instruction in the Bible. After years of confusion and explanations, Lipscomb wrote in 1909 that he had sometimes questioned whether he should have kept the word “Bible” in the college’s name (Hooper 315-316).

On June 17, 1891, Lipscomb issued a formal statement in the *Gospel Advocate* announcing his and Harding’s intention of beginning a school the following October. Their appeal met with immediate interest from potential students, but little response in the way of funds. The lack of funding was to become a significant obstacle because the announcement promised free tuition (West 198). The week before the college was to open, Lipscomb felt the need to seek financial assistance from Church of Christ congregations. The following announcement appeared in the summer 1891 edition of the *Gospel Advocate*: “The greater



number of those applying are not able to pay their way. The churches ought to aid them. [...] Each congregation should encourage a young man to devote himself to the service of God and aid him in the work” (qtd. in West 202). Lipscomb himself provided the money that enabled the school to open (Hooper 273); he and two others, J. R. Ward and W. H. Dodd, even rented a house at 180 Filmore Street for the first classroom. Classes began on October 5, 1891, with a student body of nine; during the first year that number grew to thirty-two (Young 84). All the Bible classes were taught by Harding and Lipscomb, along with Lipscomb’s brother William, who had previously taught at Franklin College; Harding also served as superintendent of the college (Hooper 273). Instruction was offered in English, Latin, Greek, mathematics, logic, metaphysics, and natural science (West 203). Students took three daily courses in the Bible, which “played the prominent role in the course of studies”: Old Testament, New Testament, and a “topical investigation,” which involved scrutinizing what the Bible had to say on a particular subject (West 203, 213). This curriculum fulfilled the founders’ vision for a broad-based liberal arts education with the study of the Bible at its center.

Young identifies two points about Nashville Bible College that were emphasized in the *Gospel Advocate*. First, the Bible was taught as a textbook to students every day, and second, in addition to the Bible, the institution offered a “thorough literary and scientific course” (86). According to Lipscomb, these Bible classes were not interested in “theories concerning the Bible” and did not “speculate on the meanings not found explicitly in the Scriptures” (Hooper 274). In part because of the controversy within the Restoration Movement regarding the Disciples’ support and establishment of a Bible school, Nashville Bible College initially offered no formally academic degrees; Harding was particularly opposed to doing so (West 208). Instead, the college presented its graduates with a handwritten booklet detailing the courses

completed (West 215). Neither did faculty members receive a salary for their work; rather, they shared in the school's earnings at the end of the academic year, a sum that was typically very small (Young 91).

Nashville Bible College grew quickly, and in 1892, J. S. Ward, assistant professor of chemistry at Vanderbilt Medical University, was added to the faculty (West 250). In 1894, the first catalog was published and the first Board of Trustees was formed, with the requirement that every trustee must be a member of the Church of Christ "in good standing" at a local congregation (Young 86). By 1896, the faculty had increased to nine (Young 86). The following excerpt from the 1896-97 catalog explains the institution's vision of a liberal arts education:

We purpose to present in the way of a liberal education as extensive a curriculum as can be found in any school, college, or university in the land, and at the same time to thoroughly drill its students in the Bible, the divine source of wisdom and goodness. It was not our design to make professional preachers, but to train males and females, young and old, all who might become members of the school, for the greatest usefulness in life. Each student is left to choose his own calling. (qtd. in "Expanded History")

The number of faculty members and students increased each succeeding year, with the exception of a slight decline during the period of 1898-1900, which was quickly remedied through more effective recruiting efforts. Admission numbers increased to 106 students the following year (Young 86-87). Thus, the school showed steady growth in its early years.

A major change in the identity of Nashville Bible College came in 1901 when the college became legally incorporated, and, beginning with the 1901-1902 academic year, began offering a bachelor's degree to students who completed four years in classical or literary courses (Young 88). At that time, Harding resigned, possibly in protest, and established another Church of Christ Bible college in Bowling Green, Kentucky; approximately half of the student body and several faculty members left with him (Young 87). While Lipscomb and Harding never attributed this move to any differences of opinion between them, scholars have speculated

that Harding left Nashville Bible College because he disapproved of offering academic degrees and establishing a permanent endowment for the college (West 255). The *Gospel Advocate* announced that Harding had left to begin a “similar school” in Kentucky and reported “no disagreement or trouble in the faculty” (qtd. in Young 87). Yet, according to Richard T. Hughes, Harding was known to have said of the proposed incorporation, “I could not work as a teacher of the doctrine of Christ under such control” (qtd. in Hughes *Reviving*). Additionally, Harding disagreed with awarding academic degrees, calling them “vain titles” (West 255). It may be that Harding had misunderstood Lipscomb’s vision for a liberal arts education all along, or that Lipscomb had changed his mind about conferring degrees. The two founders thus went their separate ways, and thereafter, Lipscomb alone became the primary visionary of the college.

In 1902, to facilitate continued growth, David Lipscomb donated fifty-nine acres of his farmland to the college. Three buildings comprised the new campus: a classroom with a chapel and separate residence halls for men and women (Hooper 306). Not only did Lipscomb donate the land, but he also led the fundraising campaign and supervised the construction of the new buildings so they would be prepared for use the very next year (Hooper 305-306). Despite the departure of Harding, several faculty members, and half the student body, construction continued throughout the 1903-1904 academic year while the remaining 165 students attended classes in buildings yet incomplete. Meanwhile, Lipscomb continued his fund-raising appeals to retire the debt he still owed (Young 88, Hooper 307). The 1904-1905 academic year saw the completion of construction and an increase in the number of faculty members from ten to thirteen (Young 89). Enrollment thereafter continued to increase, reaching 250 students by 1914; the institution’s academic vision, however, still remained a matter of contention.

When H. Leo Boles became the sixth president of Nashville Bible College in 1914, he began to improve faculty wages and the academic standing of the college. He also greatly increased the enrollment of the college by being the first president to recruit directly from the churches themselves (Young 90). Then, in 1916 and at Boles's urging, the Board of Trustees, placed all faculty on salary and bought out their ownership in the school's property; faculty were considered as part-owners of campus property because they did receive a salary prior to 1916 as described earlier in this chapter (Young 91). In 1917, nineteen students received bachelor's degrees, and in 1918, eighteen students received bachelor's degrees, forming the college's two largest graduating classes to date (Young 91). When David Lipscomb died in 1917, the Board of Trustees elected to change the name of the school to honor its founder, and in 1918, Nashville Bible College became David Lipscomb College. O. P. Barry was then elected to fill the empty seat on the board, and A. B. Lipscomb, David's nephew, was elected to replace David Lipscomb as president of the board. However, this new board was against "standardizing" as a senior college (Young 92). Upon Boles's resignation as president of the college in 1919, A.B. Lipscomb replaced him, and his newly-appointed administration discontinued the college's practice of offering bachelor's degrees. Instead, David Lipscomb College was admitted to the Tennessee College Association as a junior college in 1921, remaining a junior college for the next thirty years (Young 92).

Despite the administrative decision not to become a senior college, the university website claims that "[t]he academic excellence that characterized the founders' vision has been a driving force for each successive administration," but attempts to advance to senior college status were thwarted by the Great Depression ("Expanded History"). Regardless of the reason for reverting to junior college status, David Lipscomb College resumed granting bachelor's degrees following

World War II (“Expanded History”), adding a third year of study in 1947, and a fourth year in 1948, and graduating a class of thirty-nine in June of 1948 (Young 96-97). In 1954, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) granted full accreditation to the college. Then, in 1988, David Lipscomb College was granted Level III, or master’s degree, status and was renamed David Lipscomb University, which, in 1994, was shortened to Lipscomb University (“Expanded History”).

### **Modern Vision**

Lipscomb University credits its founder for the vision to provide a “complete” education rather than a “finished” education;” a “complete” education is described as “the comprehensive development of each student — spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically” (“Mission, Values, Vision”). In fact, Craig Bledsoe, the current Provost, says that Lipscomb is presently closer to the vision of Lipscomb and Harding than the institution has ever have been. He explains, “We don’t want [our students] to see life as being fragmented, with their campus life, spiritual life, academic life as separate components. Instead, we want to teach our students to see life as a whole” (“Office of the Provost”). The following is the current mission statement:

Lipscomb University is a private coeducational institution whose principal focus is undergraduate education in the liberal arts and sciences, combined with a number of pre-professional fields and master’s degree programs. Its primary mission is to integrate Christian faith and practice with academic excellence. This mission is carried out not only in the classroom but also by involvement in numerous services to the church and the larger community. (“Mission, Values, Vision”)

“The first “wing” of this distinctively integrated mission, the website explains, is “Christian faith and practice;” the second wing is “academic excellence” (“Expanded History”). Based on this mission, Lipscomb identifies four institutional values: Christlikeness, Truth, Excellence, and Service (“Mission, Values, Vision”). Lipscomb strives to “grow in [Christ’s] image,” to seek truth both in the classroom and in community relationships, to make “perpetual improvement”

across the institution, and to “bless the lives of others” with knowledge and skills (“Mission, Values, Vision”).

The 2013-14 undergraduate catalog explains how the university endeavors to accomplish its dual aims to both Christian faith and practice as well as academic excellence. First, it strives to promote Christian faith and practice by requiring Bible classes for all students, by employing teachers who are firmly committed to the worldview and lifestyle of biblical Christianity, and by providing specially designed programs, activities, and worship opportunities that strengthen the aspiration to become faithful, knowledgeable, and mature Christians (11). These programs will be examined more fully in the **Ethos** section later in this chapter. Second, the university seeks to promote academic excellence by introducing students to the great thinkers and ideas of history, by acquainting students with some of the humankind’s significant accomplishments as expressed in the arts and sciences, and by helping students develop a knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures (*Lipscomb University Catalog* 11). According to the catalog, “Our faculty intentionally integrate Christian faith and practice into the academic curriculum” (5). Moreover, the university states unequivocally that the special heritage of Churches of Christ is also integrated in the classroom:

Classes in every area are taught in a faith-informed approach by highly qualified faculty who represent the range of perspectives that exist among churches of Christ. “Faith-informed” learning encourages students to understand that all knowledge and skills are to be used to the glory of God in every pursuit. Because of its strong association with the churches of Christ, Lipscomb adheres to central doctrinal interpretations that characterize these churches while creating an inclusive environment that respects and welcomes all who seek an excellent education in a Christian context. Lipscomb also welcomes those for whom an awareness of the spiritual self is unexplored or recently awakened and who are willing to pursue a Christian education. (“Who We Are”)

First as a junior college, then as a senior college, and now as a university, the liberal arts vision of Lipscomb University, the oldest surviving college affiliated with Churches of Christ, has influenced the formative visions of all subsequent Church of Christ affiliated schools.

Within the last ten years, Lipscomb has expanded its institutional vision, intentionally becoming a large university with plans to construct the necessary facilities to support its growth. Since becoming the seventeenth president in September 2005, Randolph Lowry has initiated his strategic plan, “Lipscomb 2010,” a fifty-four million dollar initiative intended to “dramatically advance the institution’s academic programs and campus facilities” (“Lipscomb Legacy”). This plan has resulted in the addition of thirty-eight new programs in the last five years, along with two hundred thousand square feet of new facilities (“Lipscomb Legacy”). Since Lowry began at Lipscomb, seventy new faculty members have been added, and faculty wages have increased twenty-two percent (“Lipscomb Legacy”). Under Lowry’s leadership, the university has experienced an eighty-one percent growth in enrollment (“Senior Leadership”). Recently, Lowry has announced his next initiative, “Lipscomb 2016,” which outlines his plan to invest 125 million dollars by its 125th anniversary in 2016 (“Senior Leadership”). Evidence of Lipscomb’s achievements is its selection as a top twenty-five university in 2012 by *U.S. News & World Report* (*Lipscomb University Catalog* 5). Currently, Lipscomb offers eighty undergraduate major fields of study and several pre-professional programs in five academic colleges and twenty-four departments (“Expanded History”). Lipscomb currently enrolls 2890 undergraduate students and 1690 graduate students from forty-seven states (“Fast Facts”). According to *U.S. News*, the student-faculty ratio at Lipscomb University is 12:1 with 58.1 percent of its classes having fewer than 20 students (“Best Colleges: Lipscomb”).

Along with his broadened academic vision, Lowry remains firmly committed to Lipscomb's Christian vision. In an address delivered at the annual Summer Celebration on July 2, 2009, he described the university's commitment to this vision in three specific ways. First, he said, Lipscomb is *intentionally* Christian. While many universities in American higher education started out as being Christian, many have "long ago left that to be something else" (Lowry). Lowry explained that Lipscomb will not follow that trajectory. Over the next decade, Lowry explained, Lipscomb intends to attain the kind credibility found in the finest academic institutions in the nation but within the "envelope of a perspective about life that is drawn from who we are" (Lowry). Second, Lowry stated that Lipscomb is committed to being *courageous* in the way members of community respond to others. Lipscomb strives to represent Christ through following Scriptural examples of how He related with people in his own time. Finally, Lipscomb is committed to being *gracious*; graciousness, Lowry says, has "not always been a high point of our DNA." In many instances throughout its history, Churches of Christ and Lipscomb University have not been "gracious," but Lipscomb, Lowry explains, commits to gracious behavior in welcoming both those who agree and those who disagree with them on basic issues (Lowry). Through increased emphasis on academic credibility, spiritual courage, and receptiveness to the ideas of to others, Lipscomb University strives strengthen its commitment to Christian values.

## **Ethos**

The vision of Lipscomb University has been traced from its inception in the time of divisions within the Restoration Movement up to the present day. This next section discusses Lipscomb's ethos, which is the material expression of that vision. No person better exemplifies the ethos of Lipscomb University than its founder, David Lipscomb. His life-long commitment



to service was manifested in a multitude of ways. His dedication to education reached beyond Nashville Bible College and included advocacy for educational reform in schools for all children in the middle Tennessee region (Hooper 60). In addition, Lipscomb and his wife, Margaret, cared for children without parents through their work with the Fanning Orphan School (West 252), and they even took many orphans into their home. While building and managing Nashville Bible College, Lipscomb also traveled extensively to preach the gospel, always without pay, sometimes as many as four times a week (Hooper 106). He continued to balance these activities with the editorial responsibilities of the *Gospel Advocate*, which he frequently kept afloat with his own money. Hooper explains, “Lipscomb urged his [*Gospel Advocate*] readers to help the poor, the sick, and the starving wherever they may be found. What he urged upon others, he did himself” (146). Against popular opinion in the South, Lipscomb advocated for the rights of African Americans, both before and after the Civil War. Following the war, he encouraged his white Southern neighbors to reach out to former slaves; he insisted that Christianity demanded such action from them (Hooper 104). Apparently thinking little of his own well-being, he put himself in harm’s way to care for the sick, most meaningfully during the cholera outbreak of 1873. In his characteristically plain-spoken way, he called upon the church to help those who were suffering from illness: “It is a time that should call out the full courage and energy of the church in looking after the needy. Every individual, white or black, that dies from neglect and want of proper food and nursing, is a reproach to the professors of the Christian religion in the vicinity of Nashville” (qtd. in Hooper 154). Although religiously conservative, he was, in many ways, progressive regarding social issues. He was suspicious of “big business” and sympathized with the plight of the farmer, of which he was one (Hooper 139). Lipscomb was a pacifist, and beyond that, he opposed Christians’ participation in civil government; he grounded his

opposition to involvement with both institutions in his obedience to Christ and membership in His kingdom that is “not of this world” (Hooper 111). In each of these aspects, David Lipscomb was sympathetic to the needs of others in whatever ways those needs were known to him, regardless of his personal comfort.

Clearly, Lipscomb believed that “the theory of Christianity cannot be separated from its practice” (Hooper 184) and that the Christian faith compels individuals to place the needs of others above their own. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the present-day ethos at Lipscomb University strives to emulate David Lipscomb’s service-oriented ethos. Lipscomb University is currently rated among the top three universities in the nation for volunteer hours donated to the community (“Lipscomb Legacy”). Lipscomb’s 2013-14 catalog states that “[p]utting one’s faith into action is a hallmark of a Lipscomb education” (10). In fact, service to the community is tied to its curriculum through its Serving and Learning Together (SALT) Program: “Lipscomb is the first university in Nashville with a service-learning requirement for all of its undergraduate students and provides services to over seventy-five community organizations” (“Office of the President: Biography”). The most recent catalog explains further:

The university is committed to serve the church, the community, and the world by providing opportunities for Christians to participate in events designed to strengthen the church; by enhancing awareness of humanitarian needs; by serving the immediate community and the world through participation in appropriate service activities; by encouraging the development of socially-responsible citizens. (11)

Additionally, the Office of Campus Ministry provides “opportunities for the Lipscomb community, both believers and non-believers, to encounter Christ and be transformed into His likeness” (“Campus Ministry”). Through service-learning requirements and campus ministry, students are encouraged demonstrate their faith through service to others and through personal transformation.

In addition to service to others, Lipscomb's ethos is also expressed in chapel services, Bible classes, and codes of conduct. The chapel requirement is credit-based. All full-time students are required to accumulate thirty chapel credits each semester, twenty-five of which come from chapel assemblies and five from service hours ("Student Handbook" 39). Chapel is held Tuesdays and Thursdays; Tuesdays feature "The Gathering" for the entire campus community to convene for worship, and on Thursdays, students choose from a variety of break-out sessions, such as worship services, Bible studies, or small groups ("Student Handbook" 39). Students also may select from other spiritually-oriented activities that take place outside of allotted standard times ("Student Handbook" 39). The General Education Bible requirement consists of the following courses: The Story of Jesus, The Story of the Church, The Story of Israel, and an "Engagements" course, described as a "multidisciplinary course that investigates a particular era, theme or problem, using insights, methods and habits of thought from the liberal arts (math, sciences, humanities, and the fine arts), Bible, and other academic disciplines" (*Lipscomb University Catalog* 33). Students must also select Faith and Culture, Disciplines for Christian Living, or Biblical Ethics, as well as one religion elective for a total of six Bible courses. Chapel and Bible classes, two foundational components of the founders' vision for a Christian school, are a major part of Lipscomb's ethos.

Lipscomb's ethos is also found in its codes of behavior. The Student Handbook and the University Catalog explain that the University's "Code of Academic Integrity" is grounded in the four core values of Lipscomb University: "Christlikeness, truth, excellence, and service" ("Student Handbook" 6, *Lipscomb University Catalog* 17). Likewise, Lipscomb's "Code of Conduct" is grounded in Scriptural principles:

Lipscomb University was founded with a commitment to biblical faith and principles. As an institution, the university seeks to equip, educate, and develop graduates holistically as

people who glorify God, integrating Christian faith and practice with every aspect of their lives. We hope to equip each student with a personal integrity and a moral/ethical framework for life, which is responsible to the standards of Scripture and lived out in the Spirit of Christ. (“Student Handbook” 13)

In order to translate these principles into practice, Lipscomb prohibits intoxication by any members of its community both on and off campus (“Student Handbook 15), specifies the dress codes for appropriate clothing (16), prohibits premarital sexual activity (18), and establishes guidelines for dormitory room decorations, including prohibitions against displaying lewd images and language and depictions of alcoholic beverages (36-37). In short, the university’s moral codes adhere strictly to traditional biblical principles.

Chapel, Bible classes, service activities, and codes of conduct are intended to promote the spiritual mission of Lipscomb University. Craig Bledsoe, Provost, explains the learning objectives these requirements are intended to promote:

We want to draw our students into a learning environment that addresses the heart and the mind, and in doing so, to help our students take their faith and begin to understand how to use it in their daily lives. We don't want them to see life as being fragmented, with their campus life, spiritual life, and academic life as separate components. Instead, we want to teach our students to see life as a whole. We want them to see, act and think like the whole person God made them to be. (“Office of the Provost”)

Lipscomb’s ethos as stated in its public documents and implemented in campus life through its service opportunities, Bible classes, chapel, and moral codes reflects its strong commitment to service-learning.

### **Christian Persons**

The principle of Christian Persons plays an equally important role in Lipscomb’s overall mission. In the 1890s, when the lines of division were forming between the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ, the “overwhelming concentration” of Churches of Christ were centered around Southern Kentucky, Northern Alabama, Middle and West Tennessee, and states

westward, especially Texas; Nashville, Tennessee has remained “at the center of its strength” (Hooper 280). Illustrating this strength, the teaching faculty and staff employed at Lipscomb University represent more than seventy local Church of Christ congregations (“Expanded History”). Positioned at the geographical hub of Churches of Christ in the United States, Lipscomb University has been able to maintain Church of Christ exclusivity among one hundred percent of its board members, administrators, and faculty. A majority of its staff, with the exception of “those in auxiliary service positions,” are also Church of Christ members (“Staff Handbook” 6). Thus, Lipscomb has been able to maintain the Church of Christ exclusivity among its faculty, staff, administration, and board, the same ideal with which it began.

According to its catalog, “The Lipscomb community is diverse, with a 4,000+ member undergraduate and graduate student body representing 48 states and 35 nations that includes numerous ethnic cultures and religious traditions” (10). Lipscomb also emphasizes small student-to-faculty relationships as essential parts of its learning model: “Class sizes encourage faculty and students to create relationships that are constructive, beneficial and personal, and to maintain these relationships throughout life” (“Who We Are”). According to Aaron Burtch, Associate Director of Transfer Admissions, Lipscomb has maintained approximately fifty percent Church of Christ enrollment in the last five years, though recent trends seem to indicate that that proportion may soon decrease by as much as ten percent (Burtch). According to a 2012 study published in the *Christian Chronicle*, a slim majority of freshmen at Lipscomb University, fifty-one percent, came from Church of Christ backgrounds in the fall of 2009. In 2004, on the other hand, sixty-two percent of freshmen were Church of Christ members. “Enrollment by freshmen who identify themselves as members of Churches of Christ has declined over the last three years, but not as fast as our overall enrollment has grown,” Ricky Holaway, Lipscomb’s Senior

Director of Admissions, told the *Chronicle*, adding that “[p]art of the issue is we are attracting more students who are seeking out the faith-based education, grounded in our brotherhood’s faith principles that we offer” (Ross “Trends”). Burtch explains that the Nashville area and Lipscomb’s strong academic programs are attracting students from outside Churches of Christ. Recruiters describe Lipscomb to prospective students as a “welcoming campus” to those who want “grow in their relationship with God” as part of their educational experience (Burtch). The growing religious diversity in the student body is certainly a reflection of Lowry’s commitment to provide a “gracious” Christian environment to people of all backgrounds. While the composition of the student body has become more religiously diverse, Lipscomb remains steadfastly committed to Church of Christ exclusivity for the Board of Directors, administrators, and full-time faculty and staff.

### **Theatre at Lipscomb**

Professor Larry Brown, who served as Theatre Chair at Lipscomb University from 1989 to 2008, is well acquainted with the history of its theatre program from its beginning in the 1940’s. At that time, Lipscomb was presenting plays on campus under the direction of Ora Crabtree. Theatre existed as part of the Speech Department, which included a small selection of theatre classes such as Oral Interpretation of Literature (Brown). Brown’s association with Lipscomb University began as a student from 1977 to 1980 when he participated in theatre productions under the direction of Henry Arnold, who operated the theatre program for eleven years as part of the Speech Communication Department. Course offerings then included Oral Interpretation of Literature, Play Production, and a generic survey of drama. In 1989, Arnold left, and Brown, having completed a Ph.D. in Theatre from the University of Nebraska, returned to his alma mater as Theatre Chair. In the years immediately following, Brown added several new

theatre courses and created an “emphasis” in drama. In 1995, Sam Wallace joined the Lipscomb faculty for a few years, though both he and Brown taught speech and Bible courses in addition to theatre. When Wallace left Lipscomb, Deborah Holloway joined the faculty, first as an adjunct instructor and then as full-time instructor, teaching English and Theatre. Holloway had twenty-one years of experience teaching English, Speech, and Theatre at Christian high schools in the Southeast; through partnership with Lipscomb’s Education Department, she was able to develop an educational certification program for preparing theatre teachers K-12 (Holloway). Theatre remained part of the Communication program until 1997 when Lipscomb was reorganized into “colleges” and the theatre program was separated from the Communication Department, becoming a stand-alone department for a few years. However, because of its small size and the fact that it primarily offered academic minors (rather than majors), theatre next joined the English Department during 2007-08, where it remained for two years. Then, in 2009, the Theatre Department once again became a stand-alone department and remains so to this day.

During Brown’s tenure as Chair, Lipscomb offered both a theatre minor and, by drawing from select offerings from other departments, a thirty-hour major. Brown’s vision for the theatre program was to give students “a quality experience as a part of their undergraduate liberal arts education” (Brown). He recruited students from across disciplines to participate in theatre and encouraged those who wanted to broaden their academic experience to select a theatre minor, knowing that their major area of study would most likely develop into their careers. The administration supported this vision of theatre as a liberal arts program serving all disciplines and did not envision its growth as a professional area of study. Thus, by partnering with the Communication, English, and Education Departments, the theatre program made a significant contribution to the students’ liberal arts education as a whole.

Since Brown joined Lipscomb in 1989, three or four plays per academic year have been produced on campus. Until recently, the department used primarily a small multipurpose black box theatre now known as the “University Theatre” for most of its productions; this flexible 130-seat space has been available for exclusive use by the theatre program. Occasionally, a larger shared space, the Willard Collins Auditorium, was used, especially for their large-scale production at Homecoming. In the late 1990’s, the Shamblin Theatre was constructed, but because this shared flexible space was in high demand, Brown never used it for productions during his tenure as Chair.

Three factors governed Brown’s selection of plays: 1) personal interest, which tended to be more classic plays and serious modern dramas, 2) the available talent pool, and 3) the play’s suitability to Christian education. Language and subject matter were often adjusted to fit the expectations of the Lipscomb community. Brown explains that his editing philosophy was to “have enough respect for the play” not to select it for production if he had to “damage its artistic integrity” to meet expectations of the institution. As part of this philosophy, he also considered the “tone” of the play, that is, whether the play presented a “serious exploration” of a controversial subject or presented that subject in a positive light. Since serious dramas fit this limitation better, those were the types of play he selected most often. Having been a member of the Lipscomb community for so many years, Brown developed a sensitive understanding of the Lipscomb community. Surprisingly, he received only two formal complaints from the audience during his seventeen years as Chair.

A significant transformation to the theatre program came in 2008 with the hiring of Mike Fernandez as Theatre Chair. Since then, a stand-alone Theatre Department with professional degree plans leading to a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts has been established.



According to Holloway, the three reasons for this growth are 1) the change in administrative goals under President Lowry, 2) Lipscomb's change in emphasis from academic minors to academic majors, and 3) Lowry and Fernandez's desire for professional preparation in theatre at Lipscomb. Holloway explains that "although Lipscomb's presidents have all supported the fine and performing arts," President Lowry came wanting to build the arts programs because the arts "greatly add to the overall image of the university," bringing many visitors to campus (Holloway). Second, in "keeping with the national trend," Lipscomb no longer requires minors; the theatre program, having depended mostly on minors for many years, needed to adapt to these changes. Third, the department, under Fernandez and with Lowry's support, began rethinking its training to emphasize professional theatre. Consequently, the department has changed significantly within a few years under Fernandez, who, according to Holloway, "brought big visions and many ideas for recruiting students." With the financial support of the administration, the Theatre Department has within a short amount of time grown from a small liberal arts program supported through its affinity with other liberal arts disciplines to an independent department offering several degree plans.

### **Academic Mission**

The Theatre Department within the School of Fine and Performing Arts is part of the College of Arts and Sciences, the largest of Lipscomb's seven colleges. Lipscomb offers the following degree options in theatre: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre, in Acting, in Design Tech, and in Directing; and a Bachelor of Arts in General Theatre, in Educational Theatre, and in Theatre Ministry ("Department of Theatre: Undergraduate Programs"). The department also offers various minors, including "theatre ministry." The following is the Theatre Department's Mission Statement:

The Lipscomb University Theatre Department is dedicated to training the next generation of believer artists who seek to have a positive influence on the world and become leaders in the entertainment industry. To achieve this, we have created a department built on the ideals of community, worship, and quality training. It is also our goal to build an exciting theatre known for quality productions that entertain as well as challenge the community. (“Lipscomb University Catalog” 86)

As of the 2013-14 academic year, the Theatre Department has approximately fifty theatre majors pursuing either a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and twenty-five students pursuing a theatre minor (Fernandez). The department employs four full-time faculty members, two full-time staff members, and between eight and twelve adjunct instruct instructors per semester. Currently, the department utilizes four performance spaces: the Willard Collins Auditorium, an 800-seat proscenium theatre; the Shamblin Theatre, a 350-seat intimate modified thrust; the University Theatre, a flexible black box theatre; and a large outdoor amphitheater.

Lipscomb’s program provides preparation for a variety of theatre career paths. Students and faculty alike acknowledge the well-roundedness of the program and the individualized attention that faculty members provide for their students. Stephen Moss, BFA Design student, says that the limited size of the theatre department at Lipscomb gives him opportunities to design for the main stage in addition to student laboratory productions, and to work “one-on-one” with faculty members (Morgan, J.). Deborah Holloway, supervisor of the theatre education program, attests that a student who is studying theatre education at Lipscomb will “learn to be well-rounded,” having acquired the skills necessary to run middle and high school theatre programs, as well as how to be a competent teacher. As evidence for success of the teacher education program, she explains that “every one of our graduates who wants to be teaching is presently teaching” (Morgan, J.). The department offers many opportunities for students to gain experience through internships and to work with local professional companies, including Nashville Children’s Theatre, which is among the leading children’s theatres in the country (*Lipscomb*

*University Catalog* 86). Students also have the opportunity to study for a summer in London's West End, to spend a week in New York attending Broadway shows, and to participate in Lipscomb's touring Children's Theatre Company. Additionally, students can make connections with faculty who are working in local professional theatres, such as the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, the Tennessee Repertory Theatre, and the Circle Players (*Lipscomb University Catalog* 86). Lipscomb University's promotional video for the Theatre Department features professors expressing their willingness to recommend qualified Lipscomb students to professional theatre companies in Nashville, and students featured in the video state that the Nashville theatre community welcomes them (Morgan, J). These varied educational experiences, both on and off campus, effectively prepare students for a variety of different careers in theatre.

In addition to its on-campus productions, Lipscomb partners with local theatre companies. During the 2013-14 season, Lipscomb is partnering with Nashville's Circle Players to produce Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Rabbit Hole*, by David Lindsay-Abaire, as well as one additional joint production. According to a recent article in the *Tennessean Review*, "Sharing facilities and resources, the two theater organizations are able to bring more variety to the playbill and top-quality local performers to work with stand-out student thespians" (qtd. in "*Tennessean Praises Lipscomb Theatre*"). In addition to the Circle Players, Nashville Children's Theatre Company, and others, Lipscomb University students can work with Blackbird, a professional non-profit theatre company founded in 2010 by two Lipscomb alumni, Wesley Driver and Gregory Greene, who also serve as artists-in-residence for the Lipscomb University Department of Theatre ("Blackbird Theatre"). Their productions feature faculty and alumni of Lipscomb, including Theatre Department Chair Mike Fernandez, who won Nashville's "Best Director" award in 2012 for his production of *Doubt* ("Fernandez Wins First Night Honors").

The Blackbird project gives Lipscomb students opportunity to work both on and off stage, and, according to Fernandez, the students are often the “technical backbone” of the shows (Morgan, J.). Through these various relationships, as well as through internships mentioned above, Lipscomb theatre students are able to gain a measurably wider experience in the theatre than can be offered at most other college programs.

### **Christian Mission**

In the aforementioned promotional video, the Theatre Department at Lipscomb gives significant emphasis to its specifically Christian mission. Fernandez clarifies his department’s emphasis to “train the next generation of believer-artist to be leaders in the entertainment industry” (Morgan, J.). While the department does provide “excellent training” for students, what makes it unique, Fernandez explains, is its emphasis on students “working out their faith and their art” (Morgan, J.). The theatre program at Lipscomb is designed to prepare professional theatre artists to carry their faith into their lives and their careers. The language used on its website and in its promotional video demonstrates that the objective of the department is to “infuse” Christian faith into all aspects of students’ lives, both inside and outside the theatre (Morgan, J.). The term “believer artist,” used numerous times in the promotional materials, refers to Christians who participate in all avenues of theatre; the term is not intended to suggest that Christian believers participate only in Christian organizations. Fernandez explains, “We believe that [actors and theatre professionals] have one of the highest callings and that is to tell stories as Christ told stories and to be exceptional at telling stories” (Morgan, J.).

Fernandez explains the “platform” upon which he operates, which he describes as “three spheres of influence.” The first is the Lipscomb campus community; that is, the theatre should have a highly recognizable presence campus as a part of the academic interdisciplinary life of the

institution. In this sphere, Fernandez looks for ways to connect to the university as a whole. One way in which the theatre faculty accomplishes this goal is to discover what kinds of shows will appeal to students and faculty. Also, members of the Theatre Department serve the larger community through volunteering for campus events such as administrative dinners and sponsored parties. Furthermore, the department works with Student Government, offering them a ticket package to buy in bulk for distribution to students. The second sphere is the Nashville community. Students serve theatre companies in the area by helping to upgrade and maintain their spaces or by organizing stage properties, for example. This outreach has led to internship opportunities for Lipscomb students. The third sphere is the national level. Members of the Theatre Department attend national conferences and the American College Theatre Festival, and students attend University Resident Theatre Association (URTA) auditions, all of which help to maintain national viability for the program.

Fernandez distinguishes between the types of dramatic works that students study in the classroom and those presented to a public audience. As an academic pursuit, Fernandez says, “Any and every type of literature is open to examination.” Ultimately, though, theatre exists to serve its audience, and Fernandez explains to students that not all plays that they study in the classroom are suitable for presentation on Lipscomb’s stage. Fernandez’s vision, nevertheless, calls for both challenging and educating Lipscomb’s audiences through theatrical performance, thus promoting the exploration of works that “are not necessarily Christian.” Fernandez, whose academic preparation includes a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting, suggests that a tendency in the Christian community to “overlook the true depth of the dilemma to get to the answer” frequently results in a “lack of depth in writing and in thinking.” Conversely, Fernandez believes that “good works of art, Christian or not, dive into the depths of the human condition and often

show us something that is scary” (Fernandez). He cites Hamlet’s advice to the players as part of his own aesthetic philosophy: the purpose of theatre is to hold up a mirror to nature. “Good plays are a reflection of society,” Fernandez says; “sometimes the reflection is haunting, but Christians who are to fulfill its mission in the world cannot shy away from that which is gritty.” Ultimately, Fernandez suggests, plays should be judged by their context and overall message. Whatever the play, Fernandez encourages students to consider their personal response to the work. For instance, is the play “redemptive” or “cautionary?” Is its purpose to open a dialogue so as to reveal the nature of the tragic?

Plays considered for public performance on Lipscomb’s stages are judged on a case-by-case basis. Fernandez is careful when selecting plays that contain “core issues” that he knows will be problematic for audiences, such as sexual content, homosexuality, alcohol, and harsh language. He is particularly careful about comedy: “Gritty comedies,” Fernandez explains, are “harder to justify” than serious plays, of which audiences tend to be more accepting if they tell a “good story” in an “authentic” way, particularly one that “leads to hopefulness.” The harsher examples of abrasive language are removed from public performances, but milder language that “captures the essence of the vernacular” or “shows a sense of worldliness” or “captures dramatic situations” is generally retained. In order to communicate the type of content in a play, the department has recently developed a rating system clarifying either that “this play is suitable for all audiences” or “this play is suitable for mature audiences only” (Fernandez).

Additionally, preshow discussions and talk backs provide opportunity to talk with the audience about the issues raised in a play. Finally, through its partnership with the Blackbird Theatre, Fernandez explains, the department has the opportunity to “broaden the types of works” it is able to explore in performance because “expectations are not same as they are for the

university stage.” Through these serious explorations of the varieties of human behavior and through corresponding discussions, the department educates its audience about different ways in which theatre reflects life.

Despite its recent inclination towards professionalization, the Theatre Department’s mission continues to reach beyond the scope of students in theatre degree programs. One way the department reaches out to the campus community is through an option in the university’s “Breakout Chapel,” which encourages students to share their stories “through scripts, choreography, songs, and shows” (“Chapel”). Theatre chapel, Fernandez explains, provides a “safe place to ask, ‘What is the role of the Christian and the arts?’” During this theatre chapel, students have performed, worshipped through song, studied Scripture, and sometimes heard from guest artists who have spoken about their journey in faith. Upwards of one hundred faculty, staff, and students from across university typically attend this weekly event. In addition to breakout chapel, the Theatre Department also plans one or two sessions of the larger university chapel “Gathering” per semester.

In conclusion, the Theatre Department at Lipscomb appears to operate with a strong vision that proactively integrates faith and learning. The department strives to prepare “believer artists” who are encouraged to think about the relationship between their “faith and their art,” expressions that indicate an observable comingling of faith and theatre. Discussions about the relationships between faith and theatre happen not only within the department, but also extend to the audience members through formal and informal discussions, and to the campus community through the university’s various forms of chapel. Having grown from a small liberal arts program into a pre-professional program with several distinctive specializations, the department, nevertheless, remains committed to its original liberal arts goals through its emphasis on small

class size, close faculty-to-student mentorships, and service to the university across disciplines. The department's ethos can be seen in its service to the campus community and to the greater Nashville region and in the moral guidelines that govern play selection for production. Yet, through its affiliations with the Blackbird Theatre on campus and several professional theatre organizations in the city of Nashville proper, the department has found ways to provide students with experiences of performance that would be considered inappropriate for production on Lipscomb's campus stages. The Theatre Department is operated by Christian persons who profess and demonstrate their Christianity; the four full-time faculty members in the department belong to Churches of Christ, although there is no such requirement for the adjuncts who also teach theatre classes. Most important, the ways in which the department operates in accordance with its academic and Christian mission appear to fit successfully within the vision and with full support of Lipscomb University's administration.



## **CHAPTER 5: PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

George Pepperdine College was founded in 1937 by a benevolent entrepreneur, George Pepperdine, on land located a few miles south of downtown Los Angeles. Pepperdine, a poor young man from Kansas, had launched a small mail order business that ultimately grew into the multi-million-dollar Western Auto Supply Company. Pepperdine had a generous spirit and a genuine interest in the moral and intellectual development of young people. He was particularly interested in investing in “something of major importance for youth of the future generations,” though initially he was not sure what that would be (Clark and Bates 174). Alarmed by the number of young Christians attending university and abandoning their faith, Pepperdine ultimately determined to invest much of the wealth he had accumulated into providing an alternative type of higher education (Rushford 2).

In February 1937, Pepperdine arrived at the decision to start a new college, stating his intention to open in September of that year, a mere seven months. A thirty-four acre plot of land with a mansion in Los Angeles was found, purchased, and quickly mobilized into a campus (Rushford 4). The mansion became the president’s home, and four additional buildings were completed during the first year of operation. Though the dormitory was not yet finished, the school opened as planned to its first group of students in September of 1937 (Rushford 4). Bastell Baxter and Hugh M. Tiner became the first president and dean, respectively. For the new college’s motto, he chose the words “Freely ye received; freely give” from Matthew 10:8, which remains the motto to this day.

In its first year of operation, George Pepperdine College offered 232 hours of instruction in twenty-two subject areas taught by a twenty-two-member faculty, three of whom held doctoral

degrees (Rushford 6, 9). In April 1938, after just seven months of operation, George Pepperdine College received full accreditation by the Northwest Association (Rushford 8). By fall 1938, enrollment had so far exceeded expectations that applicants were placed on a waiting list and new buildings were added (Rushford 6). Aside from a brief drop in enrollment for a few years attributable to World War II, enrollment continued to grow and more buildings were added to the campus for the next twenty years. By late 1960's, the college community had outgrown their Los Angeles campus and, unfortunately, found themselves located in a geographical area of emerging social unrest. Therefore, the administration began to explore options for additional locations, and a site in the city of Malibu was provided as a gift (Rushford 111). The college obtained university status almost simultaneously in the early 1970's, marking a significant evolution in the history of the institution. Hughes explains, "It is impossible to overestimate the impact of the Malibu location both on the academic development and on the religious mission of the institution. The Malibu site contributed more perhaps than any other single factor to the academic enhancement of the institution" (*Models* 422)." The *Los Angeles Times* recognized the university's move to Malibu as a significant sign of its academic achievement: "Pepperdine University is in class by itself. . . . Its main campus has become a glittering diamond set on 650 acres at Malibu. The sparkle runs deep, and to many observers it symbolizes the university's academic progress" (qtd. in Rushford 163). The beauty of the campus carved out of a mountainside overlooking the Pacific serves to this day as a major feature attracting students to Pepperdine (*Models* 429).

## **Vision**

The vision for Pepperdine University was cast by its founder and first communicated to the campus community in his inaugural address on September 21, 1937: "Our college is

dedicated to a twofold objective: First, we want to provide first class, fully accredited academic training in the liberal arts. . . . Secondly, we are especially dedicated to a greater goal—that of building in the student a Christ-like life, a love for the church, and a passion for the souls of mankind” (Rushford 1). Pepperdine clarified his mission to the student body *in November of 1937*:

There are many good colleges and universities which can give you standard academic training, but if our school does not give you more than that, it really has no reason to exist. The great difference between this college and other colleges is that we are endeavoring to place adequate emphasis and greater stress upon religious teaching and Christian character. We want to present to you, in teaching and example, the Christian way of life. We do not compel you to accept it. You are free to make your own choice, but we want you to know what it is. (“About Pepperdine: History”)

The two foundational goals articulated by George Pepperdine, a first-class academic institution and an institution for teaching religion and Christian character gradually became competing commitments. History has shown that Pepperdine has vacillated between emphasis on rigorous academics apart from an explicit church connection on one hand and emphasis on its Christian mission apart from academics on the other. As Hughes explains, these tensions were actually embodied in the changeable emphasis key administrators placed on them over the years (*Models* 417-418). From its inception, Pepperdine’s relationship to Churches of Christ has been noticeably different from that of any other affiliated institution, a relationship Hughes describes as “ambiguous” and arising from two factors: one, Pepperdine has always had to balance these competing forces: its desire to affirm religious diversity while being affiliated with a religious tradition that historically has held exclusivist claims. Two, Churches of Christ have yet to develop a “coherent theological perspective that might sustain the enterprise of Christian higher education” (*Models* 414). While this conflicted relationship is found in virtually all Church of

Christ related colleges, the unique approach that has come to characterize Pepperdine is owed both to its founder and its geographical location.

William S. Banowsky, current President Emeritus of Pepperdine University and author of *The Malibu Miracle: A Memoir* (2010), explains that George Pepperdine was conflicted himself about whether or not to establish a college with a narrowly Christian mission. He was brought up in a “noninstitutional” congregation within Churches of Christ in rural Kansas; noninstitutionalists were opposed to all extra-congregational organizations, including Christian colleges, because they believed that such organizations undermined the authority of the local congregation (Banowsky 22-23). Pepperdine’s convictions regarding the church-college relationship made him reluctant to establish another Church of Christ college based on the exclusivist model. Having witnessed the potentially detrimental effect that a secular college education might have on those espousing the Christian faith, he apparently had, according to his biographers, “no intention of contributing his money to founding an institution which, instead of helping young people to grow in grace, would destroy their faith” (Clark and Bates 175). Hugh M. Tiner, a graduate of David Lipscomb College, high school supervisor in the Los Angeles school system, and minister of the Sichel Street Church of Christ, gradually won Pepperdine over to the idea of starting a Christian college. The two began intense discussions about establishing a Christian college in California, and they invited Bastell Baxter, a former president of both Abilene Christian College and of David Lipscomb College, to join the conversation (Banowsky 23). The first meeting between the three men in 1937 proved to be pivotal in the decision to establish George Pepperdine College. At that meeting, Pepperdine explained his intention:

I don’t want another college that will be dependent upon the churches for support. I have in mind a four year liberal arts college, an institution of higher learning where any worthy boy or girl, regardless of his religion or financial standing can get an education. And I

want it to be a college academically sound, based in Christian faith. Is that too much to ask? (Clark and Bates 176)

While Pepperdine was personally committed to Churches of Christ, he nevertheless insisted that the institution remain independent of Church control. And, since he was prepared to fund the endeavor with his own money, he got his wish. In his founding statement made in September 1937, he expressed the following: “This institution, while placing special emphasis on Christian living and fundamental Christian Faith, shall be a private enterprise, not connected with any church, and shall not solicit contributions from the churches” (qtd. in Clark and Bates 184).

This inexplicit relationship between Pepperdine University and the Churches of Christ has led to “considerable suspicion” on the part of some churches toward the university and vice versa (*Models* 412-413). Pepperdine himself, according to Richard Hughes, created “a sizable pocket of ambiguity surrounding the church relationship” (*Models* 417). Banowsky describes Pepperdine’s position further: “He envisioned a college with a Christian environment that would assiduously avoid any official church relationship. It was a high tightrope to walk. Ambivalence and ambiguity were inevitable. Indeed, both were bred into the Pepperdine theological DNA” (22). Banowsky continues, “Mr. Pepperdine did not create confusion by what he said, but by what he did not say” (26). Pepperdine’s founding statement did not include a single reference to Churches of Christ and defined Christianity only in broad terms: “The faculty and board of trustees shall be composed of devout Christians, men and women who will give careful attention to safeguarding and deepening faith of the students, increasing their loyalty to Jesus and their zeal for saving souls” (qtd. in Clark and Bates 184). To the first student body, Pepperdine described the religious principles of the faculty within a broadly Christian context:

The members of our faculty [...] are a group of outstanding men and women, not only in their ability to teach the academic subjects in their given fields, but they are also outstanding in their sincerity and their efforts to live the Christian life [...]. Not only their

direct teaching along this line, but their examples of Christian living should be valuable to you. This helps explain why this school is different from many other schools. (qtd. in Clark and Bates 186)

The single stipulation about church membership in the college bylaws stated that members of the Board of Trustees should be members in good standing of the Church of Christ. Beyond that, there were no explicitly church-related requirements for president, administration, faculty, students, or curriculum. In the early years, the ambiguity of this relationship did not matter much. Many such issues went unaddressed because generous funding provided by George Pepperdine afforded the college a well-known degree of independence. Then, in 1951, George Pepperdine declared bankruptcy and resigned from the board of trustees (Banowsky 45). For the next six years, the trustees kept the college afloat with endowment capital, but by 1957 the endowment was virtually depleted. Pepperdine had always planned to finance the college; therefore, no provisions were in place for supplementary forms of funding.

M. Norvel Young, who became president in 1957, had to solve the three-fold problems of growing Church alienation, faculty unrest, and the imminent financial crisis precipitated by George Pepperdine's bankruptcy (Banowsky 20). Several faculty members resigned when Young, who stated that his mission was to "save the college for the church," took office (Banowsky 29). Then, in April 1958, fifteen of the sixty full-time faculty vacated their posts mid-semester, fearing that "nonsectarian Pepperdine will now come under complete Church of Christ control." By the end of Young's second year, half of Pepperdine's faculty had resigned (Banowsky 29). After this mass exodus, Young filled the positions with faculty and staff who were affiliated with Churches of Christ.

Mending church relations and reconstituting the faculty could not, however, solve the college's financial problems. After his first year of unsuccessful fundraising within Churches of

Christ, Young began to solicit the support of conservative businessmen in Los Angeles, making what Banowsky calls “the most strategic fundraising move in Pepperdine history” (37). Few members within Churches of Christ had the financial means to support Pepperdine, and most of them chose to contribute the “safer,” more Church-oriented institutions, such as Abilene Christian College, Harding College, and David Lipscomb College (*Models* 420). Indeed, by the late 1950’s, Pepperdine had developed two separate constituency groups: members of Churches of Christ who wanted a stronger church connection and closer allegiance to that specific heritage, and members of the civic and business community who were more concerned with traditional American values such as “patriotism, hard work, basic morality and faith in God” (*Models* 420-421). The Church of Christ constituency by itself could not provide a sufficient donor base, while the civic and business community could do so. Due to the exclusivist claims held by many in Churches of Christ at that time, Pepperdine could not define itself as an inclusive Christian college without alienating its more conservative Church of Christ constituencies. Hughes explains that Pepperdine faced two options:

It could define its religious mission in terms of Churches of Christ, an option that virtually eliminated ties to a broader Christian world; or it could define its mission in the broader more inclusive terms of morality and traditional values, an option that appealed far beyond the confines of an explicitly Christian constituency and even to a variety of secular constituencies. (*Models* 421)

The result, according to Hughes, was that Pepperdine “gradually began to wear two different public faces,” as a “Christian institution” to its church connection and as a protector of “traditional values” to other groups (*Models* 421). The appeal to non-sectarian values is a major reason that the university has survived in a geographic area in which Churches of Christ are a small percentage of the population. Thus, since the late 1950’s, Pepperdine has continued to define itself in ethical, moral, or spiritual terms as “value-centered campus” and “grounded in

spiritual values” to serve two purposes: to preserve its Christian identity while allowing for religious diversity (*Models* 414). And yet recently has Pepperdine begun to reemploy overtly Christian language in its mission and vision statements.

Undeniably, the second unique feature that has characterized the relationship between Pepperdine University and Churches of Christ is its location. Los Angeles’s racial unrest in the 1960’s brought new challenges to the vision of George Pepperdine College, including relocation of the campus to Malibu and the achievement of university status. In August 1965, the Watts Riots prompted concerns for the safety of the original urban campus, inciting a debate about whether the college should relocate (Banowsky 53). The monumental change in the history of George Pepperdine College, known as the “Malibu Miracle,” occurred in 1967 when a gift of land in Malibu was offered to the college (Banowsky 72). Concerned not only about the sheer cost of developing the site but also about the suitability of a Christian College to the “worldliness” of Malibu, the Board of Trustees were initially opposed to the location (Banowsky 81). In response, Banowsky, who led the new campus search committee, and President Young partnered to raise the money needed to finance the move, which came from wealthy conservative business leaders in southern California; namely, the Adamson family donated the land, Mrs. Frank R. Seaver supplied the largest financial gift in Pepperdine history, and the “patron saint of Pepperdine” Republican Governor of California, Ronald Reagan provided the financial means to build the new campus (Banowsky 85-86).

In 1971, William S. Banowsky became the fourth president at the same time as George Pepperdine College officially became Pepperdine University. At the Malibu groundbreaking ceremony, Banowsky redefined the special relationship between Pepperdine University and Churches of Christ: “Unlike most church-related colleges, in our era of expansion we will



strengthen not loosen our ties to churches of Christ. But we will resist any sectarian spirit, do nothing to stifle open inquiry and never pose as an institution that knows all God's truth" (Banowsky 195). Thus, Pepperdine's original commitment to its church and to religious diversity was officially maintained, if still ambiguously.

The Malibu campus opened in fall 1972 and posted the highest scholastic aptitude scores of any student body in the history of the institution: the freshman class average GPA was 3.08 (*Models* 429). Along with strong academics, the Malibu campus boasted its highest percentage of Church of Christ students in the institution's history: one-third of the freshmen class aligned themselves with the Church of Christ (Banowsky 270). Additional safeguards were, nevertheless, undertaken to ally the university more openly with the Church: "At a time when the world was falling in love with the Malibu campus, steps were taken to ensure that Church of Christ members would love it most" (Banowsky 270). The annual Bible Lectures, which began in 1942, were continued at Malibu and by this time served "the world's largest annual assembly of Church of Christ members" (Banowsky 270). To symbolize its faith, the Phillips Theme Tower was constructed, a 125-foot obelisk-like structure featuring an indented cross and visible from "the sea, the sky, and the highway" (Rushford 166). In his book, Banowsky chronicles the difficulties he encountered with the Malibu community, which was strongly opposed to "the intrusive sectarian symbol, a brightly lit ecological offense towering over our homes at night" (275). It was a conflict worth having, Banowsky told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1976, because "I wanted people to know what kind of place this is" (Banowsky 290). Meanwhile, the Los Angeles campus was unable to sustain itself amid the continuing inner city difficulties and was finally sold in 1981.

Banowsky served as president of Pepperdine from 1971 until 1978, a period characterized by rapid growth and improved academic standards. Richard T. Hughes identifies three significant administrative actions during those years that had a major influence on the development of the present-day vision of Pepperdine: 1) Banowsky defined Pepperdine in broad spiritual and moral terms rather than in explicit Christian or sectarian language. 2) He restructured the Board of Trustees, which up until that juncture had been composed exclusively of members of Churches of Christ. Instead, he created a forty-member Board of Regents with the requirement that a majority should have membership in Churches of Christ (*Models* 427). 3) He hired a large number of teachers for their academic qualifications with only minor consideration for their Church of Christ affiliation. This action so alarmed some of the faculty that thirty of them addressed a letter to Banowsky expressing concern that “Pepperdine may become so secularized that all Christian impact will be lost” (*Models* 428).

To safeguard the institution’s connection with its Church heritage, Banowsky put new Church of Christ “protections” in place (356): 1) The majority of the Board of Regents must be Church of Christ members; 2) the president, chairman of the board, and chairman of the executive committee of the board must be Church of Christ members; and 3) a powerful new Religious Standards Committee, comprised exclusively of Church of Christ members, was installed and given “absolute authority to establish and maintain those policies and practices of religion and spiritual life considered by the committee to be appropriate to ensure continuing and meaningful relationship between the University and the Church of Christ” (356). These requirements remain in place to this day.

Hughes was aware, however, that Pepperdine’s academics had improved at the expense of the “explicitly Christian dimension” during Banowsky’s administration (*Models* 430). In

1978, with Howard A. White as the new president, Hughes believed that Pepperdine had returned to its earlier and stronger connection with Churches of Christ. In 1982, a new mission statement included more explicit language about “Christian values,” and White began hiring and promoting more teachers who were affiliated with Churches of Christ (*Models* 431). Nevertheless, academic quality continued to be strong even as White strengthened those affiliations. For example, he also expanded several academic programs, provided much-needed updates for aging equipment, increased the number of academic scholarships available to students, and increased faculty salaries (*Models* 431). In 1982, President White explained that while a great many American educational enterprises that had begun with a religious heritage had eventually become secularized, and while other schools remained faith-based without achieving high academic quality, he envisioned a university that would continue to challenge that pattern: “Pepperdine University dares view itself as a leader in a new approach to education. The University maintains that it is possible to affirm its distinctive values and to reach for the highest academic attainments at the same time” (qtd. in Rushford 217). The challenge to maintain those competing commitments, however, continues into the present.

When David Davenport became the succeeding president of Pepperdine in 1985, he realized that the Christian mission of the university was not as widely known to outsiders as its academic reputation, mainly due to the ambiguous values-based language employed in public documents (*Models* 432-433). To resolve that disparity, he argued that, “[W]e need to become more broadly, more fully known as a Christian University” (qtd. in *Models* 433). To follow that directive, John F. Wilson, Dean of Pepperdine’s Seaver College, revised his strategic plan with a “forthright and deliberate emphasis on the Christian character of the institution” (*Models* 434). According to Gary Selby, Director of Faith and Learning at Pepperdine, Davenport’s 1990

strategic plan marked a turning point for Pepperdine in “staking out an identity as a Christian school” (Selby 18 Dec 2013). Davenport and Provost William B. Adrian subsequently began to initiate internal conversations “about the meaning of Christian higher education in a variety of settings,” including faculty seminars funded by the president’s office in 1992 and 1993 on the theme “A Christian Worldview in the Classroom: What Does it Mean?” (*Models* 433). Simultaneously, the university continued to strengthen its academic standing. Beginning in 1987, for example, scholarly activities, including publications and/or presentations at professional meetings, began to be required for tenure and promotion (*Models* 432-433).

To foster an even more explicit connection between Christian faith and academics, the Center of Faith and Learning was created in the fall of 1999, made possible through funding from the Lilly Endowment Grant for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (Selby 18 Dec. 2013). When the Center’s founding director, Richard T. Hughes, was asked how the purpose of the center differed from the traditional Church of Christ model of “education in a Christian environment,” he answered, “‘Environment’ is not enough, since ‘environment’ fails to penetrate the heart of the university. The heart of the university is the classroom. For that reason, the Center helps faculty members find ways to integrate Christian faith with classroom teaching and scholarship” (“Pepperdine’s Center for Faith and Learning”). In 2002, the Center established the annual new faculty retreat so the faculty could “explore their roles as Christian teachers and scholars” (Chen). Now in its eleventh year is described as “a transformative experience where new tenure-track faculty from across all five schools engage in a week of community building, exploration of personal and institutional vocation, and discussion of faith and learning; this retreat, which now has included a total 150 new faculty members, has truly turned the ship” (Selby 18 Dec. 2013). The Center provides no single model for integrating faith and learning;

instead, it is “committed to the proposition that the separation between our various disciplines and our faith is neither intellectually sustainable nor personally satisfying” (“Center for Faith and Learning: Welcome”). The Center has four stated goals:

- 1) To provide support for faculty as they seek to engage in cutting-edge, original scholarship and classroom teaching within a framework of Christian values and beliefs.
- 2) To provide support and assistance to students in their quest for vocational discernment, as they seek to clarify their calling from God.
- 3) To provide extra-curricular opportunities for students, faculty and staff to integrate faith and learning in both academic and non-academic settings.
- 4) To provide resources and opportunities for students to engage in practical initiatives aimed at ministry and service, social action and justice. (“Purpose”)

In the new millennium, Pepperdine has continued to face challenges to its dual commitments to strong academics and Christian mission. Andrew K. Benton, who became president of Pepperdine in 2000, was asked how he would respond to the charge that Pepperdine is not a “real” Christian college when compared to other Church of Christ schools. In reply, he eschewed any particular “formula” for a Christian college, arguing that Pepperdine is “providing a nationally recognized education for those with backgrounds in the Churches of Christ, and we are doing the same for those who come from different traditions and experiences” (Adams). In the 2007-08 academic year, a marketing study conducted at Pepperdine confirmed that a certain ambiguity exists in the perception of college both from within and without. The marketing study sought to enhance Pepperdine’s emphasis on the integration of faith and learning, which, of course, had already been the stated norm for years. The researchers’ new suggestion, however, was that Pepperdine’s integration was unique and could therefore become its “niche” and the new marketing “banner” of the institution (Selby 18 Dec. 2013). As a result of that study, the prominent website “A Place of Faith” was created using unequivocally Christian language, and significant changes were made to methods of recruiting, hiring, and strategic planning to reflect an overtly Christian mission (Selby 18 Dec. 2013). Benton’s strategic plan, “Pepperdine 2020:

Boundless Horizons,” was approved by the Board of Regents on June 14, 2011 and lists as one of its four goals to “strengthen our commitment to the faith mission of the University.” In particular, the university seeks to accomplish this goal is by “strengthen[ing] its ties to Churches of Christ by reaffirming the University's relationship to the Church, by renewing the commitment to recruit students from Churches of Christ and other Christian communions, and by hiring and mentoring staff and faculty from Churches of Christ and other Christian fellowships” (“Boundless Horizons”). According to Selby, “faith and learning has been become truly who we are for some time; it is just that only now the student recruiting and the public face has caught up with what has been the inner story of the university for several decades” (18 Dec. 2013). Perhaps the problematic “two public faces,” one for the wealthy conservative business leaders, and one for the Church of Christ constituency as identified by Hughes, may finally be merging into one consistent identity.

Today Pepperdine enrolls approximately 7,700 students in five colleges and schools: Seaver [Liberal Arts] College, which is home to the Theatre Department, the School of Law, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, the Graziadio School of Business and Management, and the School of Public Policy (Pepperdine University Homepage). Pepperdine ranks 54th in the 2013 edition of *U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges* (“Best Colleges”). Over seventy years after its founding, its mission is remarkably similar to the original vision of its founder. In its current “vision statement,” Pepperdine affirms that it will be a “preeminent, global, Christian university, known for the integration of faith and learning, whose graduates lead purposeful lives as servant-minded leaders throughout the world” (“About Pepperdine: Mission, Vision, and Affirmation”). While the tensions between strong academics and Christian

faith commitments have not disappeared, Pepperdine University intends to remain a distinctly Christian university with a strong academic reputation for the foreseeable future.

### **Ethos**

The development of Pepperdine's *vision* of the relationship between faith and learning has been explored; next, this chapter will consider its *ethos*. The ethos of Pepperdine University is visibly shaped by its original motto, "Freely ye have received; freely give," and the original narrative of the institution together with George Pepperdine's distinctive vision are both expressed and celebrated on campus. For example, Founder's Day is celebrated annually on September 21, and the full story of the University is celebrated in its fiftieth-anniversary publication, *The Crest of a Golden Wave*. Just as significantly, the university's website features a biography of each of the past presidents of Pepperdine ("Past Pepperdine Presidents"). Additionally, the biography of the current president, Andrew K. Benton, his inaugural essay, and his strategic plan all appear on the website.

Pepperdine also recognizes on its website the connection between its ethos and its academic vision, affirming that "knowledge calls, ultimately, for a life of service" ("About Pepperdine" Mission, Vision, and Affirmation"). Daily life and spiritual activities overlap; social events, official ceremonies, and business meetings begin with prayer. Faculty, staff, and administrators encourage and pray with students ("Christian Tradition"). Alongside its specifically Christian culture of tradition and community, the ethos of Pepperdine is shaped by the value placed on religious diversity: "Pepperdine's commitment to diversity stems from a Christian heritage that compels us to love justice and to treat every individual equally with respect and compassion" ("Diversity"). Pepperdine provides pastoral counseling for the entire student body through the Chaplain's office and through spiritual support available in each

residence hall, and students also have the opportunity to serve their ministerial goals through the campus Volunteer Center and other student-led ministries (“Christian Tradition”).

Pepperdine’s ethos is also reflected in its promotion of spiritual life across campus. Dr. Gary Selby, Director of Faith and Learning, works with the University Spiritual Life Committee comprised of representatives each of the five schools of Pepperdine. The purpose of the committee, according to Selby, is to implement a “university-wide vision for spiritual formation at Pepperdine” (Chen). Each school has its own particular way of integrating faith and learning and promoting spiritual life, such as sponsoring Bible studies and worship experiences, offering service and social action opportunities, and sponsoring Christian student associations (Selby 16 Dec. 2013). For example, in 2008 Pepperdine established the Nootbaar Institute for Law, Religion, and Ethics, which “allows students to explore the intersection between law and religion,” and in January 2011, Graziadio School students formed the Graziadio Christian Society “to serve as a community for business students devoted to living a Christ-filled life, preserving values in business and fostering spiritual growth through fellowship” (Chen).

Pepperdine’s ethos is also reflected in its expectations of certain moral behaviors. Undergraduate students enrolled in Seaver College must abide Pepperdine’s “Code of Conduct,” set forth in the Student Handbook. With overt Christian language, the handbook makes clear that rules and regulations are based on Christian scriptures and “in keeping with Pepperdine University’s Christian mission and its heritage in Churches of Christ (“Seaver College Student Handbook” 39). This is yet another example of Pepperdine’s overt Christian language as it now appears in all of its public documents. The other four schools have similar codes of conduct.

Pepperdine’s commitment to religious diversity is expressed through its formal campus devotional practices. Daily chapel was a requirement of all students of George Pepperdine



College in its beginning and was celebrated as the “heart of the Pepperdine spirit” (Rushford 11). Since then, the requirement has been abridged but never completely abandoned. Current programming continues to respect spiritual diversity, featuring speakers from different faith backgrounds. This commitment to religious diversity reflects the ecumenical vision of George Pepperdine and has been an important part of chapel from the beginning. Today, however, the chapel requirement has been renamed “Convocations,” and only Seaver College undergraduate students are required to attend, amounting to approximately one program each week. The purpose of the Convocation series is “to help Pepperdine students build Christian faith, affirm Christian values, and address the moral and ethical dimensions of current issues” (“Convocation Series”). Convocation options include Wednesday morning chapel, ongoing chapels and special religious events, small group discussion of religious issues, and religious mentoring groups (“Student Handbook” 7-8). Seaver College students are required to take a total of nine hours of courses in religion: The History and Religion of Israel, The History and Religion of Early Christianity, and Christianity and Culture. Additionally, all incoming freshmen are required to take a vocational exploration course which involves selected readings and essay writing on the subject of vocation. Vocation is defined as a “calling” rather than a “career;” students are encouraged to think not about their major or earning potential but rather to identify their “gifts” and “talents,” considering how they might use them “on behalf of other human beings” (“Faith and Learning: First Year”).

Yet another aspect of the Pepperdine ethos includes both the beauty and the affluence of its surrounding community. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the relocation of Pepperdine from Los Angeles to Malibu initially posed concerns to its key constituencies during the 1960’s and 1970’s, and today many still continue to believe that the location has had an adverse effect

on the ethos of the institution. Addressing this issue in an article in the *Christian Chronicle*, current president Andrew Benton said, “Our location in Malibu virtually shouts privilege, yet we are reaching out to the broad Los Angeles community.” Benton points to three recent graduates as examples: a law graduate who helped establish a justice court in Los Angeles to serve the homeless, another law graduate who now leads a charitable law clinic at the Union Rescue Mission, and a psychology graduate who offers a counseling clinic to the disadvantaged (Adams). Additionally, through the Center for Faith and Learning, the university offers a Service and Social Action Grant, available to students by application, to serve the community through faith-based initiatives (“Center for Faith and Learning: Student Programs”). While some supporters continue to criticize Pepperdine’s material affluence, the stated ethos of Pepperdine is intended to use those resources to meet the needs of the larger community in ways that mirror the benevolent spirit modeled by its founder, who, in addition to providing the financial means to establish the university, also gave generously to various charitable organizations throughout his life.

### **Christian Persons**

Now that Pepperdine’s *vision* and *ethos* have been explored, this chapter will next consider its *Christian persons*. A significant difference between Pepperdine and most other Church of Christ affiliated institutions is the intentionally diverse community of its campus. At the same time, Church of Christ affiliation is maintained through its Board of Regents, as described earlier in the chapter, and through consistent recruitment of students, faculty, and staff from within Churches of Christ (“Christian Tradition”). Additionally, the Office of Church Relations, whose mission is to “strengthen the historic spiritual ties between Pepperdine and the Churches of Christ, and to continue to build new bridges of partnership with this vibrant church

constituency,” sponsors an Annual Bible Lectureship, bringing thousands of visitors to campus each year for religiously-themed lectures, classes, and performances (“Church Relations”).

Throughout Pepperdine’s history, members of Churches of Christ have been assigned varying degrees of hiring priority. Richard T. Hughes explains the university’s continual striving for this balance: “While Pepperdine has sought to maintain a ‘critical mass’ of faculty who are members of Churches of Christ, the institution has regularly employed faculty who belong to other Christian denominations and sometimes faculty who adhere to other religions, especially Islam and Judaism” (*Models* 413). Exactly what constitutes a “critical mass” within the faculty remains unclear, however. In 2006, for example, the *Christian Chronicle* featured an article about the decline in the numbers of Seaver College faculty members associated with the Churches of Christ. When David Baird, Dean of Seaver College, was asked how large the critical mass should be, he responded, “That is an open question, but I can tell you that the percentage of the Seaver faculty who are members of Churches of Christ is going down, and as it declines, so does the strength of the school’s relationship with the Church” (Chandler). When the interviewer asked Steve Lemley, Professor of Communication and former university provost, the same question, his response was similar:

We lack many of the “constitutional” tools that other Christian universities have to make sure that they will keep their mission and purposes over the long haul. Having a significant number of people who are related to the Churches of Christ and also filling university appointments is about the only way we have of being meaningfully related to that church and being related to that church is one of the most important ingredients in preserving our Christian identity as a university. (Chandler)

According to 2012 statistics from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, approximately twenty-nine percent of the current faculty at Pepperdine are members of Churches of Christ (Chen).

In addition to faculty, Pepperdine has sought religious diversity among its students, and while it has “nurtured its relation to the Churches of Christ, it has not tried to appeal only to students of that tradition” (*Faith and Learning* 413). The desired “critical mass” of Church of Christ students, according to President Benton, is twenty-five percent of the undergraduate student body; that percentage, he believes, will continue to rise (Adams). He does suggest, however, that a religiously-diverse student body is necessary to have an influence on those members of the campus community who may not know Christ (Adams). While maintaining this balance among students and faculty is an ongoing challenge, Pepperdine has succumbed neither to Church of Christ exclusivity nor to complete secularization. With a critical mass of faculty members and students, the majority of the Board of Regents, and stipulation that the chairman of the board, chairman of the executive committee of the board, and president be members of Churches of Christ, Pepperdine has been able to maintain its unique commitments to both its Church of Christ distinctiveness and to a diverse campus community.

### **Theatre at Pepperdine University**

The theatre arts have existed at Pepperdine University from school’s earliest days. Jerry Rushford explains in the fiftieth anniversary history of Pepperdine University that “students from George Pepperdine College began to distinguish themselves in forensics, drama, and debate early in the life of the institution” (10). The list of faculty and departments that appeared in the first college bulletin published in June of 1937 (three months before George Pepperdine College opened) lists “Speech Art” under the category of “Fine Arts” with a faculty member “To Be Selected” (7). Speech and dramatic activities were listed under the heading “Student Programs and Contests”:

Student groups will provide entertainment in college programs as often as is compatible with the ideals of college life. These will consist of numbers from the Piano Department, plays from the Dramatic Club, programs from the Quartet, Glee Club, Choral Club and Orchestra; public speaking, declamatory, debating and oratorical contests from the Department of Speech Art. (12)

Starting in 1938, a “Department of Speech” began to be listed in the College Bulletin, with a Miss Black and Mr. Baxter listed as faculty members (37). Additionally, plans were announced “to provide additional faculty members and teaching facilities to offer a Dramatic Arts major in this department beginning with the year 1939-40” (37-38), and options included preparation in theatre arts or public speaking (38). The course catalogue also outlined a sequence of courses leading to a four-year degree with classes in a range of speech and dramatic arts from freshman to senior level. The catalog published in June 1939 lists majors in Dramatic Arts and Public Speaking, and Miss Black and Mr. Baxter continue to be listed as faculty members (77). Ten years later, the bulletin lists eight faculty members in the Department of Speech and Dramatic Art: Mr. Young, Mr. Long, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Motter, Mr. Broadus, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Rudy, and Mr. Grasham (161). Furthermore, the following extracurricular activities are listed: 1) Blackfriars: an organization to meet the needs of all students interested in campus plays, 2) National Collegiate Players, a National Dramatics fraternity for students interested in professional theatre, 3) Debate and Oratory Club for students interested in intermural forensics, 4) Pi Kappa Delta, a National Speech Fraternity for those interested in professional Speech, and 5) Student Speakers Bureau to assist with contacts outside the organization who need speakers and entertainment (161). This emphasis on performance in the early history of Pepperdine is significant considering the uneasy relationship of Churches of Christ with the arts as discussed in Chapter One.

For the first five years at the Malibu campus, students presented plays in the cafeteria, gymnasium, or Elkins Auditorium. Subsequently, local supporter Frances Smothers donated funds to construct a dedicated theatre facility, and ground was broken for the 450-seat Smothers Theatre on November 9, 1977. The facility opened in 1980; a few weeks later, *West Side Story* was presented there. Today the theatre is host to dozens of events each year and is considered one of the finest performance venues of its size in Los Angeles. The Helen E. Lindhurst Theatre, a flexible black box space seating fifty to one hundred people, is home to “innovative student productions,” and the Mini Theatre houses acting classes, lighting labs, and student-directed plays. Each year, the Pepperdine Center for the Arts hosts over 250 public events, such as performances by international celebrities, touring groups, and visual artists who rent Pepperdine’s facilities, as well as productions from Pepperdine’s Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts Departments, (“Fine Arts Division: Facilities”).

Because theatre faculty members did not respond to requests for interviews, what follows next regarding the Theatre Department’s mission is based on publically available information, such as the website, academic catalog, and articles. These public statements provide an important but incomplete glimpse of the department.

### **Academic Mission**

Seaver College, the university’s residential college of letters, arts, and sciences, enrolls approximately three thousand undergraduate students and offers thirty-eight majors and thirty-six minors (“About Seaver College”). The Theatre Department is part of the Fine Arts Division of Seaver College, which “offers excellent training in the disciplines of Studio Art, Art History, Music and Theatre Arts” (“Fine Arts Division”). The Seaver College website emphasizes “student-centered teaching” and claims a student-faculty ratio of thirteen to one (“About Seaver

College”). The Theatre Department offers a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts, a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Media Production, a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Music, and a Secondary Teaching Credential for teaching theatre at junior and senior high schools in California. Pepperdine enrolls approximately seventy-five theatre majors; all majors are required to audition and interview for acceptance into the program (“Fine Arts Division: Theatre”). The Theatre Department lists four Student Learning Outcomes: A student who completes a major in Theatre should be able to: 1) Demonstrate artistic self-expression grounded in analytical thinking, 2) Demonstrate proficiency in modes of communication – visual, oral, physical, and written, 3) Articulate the ways in which theatre serves as an agent of social change, and 4) Apply a code of conduct mandated by the theatre profession (“Fine Arts Division: Majors”). Each year, the Theatre Department presents four major campus productions. Since 1985, the Theatre Department has participated in the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival. Under the direction of Cathy Thomas-Grant, students participate in residency programs in London and Glasgow, followed by performances at the Festival (“Fine Arts Division: Edinburgh”). The residency program includes coursework in theatre, attendance at theatrical productions, field trips to local museums, castles, and other historical landmarks, and preparation for the Fringe Festival performances (“Fine Arts Division: Edinburgh”). In the summer of 2012, the Pepperdine Theatre Program was awarded a Scotsman's Fringe First Award for their production of *Why Do You Stand There in the Rain?* by Peter Arnott (“Fine Arts Division: Edinburgh”). Through these programs, students have opportunity to participate in productions and to take courses in theatre on campus and overseas throughout the calendar year.

## Christian Mission

The Seaver College homepage states that a commitment to Christian beliefs regarding the origin, nature, and destiny of humanity permeates the curriculum; the college's ties to the Churches of Christ call it to a serious commitment to Biblical Christianity ("Seaver Mission").

Additionally, the course catalog states the following:

This entire educational enterprise is set against the backdrop of the Christian faith. As our founder George Pepperdine stated in his inaugural address, educating a person without addressing the moral implications of decisions made makes one dangerous to society and others. We aspire to produce graduates who are passionate about how their education can be used to benefit others, and to make our world a better place for all. (*Seaver College 2013-14 Academic Catalog* 9)

Seaver College strives to offer "traditional liberal arts curriculum based on a Christian worldview" ("About Seaver College"). Exactly how the Theatre Department embodies these goals in the curriculum and in production, however, is unclear. The department website lists no objectives related to the Christian mission of Pepperdine. The theatre homepage emphasizes a holistic approach and transformative power of theatre. The site further claims that graduates leave Pepperdine with an awareness of "their purpose as theatre artists, ready to serve their communities;" moreover, the department promotes creation of "meaningful, high-caliber performances" and art that has the "power to change lives, hearts, and minds" ("Fine Arts Division: Theatre"). The website additionally states that classes are kept small, with an average class size of twelve students, reflecting its liberal arts aims.

The department's themes of relationships, transformation, and service to the community are consistent with the values-based philosophy originally identified by Hughes. Preparing students for service to the community is consistent with Pepperdine's motto, "Freely ye received; freely give." The exact nature of Theatre Department's relationship to a Christian philosophy is undefined in its public documents. It is, therefore, not possible to determine how the department



relates faith and learning, either as an *add-on* or as an *integrated* approach. Because of the Seaver College requirement, theatre majors will necessarily take the three core Religion courses and the freshman experience in vocational development that challenges students to consider their intended career as service to God and to others. There may be additional ways that the theatre department interacts with the Center of Faith and Learning. For example, the in 2012 Theatre Department has partnered with the Center for Faith and Learning to sponsor a production of *Tartuffe*, a play with a significant religious theme. In 2013, the Center for Faith and Learning sponsored another performance on campus, a one-man show featuring guest artist Tom Key in *C.S. Lewis on Stage*, which captured “the personality and fiction of the [well-known Christian] author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*” (“Center for Faith and Learning: Calendar”).

Two recent articles published February 2012 in the student newspaper, *The Graphic*, provide examples of how the often-competing aims of the academic mission and the Christian mission of Pepperdine manifest in the Theatre Department. A particular student’s selection of the play *After the End* by Dennis Kelly for her student-directed senior project was rejected by theatre faculty both for its profanity and nudity. Professor Brad Griffin explains:

Looking very specifically at the play, I realized, this is edgy, this is psychological, and it has some strong language in it, but it also contained several instances of nudity: male nudity and female nudity, and it has some very strong sexual content in it [...]. For anything that we stage here, on the main stage or in the mini-theatre, one line that we as a faculty are not prepared to cross in any situation, is nudity on stage, and anything that is going to put our student performers into a position that would make them extremely vulnerable. (McDonald)

The student director explained to *The Graphic* that she had no intention of employing nudity in her production of the play and expressed regret that the department did not trust her to handle the mature subject matter and to “mask [the nudity] in a creative way” (McDonald). Additionally, she expressed concern about a larger issue: there is no “written code as to what is appropriate or

not” and therefore no way for students to know what the boundaries are (McDonald). She argues that it is “necessary to investigate the darker parts of human nature [by] seeing it performed on stage” (McDonald).

In another article in *The Graphic*, student writer Zachary Taylor suggests that the censorship issue raised by this incident is not an isolated event, and he argues for freedom of expression for all of the arts at Pepperdine. Given the Theatre Department’s record of tackling difficult material in plays such as *Rabbit Hole* by David-Lindsey Abaire, Taylor concludes that the department is willing to produce plays with violence and harsh language but not plays with explicit sexuality. Similarly, he points to restrictions placed on art students drawing live nudes. These restrictions on the exploration of all aspects of humanity do not apply to the sciences, he argues, as pre-med students study fully nude cadavers. He concludes that Pepperdine is not consistent in the application of its mission:

Pepperdine is an academic institution whose credo is “the truth has nothing to fear from investigation.” It should do this in all its realms of academia, not just with the sciences but with the arts as well. By creating an atmosphere of censorship in plays and the visual arts, we are telling students that certain stories are worth telling and others should be hidden from view. (Taylor)

Though these sources present a brief account of a complex issue, the incident reveals that the competing forces between Christian mission and academic rigor affect the Theatre Department and continue to pose difficult questions to those in the arts.

While these public sources of information provide an overview of the Pepperdine Theatre Department, many questions remain unanswered. Significantly, Pepperdine University emphasized theatre performance from the beginning, evidenced by swift implementation of a four-degree in Speech and Dramatic Arts, and necessary faculty additions over time to meet the demands of a growing program. It is unclear what, if any, obstacles the department has overcome

through the years, but at present, the department appears to have strong academic major with year-round performance opportunities and adequate facilities. The department lists learning outcomes and communicates its vision of a liberal education of the whole person through its various degree plans, course offerings, production season, and a summer overseas learning intensive. Less clear is the relationship between classroom instruction, laboratory plays and senior projects, formal campus productions, and the visiting artists. Additionally, though the Theatre Department claims to offer individual attention through small class sizes, with seventy-five majors and four main shows per academic year, questions remain regarding the extent to which opportunities for involvement in production are available to each individual student.

Most significantly, based on the information available in public documents, the Theatre Department's model of faith and learning is not defined. One may deduce that the institutional *vision* outlined on the university, Seaver College, and Fine Arts Division pages apply to the Theatre, but since the Theatre website does not articulate its particular interpretation of Pepperdine's Christian mission, this is mere speculation. Because of Seaver College's requirement, theatre majors will necessarily take the three core Religion courses and the freshman experience in vocational development that challenges students to consider their intended career as a service to God and to others. Whether this kind of integration occurs in theatre coursework or in production is not known. The recent controversy related to a student's senior project demonstrates that the department has strict guidelines regarding nudity and some sexual content, though the guidelines do not appear to be as strict regarding language and other challenging content. Additionally, as of 2012, the Theatre Department's guidelines were not clear to the students. There is some level of concern about censorship and freedom of expression in the arts at Pepperdine; just how pervasive this concern is not known. At least one student has

called into question the academic integrity of the department in relation to the University's mission to explore truth in all of its facets. A response from the Theatre Department to these concerns is not publically available.

The Theatre Department's *ethos* appears to be consistent with that of the university: to transform lives and serve community. The overseas educational experience fits within the university's mission to offer a "global" education. Finally, the influence of *Christian persons* on the department is not known because religious demographics about the faculty and students are not publically available. Because of many remaining questions about the vision, ethos, and Christian persons, it cannot be determined whether the Theatre Department embodies the integrated model that has been developing at Pepperdine or if it adheres to an add-on model. Nevertheless, the components of the theatre program as described provide some valuable points of comparison to theatre at Lipscomb University and York College.

## **CHAPTER 6: YORK COLLEGE**

### **Overview**

York College was founded in York, Nebraska, on August 26, 1890, by the United Brethren Church, but control of the campus property was eventually transferred to the city of York. On March 20, 1956, York College came under the control and management of a Board of Trustees composed of members of Churches of Christ. In 1970, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) awarded accreditation to York College; in 1989, the NCA gave its approval for York to grant a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in Biblical Studies and Religious Studies; in 1994, York College received accreditation as a senior college. More recent developments include “York College Online,” implemented in 2010 to reach non-traditional students, and in 2011, York began offering its first graduate degree, a Master of Education in Instruction and Curriculum Development designed to meet the needs of full-time educators (“History of York College”). The college has grown from four major buildings in 1956 to a campus of seventeen buildings serving nearly five hundred students today.

### **Vision**

Although York was not affiliated with Churches of Christ prior to 1956, that earlier period pertains to York’s present identity as explained by Dale R. Larsen in his dissertation, *A History of York College*. Larsen, who was involved in the acquisition of York by Churches of Christ and served as its longest-tenured president, explains that “[t]he basic philosophy of York College had its roots deeply imbedded in the objectives of its owner and sponsor, the United Brethren Church” (36). To understand these roots, the complicated beginnings of both the city of York and York College should be clarified. The city of York was founded in 1869. By September of 1871, a few small buildings had sprung up when C. S. Harrison, commissioned by

the B & M Railroad to build a colony in York, Nebraska, visited for the first time. After that visit, Harrison told the Land Commissioner of the B & M that he “must have a nucleus around which to build” (qtd. in Larsen 7). Specifically, Harrison wanted that nucleus to be a college. With both a school and a church, he hoped to draw “a better class of people than other towns secured [with] saloons and gambling dens” (Larsen 7). To that end, the city of York provided for forty acres of land, without cost, to be conveyed to the Congregational Church to build a school (Larsen 7). After selling off thirty acres to raise funds for construction, the first building was constructed on the remaining ten-acre plot (Larsen 8). Plans changed somewhat unexpectedly, however, because some York citizens were concerned that the location was too close to that of another institution, Doane College, which had been founded in 1872 in Crete, Nebraska, only forty miles away. (Larsen 8). Once the first college building was completed, the structure, which had been intended for a college, was used instead for public school and Congregational Church worship services (Larsen 8).

Meanwhile, another group, the United Brethren in Christ, became interested in founding a liberal arts college in Nebraska to educate their young followers and to facilitate church growth in the “rapidly expanding West” (Larsen 36). They initially considered the York campus, but they purchased Gibbon Collegiate Institute in Gibbon, Nebraska instead (Larsen 8). In 1879, a third group, the Methodist Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska, were also interested in operating a college in York. In January of 1880, this Methodist institution, which became known as York College, opened, offering “customary degrees” through a Literary College, a College of Music and Fine Arts, and a Medical College (Larsen 12). The Methodist college lasted a mere eight years, closing in 1888 (Larsen 9, 11). Between the years 1888 and 1890, the citizens of York and various religious groups attempted to re-establish a Christian college but failed. They remained,

nevertheless, committed to their original hope; in the words of Larsen, “The people of York, whose very city developed around the vision of a church-related school, did not give up their college without a struggle” (13). The unsuccessful efforts of the United Brethren in Christ and the Methodists served to give a boost to the local citizens’ efforts to establish York College.

More lasting success came when the city of York, which still maintained control of the property, approached the United Brethren Church, which had recently established a church in the city of York, about creating a college there as well (Larsen 16). The leaders of the United Brethren Church accepted the invitation, and York College was incorporated in August of 1890, thus securing its future in name if not necessarily in affiliation (Larsen 20). On November 16, 1946, the Evangelical Church merged with the United Brethren Church, and thereafter, the Evangelical United Brethren Church operated York College. The first catalog, published in 1890, indicates that students were required to attend chapel every day as well as a class in systematic Bible study three days a week. Additionally, they were encouraged to attend weekly church services, practice individual Bible study, and participate in missionary outreach (Larsen 38). The first catalog likewise emphasized the high moral standards required of students. Religion at York was “strictly non-sectarian and earnestly Christian” (qtd. in Larsen 39). The standard curriculum, as described in the 1894 catalog, consisted of a “Classical Course,” a “Scientific Course,” and a “Normal Course” (Larsen 42-44). The catalog of 1899 explained York’s distinctly Christian perspective towards liberal arts education, reflecting the belief that the “best education is Christian”:

It looks to the needs of the whole man and seeks the development of the physical, mental, and moral powers in due proportion. Good Christian character is accounted a matter of prime importance and all diligence is employed to build up the same. No sectarian principles, however, are urged upon the student. The design is to afford all opportunity of securing a liberal education under the most pleasant and healthful moral influences. (Larsen 40)

This plainly non-sectarian stance of York College continued until 1954.

When York College opened, it had nine faculty members and forty-four students; by the 1952-53 academic year, it had twenty-four faculty members, all but four of whom held graduate degrees, and 200 students (Larsen 74, 79). For its first two years, York College was administered out of rented space in downtown York; Old Main, a facility for administrative offices, classrooms, and an auditorium, was ready for use starting in the 1892-93 academic year. Over the years, enrollment varied, reaching over eight hundred in 1918 but, as indicated above, declining to 200 in 1954 (Larsen 81). By 1950, York offered a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Science, and a Bachelor of Science in Education (Larsen 50). Facilities were added as the student body grew. Most of the construction funds came from the citizens of York. Then, on January 3, 1951, a fire destroyed the college's administration and multi-purpose building. This event marked the end of the era of York College as it existed under the supervision of Evangelical United Brethren Church. After the fire, community leaders immediately began a campaign to raise the necessary \$300,000 to rebuild. Soon, however, disagreements regarding the terms of the title to the real estate of York College caused division between the city of York and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Then, the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged with another affiliated school, Westmar College in LeMars, Iowa, and ceased operations at York College in the summer of 1954 (Larsen 92). York College remained closed with its property under the jurisdiction of the city of York until 1956, when it resumed operation under Church of Christ leadership.

This history of York College prior to the beginning of its relationship with Churches of Christ is significant in that those formative years shaped the identities of the college as well as its sponsoring city in several ways. The strong alliance between York College and its community



was forged out of their nearly simultaneous formation. York, Nebraska, was intentionally built around an institution of higher learning, and York College depended on the community for its moral and material sustenance. Sixty years after the establishment of the new college, the level of formal education among citizens of York ranked among the highest in the nation. The alliance proved to be a direct benefit of the college to the community, with “[t]he sidewalks in York’s business and residential districts [...] literally lined with former students of York College” (Larsen 88, 93). Similarly, York College relied for its operations on steady financial support from the community. The original plans for the city of York included land dedicated for the purpose of higher education, and, through the years, its citizens contributed time, money, and resources that were crucial to the success of York College. Many community leaders who donated money to the college also served as members of the Board of Trustees, including C. A. McCloud and Elijah A. Levitt, local bank owners and businessmen, both of whom served as Board Chairmen as well (Larsen 90).

The citizens of York valued liberal education, but, more significantly, they placed an even higher priority on religious education. Specifically, they built their community around a church-related college in order to safeguard its citizens from immoral influences. High moral standards were emphasized in the first catalog in 1890:

A healthy public sentiment has been cultivated and maintained by which the morals of the community have been promoted to an exceptional degree [...]. Persons who wish to send their boys to school can send them here in full confidence that they will encounter the least peril to the morals to be met with anywhere in the state. (qtd. in Larsen 18)

The religious emphasis of both the community and College provided the foundation of York College’s vision for Christian education. Significantly, the actual denomination that sponsored their college was not important to the citizens of the city. They began by cooperating with the Congregational Church, but when those plans did not materialize, they persisted until an

agreement was reached with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The following description of York College as chronicled in *The Old Settler's History of York County Nebraska and Individual Biographies* (1913) explains the citizens' viewpoint:

It [York College] must not be accounted a sectarian institution. It does not stand for any special creed. Several different denominations are always represented on the Faculty and Board of Trustees. But the institution is earnestly Christian. It stands for the Bible and employs all diligence to upbuild good character, and no less than one thousand students have within its halls been led to enter the Christian life. (53)

An ecumenical spirit prevailed at York College until it closed in 1954, when control of the school passed to the city of York. When members of Churches of Christ approached the city leaders regarding the possibility of acquiring the York campus, they were welcomed simply as another religious organization that would keep alive the city's hope for a church-related college.

In May of 1954, two Church of Christ preachers, Herschel L. Dyer of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Dale R. Larsen of Omaha, learned about the probable closing of York College. After quickly viewing the campus, Larsen contacted the York Chamber of Commerce to inquire whether the City had interest in "some other qualified group taking over operation" (Larsen 96, 98). Prior to that time, there had been no interest among members of Churches of Christ to establish a college in that area of the country. Churches of Christ were "few and small" in Nebraska; as of February of 1954, a total membership of 923 in 37 congregations was reported (Larsen 96). Dyer, Larsen, and city leaders met in June 1954 and formed an investigating committee, which soon confirmed that York College could legally be "conveyed without cost" to a new sponsor because the Evangelical United Brethren Church had "withdrawn their support" (Larsen 100). York community leaders agreed to launch a fundraising campaign in the amount of \$50,000, while Dyer and Larsen began recruiting support from members of Churches of Christ in other states, forming a preliminary board that eventually became the Board of Trustees for a new York

College (Larsen 100-101). Financial support came from Church of Christ members who believed that a small school in an underdeveloped area would lead to church growth, as had been the case for each previously established Church of Christ college (Larsen 121). Financial support, therefore, came from both non-Church of Christ members of the York community and Church of Christ members throughout the Midwest.

On May 24, 1955, the new Board of Trustees assumed “permanent status,” and Harvey Childress, one of the initial board members, was elected to serve as the first president of York College, effective August 31, 1955 (Larsen 103). After having been closed for two years, York reopened on September 1, 1956, with a new administration and twenty faculty members (Larsen 104, 155). Legal transfer of the property occurred on March 20, 1956; the York Chamber of Commerce praised the work of the new board and promised its support (Larsen 103). The Chamber held an honorary dinner, and E. A. Levitt, a prominent business leader in the community, on behalf of the citizens of York, spoke confidently of the new partnership: “Many other groups wanted the school plant, but after learning to know these gentlemen of the church of Christ, we became convinced they were the ones we wanted to come to York” (qtd. in Larsen 104). Thus, the transfer of governance from the city of York to the new administration of York College was legally formalized by the city and Church of Christ members.

At the time York reopened, it was the only Church of Christ college serving the North Central states (Larsen 96). Although the Evangelical United Brethren Church had been granted legal rights to some property and assets of York College for relocation to Westmar College, the campus facilities retained included Hulitt and Middlebrook dormitories, three off-campus houses, the library building (minus the books), the gymnasium, ten apartments, three large residences, and most of the equipment (Larsen 140). Improvements to the facilities began

immediately, with special attention given to the library, offices, and science classrooms (Larsen 140). The first chapel service marked the formal opening of the college, and former Board Chairman E. A. Levitt recalled the events leading to the reopening, acknowledging Christianity for the “growth and development of the finest schools in the world” (Larsen 170). A total of eighty-nine students enrolled during the first year (“A History of York”).

Soon, however, the ecumenical vision of the community leaders and supporters of the “old” York College philosophy came into open opposition with the narrowly sectarian vision of its new leadership. The new Articles of Incorporation of York College stipulated that the institution had to remain under the “management, direction, and control” of a Board of Trustees composed of members of Churches of Christ “in good standing, as determined by [...] local congregation[s]” (qtd. in Larsen 115). All faculty and administrative personnel were also required to be “active members” of the Church of Christ (Larsen 122). Michael Westerfield, employed from 1974-1995 in numerous positions at York, including Administrative Vice President, explains that “this puzzled leaders in the community who truly saw the college as York's college.” Tensions soon arose between members of the York community and the new leadership of York College over this exclusivity that had not existed under control of the Evangelical United Brethren, whose management of the college had been marked by an interdenominational spirit of Christian cooperation, a spirit that community members expected to continue. However, the mainstream Church of Christ position in the 1950’s was that those other “denominations” were not Christian because their members had not been immersed as adults for the forgiveness of sins (i.e., “born again”), which, in traditionalist Church of Christ doctrine, is the only way someone can be saved. Dr. Clark Roush, current Endowed Chair for the Performing Arts and the Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities at York College, explains that the

faculty and administration of the newly-opened York were conservative members of Churches of Christ, from southern Church of Christ colleges, who had recently settled in York. These members of the new administration and faculty behaved as if the members of the community, who viewed themselves as devout Christians, were unbelievers seriously in need of conversion (Roush). This kind of narrow sectarianism alienated the members of the community who had, for more than sixty years, invested in York College as a broadly defined Christian college whose mission was similar, if not identical, to that of their city.

Conciliatory efforts to proactively embrace the York community have been attempted over the years through “Advisory Boards” made up of community leaders. The first Advisory Board, numbering as many as 130 men, was implemented in September of 1957 and has continued in this way throughout the years. According to Larsen, the purpose of this Advisory Board was to “counsel and assist the trustees and support the school” (146). However, as time went on, members of the community came to understand that the Advisory Board possessed no real power, as evidenced by one community leader’s rejoinder that “The College is fooling nobody; we know this board has no influence” (qtd. in Westerfield). The community of York came to understand that this new group of administrators viewed them as alien to their vision of a Christian education.

This tension soon created confusion over institutional identity as well as potential financial problems. Support from wealthy citizens began to shrink, leaving the leadership of the college with the formidable task of operating in a geographical area of the country already with too few Church of Christ members to support it. According to one long-term administrator, York College came to envision itself as a “‘Mission School in the North,’ making it clear that it was a ‘Church of Christ’ school designed to keep ‘Church of Christ’ youth in the North”

(Westerfield). By excluding local leadership and focusing on Church of Christ outreach exclusively, York College came to be perceived by those in the surrounding area more as a “church school” than an academic institution (Westerfield). York’s struggles were further complicated by Church of Christ families who sent their children either to state schools or to Church of Christ colleges in the South with stronger academic reputations (Westerfield). Not only did York College face recruiting difficulties within its regular constituency, but the fundraising strategy that conceptualized the college primarily as a “Christian mission” for members of Churches of Christ could not be practically sustained (Westerfield). Furthermore, the Board stipulation that funds for support of the college could not be solicited or received from church treasuries but only from “church members as individuals” (Larsen 124) posed yet another funding problem. This policy, of course, fits within the general Church of Christ understanding of the necessary separation between local congregations and the college to prevent colleges from coming under centralized Church control (or vice versa), but without a sufficiently large Church of Christ population in York, Nebraska, fundraising became particularly difficult.

York’s conception of itself as a mission school directly affected the role of faith and learning in the hiring of new faculty. The administration gave preference to conservative members of the Church of Christ and limited the influence of non-members to make sure the school maintained its specific Christian identity. For example, Dr. Clark Roush, Chair for the Performing Arts and the Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities, describes his own interview process in 1986, which required him to submit position papers about his beliefs regarding significant Church of Christ defining issues, such as a cappella music and the role of women in formal worship, yet he was not required to submit similar papers about his teaching

philosophy nor was he asked to demonstrate his teaching competency (Roush). In those days, the theological position papers served as a “litmus test” to certify that York maintained like-minded faculty, and candidates’ religious beliefs were emphasized more than their teaching abilities. In this way, doctrinal consensus was given priority over academic competence.

Identity confusion (i.e. “mission school” or four-year liberal arts college) and financial challenges, according to Westerfield, frustrated some of the new administration’s academic goals. York reopened in 1956 initially with a two-year course of study while plans were in place for a third year to be added during the second year of operation (Larsen 125). During the 1958-59 academic year, however, circumstances compelled the administration of York to reevaluate its goals. Unable to attract students to its projected four-year-degree plans, York reverted to a junior college with the intention of becoming a fully accredited Christian liberal arts college as soon as it became possible financially (Larsen 123, 125). The *York College Policy and Procedure Manual* (2013) explains that the administration of 1958-59 realized that “the rapid expansion to a four year college had been premature and, in some respects, unwise” (9). Beginning in September 1959, York began operating as a junior college with no immediate plan to reinstate a four-year program (Larsen 125). The focus at York then shifted to creating an academically sound junior college aimed at preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions (*York College Policy and Procedure Manual*). Many years would pass before York College would realize its plans for a four-year course of study.

In 1961, the college considered seeking regional accreditation through the North Central Association (NCA), but a preliminary self-study revealed “too many weaknesses;” thus, the administration postponed application (*York College Policy and Procedure Manual*). Instead, they sought and attained membership in the American Association of Junior Colleges. Five years

later, after addressing their self-identified weaknesses, York College applied to the NCA for accreditation as a junior college and was admitted as a Candidate for membership (*York College Policy and Procedure Manual*). During the next two academic years, the faculty prepared a self-study, which was presented to the NCA in 1969. In 1970, York College was granted accreditation and membership in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, becoming the first junior college in Nebraska to receive that distinction (“History of York”). Finally, in 1989, North Central Association granted its approval for York College to award the Bachelor of Arts Degree with majors in Biblical Studies and Religious Studies, and in 1994, York was granted full accreditation as a senior college (“History of York”). After nearly forty years, York College achieved the status of a four-year liberal arts college that the 1956 Board of Trustees had envisioned.

While the institution strengthened its academic programs, however, the strained relationship between York College and the city of York continued on for many years. Today, fortunately, the college and the city once again enjoy a strong mutually beneficial alliance. Roush explains that when he began as a music professor at York in 1986, most of the administration was still opposed to connections with the community. Over the years, however, several faculty members became active in the community through participation in volunteer and civic organizations (Roush). Slowly, old wounds began to heal: “It is has turned around 180 degrees from where it was 28 years ago,” Roush explains. “Only those members of York who have been around for a long time remember these tensions.” A substantive change on the part of the administration came under the leadership of Wayne Baker (1996-2009), who made a priority of creating strong relationships with the community. John Baker, Chair of the Communication Department and Theatre Director, explains that when he was interviewed in



1997, President Baker advised him that community involvement was expected of faculty (Baker interview). Current President Steve Eckman commended his predecessor for the way he “connected us with this community as we never were before” (“About Steve Eckman”). Ekman, who took office in 2009, said, “We need to have more faces from this college than the president known and active in this community [...]. The time is right for there to be many people from campus who are active in every facet of this town” (“About Steve Eckman”). Presently, faculty members are expected to become involved in the community, and this expectation is communicated to new faculty members (Roush).

In recent years, York has also become more intent on screening potential faculty members for their strengths in the classroom and their philosophy regarding faith and learning rather than their opinions regarding specific doctrinal positions. Moreover, as part of the current interview process, candidates must demonstrate their teaching capabilities, and, in interviews with the president, candidates are asked to articulate their philosophy of integrating faith and learning. Moreover, when candidates are hired, they are informed that they are expected to continue such thinking (Roush). In the new millennium, faith and learning initiatives have occurred with frequency at York. For example, several faculty members have attended faith and learning seminars hosted by Pepperdine University. Roush believes that today York conceives of Christian education more in a “God-honoring way” and less in a narrowly Church of Christ way (Roush). While all faculty members must be members of Churches of Christ, the former emphasis on fine points of conservative belief has shifted to an emphasis on integration of faith and learning, both in the classroom and in evidence of cooperation and mutual respect between college and the larger community.

Like many institutions of higher education, both public and private, York College faced financial difficulties stemming from the national economic downturn of 2007. During the 2007-08 academic year, for instance, York was among 114 private nonprofit degree-granting colleges deemed by the U.S. Education Department to be in fragile financial condition. Eckman explained that the college was nine million dollars in debt, due chiefly to the construction of two new residence halls. He tried to frame the problem in positive terms in his 2009 response to the *Chronicle*: “The residence halls give the college more room to house students, but it takes time to increase enrollment to fill the new dormitories” (Ross, B. “College Finances”), stating that York College was on firmer financial footing now than it had been in some time. Currently, York is in its fifth consecutive year “in the black,” including a substantially increased endowment.

Since no official strategic plan has been published since Eckman became president in January 2009, establishing a definitive statement is not possible regarding the relationship between faith and learning or a vision for the future, but the administrative team intends for the current Higher Learning Commission self-study to serve as the starting point to develop an updated strategic plan (Roush). In a 2009 interview published on the college website, Eckman explained that a major challenge facing him as president is that many constituencies continue to think of York as a junior college: “[We are] not a junior college any more. That’s a big shift for many alumni and friends. We are offering an education that has ramifications – we’re not just preparing someone to go to school somewhere else” (“About Steve Eckman”). York became a senior college nearly twenty years ago; Eckman’s concerns would seem to indicate that York is still trying to work out a clear definition of its overall vision. A comprehensive mission

statement is, therefore, awaiting the results of the self-study and subsequent articulation of a formal strategic plan.

Currently York offers twenty-five liberal arts majors leading to a BA degree and eight pre-professional BA and BS degrees. Online offerings include a Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Criminal Justice, some General Education courses, and a Master of Education in Curriculum Instruction. According to *U.S News*, the student-to-faculty ratio is fourteen to one (“Best Colleges: York”). The Mission of York College is “to transform lives through Christ-centered education and to equip students for lifelong service to God, family and society” (“Mission Statement”). Based on this mission, York supports four core values: to *transform*, *educate*, *equip*, and *serve*. York’s pledge to *transform* refers to “God’s transformational work in the lives of people” through “curricular and co-curricular programs and experiences intended to lead the entire community to a positive expression of spiritual values.” Second, York’s pledge to *educate* means “academic discovery is a God-honoring endeavor characterized by the pursuit of truth and inquiry within the context of intellectual disciplines.” Third, York pledges to *equip* each student “to apply critical thinking and knowledge integration skills, and to evaluate changing circumstances in the context of faith.” Finally, York pledges that it will *serve* because “service is the means by which people of God live out their faith” (“Mission Statement”).

York College lists the following tactical goals, each corresponding to one of the four affirmations: Students will 1) “intentionally be brought face to face with Jesus and his teachings, thereby encouraging a transformation into his likeness (transform); 2) attain an institutional standard for written and oral communication that supports success in a variety of settings (educate); 3) be introduced to the integration of knowledge through the traditions consistent with

an ongoing engagement in service opportunities (equip); and 4) participate in organizations and activities that directly relate to their chosen academic discipline and career goals (serve)” (“Mission Statement”). This mission and these corresponding values and affirmations are York’s current statements outlining its vision.

## **Ethos**

York’s *vision* has been examined as it evolved from affiliation with the United Brethren to the Churches of Christ; at this point the college’s *ethos* will be examined. As its history has demonstrated, the matter of moral standards has been important to the citizens of York and to York College from the time of their mutual establishment. Early historical accounts of the city of York confirm this:

It was the noble purpose of its founders to establish under United Brethren auspices an institution of higher learning, where the young people of Nebraska and the West could secure a thorough education at the minimum expense of time and money and under the most pleasant and healthful surroundings and the best moral and religious influences. (*Old Settler’s History* 53)

Moral standards derived from a conservative Church of Christ interpretation of the New Testament are certainly the foundation of York’s ethos. As Larsen observed in 1966, York continued to maintain a “conservative policy” regarding “student conduct and moral standards,” that is, by prohibiting profanity and the use of alcohol by students and prohibiting tobacco use in any form for boarding students (124). These rules continue to this day, as the *York College Student Handbook 2013-14* states. York enforces strictly its prohibition of alcohol (*Student Handbook* 21) and tobacco both on campus and other college property and at all college-sponsored activities, including sporting events (*Student Handbook* 23-24). Everyone on the York campus is required to dress according to specific guidelines for “Christian appropriateness” (*Student Handbook* 21). The Handbook explains further that its “philosophy of discipline” is to

promote a “way of life that is intended to uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ, and reflect our mission to transform lives through Christ-centered education” (37). Infractions are met with varying levels of consequences, ranging from warnings, to fines, even to expulsion. York College explains that this philosophy is based on a “loving disciplinary response, balanced by justice and mercy [...] with the goal of redemption of individuals and relationships” (37). Furthermore, “[t]he College endeavors to have its discipline firm, reasonable, and sympathetic” (124). These rules coincide with the moral guidelines of the original York College.

In addition to the standards of moral behavior, the ethos of York is embodied in its service ministries, campus ministry, daily chapel, and residential life. One of the first policies instituted by the Board of Trustees was for all students to attend daily chapel and enroll in a Bible class every semester (Larsen 122). All full-time students are required to attend chapel; students who exceed the maximum allowable absences incur consequences ranging from monetary fines, restrictions on participation in college-sponsored organizations and activities, forfeiture of scholarships, and possible expulsion (*Student Handbook* 9-10). Similarly, the *Faculty Policy and Procedure Manual* lists participation in Chapel as the first of many duties expected of faculty members as well: “As examples to students in attendance and attitude toward Chapel, regular and consistent participation is expected of all full-time faculty members” (*Faculty Policies and Procedures* 36). Daily chapel attendance for the entire campus community is the principal feature of York’s ethos in practice.

York’s ethos is also embodied in its service ministries. According to its website, “[f]rom the first days of reopening, the college has had a strong focus in Christian mission work demonstrated by ongoing outreach by individuals, informal groups and official college sponsored programs” (“History of York College”). In January 1957, a group of female faculty members and

faculty wives formed “Y Women,” later renamed “Helping Hands,” to conduct service projects, one of which was establishing a restaurant off-campus for York students (Larsen 165). Another service program was the Master's Apprentice Program, which operated from the 1960s through 2005 (“History of York College”). More recently, York has partnered with *Let's Start Talking* Ministries to provide outreach to non-Christians around the globe through English language instruction (“History of York College”). Similarly, York’s ethos is embodied in its campus ministry, whose mission is “to draw students closer to Jesus Christ by offering opportunities to grow in their faith” (“Campus Life”). The campus minister leads a team of student volunteers in planning spiritual life programs across the campus, including separate weekly services for devotion and communion. The Campus Ministry office also encourages “student-to-student ministry” (“Campus Life”).

Because York College is primarily a residential school, most of its students live in campus housing. Residential life seeks to support the college’s vision that education involves the development of the whole person and is an important aspect of the co-curriculum where students grow socially and spiritually, as well as academically (“Residence Life”). In fact, all full-time students are required to live on campus unless they meet certain criteria and receive prior approval from the office of Student Development (*Student Handbook* 29). Moreover, residential students must abide by campus residence rules, including curfew and room check-out procedures (*Student Handbook* 34). Rules governing dormitory living include guidelines for room decoration. For example, “posters that sexually exploit, promote racism, or degrade men or women in any form” and any decoration that supports tobacco products or alcoholic beverages are prohibited (*Student Handbook* 32). Students must also abide by rules concerning sexual activity: “Spending the night with a member of the opposite sex and/or sexual immorality,

premarital, extramarital or homosexual” are all prohibited (*Student Handbook* 39). These codes of conduct are public expressions of the college’s ethos relative to creating and maintaining a traditional Christian environment.

York’s ethos is also rooted in the way it celebrates its Church of Christ heritage through emphasis on a cappella singing. The college website states that Concert Choir is the college’s “flagship” for both outreach to the community and for the “strength of the student experience” (“A History of York College”). The practice of a cappella singing, which is a characteristic feature of Churches of Christ schools, has “proven to be a major influence on the college’s tradition of daily chapel” (“History of York College”). Conclusively, York’s ethos is reflected in its selection of Philippians 4:8 as the representative statement of its identity: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (“Mission Statement”). Through daily Chapel, service, ministry, and moral expectations, York’s ethos is a sturdy material component of its identity as a Christian college.

### **Christian Persons**

Now that the *vision* and *ethos* of York College have been examined, the *Christian persons* affiliated with York will be discussed. As explained in the Vision section, prior to 1954, York’s supporters included members of both churches that formerly operated York College as well as the community leaders of the city of York who were committed to the college. After the college became affiliated with Churches of Christ, those who influenced the development of York’s identity most were members of Churches of Christ who moved to York, Nebraska as a result of their employment with the college. As explained earlier, all members of the Board of Trustees and all full-time faculty members need to be faithful members of Churches of Christ

(*Faculty Policy and Procedures* 24). Church membership is not required of students, but students are told to expect that the institution's "central focus on faith" will have a "profound influence on every aspect of the campus" ("Church Relations"). York defines Churches of Christ followers as those who are "committed to taking the Bible as the only guide and creed for believers" and whose defining characteristics include "congregational autonomy, believer's baptism, a weekly communion to remember Jesus' death, a cappella music in worship, and a strong commitment to the study of God's word" ("Church Relations"). The Church of Christ identity of York College has thus remained intact through the exclusive Church of Christ membership requirement which began in 1956.

Nevertheless, York College has faced challenges to sustaining a satisfactory population of Church of Christ affiliated students. In July 2010, an article in the *Christian Chronicle* pointed out the declining numbers of Church of Christ students attending Church of Christ colleges and universities over the prior ten years. The article reported that at York College, the majority of freshmen had come from outside Churches of Christ for the past two years. In response, Eckman pointed to a "lack of emphasis on Christian education among the families within churches [of Christ]. It is no longer assumed that these kids will choose a Christian education" (Ross, B. "Freshman Enrollment"). Furthermore, according to Roush, Chair for the Performing Arts and the Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities, membership in Churches of Christ is declining nationwide, thus making it even more challenging to recruit students from Church of Christ families. The high cost of tuition, so necessary because Church of Christ congregations do not sufficiently support their affiliated college, also creates recruiting difficulties. Logically, targets for recruiting are primarily students from Churches of Christ, largely because the enrollment staff is less experienced in recruiting among other religious groups (Roush). Currently, about



sixty percent of York's student body declares membership in Churches of Christ, though Roush explains that the actual percentage may be higher since some students who have grown up in Churches of Christ do not claim Church of Christ allegiance. This situation, Roush says, is because the church is "so fractured" that students are not sure what it means to be a member of Churches of Christ or because they do not agree with what the Church of Christ represents. Of further interest is the recent establishment of a more progressive Church of Christ congregation in the city of York, which is another factor indicative of the changes occurring in Churches of Christ across the country.

In summary, York College is operated by a Board of Trustees, all of whom are members of Churches of Christ; a full-time faculty who are members of Churches of Christ; and a student body with a decreasing majority of Church of Christ members. The current "identity crisis" within Churches of Christ as a whole as explained in Chapter One is likely an influence in York's decision to liberalize its initial narrowly sectarian spirit. It is uncertain what direction York College is heading, at least according to its associated Christian persons. Nevertheless, its new identity, if that is what it will be, may become clearer when Eckman's strategic plan is publically released and the NCA recommendations (February 2014) are known.

### **Theatre at York College**

In addition to tracing the history of York College, Dale Larsen's dissertation *A History of York College* also examines the theatre activities directly proceeding and during the early years of York's association with Churches of Christ. According to Larsen, the 1950 York Catalog, under the Evangelical United Brethren, listed nine courses in theatre: Beginning Dramatic Interpretation; Intermediate Dramatic Interpretation; Advanced Dramatic Interpretation; Stage Art and Play Production; Story Telling; Acting Rehearsal and Performance; Dramatic

Interpretation; Private Lessons; and Modern Drama (57). For the 1955-56 academic year, that is, the first year of Church of Christ association, the catalog listed two classes: Story Telling and Beginning Dramatic Interpretation (Larsen 128), a reduction possibly due to York's status as a two-year college when it reopened. Two years later, offerings grew to include Fundamentals of Oral Interpretation, Oral Interpretation of Literature, Play Production, and Television Workshop (Larsen 133). A drama club was organized in November 1956 and included thirteen students (Larsen 161). Childress Hall, named in honor of York's first president, was completed in March 1958, and was used as a multipurpose auditorium, including daily chapel, until 1964, when it became home to the York College Dramatic Department (141). York's *Policy and Procedural Manual* states that following York's NCA approval as a junior college in 1970, co-curricular programs, including those in "dramatics," began to grow (9).

For several years thereafter, the college offered two theatrical productions each academic year: one in the fall, typically a musical, and one in the spring. Larry Brown, theatre director at York from 1982-1986, said that during his tenure a drama team, "Soul Concern," performed original sketches at local youth events and churches. This group also served the college's recruiting aims, not in an overt way but as a presence in the surrounding communities that drew the attention of high school students to York (Brown). Throughout the '70's, '80's and '90's, no theatre director stayed employed at York for more than a few years, and no major additions to the theatre program occurred until John Baker, current Chair of the Department of Communication and Speech, came to York College in 1997. At the time of his arrival, York offered a Bachelor's in Communication with two course offerings in theatre: Introduction to Theatre and a one-hour course offering academic credit for performing or set construction. Although courses in Acting, Technical Theatre, and Directing were listed in the catalog, Baker

discovered that they had not been offered for some time (Baker Interview). When the academic dean granted permission to revive those classes, they were well received by the student body, and Baker subsequently added new classes to them. Soon thereafter, Baker proposed that a “theatre emphasis” be added to the Communication major, as well as a theatre minor, by including some course work from the Music and English Departments, programs that were quickly approved because the administration was looking for ways to grow. To meet the needs of students who were interested in careers in professional theatre or graduate school, Baker says, he added “on demand” upper division guided-study courses in theatre history and advanced directing. One-hour courses in more specialized areas such costume and make-up were added on a three-year rotation. To the fall and spring productions, Baker soon added a Traveling Children’s Theatre troupe and a Student-Directed One-Act production.

Presently, Gurganus Hall, originally the church building constructed when Churches of Christ assumed leadership of York, is home to the theatre department. A stage has been built over the former baptistry, and the basement provides the dressing areas and green room, spaces less than ideal for the needs of the department since students must exit the basement through doors to the outside of the building in order to get to the backstage area. Also, since Gurganus Hall is shared with the Music Department, choir rehearsal must relocate during production times. These problems will hopefully be resolved as plans are currently underway for constructing a new performing arts facility along with plans to convert Gurganus Hall into a scene shop. These newly constructed and renovated areas are intended to be for the exclusive use of the music and theatre programs. Ground is expected to be broken in the summer of 2014. With these new facilities to support their program, significant growth of the theatre department is within reach.

## Academic Mission

York College currently offers a degree in Communication with a Theatre Emphasis. The Communication and Speech Department states that it

- 1) Nurtures each student to better appreciate and understand expressive communication;
- 2) Prepares students for confident and competent entry into their chosen fields, whether that be graduate school or their initial professional experience;
- 3) Provides students with a balance of communication theory and practical application;
- 4) Expresses passion about exploring the body-mind-spirit connection and about how faith and learning are integrated in such a way as to prepare students for life – not just their professions;
- 5) Offers a variety of opportunities to be involved [in] multiple performance opportunities through YC Theatre, and the YC Forensics Team as well as other departmental venues. (“Communications and Speech”)

The Theatre Program’s goals are to provide students with a “Christian atmosphere,” to learn and practice all aspects of theatre, to offer both the campus and surrounding community with “quality theatrical experiences,” and to educate both students and audiences by addressing relevant issues (Baker E-mail). According to the theatre program’s brochure, York subscribes to the “philosophy of a well-rounded liberal arts education,” and courses in the major emphasize the “interdependence of all aspects of production” (*York College Department of Communication and Theatre*). The theatre major curriculum seeks to prepare students for careers in theatre education, acting, directing, and technical theatre and for graduate school (*York College Department of Communication and Theatre*). According to Baker, the Communication Department fulfills the academic mission of York College through classroom instruction in theatre and through the presentation of theatrical productions: “Students and community members are exposed to a variety of theatrical genres and styles which add to their cultural experience” (Baker E-mail). The play selection process gives consideration both to “quality literature that challenges and educates” the students and to what “provides the audience with an educational experience.” York College employs one full-time faculty member in theatre, John Baker; faculty members from the

Music and English departments teach three of the required courses for the theatre major. Currently, York has eight students who are theatre majors and four who are theatre minors. Most of the students who choose theatre minors do not aspire to some type of career in theatre; rather, they choose it as an enjoyable course of study that complements their majors (Baker Interview). Each year, between forty-five and sixty students participate in theatrical productions, auditions for which are open to the entire student body.

The York College theatre webpage states that students “learn all aspects of production including performance, costuming and prop management, make-up, set design, set construction, stage crew, lighting, sound, and ticketing” (“Theatre Emphasis”). York students have opportunities to perform both on and off campus. Off-campus opportunities include York’s Children’s Theatre and forensics team. Also, students have directed productions for some local high schools, and the York College Traveling Children’s Theatre performs approximately sixteen to eighteen shows per academic year in local elementary schools and area libraries (Baker E-mail). The college website recognizes the theatre program’s “outreach to patrons, churches, area schools and young audiences” as one of its greatest strengths (“History of York College”). Baker indicates that the department is “quite connected with the surrounding community,” particularly to the Yorkshire Playhouse (York’s community theatre) and to local schools; students serve the community Playhouse as actors, designers, stage managers, interns, and student directors. Baker has served as a member of Yorkshire Playhouse Board of Directors for the past sixteen years and regularly directs, designs, performs, and constructs sets for them. Additionally, for the past thirteen years he has operated a summer program, Yorkshire Playhouse Children’s Theatre, which he also founded. Finally, Baker serves as an adjudicator for area one-act festivals and as an advisor to local high schools by critiquing their one-act plays in preparation for competitions

(Baker E-mail). Undoubtedly, the theatre program has significant involvement in the surrounding community.

Likewise, the performing arts faculty members agree that the Theatre Department is well supported by the campus community, by both Church of Christ congregations in York, and by the city of York. Clark Roush, Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities, explains that scholarships to students in the performing arts are well supported by the administration (Roush). The commitment to construct a new facility for exclusive use of the performing arts and the fact that an anonymous donor has recently contributed two million dollars towards its construction (Roush) are further evidence of administrative and community support for the performing arts. Local Church of Christ congregations support the theatre program at York by advertising their shows in church bulletins and by attending theatrical productions; approximately one-quarter of the audiences at theatrical productions consist of these church members (Baker E-mail). Another one-quarter to one-third of the audience consists of community members from York who are not directly connected with the college or the church. “Arts belong to the campus, yes,” Roush said, “but they must belong to the community.” Consequently, this mutually-supportive relationship between York College theatre and the nearby community has become an essential component of its academic mission.

### **Christian Mission**

The first goal of the Theatre Department as explained by Baker is “to provide students with a Christian atmosphere” in which to study and practice the art of theatre (E-mail). Providing a Christian environment in which to grow, Baker argued, is an important part of the development of young Christian artists: “Students have to wrestle with things in a safe environment, and they need to talk through issues with a professor or with each other” (Interview). Because students are

likely to find themselves working in non-Christian environments after they graduate, the goal of the department is to help students develop the skills to succeed in these situations. Devotional activities are part of this Christian environment as actors “come together as a family” to pray before rehearsals and performances. Relationships are also important in this environment, both student-to-student and professor-to-student. Baker explained that he keeps a watchful eye on his actors, noting how their work in the theatre affects them personally. Young artists are asked to play intense roles; frequently, Baker explains, they need help to process the powerful emotions that emerge. Finally, Baker explained, he discourages egotistical behavior in the actors since it is not appropriate for a Christian environment. Clearly, the Theatre Department engages proactively in creating a distinctly Christian environment for the students.

Another goal listed by both the Theatre Department and the Division of Arts and Humanities is integrating the arts and Christian faith. The performing arts at York encourage students to “express passion about exploring the body-mind-spirit connection and about how faith and learning are integrated in such a way as to prepare students for life – not just their professions.” Roush explained that an essential component of a Christian education in the performing arts is to help students learn “what to do with their passions. “You have to claim your dark side,” Roush said, “admit that it is there, and explore what kind of person you might be if you give it freedom.” Ignoring this “dark side” is not only counterproductive to artistic expression but counter to spiritual development because, if it is ignored and suppressed, it has the potential to overwhelm a person when least expected. What makes the approach to this “exploration of the passions” uniquely Christian is that students learn that their emotions do not own them. Instead, students are empowered to “give their passions to Jesus” (Roush). Drawing clear distinctions between life and art, students are free to explore challenging content in

performance with the understanding that the world of the play is not real life and that “they are playing a character” (Roush). The aesthetic philosophy of the Division of Arts and Humanities is that “rehearsing and performing are more than life-enriching, they are life-changing” (“Performing Arts”). Chair of Communication and Theatre John Baker and Division Chair Clark Roush take seriously the mission of York College to “transform” its students’ lives. While students understand that the characters they portray “are not them[selves],” people much like those characters exist in the “real world” (Roush). Four years of “getting inside the skin” of all kinds of people transforms theatre students: “Our majors are inclusive of people who are different. It changes how they minister to people; they are better people, more sensitive and caring like Jesus asks them to be” (Roush). Similarly, Baker explained that a script is a way to learn about the world and how other people think. Theatre, he says, is “a safe way” to learn about non-Christian worldviews. Finally, Roush explained that theatre students are encouraged to do their best work through diligence in rehearsal and performance to honor God who, for the salvation of the world, sent the “very best” in his son Jesus Christ (Roush). Both Baker and Roush envision theatre as serving both the liberal arts mission of educating the whole person and the Christian mission of transforming lives for Christ.

While the Theatre Department has a logical basis for exploring the darker sides of humanity, it nevertheless sets parameters to guide the selection of materials for performance. Scripts with strong language, plays that promote controversial social issues such as homosexuality, or plays with nudity are not selected for production at York, and potentially offensive language is modified (Baker E-mail). The Department does not necessarily present Christian plays, but it chooses plays, according to Baker, that deal with serious issues which “need to be talked about and that are not always comfortable to Christians,” such as abuse,



mental illness, and cancer: “In this respect we provide thought for Christians as they view the shows that are being performed” (Interview). Recent plays that exemplify this philosophy include *Wit*, *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Anatomy of Grey*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and *The Crucible*. Through such thoughtful play selections, the department includes audience members as well in the integrated educational experience at York.

Despite the care with which selections are made, plays presented at York draw frequent criticism from audiences due to content. The campus community, Baker explains, is generally supportive, expressing their concerns privately or not attending a production if they are aware of what they may consider potentially offensive content. The “public” audiences, on the other hand, are not as diplomatic; often their displeasure is expressed through letters to the president, dean, and division chair. Many times, administrators respond to such complaints themselves, thus protecting the arts faculty from undue criticism. For example, in 2001 the department produced *Steel Magnolias*. Though the language was “cleaned up,” one complaint sent to the president stated that the writer’s children would not attend York College now unless the theatre director was dismissed. Wayne Baker, then president of York, defended the Theatre Department’s production (Baker Interview). Both Roush and Baker are familiar with the expectations of their audiences, and while they recognize that complaints can occur regardless of the production, they are careful to take such criticisms into consideration. These tensions are, in fact, a direct result of the dual commitments of York to liberal studies in theatre and to its Christian mission.

The Performing Arts Division has developed a calculated approach to balance these two commitments through two different types of performances: one type emphasizes academic aims and the other appeals to the Church of Christ constituency. The Music Department achieves this balance with their Concert Choir performing sacred music a cappella in fall concerts and on tour

to Church of Christ congregations while performing non-a cappella works on campus for the annual spring concert. For the sake of academic freedom, integrity, and student learning, years ago Roush promoted the need for musical performances with instrumental accompaniment and justified the practice on the basis that it is “a concert, not a worship service” (Roush). The annual spring accompanied concert is now a respected aspect of York’s Performing Arts program. Similarly, the Theatre Department makes selections to serve York’s two aims. A “crowd-pleasing” musical or comedy is selected for the fall production as part of the Homecoming celebration. Interestingly, this production seems to draw the most public criticism (Baker E-mail). The annual spring production, which draws fewer alumni and conservative church members, features more serious works (e.g. *The Crucible*, *Wit*, etc.). Additionally, student directors who participate in the Emerging Director One-Acts are given more flexibility for the sake of academic preparation. By allowing students some latitude in making directing choices, the department follows the philosophy that “if something [inappropriate] sneaks its way in,” it can become a valuable “teaching moment” necessary to a liberal arts education (Roush). In addition to campus productions, more freedom to explore controversial subjects is granted to students who participate in the forensics program in off-campus competitions (Roush). Assessing which kind of audience can be expected for each performance allows the performing arts faculty members to make informed decisions about which of the two missions (academic or Christian) it hopes to emphasize.

An analysis of the above information, which includes public statements from the college’s websites, historical materials, and interviews with college personnel, leads to several conclusions. The York College theatre program contains aspects of both the *add-on* model, whereby learning takes place in a Christian environment, and an *integrated* model, which

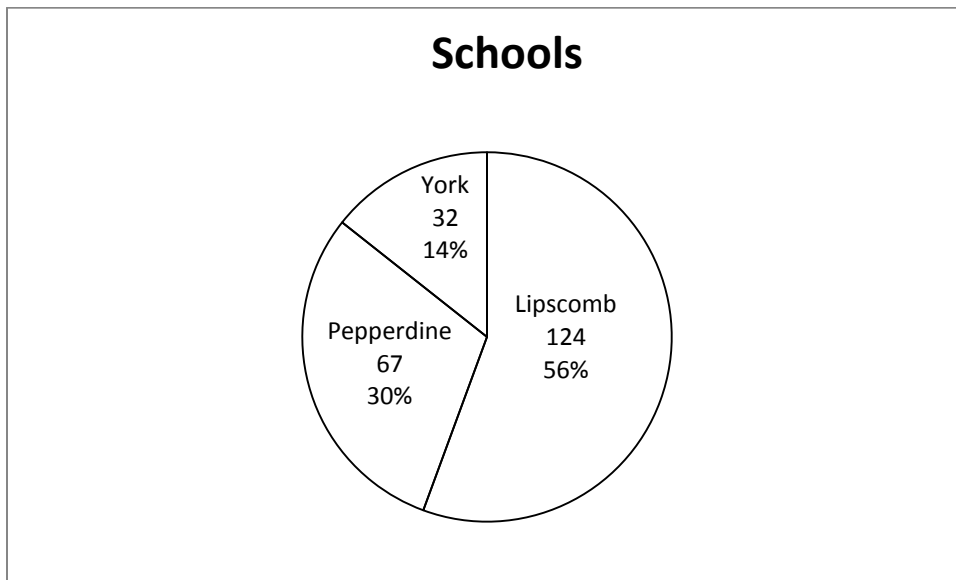
involves active reflection about the connections between theatre and Christian faith. As typical of the add-on model, the theatre program is characterized by a strong Christian *ethos* as evidenced by the devotional components, close mentoring relationships with faculty, and exacting moral codes that govern play selections and script modifications. Furthermore, the strong community relationships demonstrated by the department's outreach activities are consistent with York's recently-emerged community ethos. Nonetheless, York College maintains a strong Christian aesthetic philosophy shared by both Professors Roush and Baker, an approach that helps students to make meaningful connections between their faith and their work in the theatre. Furthermore, the Performing Arts Division is overseen by committed *Christian persons* who belong to the progressive Church of Christ congregation in the city of York. The *vision* of the Theatre Department is articulated in its learning goals, though this vision is implemented more noticeably in the rehearsal process than it is in course curricula or course learning outcomes. Furthermore, the scope of this *vision* is carefully monitored so as to conform to audience expectations. This careful monitoring of the moral content of artistic productions is consistent with Churches of Christ heritage and their as yet underdeveloped aesthetic philosophy described in Chapter One. By designating times and places for further exploration of the human plight, the Theatre Department at York has found practical ways to come to terms with the moral restrictions placed on their public performances. Despite these challenges, however, the arts programs at York have earned the support of the college administration, church members, and the greater York community.

## CHAPTER 7: SURVEY RESULTS

### Sample Characteristics

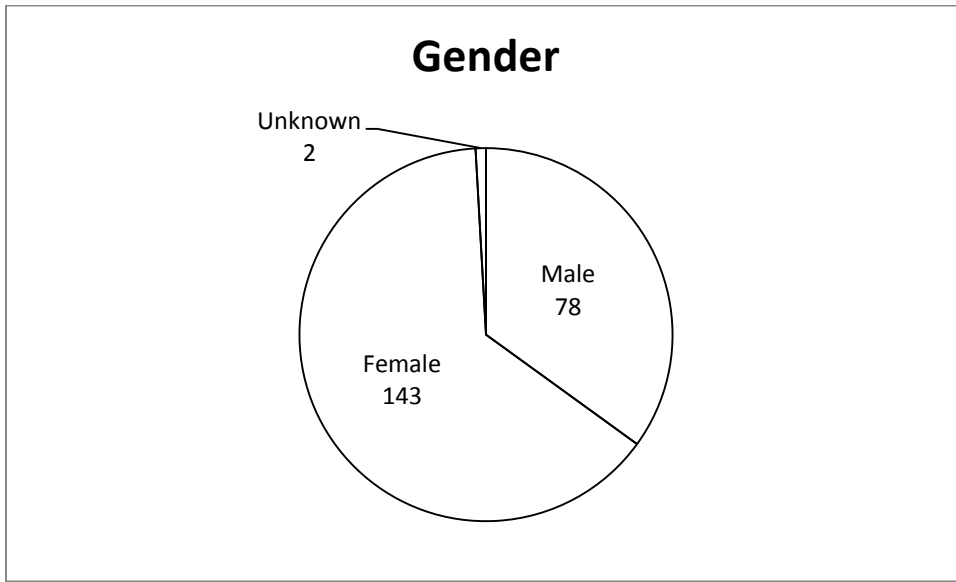
Survey data were collected between September 12, 2013, and January 21, 2014. A total of 223 respondents participated in the survey – 124 from Lipscomb University, 67 from Pepperdine University, and 32 from York College (see fig. 1).

**Figure 1 Schools**

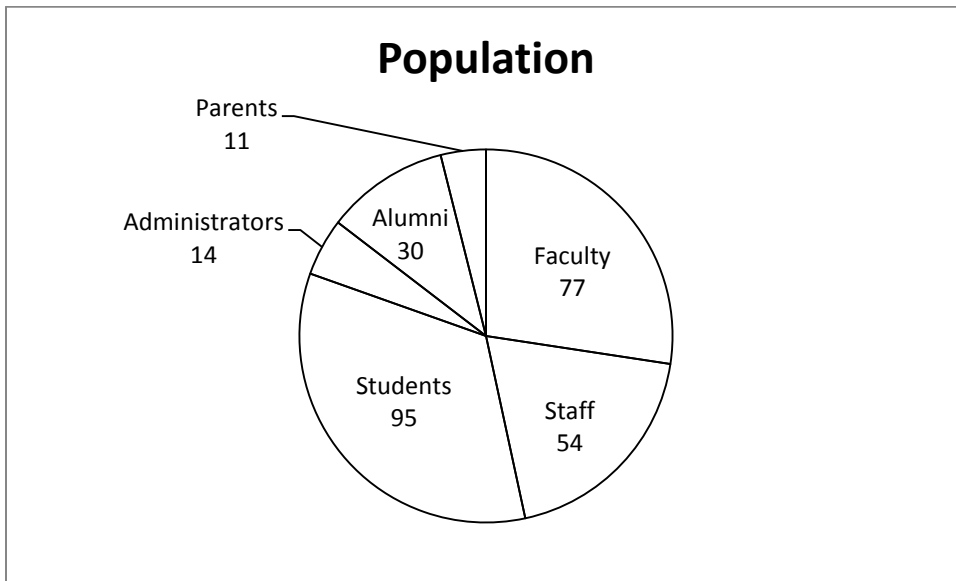


Of those respondents, 78 identified themselves as male, 143 as female, and 2 did not indicate gender (see fig. 2). Respondents were asked to select *all* that apply from the following categories; therefore, the sum of the respondents in each category (281) exceeds the number of participants (223), which consisted of 77 faculty, 54 staff, 95 students, 14 administrators, 30 alumni, and 11 parents (see fig. 3).

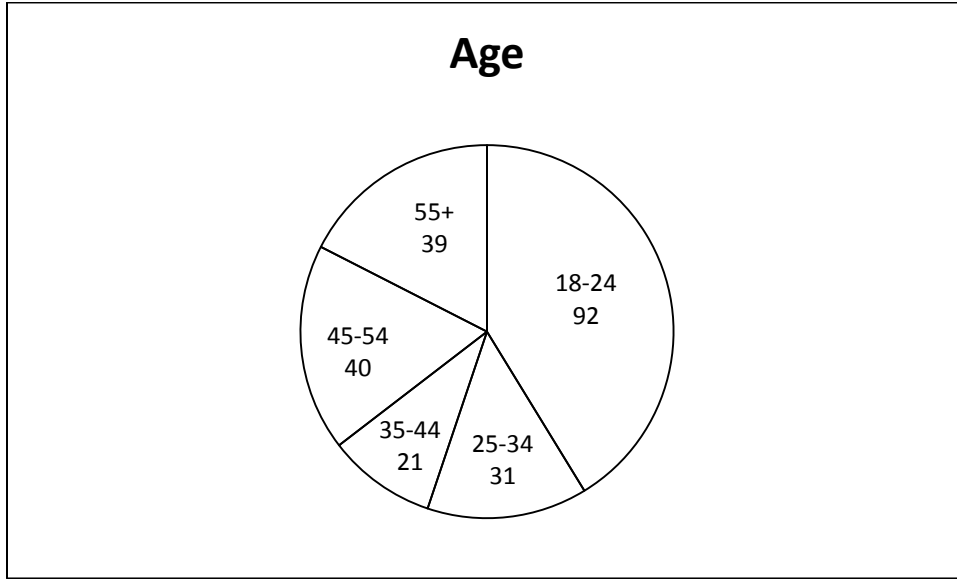
**Figure 2 Gender**



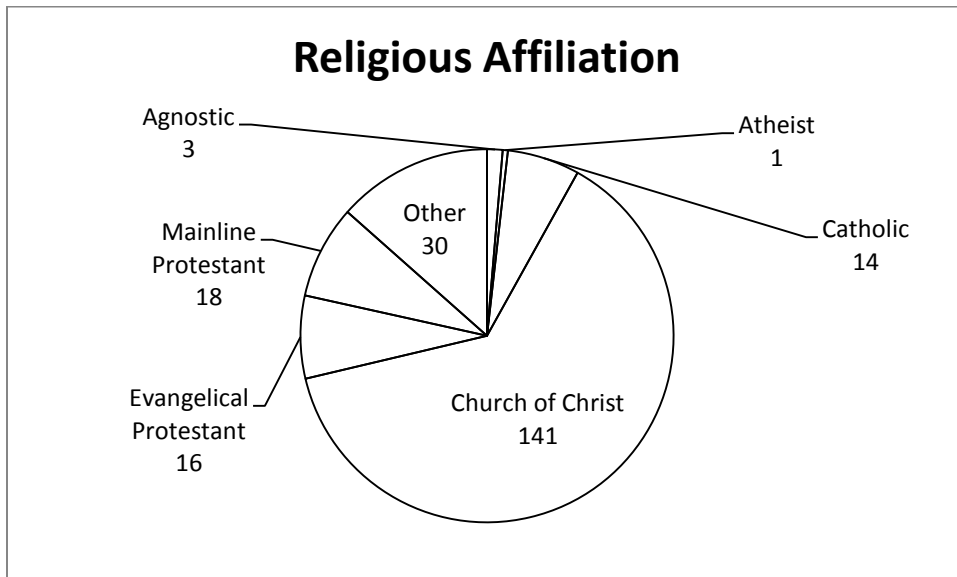
**Figure 3 Population**



Respondents were asked to indicate their age: 92 were 18-24 years old, 31 were 25-34 years old, 21 were 35-44 years old, 40 were 45-54 years old, and 39 were 55 years of age or older (see fig. 4).

**Figure 4 Age**

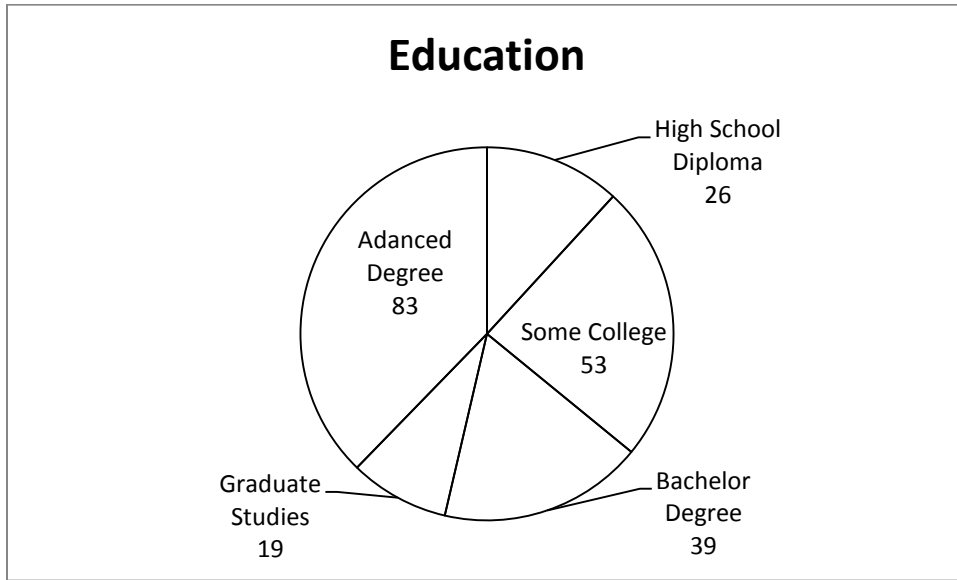
Respondents were asked to select their religious affiliation: 3 respondents selected Agnostic, 1 selected Atheist, 14 selected Catholic, 141 selected Church of Christ, 16 selected Evangelical Protestant Mainline, 18 selected Protestant, and 30 selected Other (see fig. 5).

**Figure 5 Religious Affiliation**

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education: 26 had a high school diploma, 53 had some college, 39 had a bachelor's degree, 19 had some graduate studies, and 83

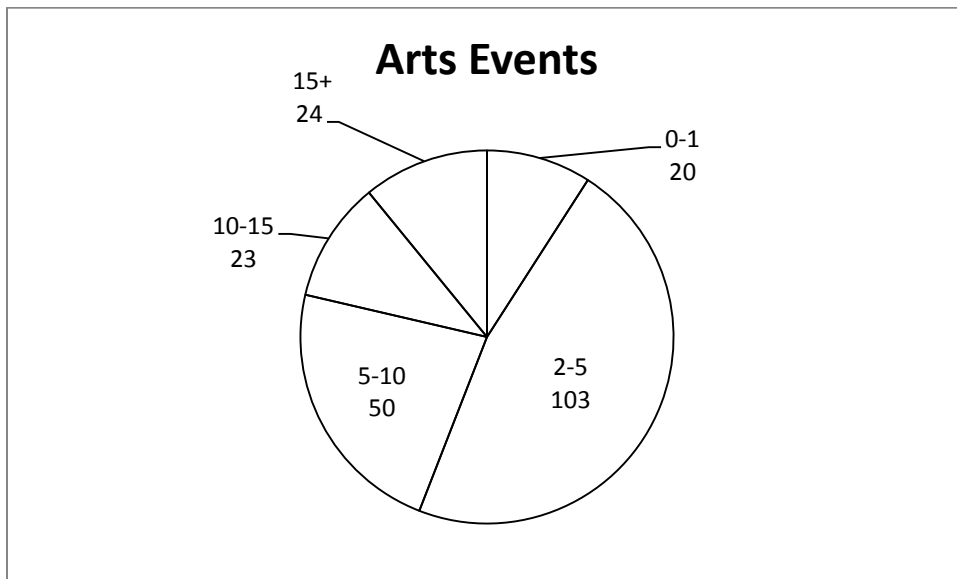
had advanced degrees. Of those who had received undergraduate or graduate degrees, 82 said their degrees were from the arts, and 59 from the sciences (see fig. 6).

**Figure 6 Education**



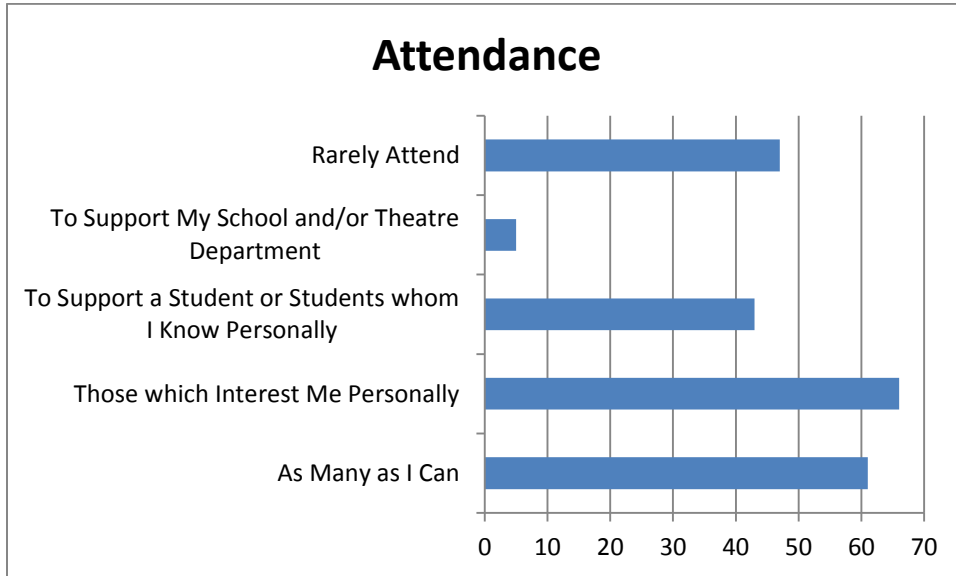
Respondents were asked to indicate how often they attend artistic activities per year: 20 people attended 0-1; 103 attended 2-5; 50 attended 5-10; 23 attended 10-15; and 24 attended 15 or more (see fig 7).

**Figure 7 Arts Events**



Respondents were asked how often they attend campus theatrical productions: 61 said they go to as many as they can; 66 go to only those productions that interest them; 43 to support a student they know personally; 5 go to support the school and/or theatre department; and 47 rarely attend college theatre productions.

**Figure 8 Attendance**



Significant differences were found among the schools on the following categorical demographic identifiers – identifiers for which a number refers to a distinct class rather than numerical value – described below:

- Religion: Respondents from Lipscomb and York were predominately affiliated with the Church of Christ. The sample at Pepperdine was far more religiously diverse; the Pepperdine population was relatively evenly distributed among Church of Christ, Catholic, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, and Other. At York, 25 of the 32 indicated Church of Christ affiliation; at Lipscomb, 98 of the 124 respondents indicated Church of Christ affiliation ( $p = .009$ ).



- Campus plays: York's attendance campus productions differ significantly from Lipscomb and Pepperdine ( $p = .004$ ). See table 1 for the differences among schools.

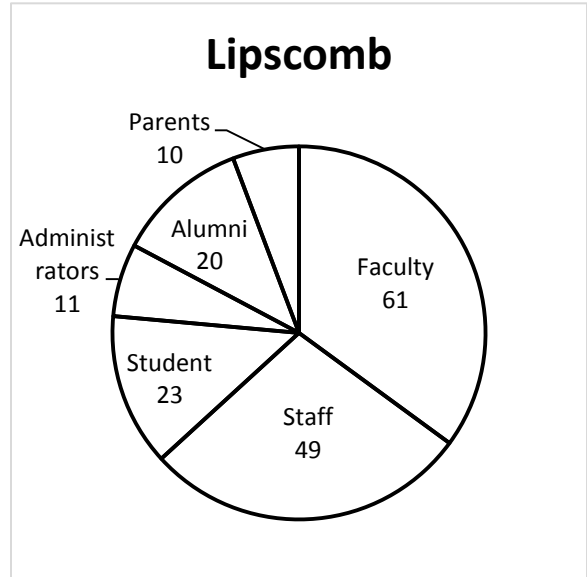
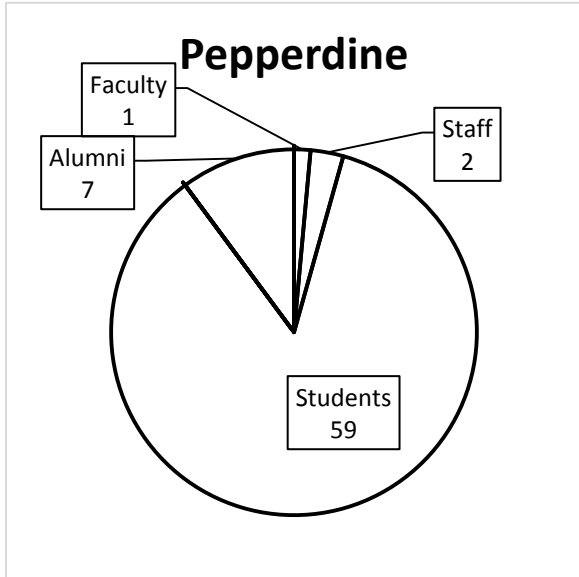
**Table 1 Attendance at campus productions**

<b>School</b>	<b>As Many</b>	<b>Interest Me</b>	<b>To Support Students</b>	<b>To Support School/ Theatre</b>	<b>Rarely Attend</b>
Lipscomb	25	44	21	4	30
Pepperdine	9	21	20	0	16
York	27	1	2	1	1

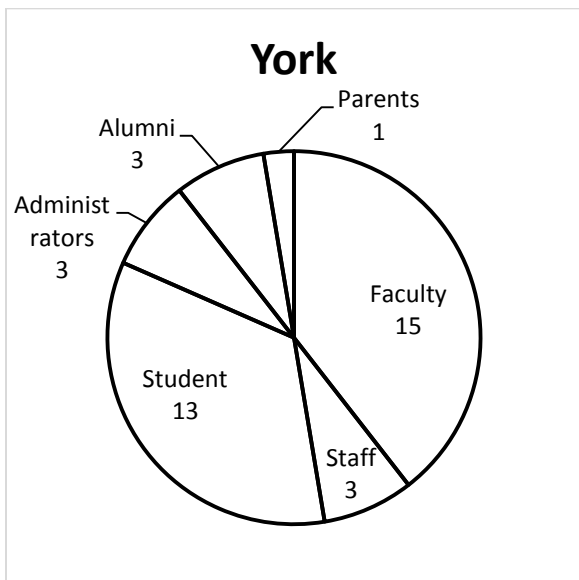
- Significant differences were found among respondents' roles at their respective schools. See figs. 9, 10, and 11 for the differences among the schools.

**Figure 9 Pepperdine**

**Figure 10 Lipscomb**



**Figure 11 York**



### Quantitative Analysis: ANOVA

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical method used to analyze score data in order to discover if differences exist between groups or measured variables. This way, responses from each school to each item on the questionnaire can be compared, and significant differences among the schools can be discovered.

#### *Demographics*

Significant differences were found among the schools on the following ordinal demographic identifiers – identifiers for which ranking numbers correspond to numerical ranges – described below (see table 2):

- Age: Respondents from Pepperdine were significantly younger than respondents from York and Lipscomb ( $F = 44.00, p < .001$ ).
- Education: Pepperdine had significantly less education than Lipscomb and York ( $F = 46.79, p = < .001$ ).
- Arts Events: Lipscomb attended significantly fewer artistic activities than York and Pepperdine ( $F = 5.71, p = .004$ ).

**Table 2: Mean values for demographic ordinal variables**

Demographic	Lipscomb	York	Pepperdine	ANOVA	Sig
Age*	3.19	2.78	1.29	44.00	<.001
Education Level**	3.90	3.69	2.06	46.79	<.001
Arts Events***	2.41	3.04	2.87	5.71	.004
*1=age 18-24, 2=age 25-24, 3=age 35-44, 4=age 45-54, and 5=age 55 +					
**1 = high school diploma, 2 = some college, 3= bachelor's degree, 4= graduate studies, 5 = advanced degree					
***1 = 0-1, 2 = 2-5, 3 = 5-10, 4 =10-15, 5 = 15+					

*Ranking Items*

## Caveat

The survey generator for this study, managed by Google, could not “force” answers, which affected some responses to the ranking questions. Four respondents to the survey (three from York, one from Lipscomb), instead of ranking *all* the items in order of preference 1-5, ranked *each* item with a numerical value of between 1 and 5. Three of these four respondents rated each individual item with a numerical value between 1 and 5, and one of these respondents rated one item from each of the three ranking questions with a 1 (most important), not assigning a numerical values to the rest of the items. When this ranking “error” was discovered, the ranking questions were changed to clarify precisely how respondents were to complete the ranking. Once the questions were clarified on the survey, all subsequent respondents ranked the items in importance in numerical order 1-5. The answers from these four respondents were included in the statistical analysis.

*Ranking (continued)*

1) Respondents from across the schools ranked “the purpose of theatre at your institution” in the following order of importance (1 = Most Important; 5 = Least Important). See Table 3 for a comparison of the ranking among the schools.

- 1) “As professional training for theatre majors”
- 2) “a component of education in the humanities”
- 3) “For entertainment and enjoyment”
- 4) “An extracurricular activity”
- 5) “For evangelism and promulgation of Christian principles”

The following significant differences were found among the schools:

- “An extracurricular activity.” Pepperdine respondents rated this item as significantly more important than Lipscomb and York ( $F = 6.50, p = .002$ ).
- “A component of education in the arts and humanities.” Pepperdine ranked this item significantly less important than Lipscomb and York ( $F = 10.92, p < .001$ ).
- “For entertainment and enjoyment.” Pepperdine rated this item significantly less important than Lipscomb and York ( $F = 7.47, p = .001$ ).

**Table 3: Ranking question 1: Breakdown of the mean scores**

Item	Lipscomb	York	Pepperdine	Combined
An extracurricular activity	3.58	3.50	2.91	3.67
A component of education in the humanities	2.22	1.94	3.00	2.41
As professional training for theatre majors	2.01	1.94	2.40	2.12
For evangelism and promulgation of Christian principles	3.81	3.71	3.49	3.70
For entertainment and enjoyment	2.83	2.91	2.16	2.65

2) Respondents from across the schools ranked “What makes your school a Christian school” in the following order of importance (1 = Most Important; 5 = Least Important). See Table 4 for a comparison of the ranking among the schools.

- 1) “Christian viewpoints are integral to classroom learning”
- 2) “Faculty and staff model Christ-like behaviors to students”
- 3) “The institution is operated by persons of faith”
- 4) “There are multiple devotional and spiritual activities for students”
- 5) “The campus community is expected to follow certain rules for moral behavior”

The following significant differences were found among the schools:

- “There are multiple devotional and spiritual activities for students.” Pepperdine rated this item significantly higher than Lipscomb and York ( $F = 11.06, p < .001$ ).
- “The campus community is expected to follow certain rules for moral behavior.” Pepperdine rated this item significantly higher than Lipscomb ( $F = 8.01, p < .001$ ).
- “Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students.” Lipscomb rated this item significantly higher than Pepperdine ( $F = 3.54, p = .030$ ).
- “Christian viewpoints are integral to classroom learning.” Lipscomb rated this item significantly higher than Pepperdine ( $F = 3.28, p = .039$ ).

**Table 4: Ranking question 2: Breakdown of the mean scores**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Lipscomb</b>	<b>York</b>	<b>Pepperdine</b>	<b>Combined</b>
The institution is operated by persons of faith.	2.79	2.65	2.45	2.67
There are multiple devotional and spiritual activities for students.	3.35	3.19	2.40	3.04
The campus community is expected to follow certain rules concerning moral behavior.	3.76	3.31	2.85	3.42
Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students.	2.13	2.27	2.61	2.37
Classroom viewpoints are an integral part of classroom learning.	2.15	2.34	2.67	2.34

3) Respondents from across the schools ranked “What is the difference between any given academic course at your institution and the equivalent at a secular institution?” in the following order of importance (1 = Most Important; 5 = Least Important). See Table 5 for a comparison of the ranking among the schools.

- 1) “Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith.”
- 2) “Professors care about their students.”
- 3) “There is a prayer or scripture reading before class.”

- 4) “Course content would exclude those topics or persons which are offensive to Christian principles.”
- 5) “There really is no difference between academic courses at my institution and a secular university.”

The following significant difference was found among the schools:

- “Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith.”  
Lipscomb rated this item significantly higher than both Pepperdine and York ( $F = 9.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 5: Ranking question 3: Breakdown of the mean scores**

Item	Lipscomb	York	Pepperdine	Combined
Professors care about their students.	1.99	1.81	1.94	1.95
There is a prayer or scripture reading before class.	2.83	3.25	3.12	2.98
Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith.	1.59	2.09	2.24	1.86
Course content would exclude those topics or persons which are offensive to Christian principles.	3.72	3.41	3.61	3.64
There is really no difference between academic courses at my institution and a secular university.	3.72	3.69	3.72	3.71

### *Likert Scale Questions*

Respondents were asked to rank items using a Likert scale as follows 1=strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree. Each item, its grand mean score from across the schools, ANOVA, and significance level are listed in Table 6. Significant differences among the schools are described immediately following the table.

**Table 6 Analysis of the Variance for the Likert-scale items**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>ANOVA</b>	<b>Significance*</b>
The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand themselves and others.	1.83	F = 9.33	p < .001
I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language.	2.75	F = 4.13	p = .017
Students who have abilities in the performing arts should be encouraged to develop and use those abilities.	1.33	F = .99	
Performances given on our campus should be used as a tool of evangelism.	3.04	F = 1.15	
Students who attend our institution should not be exposed to non-Christian viewpoints.	4.07	F = .40	
Plays selected for performance on our campus should include plays from the canon of dramatic literature.	2.32	F = .23	
There is evil in the world, so plays will contain evil also.	2.09	F = 1.90	
The study of theatre is a necessary component of a college liberal arts program.	2.06	F = 4.01	p = .019
When I see an actor portray something evil onstage, I wonder if that is how that person really behaves.	4.27	F = 9.71	p = <.001
Participation in the theatre is conducive to a student's holistic education.	2.34	F = 5.15	p = .007
An actor should not portray a character who is drunk.	4.22	F = 2.57	
I expect that any play produced on our campus will be suitable for children to attend.	3.38	F = 1.26	
There are unfair restrictions placed on our theatre department regarding what plays they produce.	2.87	F = 2.56	
An actor who portrays a sinful act onstage is condoning that sin.	4.36	F = 4.74	p = .010
Human beings are creative because they are made in the image of a creative God.	1.46	F = 1.81	
Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution.	2.59	F = 2.90	
A theatre major does not really fit into our identity as a Christian college.	4.32	F = 5.05	p = .007
An actor should not portray a character who commits murder.	4.28	F = 5.35	p = .005
Our theatre should be doing plays which are uplifting and light-hearted.	3.08	F = .95	
A career in the secular theatre is not appropriate for a Christian.	4.20	F = 1.24	
Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college.	2.69	F = .82	
If a play contains bad language it should be removed (edited) from plays presented on this campus.	3.24	F = 5.80	p = .004



The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.	1.91	F = 4.46	p = .013
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level.			

The following significant differences in responses to Likert-scale items were found among the schools:

- “The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand themselves and others.” York and Lipscomb agreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Pepperdine.
- “I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language.” York agreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Pepperdine.
- “The study of theatre is a necessary component of a college liberal arts program.” York agreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Lipscomb or Pepperdine.
- “When I see an actor portray something evil on stage, I wonder if that is how the person really behaves.” Lipscomb and York disagreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Pepperdine.
- “Participation in theatre is conducive to a student’s holistic education.” York agreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Pepperdine and Lipscomb.
- “An actor who portrays a sinful act on stage is condoning that sin.” Pepperdine disagreed significantly less strongly with this statement than Lipscomb and York.
- “A theatre major does not really fit into our identity as a Christian college.” Pepperdine disagreed significantly less strongly with this item than York and Lipscomb.
- “An actor should not portray a character who commits murder.” Pepperdine disagreed significantly less strongly with this statement than Lipscomb and York.

- “If a play contains bad language, it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus.” All three schools differed significantly from each other: York agreed most strongly with this statement, followed by Lipscomb, who agreed less strongly, then Pepperdine, who agreed least strongly.
- “The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.” Pepperdine agreed significantly less strongly with this statement than both Lipscomb and York.

### **Quantitative Analysis: Correlation Coefficients**

A correlation coefficient is a numerical measure of a linear relationship between two measured variables. The coefficient describes both the magnitude and the nature of the relationship. Correlation coefficients range from -1.0 to +1.0. Correlation coefficients between select variables in this study are compared below. Of particular interest to this study are relationships between certain demographic identifiers and certain ranking and Likert-scale items.

#### *Age/Ranking Items*

Responses to the following ranking items were correlated with the age of respondents across the schools (See table 7):

1) “The purpose of theatre at your institution should be”

- Older respondents ranked “A component of education in the humanities” significantly higher in importance.
- Younger respondents ranked “For evangelism and promulgation of Christian principles” significantly higher in importance.

2) “What makes your school a Christian school?”

- Younger respondents ranked “There are multiple devotions and spiritual activities for students” significantly higher in importance.
- Younger respondents ranked “The campus community is expected to follow certain rules concerning moral behavior” higher in importance.
- Older respondents ranked “Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students” higher in importance.

**Table 7 Intercorrelations with age and ranking items**

Item	r	Sig.
A component of education in the humanities	r = -.281	p = .000
For evangelism and promulgation of Christian principles	r = .133	p = .048
There are multiple devotions and spiritual activities for students	r = .173	p = .010
The campus community is expected to follow certain rules concerning moral behavior	r = .131	p = .050
Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students	r = -.219	p = .001

*Age/Likert-Scale*

Responses to the following Likert-scale items were correlated with the age of respondents across the schools (See table 8):

- Older respondents agreed more with the item “I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language.”
- Older respondents agreed more with the item “If a play contains bad language, it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus.”
- Younger respondents agreed more with the item “The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.”

**Table 8 Intercorrelations with age and Likert-scale items**

<b>Item</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language.	r = -.179	p = .008
If a play contains bad language, it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus.	r = -.239	p < .001
The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.	r = .147	p = .028

*Ranking Items/Likert-Scale Items*

Responses to the following ranking items were correlated with the following Likert-scale items across the schools:

1) The ranking item “(The purpose of the purpose of theatre at your institution should be): A component of education in the humanities” is positively correlated with the following Likert-scale items (see table 9):

- The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand others and themselves.”
- “Plays selected for performance on our campus should include plays from the canon of dramatic literature.”
- “The study of theatre is a necessary component of a liberal arts education.”
- “Participation in theatre is conducive to a student’s holistic education.”
- “The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.”

The ranking item “(The purpose of the purpose of theatre at your institution should be): A component of education in the humanities” is negatively correlated with the following Likert-scale item:

- “Our theatre should be doing plays which are uplifting and lighthearted.”

**Table 9 Intercorrelations with the Ranking Item: A component of education in the humanities and Likert-scale items**

Item	r	Sig.
The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand others and themselves.	r = .253	p < .001
Plays selected for performance on our campus should include plays from the canon of dramatic literature.	r = .136	p = .034
The study of theatre is a necessary component of a liberal arts education.	r = .247	p < .001
Participation in theatre is conducive to a student’s holistic education.	r = .237	p < .001
The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.	r = .140	p = .037
Our theatre should be doing plays which are uplifting and lighthearted.	r = -.147	p = .028

2) The ranking item “(What makes your school a Christian school?) Christian viewpoints are an integral part of classroom learning” is positively correlated with the following Likert-scale items:

- “Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution” (r = .273, p = .000).
- “Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college” (r = .224, p = .001).
- “If a play contains bad language it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus” (r = .266, p = .000).

3) The ranking item “(What is the difference between any given academic course at your institution and the equivalent at a secular institution?) Students are encouraged to reflect on

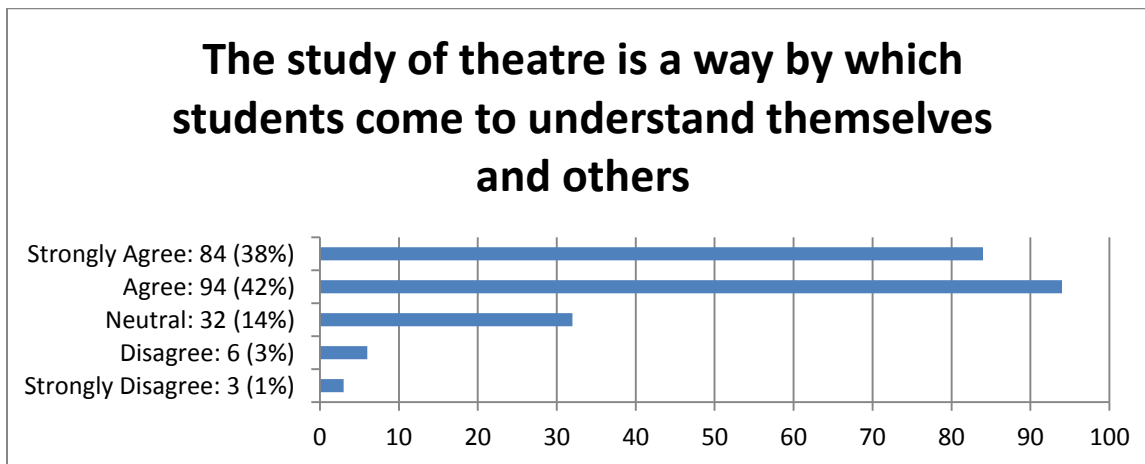
their coursework in light of Christian faith” is positively correlated with the following Likert-scale items:

- “Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution” ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .000$ ).
- “Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college” ( $r = .214$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
- “If a play contains bad language it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus” ( $r = .189$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

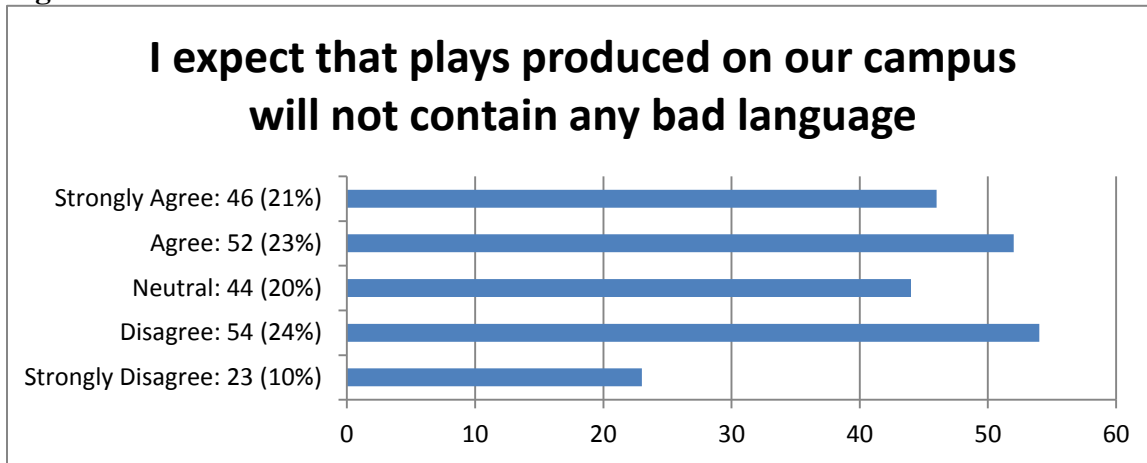
### Quantitative Analysis: Likert-scale Items

Figures 12-34 present summary data for the Likert-scale questions from the entire sample. Each figure illustrates the responses from across the schools to each question.

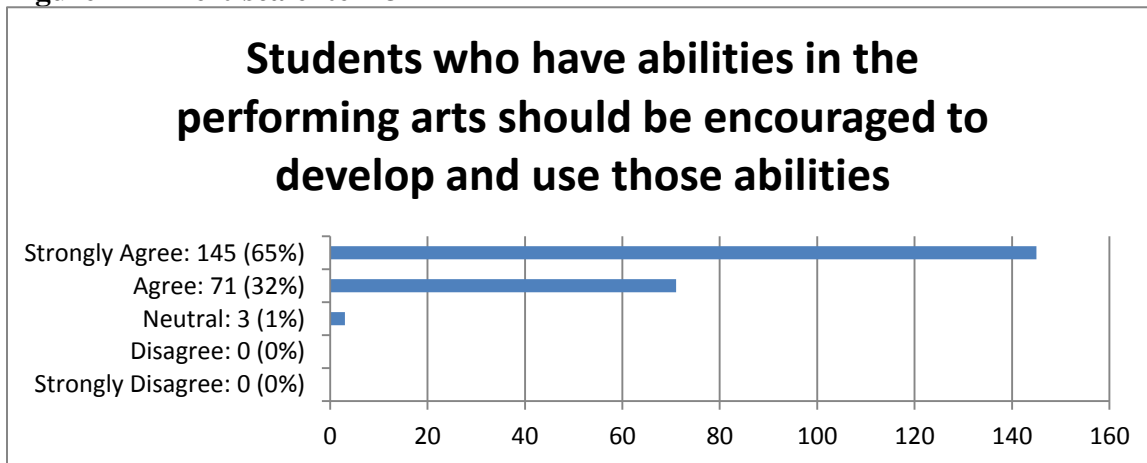
**Figure 12 Likert-scale item 1**



**Figure 13 Likert-scale item 2**



**Figure 14 Likert-scale item 3**



**Figure 15 Likert-scale item 4**

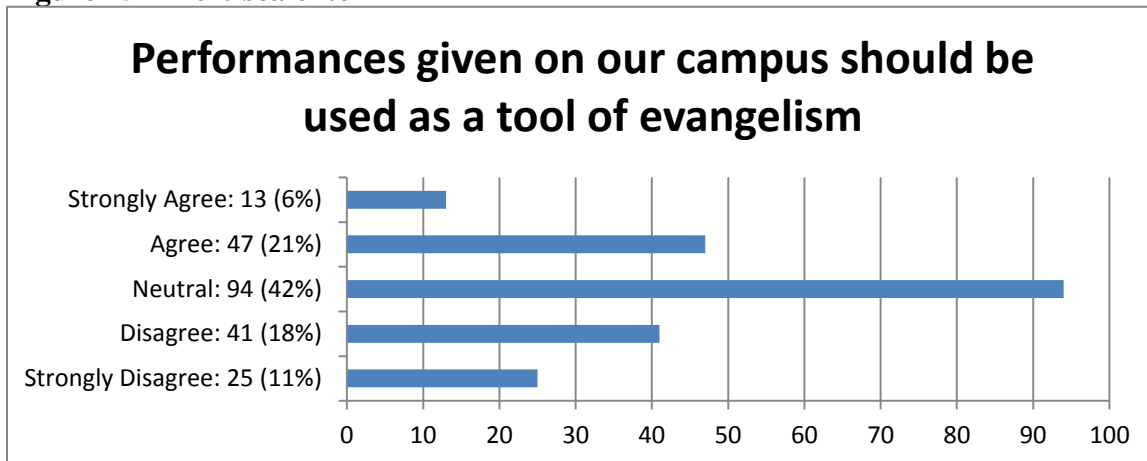


Figure 16 Likert-scale item 5

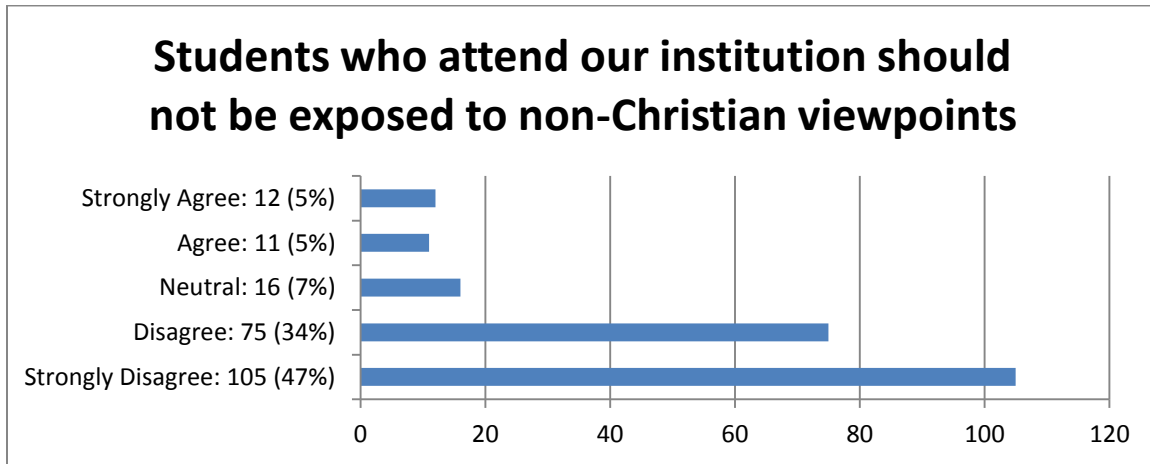


Figure 17 Likert-scale item 6

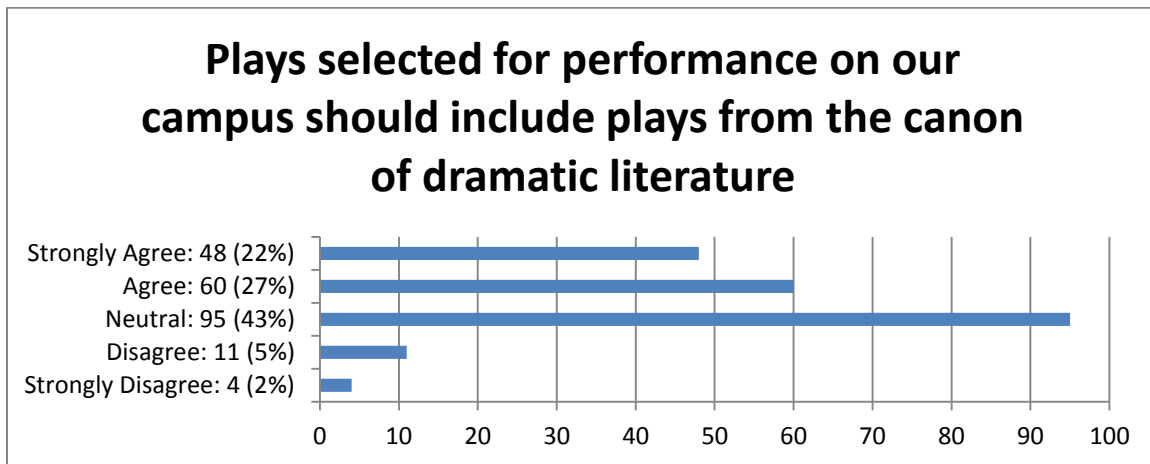
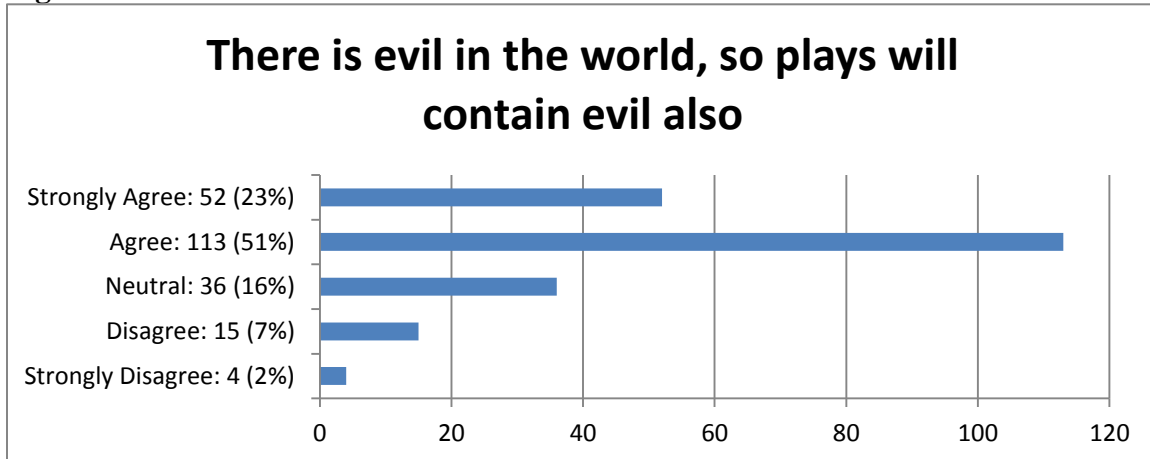
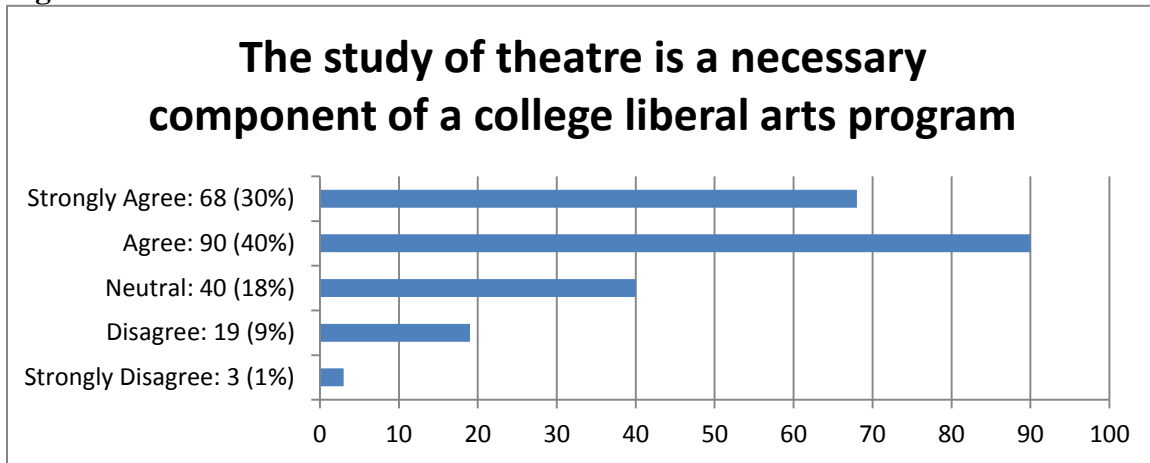
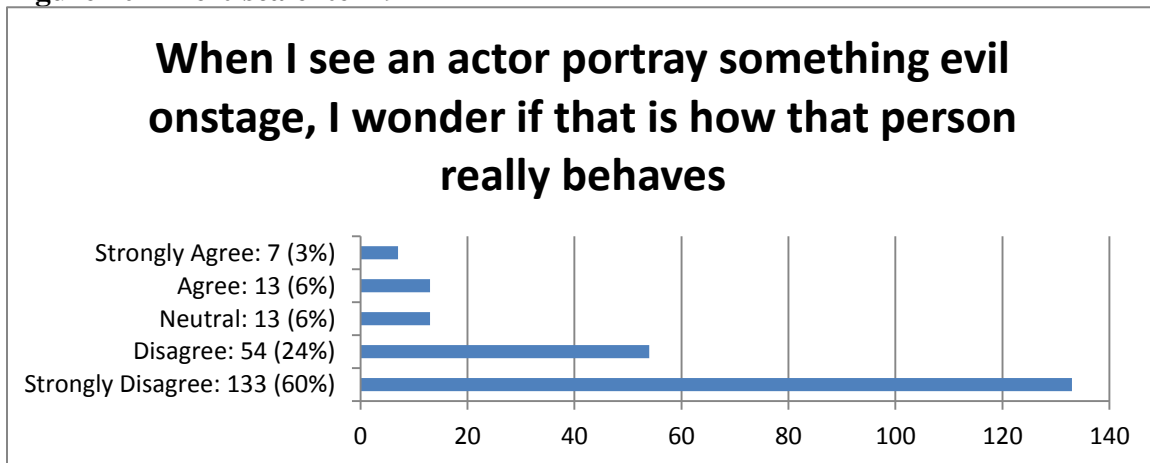
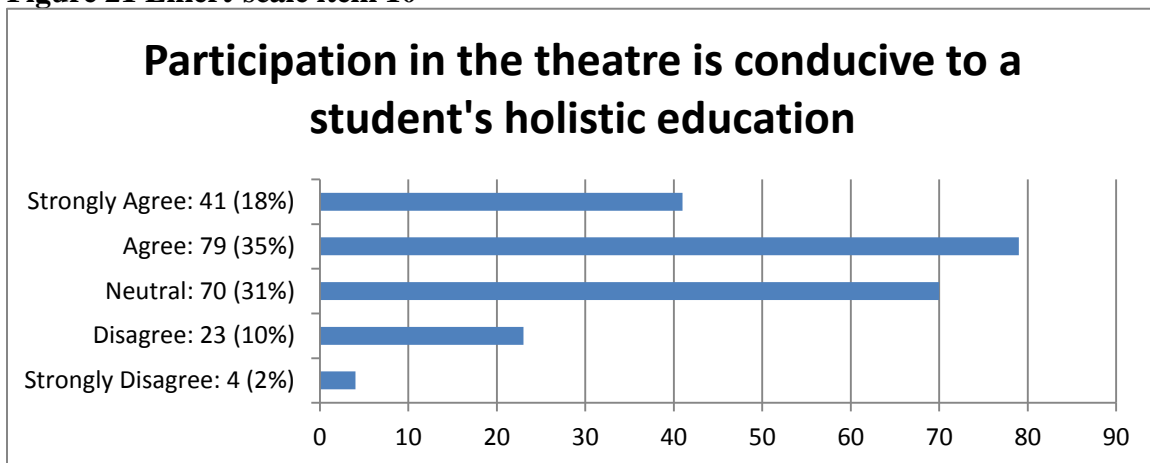


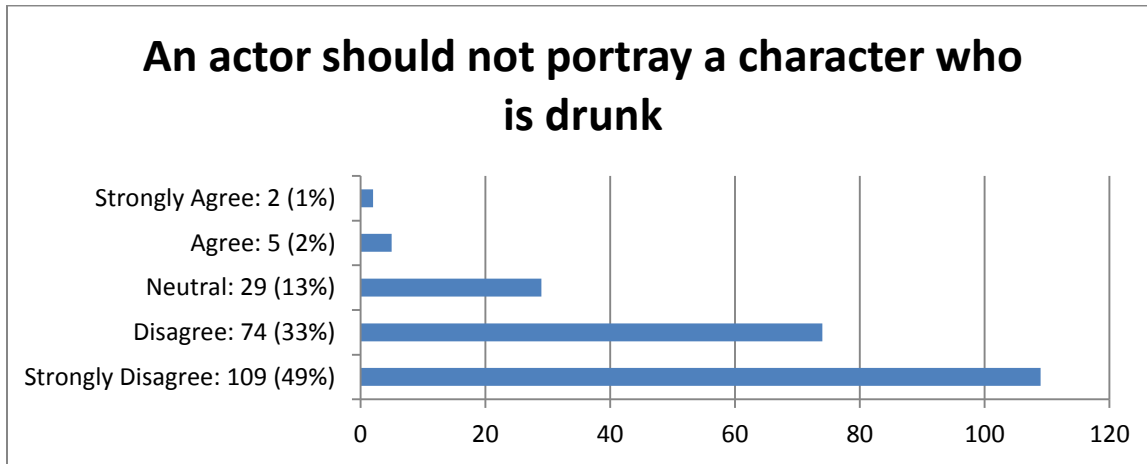
Figure 18 Likert-scale item 7



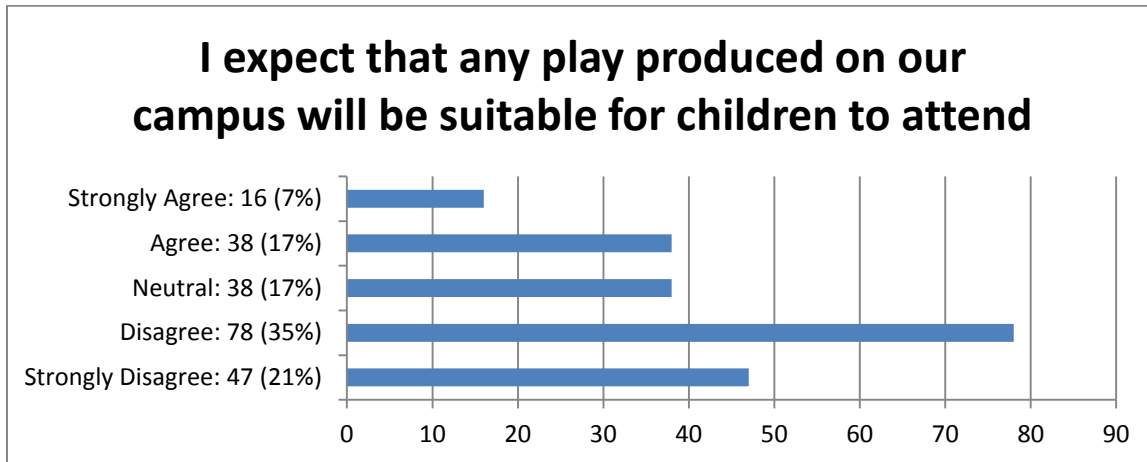


**Figure 19 Likert-scale item 8****Figure 20 Likert-scale item 9****Figure 21 Likert-scale item 10**

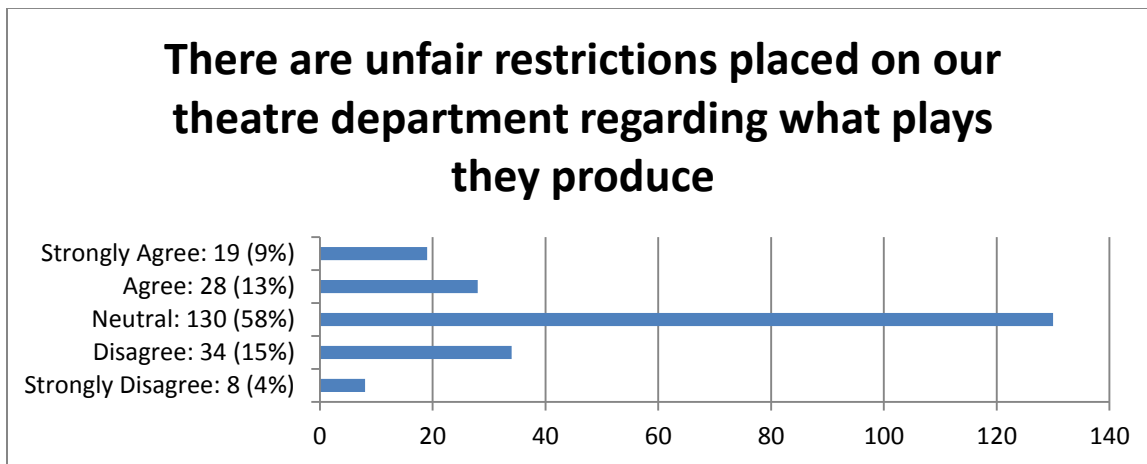
**Figure 22 Likert-scale item 11**



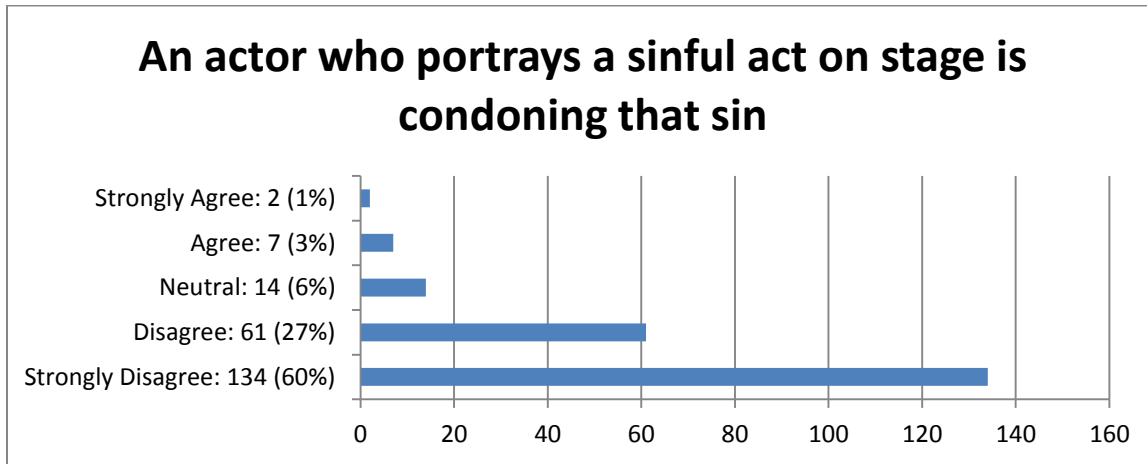
**Figure 23 Likert-scale item 12**



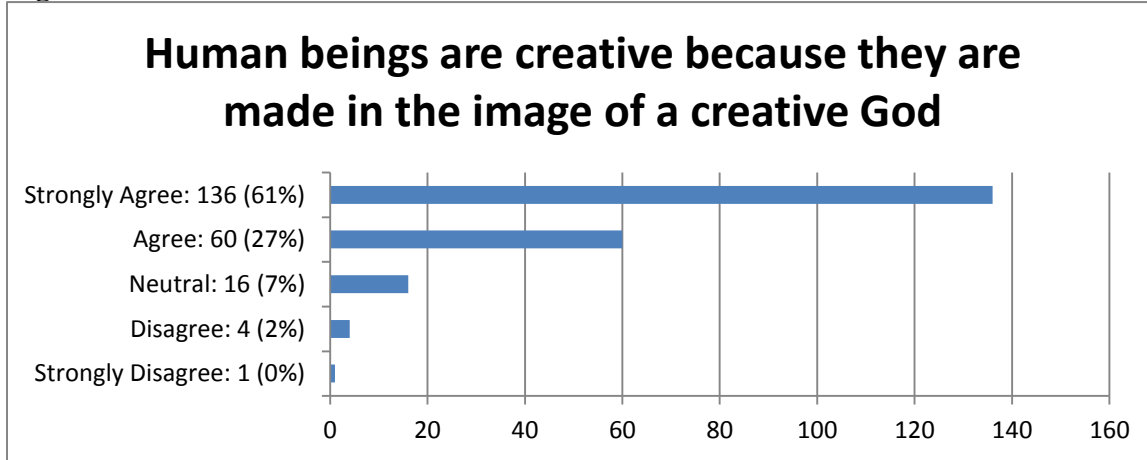
**Figure 24 Likert-scale item 13**



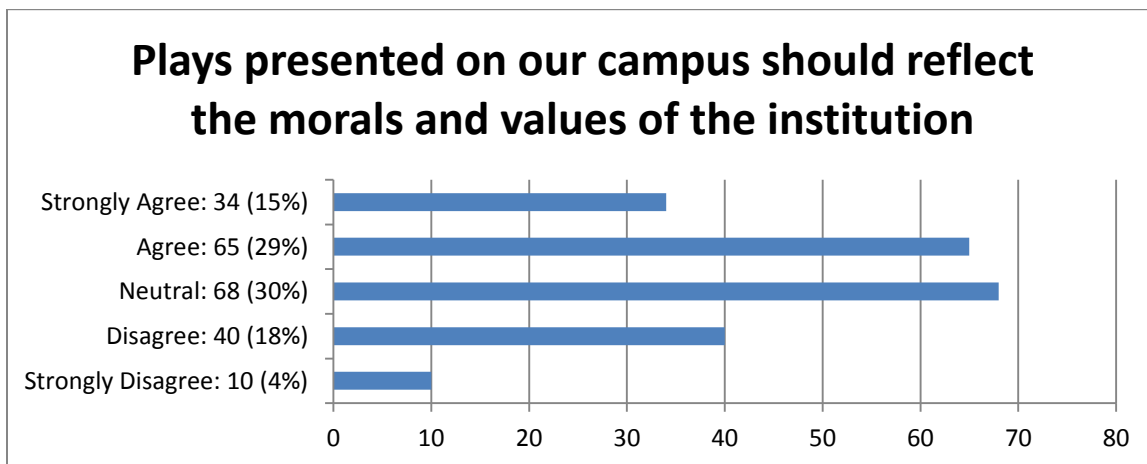
**Figure 25 Likert-scale item 14**



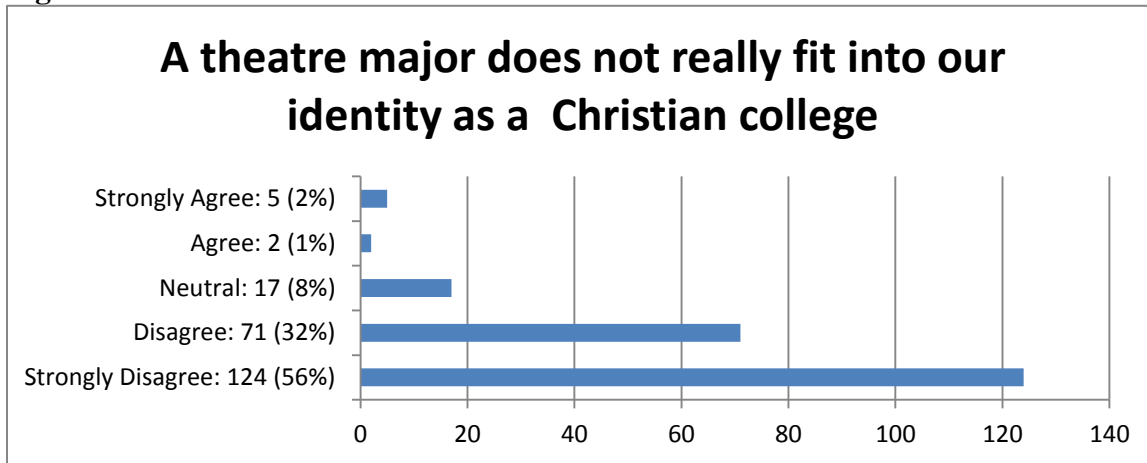
**Figure 26 Likert-scale item 15**



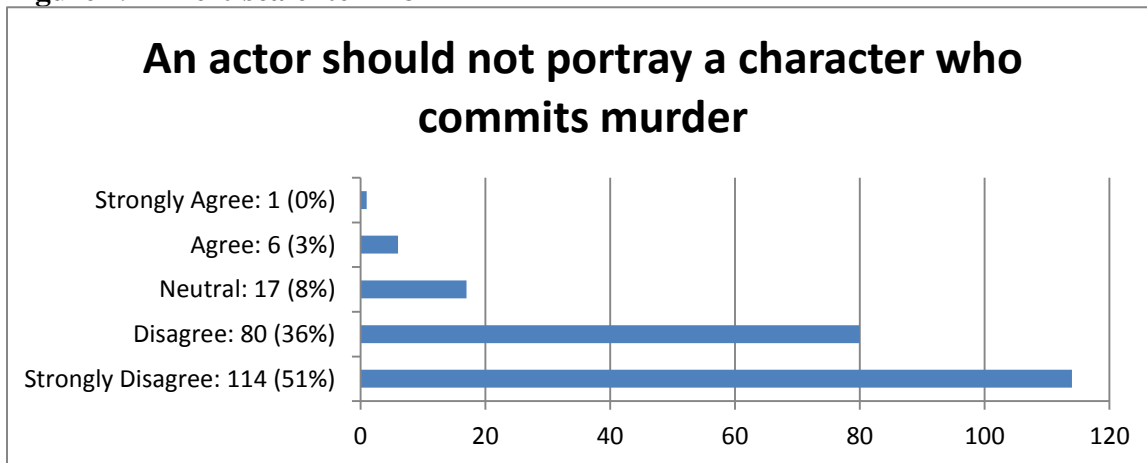
**Figure 27 Likert-scale item 16**



**Figure 28 Likert scale item 17**



**Figure 29 Likert-scale item 18**



**Figure 30 Likert-scale item 19**

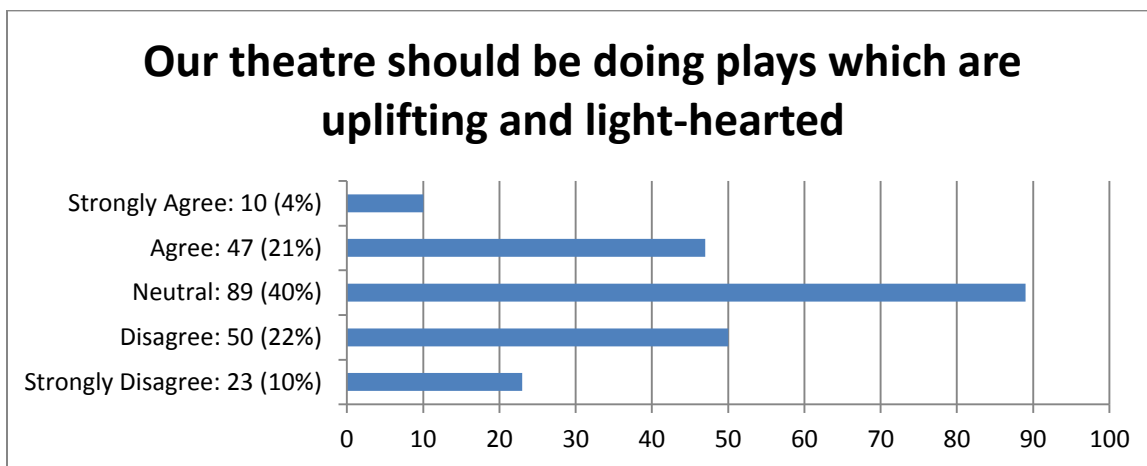


Figure 31 Likert-scale item 20

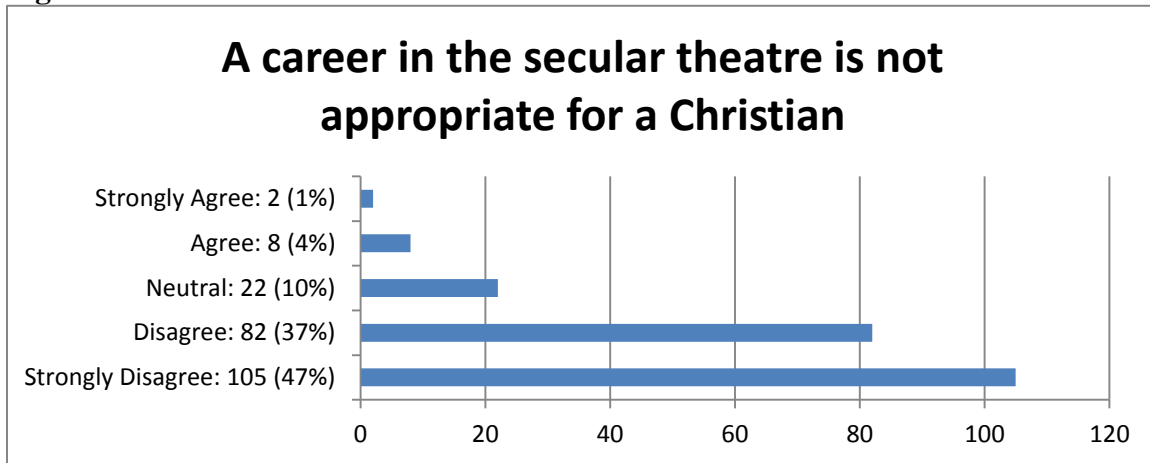


Figure 32 Likert-scale item 21

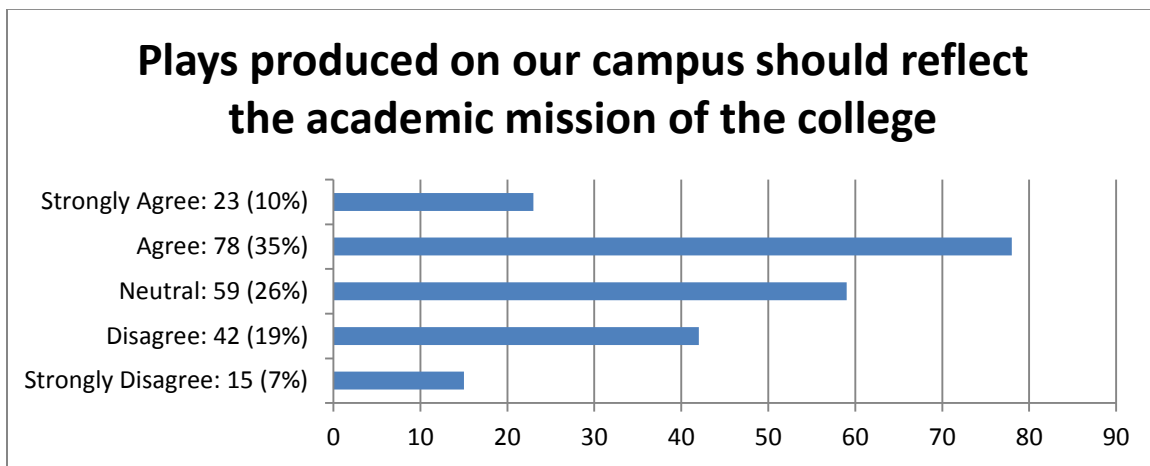
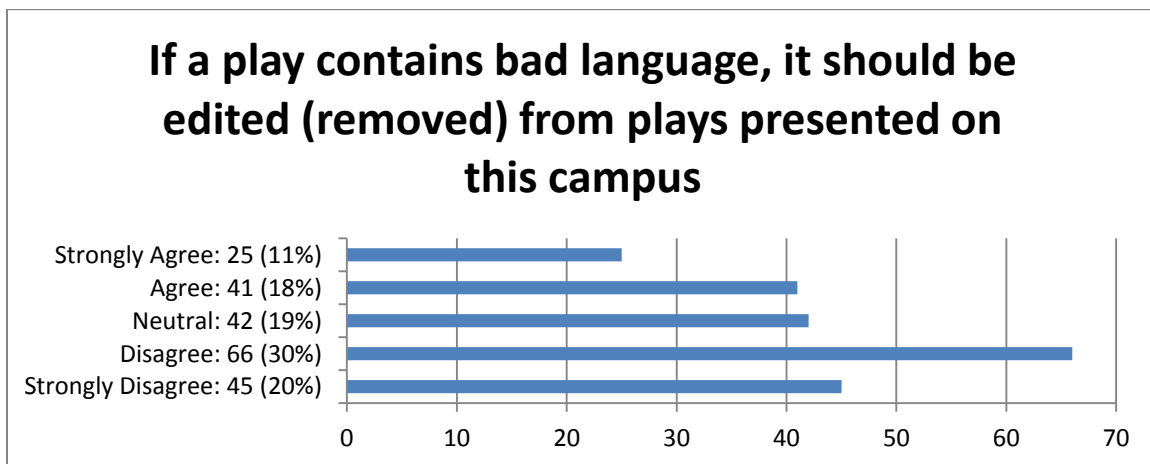
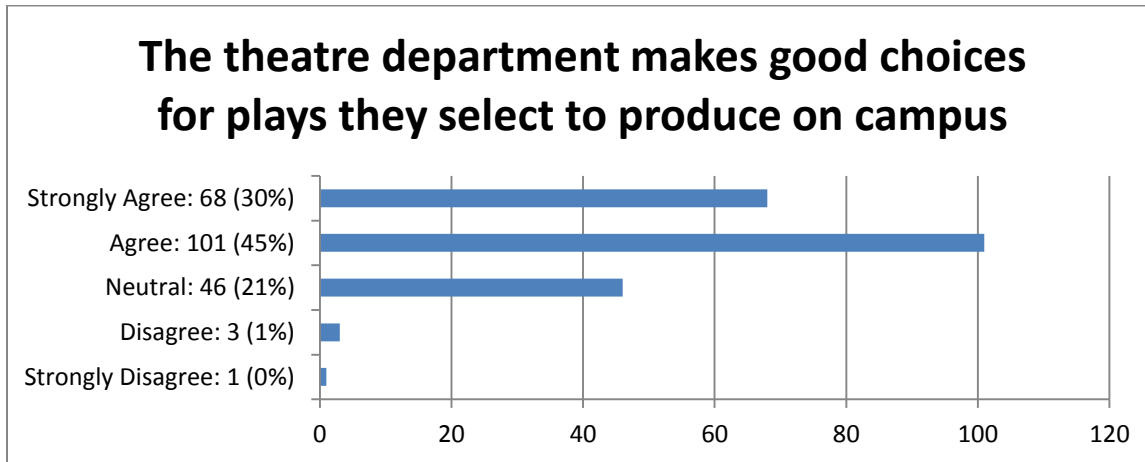


Figure 33 Likert-scale item 22



**Figure 34 Likert-scale item 23****Qualitative Analysis: Comments**

Each respondent had an opportunity to comment on the survey. A sample selection of these comments is reported below, divided into five categories based on shared characteristics. Those categories are “Difficult to Answer,” “Liberty in Theatrical Content,” “Restrictions in Theatrical Content,” “Overall Message or Context” and “Theatre as Major or Vocation.” All of the comments can be found in the Appendix.

*Difficult to Answer*

Respondents had some difficulty answering the forced responses for a variety of reasons: “I think that there are more views other than those presented in the statements placed in the ranking questions. Also, I would rather discuss some of the statements above rather than label them with agree or disagree [sic]”

“I think the ‘ranking 1-5’ section was confusing and difficult to complete.”

“I answered with a lot of neutrals because I’m fairly unfamiliar with Theater in general and as a major. Also due to not having given this much thought (theater/Christianity) can’t really give thoughtful responses.”

“I do not feel I have been involved enough to make clear judgments on several of these questions [sic].”

“Some of the wording of these questions made them difficult to understand.”

“I completed this to be helpful (hopefully) to the research, but I became frustrated that many of the items pushed me toward very artificial answers.”

### *Liberty in Theatrical Content*

The following comments provide rationale for including some difficult content in play production:

“I do prefer plays to represent diverse points of view. How could they be interesting if they were merely uplifting and light-hearted evangelism tools?”

“Theatre is a reflection on humanity itself and just because it includes characters that are morally incorrect doesn't mean that the whole play is morally incorrect. Sometimes a play is trying to teach something moral through things that are immoral.”

“Religion should not hold an influence over what plays are shown on campus. Creativity should be free-flowing, and not restrictive at all i.e. religion should not inhibit this creativity [sic]”

“I think the theater department deserves complete authority over their play choices and artistic freedom in what they choose to portray. If a play is children-appropriate, we will advertise it as such. Do not limit the talent of the theater department.”

“I believe that we owe a huge amount of respect to the work of the ‘playwright’ and to the form in which the work was written. Censorship should be ‘minimal’ at best.”

“Theatre allows students to see the world as Jesus did...in its beauty and in its ugliness.”

“For theatre to really resonate with me, it needs to represent authentic emotions and struggle (even comedies). I don't think that is possible if you are restricted from portraying the fallen

nature of our world. I think the best theatre teaches us about ourselves and our struggle with our own fears, desires, and broken social structures.”

“Since the Lord God in editing scripture allowed evil to remain and be represented as evil I feel we do a disservice to ourselves and others and we dishonor Him if we refuse to show evil. It is as if we are telling the creator of the universe that we can do a better job than He did by editing out all the stuff we think is bad.”

### *Restrictions in Theatrical Content*

Respondents’ comments provide rationale for some limitations to content in play production:

“Unfortunately, the college does have to ‘please’ parents, donors, towns people, so the plays do have to have a few restrictions on them.”

“I believe we are exposed to so much violence, obscene language, vulgarity and negativity by just being a part of this world, that your theater productions should help counter act this, rather than be a part of the world and what it says are appropriate/acceptable standards.”

“While theatre on a Christian University campus does not need to always teach a moral or spiritual lesson, it should not contain bad language or sexual conduct unbecoming of a Christian. There are many lighthearted musicals and comedies that can be performed on the stage of a Christian University.”

“Gratuitous or explicit violence, language, and/or sex should not be part of a production on a Christian campus. A creative director can make the point offensive and well without making it obscene.”

“Language was mentioned a couple times, I think the difference between portraying murder or a drunk is just that it is portraying it, where as [sic] foul language actually requires saying it out



loud. The same reasoning that nudity is not permissible even if a play called for it. There is no good reason why simple words cannot be substituted for bad language.”

“As a Christian institution, we should be ‘set apart.’ We should be aware of language; as well as, inappropriate attire. I have no desire to attend a play where I will hear foul language or see immodestly dressed actors/actresses. True entertainment can be found without the use of those things.”

“While I don't think Christian universities should omit all evil, I do feel it appropriate to edit out extreme or excessive bad language.”

#### *Overall Message or Context*

The following comments are about the overall message or context of a play or season:

“I do not believe that every play should be free of ‘sinful acts’ but I do not think that we should be putting on plays that portray a sinful world view as a positive.”

“As far as behavior simulated or offensive language being used – I would agree that it is permissible if not gratuitous, rewarded or put in a positive light in the whole context of the play.”

“As far as selection of plays, they should not all be uplifting and light-hearted since life is not that way but I wouldn't want to attend all one or the other – a mixture is good.”

“Criteria for choosing plays should be no different than criteria for choosing literature. The quality of the piece is most important, and at least some of the productions should provoke thought – even questioning of what we assume our students believe.”

“We do need to uphold Christian values but...that does not mean that we can't ‘play a drunk’ or ‘murder someone.’ The difference is you are telling a story not really being drunk or killing.

When you use curse words you are really cursing. Modesty is also an issue. You can play a

immodest person while still being modest. If you wore very revealing cloths then you are not acting you are really being immodest [sic]”

“I would also find it very difficult to appreciate a play that presented immoral behavior in a good light.”

*Theatre as an Academic Major or Vocation*

The following are comments about theatre as a profession:

“I believe strongly that theater/art can be appreciated for its artistic value regardless of whether it has Christian value. I also believe that we are called to steward the gifts and talents of our students, and those that are gifted in theater and the performing arts should be encouraged to develop those gifts. In any case, the arts often lack Christian believers, and encouraging our students to faith to participate in the arts in the community or as a career will give them excellent opportunities to witness to non-believers [sic]”

“To say that being a theatre major or acting as a sinful character is a sin is plain wrong.”

“Christian thespians can evangelize to other cast member and be Christ to anyone who stay to meet the cast or comes in contact off stage. I think asking if they can be in secular productions is like asking if Christian business majors have to choose work in Churches or Christian NGOs to be really Christian [sic]”

“I believe that anyone can be a Christian and hold onto their Christian values in whatever profession they choose. I also wonder if there might be many careers that have more obstacles (to ‘walking the walk’) than others? All Christians (no matter their career choice) should be aware of the temptations and be mindful to be on their guard against the lures of sin.”

## CHAPTER 8 : EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This final chapter will evaluate the materials from the case studies of Lipscomb University, York College, and Pepperdine University according to Benne's three components of Christian higher education—vision, ethos, and Christian persons—and assess each institution's model of faith and learning. The analysis will also include an examination of the ways in which theatre programs at these schools embody a model of faith and learning. Then it will evaluate the results of the questionnaire, also according to Benne's categories. The case study evaluation will then be compared to the survey data in order to show how the schools' public documents and self-definitions relate to the perceptions of those who responded to the survey. Finally, this chapter will make recommendations based on these evaluations.

### Vision

According to Robert Benne, *vision* is "Christianity's articulated account of reality." It is "comprehensive," "unsurpassable," and "central," and it is "the umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted" (Benne 6). For Christian colleges and universities, vision arises from the Bible and the long history of their individual denominations. It is the intellectual tradition specific to each form of Christianity, one that articulates, among other things, "a theory about how revelation and reason are related" (Benne 7). This study has specifically examined the history of Churches of Christ and the history of three of its affiliated schools in order to discover the particular ways in which these schools' visions are molded by their Church of Christ identity. All three schools in this study began with a vision for Christian liberal arts education to be supported and operated by members of Churches of Christ.

The vision of Lipscomb University, the oldest (est. 1891) active Church of Christ affiliated institution, is based on Alexander Campbell's conception of educating the whole person alongside inductive study of Scripture without aid of theology or creed. Established prior to the 1906 division separating Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ, Nashville Bible College grew up amid the then-developing tensions regarding the use of instrumental music in worship and participation in para-church organizations. As such tensions intensified, David Lipscomb strove to protect Nashville Bible College from the perceived apostasy in the Restoration Movement by means of strict adherence to scriptural commands. Additionally, Lipscomb, in order to remain on "safe ground," promoted the idea that the "silence of Scripture" is interpretively prohibitive. This approach resulted in an increasingly sectarian outlook toward those affiliated with Christian denominations that did not share Church of Christ beliefs regarding the New Testament "pattern" of congregational organization, corporate worship, or baptism. Lipscomb University was thus built on a sectarian vision that supported this position through adherence to biblical commands, a vision that was accomplished through the school's program of rigorous study of the Bible as a "book of facts." The school's liberal arts vision, however, caused early disagreement among the various members of the board and the administration regarding the propriety of granting bachelor's degrees. In any case, the model with which the school began – a liberal arts course of study together with study of the Bible – has influenced the guiding philosophies of all Church of Christ affiliated colleges to the present.

George Pepperdine's founding vision called for a liberal arts college that would be "academically sound" and "based in Christian faith." Over the years, Pepperdine University has struggled to maintain this dual commitment in the face of the different ways in which administrators have conceived of the relationship between Christian faith and academics. George

Pepperdine's vision was intentionally different from what had, by the 1930's, become the model for Christian education at Church of Christ affiliated colleges. Unlike David Lipscomb, George Pepperdine had always welcomed religious diversity and, therefore, he avoided specific Church of Christ language in his college's formative statements. For decades, there was much ambiguity surrounding Pepperdine's commitment to being a Christian school and, more specifically, its commitment to being a Church of Christ school. Eventually, Pepperdine came to define itself as a school that promoted "morals" and "values" more so than explicitly Christian principles. As a school in a region of the country with few Church of Christ members to support it, Pepperdine relied on this broadly values-based model to appeal to conservative business leaders and to Christians outside the Churches of Christ. In recent years, however, Pepperdine University seems to be defining itself more as a Christian College and as one affiliated with Churches of Christ explicitly. Significantly, Pepperdine University has also become widely known for its strong academic programs and its picturesque setting in coastal California. Through increasingly exacting Church of Christ membership requirements for administrators and by careful realization of a "critical mass" of Church of Christ followers across the university, it has simultaneously maintained both its Church of Christ affiliation and its religious diversity.

York College was founded in 1890 but became affiliated with Churches of Christ only in 1956. Church of Christ members welcomed the opportunity to expand the influence of Churches of Christ into area region of the country with few members. Unlike Pepperdine University, whose formative language was broadly Christian and non-sectarian, York defined itself by means of strictly sectarian language that was typical of Lipscomb and other self-consciously traditional Church of Christ colleges (e.g. Harding University, Abilene Christian University). However, this language created some tensions within the city's predominantly Christian

community, who had for many years supported the work of York College during its previous affiliation with the United Brethren Church. These early misunderstandings have since been cleared up, but unlike Pepperdine, York College has maintained the requirement that all members of the faculty, administration, and governing board must be members in Churches of Christ. In this requirement, York's model of Christian education is similar to that of Lipscomb University. And, though Lipscomb and Pepperdine have developed into universities, York has contentedly remained a small liberal arts college.

Today, all three schools share visions remarkably close to those articulated by their founders. Both Lipscomb and Pepperdine were guided for many years by their founders who personally invested significant financial resources to enable the schools to obtain campuses and personnel. Furthermore, the founders provided the dominant guiding philosophy for each school's interpretation of the role of faith in the life of the institution. York College, conversely, was not shaped by a single visionary, but by the collective vision of a group of leaders who obtained the York campus after it had been vacated by a previous religious organization. These leaders envisioned a Church of Christ college located specifically in the Midwest with the aim of providing a near-by school to those Church of Christ families in the Midwest.

### **Ethos**

According to Benne, *ethos* is the way faith is actually lived in the world, that is, the "way of life." It includes, but is not limited to, public worship and prayer, sacramental acts, religious music, liturgical expressions, moral actions, service, and rules for Christian living (Benne 7-8). The *ethos* of Lipscomb University emerged amid the frenzied reconstruction of the South following the Civil War. David Lipscomb strove to serve the community in various tangible ways during those difficult times and passed on that spirit to the college. An ethos of service to

the community remains one of the strengths of the university to this day. In addition, its ethos is expressed in required chapel programs and Bible classes and in moral codes for Christian living. Finally, its ethos is expressed in its strict rules requiring that all members of the faculty, administration, and the greater part of the staff must be followers of the Church of Christ.

The ethos of Pepperdine University is seen in the motto chosen by George Pepperdine, “Freely ye have received; freely give,” with an understanding that knowledge calls for a “life of service.” The school encountered significant criticism when racial tension in Los Angeles prompted the evacuation of its inner city campus, especially since Malibu was selected specifically for its location on the California coast. Critics viewed this move as abandonment of its commitments to the urban community and intentional realignment with affluent and influential California business and political leaders. Not surprisingly, the Malibu location enabled Pepperdine to attract a large population of students and eventually to attain university status. Religious diversity has remained its most distinguishing characteristic in comparison to both Lipscomb and York, and, in fact, to every other Church of Christ affiliated school. Nor has Pepperdine ever required Church of Christ membership for its faculty or administrators. For governing board members, the original requirement for one hundred percent Church of Christ representation is now merely a simple majority. Nevertheless, some evidence of Pepperdine’s Church of Christ ethos can still be found expressed in its requirements for student participation in religious “convocations,” a core curriculum of religious courses, and student compliance with certain codes of conduct.

York College’s heritage of building strong moral character dates back to its foundational ethos in 1890 and its commitment to strict codes of conduct has consistently been one of its most defining aspects. Prior to its affiliation with Churches of Christ in 1956, York was operated by

various Christian groups who cooperated with the York community, which had little interest in strict denominational affiliations. When Churches of Christ assumed leadership, however, the exclusivist philosophy of this new leadership surprised members of the local community who, up to that time, had been loyal to York. Faculty, administration, and board of directors were all members of Churches of Christ and, by and large, believed that members of other denominations were not members of the one true church and, therefore, not Christians. This narrowly sectarian ethos characterized operations at York until the 1990's when the administration launched a dialogue with the community to begin to build more a positive relationship. Since then, a mutually beneficial relationship between the college and its community has been successfully achieved, thereby strengthening its Christian ethos as well. Daily chapel attendance, service activities, and required Bible classes are further examples of York's specifically Christian ethos in action.

The following can be said of the ethos for all three schools: 1) a core of academic courses in Bible; 2) prominently featured campus devotional activities, most particularly in the form of chapels or convocations; 3) emphasis on service to others as the moral responsibility that accompanies the privilege of higher education; 4) codes of conduct grounded in fundamental scriptural principles; 5) and a high percentage of members of Churches of Christ in their student and administrative constituencies.

### **Christian Persons**

Benne's category of *Christian persons* identifies those involved in the day-to-day planning and operation of Christian colleges, including the governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Together they implement the *vision* and *ethos* and maintain the relevance of those ideals within the college (Benne 8). Each of these schools has maintained its



Church of Christ character though prioritizing the employment and recruiting of Christian persons affiliated with Churches of Christ. At Lipscomb and York, these conditions are more stringent, requiring one hundred percent membership for the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and most staff. Pepperdine maintains its affiliation with Churches of Christ by maintaining a critical mass of Church of Christ followers in its Board of Trustees, requiring Church of Christ membership for major administrative positions (such as the president), in addition to a critical mass among faculty, staff, students. Given the congregational polity of Churches of Christ, the schools' affiliations are maintained by employing those who are "members in good standing" of local congregations. Yet none of these schools absolutely require assent to a particular creed or a signed statement of faith. With no supervising central office to oversee a college's observance of Church of Christ doctrine, each school operates in real time under the authority of its Board of Trustees and, therefore, only informally with Church of Christ congregations and affiliated colleges. Thus, each school is autonomous, at least in relationship to one another and to any Church of Christ congregation. Conversely, each school bears similarity to the others in that they share a similar understanding of Christianity, particularly in the tradition of a cappella singing in worship, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, adult baptism by immersion for forgiveness of sins, and local governance of each congregation by elders. Among the student body, nevertheless, all three schools are becoming ever more religiously diverse, with students from Churches of Christ composing as little as half or less of the student body at the present time.

### **Faith and Learning**

According to Richard T. Hughes, the model of faith and learning at Churches of Christ colleges essentially consists of two characteristics: 1) encouragement and preservation of

mutually-agreed-upon morals and values and 2) an institutional context where one hundred percent of the faculty and a significant majority of the students are members of Churches of Christ (*Models* 408). These characteristics fit within Benne's description of a *two-sphere* or *add-on* model of higher education in which a critical mass of Christian persons from a particular religious heritage are employed and enrolled at a college to sustain its stated religious mission. Benne submits that in this model, "real Christian presence is 'added-on' to the main intellectual tasks" and that such a school "even if nominally Christian, will look like education anywhere else" (37). Importantly, such a model involves separating the worlds of faith and academics by an impenetrable barrier, with no practical way of relating them to each other. Examination of the three case study schools confirms Hughes's observation that the Church of Christ model is based on agreed-upon morals and supported by persons affiliated with Churches of Christ. Certainly, the source of the Church of Christ college add-on model began with Alexander Campbell, passed to Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb and, through them, conveyed to all active Church of Christ affiliated schools. Alongside an empirical approach to the liberal arts, the Church of Christ model has involved rigorous study of the Bible based on an empirical approach to Scripture, intentionally avoiding "speculation" about larger meanings of the text. Without such "speculation," however, there can be no overarching theological vision that considers larger meanings of Scripture or any meaningful connection between the worlds of faith and academics.

An *integrated* model, conversely, involves direct and purposeful interaction between faith and learning. Christian higher education, as articulated by Arthur F. Holmes, should not be "simply to offer a good education plus biblical studies in an atmosphere of piety," but rather strive to cultivate the "creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture" (5-6). The case studies herein seem to indicate that these schools began and continued to operate

for many years within the so-called add-on model; nevertheless, a fundamental change is taking place, or has taken place. For now, at least, each school publicly declares a commitment to “integrating” faith and learning as part of its overall vision. Lipscomb University seeks to “*integrate* Christian faith and practice with academic excellence” (“Mission, Values, Vision” italics added); Pepperdine University seeks to be a “preeminent, global, Christian university, known for the *integration* of faith and learning” (“About Pepperdine: Mission, Vision, and Affirmation” italics added); and York seeks to equip each student “to apply critical thinking and knowledge *integration* skills, and to evaluate changing circumstances in the context of faith” (“Mission Statement” italics added). Among the three schools, Pepperdine University’s model for integration seems to be the most obvious. Initially, Pepperdine’s model was of the add-on variety, consisting of classroom instruction side by side with a broadly-defined Christian faith represented by daily chapel, moral teaching, and community service. Education at Pepperdine took place in a Christian “environment,” but without any formal connection between the worlds of faith and learning. In the last fifteen years, however, Pepperdine has shifted to an integrated model, beginning with the establishment of the Center for Faith and Learning in 1999. Richard T. Hughes, its founding director, promoted the idea that a Christian “environment” is not enough, but, rather, the worlds of faith and learning must converge in the classroom (“Pepperdine’s Center for Faith and Learning”). Most significantly, as a result of Pepperdine’s recent marketing study (2007-2008), the administration has now made the integration of faith and learning Pepperdine’s specific “niche” that forms the new marketing “banner” of the institution (Selby 18 Dec. 2013). Through its annual faculty retreats, convocations, guest speakers, and vocational training, the Center for Faith and Learning continues to facilitate the exchange of ideas across the university to assist in creating lasting connections between faith and learning.

Lipscomb University and York College are schools that also started with an add-on model. They both featured a strong ethos and a narrowly-defined Church of Christ conception of Christian faith, but recently they appear to be turning towards an integrated model. Lipscomb's website explains that "'faith-informed' learning encourages students to understand that all knowledge and skills are to be used to the glory of God in every pursuit." ("Who We Are") According to its undergraduate catalog, faith and learning, as well as the particular heritage of Churches of Christ, are purposefully integrated in the classroom. Furthermore, Provost Craig Bledsoe explained that students should not "see life as being fragmented, with their campus life, spiritual life, and academic life as separate components," but rather they should "*see life as a whole*" ("Office of the Provost" italics added). Likewise, York College strives to equip its students to handle the rapidly changing world through critical thinking about these changes in the context of faith. While their public documents do not provide details, Clark Roush, Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities, explains that part of York's interview process involves faculty candidates articulating their philosophy of integrating faith and learning. Furthermore, Roush explains, faculty members are involved in ongoing discussions about the connections between faith and learning.

Because information from the Theatre Department at Pepperdine was limited only to what is publically available, it is not known whether the Department follows an add-on or integrated model. An examination of Lipscomb and York's theatre programs indicates that these departments are seeking an integrated model. In fact, integration of faith and learning is crucial to the vision of Lipscomb University's Theatre Department. Its mission statement confirms its dedication to the training of "believer artists," and department chair Mike Fernandez explains that the program's emphasis is on students "working out their faith and their art" (Morgan, J.).

Furthermore, Lipscomb's Theatre Department seeks to "infuse" Christian faith into all aspects of students' lives. The department is built on the ideas of "community" and "worship" as exemplified in theatre "focus chapels" that encourage thinking about the connections between Christian faith and the arts through discussion and through performance as an expression of worship. The department seeks to tell good stories on stage and reflect even the "gritty" truths about the world, educating its audiences through pre- and post-show discussions of the issues presented in its performances. All these examples point to vital connections between faith and learning.

Similarly, the York College Theatre Department seeks to integrate faith and learning to prepare students for life, encouraging its students to discover the "body-mind-spirit connection" through performance. The department conceives of performance as "life-changing," fulfilling the institutional mission to "transform" students. Its faculty members suggest that through the encounter with flawed characters and through the enactment of dramatic literature, theatre students are encouraged to truthfully explore their own passions (Roush). Further, the Theatre Department seeks to provide a "safe environment" in which to explore darker issues of human action, and by empathizing with certain characters, students come to acknowledge their own weaknesses and thereby learn to be more sympathetic towards the weaknesses of others. Students are taught that their passions do not own them; instead, they are encouraged to give their passions to Christ. In these ways, the Theatre Department seeks to fulfill York mission to transform students' lives.

The theatre departments at Lipscomb, Pepperdine, and York, however, also retain characteristics of an add-on approach; this is most evident in the implied expectation that theatre productions are intended to be public expressions of the school's ethos. All of these schools have

in place moral standards regarding the content suitable for public performance, that is, standards based on certain scriptural prohibitions. Stan C. Denman, whose dissertation (1997) examines the theatre program at Abilene Christian University, another Church of Christ college, argues that the Church's lack of a formal aesthetic philosophy has resulted in the understanding that theatre programs within Church of Christ affiliated colleges are to be used to promote a "Bible-based morality" (174). Historically, the empirical worldview corresponding to a Churches of Christ understanding of Scripture has not placed high value on poetic and metaphorical expression. Therefore, many Christians involved with Church of Christ colleges believe that a morals-based theatre program is the expected way in which theatre programs fulfill the Christian mission of the college.

In summary, the case study findings suggest the following similarities among all three schools:

- 1) All these colleges are committed to a liberal arts education as a preparation of the whole person for the contingencies of a Christian life. Pepperdine and Lipscomb, although now larger universities featuring professional and graduate programs, still continue to emphasize comfortably small classes and personal mentoring within an explicitly Christian community; York College remains an enjoyably small liberal arts college.
- 2) All three schools have staunchly retained their commitments to Christian faith. They have resisted secularization and continue to be administered by a significant majority of Christian persons who are members of Churches of Christ.
- 3) All three colleges have made substantial efforts to avoid the kind of narrowly sectarian language that has often characterized Churches of Christ throughout their history.

Pepperdine has even employed a non-sectarian definition from the very start. York's vision statements use the generically-Christian phrase "God honoring" to describe its educational goals, and members of the college have made measurable efforts to overcome certain initial tensions within the local community. President Randolph Lowry's vision of Lipscomb as a Christian school reflects the ecumenical spirit of the earlier Restoration Movement by endeavoring to be "gracious" and welcoming to a broad range of religious preferences.

- 4) When founded, all three colleges initially employed the add-on model of faith and learning, thereby featuring a strong ethos supported by Christian persons. Furthermore, all three schools have begun to alter their identities to some degree by employing language of integration.

The case study findings further suggest the following similarities among the theatre programs at all three schools:

- 1) They all began with administrative connections to Speech, Communication, or English Departments that featured extracurricular play productions for the education and enjoyment of the students. Of the three schools, Pepperdine made the move to an academic major in theatre most quickly; York and Lipscomb began by offering a few classes that grew first into an "emphasis" within communication studies, then to a minor, and finally to a major.
- 2) All theatre programs now have a firmly established academic major in theatre, largely for the purpose of a liberal arts education but also as preparation for possible careers in professional or academic theatre.

- 3) They all contribute to the liberal arts mission of their institutions by striving to prepare the whole person for the contingencies of a Christian life.
- 4) All theatre programs operate within their institution's moral guidelines governing content for public audiences. None have formal "policies," but each school does require certain non-negotiable issues such as prohibitions against nudity, sexual content, and excessively coarse language.

### **Evaluation of the Survey Data**

Now that the case study materials have been examined, the survey data will be evaluated to determine ways that respondents understood the interrelationship between faith and learning at their respective colleges and theatre programs.

Of the 223 respondents, 56% came from Lipscomb, 30% from Pepperdine, and 14% from York. Therefore, the overall survey results reflect these same percentages. Significant differences in several of the demographic indicators were found among the schools. Most importantly, Pepperdine respondents were considerably younger, less educated, more religiously diverse, and attended significantly fewer arts events than respondents from York and Lipscomb. Pepperdine's religious diversity fits within its established demographics, but the significant differences in age and education are a direct result of the limitations within the sample, in which respondents were predominantly students. Due to these circumstances, differences between the schools may be attributable to differences in demographics as much as or more than the differences among the schools themselves.

### *Model of Faith and Learning*

As indicated above in the evaluative portion of this chapter, the case study results suggest that the model of faith and learning at the three schools has begun to shift noticeably from an



add-on model to an integrated model. The survey results suggest further that respondents also perceived their schools more as integrated models than add-on models. Respondents from across the schools ranked items associated with an integrated model of faith and learning higher than items associated with an add-on model.

To the ranking question, “What makes your school a Christian school?” respondents from across the schools ranked the statement “Christian viewpoints are integral to classroom learning” highest, and “The campus community is expected to follow certain rules for moral behavior” lowest. Pepperdine differed significantly from the one or the other schools in the estimation of what defines their school as Christian. Pepperdine ranked the statement “There are multiple devotional and spiritual activities for students” significantly higher than Lipscomb and York did, and ranked the statement “The campus community is expected to follow certain rules for moral behavior” significantly higher than Lipscomb did. Pepperdine ranked the two statements “Christian viewpoints are integral to classroom learning” and “Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students” significantly lower than Lipscomb did. As indicated above, these differences may be attributable to demographics and/or differences among the schools.

To the ranking question “What is the difference between any given academic course at your institution and the equivalent at a secular institution?” respondents from all the schools ranked “Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith” highest and “There really is no difference between academic courses at my institution and a secular university” lowest. Lipscomb ranked the statement “Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith” significantly higher than Pepperdine and York did. Again, this difference may be attributable to demographics and/or differences among the schools.

Significant differences among the schools suggest that respondents from York and Lipscomb perceived the model of faith and learning at their schools as an integrated model more strongly than did the respondents from Pepperdine. Based on the responses to the ranking items, respondents from Lipscomb University identified their school most strongly with an integrated model, followed by respondents from York, and then by respondents from Pepperdine. Again, these results may be due to significant differences in demographics—over half of Lipscomb’s respondents identified themselves as employees, while almost all of Pepperdine’s respondents identified themselves as students—than to real differences between the schools.

### *Purpose of Theatre*

Survey results suggest that respondents from across all the schools consider the purpose of theatre at their schools to be primarily academic. To the ranking question “The purpose of theatre at your institution should be,” respondents from all the schools ranked educational goals higher than they ranked entertainment, extracurricular, or evangelistic purposes. Respondents across all the schools ranked “As professional training for theatre majors” highest, followed by “a component of education in the humanities.” Using several Likert-scale items, correlations were also found with rankings of theatre as a component of the humanities. Not surprisingly, respondents who rated theatre highly as “a component of education in the humanities” also agreed that theatre is “conducive to a student’s holistic education” and that “the study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand others and themselves.”

Once more, Pepperdine differed significantly from Lipscomb and York in their ranking of the purpose of theatre “as professional training for theatre majors” (they ranked it lower); “as an extracurricular activity” (they ranked it higher); “for entertainment and enjoyment” (they ranked it higher). Again, these differences may be attributable to the differences in demographics

and/or differences among the schools. Significant differences among the ranking items across all the schools indicate that Lipscomb and York perceived their theatre programs more as part of a liberal education than Pepperdine did.

Responses to the Likert-scale items indicate support across all the schools for theatre studies as a component of liberal arts education as well as preparation for a professional career. Respondents from across all the schools agreed that “The study of theatre is a necessary component of a liberal arts education” (70% agreed or strongly agreed), and that “The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand themselves and others” (80% agreed or strongly agreed). Respondents somewhat agreed that “Participation in the theatre is conducive to a student’s holistic education” (53% agreed or strongly agreed, 32% were neutral). Respondents from across all the schools disagreed that “A career in the secular is not appropriate for a Christian” (84% disagreed or strongly disagreed) and that “A theatre major does not really fit into our identity as a Christian college” (88% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

#### *Academic Mission*

Survey data indicate mixed results regarding respondents’ perceptions of the relationship of their theatre departments to their institution’s academic mission. With the Likert-scale item “Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college,” 45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 26% were neutral, and 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed. With the Likert-scale item “Plays selected for performance on our campus should include plays from the canon of dramatic literature,” 47% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 43% were neutral, and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because respondents across all the schools ranked academic goals highest in the ranking question, it is unclear why there was not stronger agreement for questions that correspond to their theatre department’s academic

missions. It may be that, while respondents recognized that theatre programs exist for academic preparation, they may think more in terms of the classroom than play production as such.

### *Christian Mission*

Survey data suggest that respondents find their theatre programs compatible with Christian faith. Respondents from across all schools agreed that “Human beings are creative because they are made in the image of a creative God” (88% agreed or strongly agreed) and that “Students with performing arts talents should be encouraged to develop those talents” (97% agreed or strongly agreed). And respondents from across all schools disagreed that “Students who attend our institution should not be exposed to non-Christian viewpoints” (81% disagreed or strongly disagreed). Respondents from across the schools were almost neutral on the statement that “Performances given on our campus should be used as a tool of evangelism” (27% agreed or strongly agreed, 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 42% were neutral).

Survey data indicate mixed results with regard to the item “Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution” (44% agreed or strongly agreed, 30% were neutral, 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed). This question is perhaps not as specific as others in this category, and, therefore, respondents could have interpreted in various ways whether or not the plays selected for performance by their department “reflect the morals and values of the institution.”

### *Content in Productions*

Survey data suggest that respondents comprehend that plays produced on their campuses are likely to depict content that is obviously not Christian, and that they do not conflate an actor’s portrayal of such viewpoints as tacit approval of them. Respondents agreed that “There is evil in the world, plays will contain evil also” (74% agreed or strongly agreed); they disagreed

that “When [they] see an actor portray something evil onstage, [they] wonder if that is how that person really behaves” (84% disagreed or strongly disagreed); and disagreed that “An actor who portrays a sinful act on stage is condoning that sin” (87% disagreed or strongly disagreed). However, respondents differed widely in their expectations about the type of non-Christian viewpoints that should be depicted in plays on their campus. Portrayals of drunkenness and murder were generally not considered problematic. Respondents from across schools disagreed that “An actor should not portray a character who is drunk” (82% disagreed or strongly disagreed) and that “An actor should not portray a character who commits murder” (87% disagreed or strongly disagreed). However, respondents from across all schools were divided in their expectations concerning the language in a play. Thus, the results across the schools were mixed in response to “I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language” (21% agreed, 23% strongly agreed, 20% were neutral, 24% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed). York agreed significantly more strongly with this statement than Pepperdine. Furthermore, older respondents were more likely to expect that plays produced on campus not contain offensive language. Results across the schools were similarly mixed in response to “If a play contains bad language, it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus” (4% strongly agreed, 21% agreed, 40% were neutral, 22% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed). Furthermore, on this issue respondents from all three schools differed significantly among themselves: York agreed most strongly with the need to edit offensive language, followed by Lipscomb which agreed less strongly, and then Pepperdine which agreed least strongly. Not surprisingly, older respondents were more likely to expect that offensive language should be removed from plays produced on campus.

Respondents across all the schools were also divided on whether plays should be appropriate for children and whether plays should be upbeat and life-affirming. They majorly disagreed with the item “I expect that any play produced on our campus will be suitable for children to attend,” (7% strongly agreed, 17% agreed, 17% were neutral, 35 % disagreed, and 21% strongly disagreed). They disagreed somewhat less with the item “Our theatre should be doing plays which are uplifting and light-hearted” (4% strongly agreed, 21% agreed, 40% were neutral, 22% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed). They were relatively neutral regarding the item “There are unfair restrictions placed on our department regarding what plays they produce” (9% strongly agreed, 13% agreed, 58% were neutral, 15% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed). Finally, respondents from across all schools undoubtedly agreed that “The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus” (75% agreed or strongly agreed).

#### *Faith and Learning Intercorrelations with Play Content*

Intercorrelations (mutual relations) were found between ranking statements that reflect an integrated model of faith and learning and responses to the three Likert-scale items regarding play selection and content. To the question “What makes your school a Christian school?” respondents who selected “Christian viewpoints are an integral part of classroom learning” also tended to agree with the following statements: “Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution,” “If a play contains bad language it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus,” and “Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college.” Similarly, regarding the question “What is the difference between any given academic course at your institution and the equivalent at a secular institution?” those respondents who selected “Students are encouraged to reflect on their

coursework in light of Christian faith” also tended to agree with three matching Likert-scale items: “Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution,” “If a play contains bad language it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus,” and “Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college.” The correlation among these statements suggests that respondents inclined to support the integration of faith and learning also expect plays to conform to the morals and values of the institution and to be free of offensive language. If, as this study seems to suggest, these three colleges are moving toward an integrated model of faith and learning, it also appears that the expectation for play content to conform to the morals and values of the institution remains firm or even becomes firmer. However, the correlation between these statements also suggests that those who were inclined to support the integration of faith and learning also expect plays to conform to the academic mission of the college. Significantly, these correlations—that plays should follow both the moral values of the institution and the aims of a liberal arts education—replicate the dual aims explained in the case study portion of this chapter. Respondents who favor an integrated model of faith and learning expect their theatre departments to serve the often-conflicting dual commitments to uphold *both* the Christian mission (morals and values) and the academic mission of their institutions.

#### *Survey Comments*

The quantity of optional comments in the surveys would seem to indicate a general interest in further discussion the relationship of theatre to Christian faith beyond the choices imposed by the scaled answers. Many respondents commented that they found the questions about this relationship difficult to answer. Furthermore, a number of comments revealed a wide diversity of opinions regarding play content.

## **Limitations**

Along with questionnaire responses by school members, the mixed method approach to this study (qualitative and quantitative) also facilitated an examination of public artifacts from the schools. However, this methodology did not take into account either direct observation or examination of primary sources. Furthermore, because of the limited information accumulated and lack of access to populations at Pepperdine, the case study portion related to Pepperdine University and its theatre program was restricted to publically available information, and, therefore, respondents from Pepperdine represent a very narrow segment of its eligible population.

The majority of the total survey respondents (56%) were from Lipscomb University. Therefore, the data analysis represents Lipscomb's population more so than Pepperdine's or York's. Additionally, the ratio of each constituency group (faculty, staff, student, etc.) is significantly different among schools, particularly since Lipscomb's respondents consisted largely of employees and Pepperdine's largely of students.

At Lipscomb and York, the survey was distributed by e-mail to all employees and students, but not to separate distribution lists for "alumni" or "parents." Accordingly, those respondents who identified themselves as "parents" or "alumni" were also likely to be found among other constituency groups (faculty, staff, administrators, students). Therefore, parents and alumni who responded to the survey consisted of individuals who are likely to be connected to their colleges in other ways as well. Because respondents were instructed to "select all [affiliations] that apply" (faculty, staff, administrator, student, parent, alumni), analysis of differences among these groups is not appropriate for this study.



Another limitation of the study is imposed by the limitations of forced-answer scale questions. In this kind of questionnaire, there is no opportunity to ask for clarification, which constituted a problem for many respondents. Furthermore, although rankings are very useful for certain measurements, they are less than useful for illuminating the magnitude of a respondent's feelings or the scope of the difference among items. Additionally, ranking forces respondents to assign a numerical value to each choice, even if they do not believe a particular choice has relevant value. The Likert-scale methodology also forces responses, but the choice of "neutral" is always an option for those without an opinion about a given item. Several Likert-scale items on this survey, for example, garnered a high percentage of neutral responses.

Because of these limitations, caution should be used in the extent to which these findings are generalized to these schools in themselves. Furthermore, extra special caution should be used in considering these findings to be "representative" of other Church of Christ schools.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings presented here leave many unanswered questions about the nature of the apparent shift from an add-on model to an integrated model at the three study schools. Researchers may be interested in learning more about the nature and breadth of these changes and how they are playing out materially across Church of Christ affiliated schools.

The 223 respondents who took part in the survey provide a small but valuable sample of the relationship between faith and learning and theatre among selected members of Church of Christ schools. Obviously, a more wide-ranging attitude-assessment of theatre programs at Churches of Christ colleges across the country could provide a more conclusive assessment of such attitudes.

Similarly, a widespread attitude-assessment of members of Churches of Christ who are *not* affiliated with colleges could provide a more conclusive assessment of the ways that members-at-large conceive of faith and learning and/or theatre in general. Such a study could facilitate improved communication of institutional objectives among administration, faculty, and students.

Specifically in regard to theatre, an attitude-assessment of audience members who attend campus plays would be especially beneficial. In a separate but related sphere of discussion, it would be valuable to learn how Church of Christ members feel about the use of drama and theatre in formal worship or in other church-related ministries. Furthermore, it would be valuable to learn how Churches of Christ leaders view their members' participation in "secular" (i.e., non-academic) theatre, and whether, for instance, they encourage their members to pursue careers in the fine and performing arts.

Finally, it would be valuable to learn the trends that are emerging at liberal arts schools within other faith traditions, that is, trends relating to models of faith and learning and to attitudes about theatre in general.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

According to Richard T. Hughes, higher education in Churches of Christ has evolved "with no well-defined theoretical model" (*Models* 411). "[I]magination and theological reflection in the context of a particular tradition," Hughes writes, "are the crucial ingredients for the creation of a theoretical model that might sustain and give long-term direction to Christian higher education" (*Models* 411). To sustain the educational enterprise without such theoretical foundations, it would appear that Churches of Christ have tended to rely on the moral principles espoused by those in leadership positions at Church of Christ schools.

The Church of Christ model of Christian higher education began in the mid-nineteenth century with Alexander Campbell's vision for Bethany College, that is, close study of the Bible side by side with a liberal arts education. His legacy continues in the commitments to Christian liberal education represented by the three schools in this study and indeed in all Church of Christ affiliated schools. Following Campbell's death and the subsequent divisions within the Restoration Movement, Church of Christ schools adopted an increasingly sectarian model exemplified by Nashville Bible College (now Lipscomb University) and York College. Douglass A. Foster in his article "Learning and Faith through the Eyes of Our Heritage" (2001) explains that with the exception of Pepperdine University, Church of Christ affiliated schools have, therefore, not been threatened by the trend towards secularization identified by Burtchaell's *Dying of the Light* (see Chapter One of this study) because they have "been committed to a narrow and decidedly confessional approach to higher education" (54). As Church of Christ institutions seem to move towards more a more ecumenical philosophy, however, unanticipated consequences have emerged. Foster explains:

We are unquestionably in a dilemma today in Churches of Christ higher education because a piece of what has been so central and ultimately defining is deteriorating in Churches of Christ generally. As we move away from the exclusivism that has largely defined our church and educational commitments, there is a legitimate fear that we will move – not so much immediately toward secularization – but into a broad evangelical stance like that once held by older Universities that have gone secular, that will gut any remaining commitment to our distinctive understandings and lead to secularization. (55)

Furthermore, with the breakdown of the Enlightenment foundations on which the Churches of Christ were established, Churches of Christ are now in the midst of an intense period of self-examination and perhaps redefinition. Ironically, Alexander Campbell, who believed that Scripture could be understood without intervening philosophical or theological aid, did indeed employ an interpretive methodology in his own understanding of Scripture. Although he did not

recognize it as such, he employed empirical methodology and thus attempted to interpret Scripture as, he said, a “book of facts,” something to be learned rationally, in the manner of scientific investigation. This was the method of Bible study he transmitted to his successors and their affiliated schools.

Hughes suggests that this “preoccupation with the biblical text as a legal pattern often obscured the Bible’s theological core;” nevertheless, he suggests that this legalistic emphasis in Churches of Christ is changing (*Models* 405). In recent years, Hughes points out, there has been a shift within Churches of Christ towards the broader theological themes found in Scripture, a shift that has helped create “a climate in which a theological worldview can develop and which can help sustain the enterprise of Christian higher education in ways that were not possible for previous generations” (*Models* 405). Hughes further explains what he means by “theological thinking” in his book *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (2001). Theological thinking, he says, differs from Biblical thinking in that one can “learn biblical facts and never embrace theological work at all” (6). On the other hand, thinking theologically demands that we “think creatively about the *meaning* of what we believe,” which can happen only when we reject the conception of the Bible as a rule book and embrace it as a theological text, that is, “a book about God” (7-8).

Logically, the apparent shift in the faith and learning models leads to questions about the sufficiency of the theological vision that sustains such integration, and, if so, what that vision entails. Hughes identifies a “wave of renewal” sweeping through Churches of Christ, resulting in a new understanding of the Bible as a “theological treatise.” As a result, he says, “sectarianism, exclusivism, and legalism are slowly giving way to great biblical themes like creation, redemption, and self-giving love,” which are precisely the kinds of biblical themes that are

needed to sustain higher education (*Models* 411). If Hughes is correct, the implications for the theatre studies are significant. He has described the specific ways in which the add-on model is particularly problematic for the performing arts, for without Biblical command or precedent, theatre is conceptualized as a “secular” activity independent from Christian faith. Because of this, Church of Christ college programs in the arts, Hughes contends, “seldom foster artistic creativity in ways that invite serious theological reflection on the creative enterprise itself, or in ways that allow self-conscious integration of artistic creativity with theological imagination.” This condition leads students to conclude that their faith commitments have little to do with their academic, artistic, or professional activities in theatre (*Models* 410). However, an integrated model encourages this connection. Stan C. Denman, whose dissertation (1997) examines the theatre program at Abilene Christian University, another Church of Christ college, argues that the Church’s lack of a formalized aesthetic philosophy has resulted in the belief that theatre programs in Church of Christ affiliated colleges should be used as a means to promote a “Bible-based morality” (174). The empirical worldview corresponding to Churches of Christ has historically placed little value on poetic and metaphorical expression. For that reason, many Christian persons involved with Church of Christ colleges consider that a morality-based theatre program is the expected way in which theatre programs fulfill the Christian mission of the college.

The integrated model provides the missing theological “bridge” between the worlds of the secular and the sacred and, thus, the worlds of Christian faith and theatre. If the change currently occurring among Churches of Christ congregations is leading its members to consider the *core* of the biblical narrative—that the message of the *whole* Bible is that of the relationship between God and humanity—then a theological foundation for the development of an aesthetic

that considers the *whole* work of dramatic art may now be possible. Through this viewpoint, theatre may be conceived of as an expression of the human condition as a whole. In other words, a play may be seen through Scripture's comprehensive sin-redemption narrative instead of whether a play endorses or contravenes certain Scriptural commands.

Academic programs in theatre in all three schools appear to be a vital part of institutional missions. Faculty members and department chairs at Lipscomb and York describe their theatre programs in terms of a theologically-grounded aesthetic that integrates faith and theatre. Theatre programs at Lipscomb and York are supported by their administrations, as evidenced by the recent growth in size, budget, and academic offerings at Lipscomb and by the forthcoming construction of a new performing arts facility at York. Outside the programs themselves, survey respondents in general also indicate strong support for the contributions of the theatre program to a liberal arts education along with equally strong support for the development of artistic talent in students.

Nevertheless, a sizeable constituency in all three schools expects plays to be markedly consistent with the schools' stated morals and values. While these survey respondents do understand that exposure to non-Christian viewpoints are consistent with a liberal education, they are not in agreements about what sort non-Christian material is acceptable in the public performance of plays. Their differences are not inconsistent with the information gathered from the case studies, which shows clearly that all three theatre programs are precautionary in their selection of plays and sometime feel the need to excise or modify potentially offensive content. Some respondents interpret this to mean their schools are giving too much emphasis to religious values at the expense of academic ones; others maintain that moral guidelines for play selection are necessary and desirable for theatre programs at any Christian school.

In any case, theatre programs at all Churches of Christ colleges must continue to struggle with the often-competing claims of Christian faith and academic freedom. These claims come not only from college administrators, but also from the public at large. Theatre, unlike most other academic subjects, requires an audience. It follows that theatre departments need to consider audience expectations in the planning of public performances. Yet, audience expectations taken by themselves can unknowingly inhibit the wide-ranging exploration of the human condition that the development of young artists requires. Institutional and public opinion should always be prudently considered, particularly by arts programs, and even more so when issues of faith and intellectual freedom are involved. The integrated model of faith and learning emerging at the colleges in this study has the potential to offer a theoretical framework for effective communication between these competing claims.

In September of 2008, the non-sectarian Coalition for Theatre Education, a partnership of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and the Educational Theatre Association, issued a “Statement on Freedom of Expression” endorsing and elaborating on the 1990 policy statement on academic freedom and artistic expression published by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The AAUP statement reads, in part, as follows:

[A]rtistic expression in the classroom, studio, and workshop... merits the same assurance of academic freedom that is accorded to other scholarly and teaching activities. Since faculty and student artistic presentations to the public are integral to their teaching, learning, and scholarship, these presentations no less merit protection. (qtd in “Coalition”)

Because theatre is often subject to closer scrutiny from its constituents than are the other arts, the Coalition offers theatre educators the following recommendations for prioritizing their goals:

1. Mastery of content (literature, history, criticism, skills, etc.) and the ability to articulate a philosophy of theatre and education to administrators, parents, and students.

2. The formulation of educational and artistic objectives for each play, scene, reading, and/or creative drama experience.
3. The development of workable techniques, activities, and materials relevant to the interests, abilities, and maturity of students.
4. Regular communication regarding educational theatre activities and goals to students, school administration, and (where appropriate) parents. This may include providing students with instruction on educational and artistic reasons for inclusion of particular plays in the repertory, and discussion of considerations such as audience, technical capabilities, casting, and other factors that influence repertory choices.
5. Respect for works of dramatic art, which encompasses paying royalties as appropriate, complying with copyright law, and obtaining permission for text changes when required by contract or statute to do so.
6. A good-faith effort to inform administrators of potentially controversial issues well in advance of the scheduled production.
7. Consideration of community expectations and attitudes in the selection of study and performance materials.
8. Providing the community with information regarding the artistic and educational objectives of the theatre program.
9. Maintaining an environment in the classroom, rehearsal, and performance that promotes the free exchange and examination of ideas of social significance.

(“Coalition” 3)

The author’s modest hope with this dissertation has been to offer information and advice to theatre departments at Christian colleges (and colleges at large) in the process of coming to terms with their ever more challenging obligations to both faith and learning. With this in mind, the following proposals are respectfully offered for further consideration.

First, members of Christian college communities should encourage initiatives across campus for discussing the integration of faith and learning. A Christian college is built upon its vision of this relationship, its ethos, and its support from Christian persons. Such discussions across both disciplines and populations (faculty, staff, administrators, students, parents, alumni) can aid in forming and maintaining a consistent institutional identity.

Second, faith and learning initiatives can occur at both macro and micro levels. Theatre departments can promote integration through service-learning projects, official participation in chapel and other department or campus-wide devotionals, and discussions about Christian faith



in the classroom and in performance. Theatre departments should articulate a specific philosophy of faith and learning for theatre and make it available as well to key constituencies in other institution as Lipscomb and York have done.

Third, theatre departments can promote proactive integration by creating learning goals and outcomes forthrightly connected with the Christian mission of the college for each course in the curriculum. These goals and outcomes need not be the primary goals of a course; some courses *could* emphasize them more than other courses would. In this model, learning outcomes might be exactly the same, for example, as equivalent theatre history courses taught elsewhere, but discussions of the relationship between Christian faith and the related development of theatre over time might be addressed in ways that are different from secular institutions. Indeed, respondents to the survey across all schools *expected* that courses at their institution would be recognizably different from equivalent courses at secular institutions. With such goals and outcomes articulated across the curriculum, theatre departments could thereby demonstrate this hoped-for difference.

Fourth, theatre departments should clearly articulate their liberal arts goals, values, and learning outcomes, particularly the ways in which their goals, values, and outcomes support larger institutional goals about equivalent matters. As Thomas H. Gressler has argued, theatre has the potential to be the “essential liberal art,” reaching across disciplines and making use of a vast array of learning styles (see Chapter One). Survey results suggest that some respondents across all schools may neither grasp the full extent of the theatre program’s potential role in the academic life of the institution nor be aware of the ways in which theatre can be beneficial to the development of the whole person. Theatre departments probably need to be more forthright in spelling out the educational values that their program can offer to students irrespective of

academic major. Furthermore, it would be fitting for theatre departments to actively seek out interdisciplinary connections through contributions to general education requirements and partnerships with individual faculty members from other disciplines on selected projects, courses, discussions, researches, and publications.

Fifth, theatre departments should articulate professional and academic goals, values, and learning outcomes for each theatre course and dramatic production. While survey respondents across the schools understand that the primary mission of their department is academic preparation for theatre majors, respondents are conflicted about the ultimate purpose of dramatic presentations. Theatre educators may need to make more explicit that live performance *is* a classroom, and, therefore, is precisely the only place where certain educational outcomes can be achieved. While it is true that theatre departments at Christian colleges have a public component unlike perhaps any other discipline, and while they do provide entertainment and enjoyment to audiences as well as extracurricular enrichment to its students, and while they do, at times, promulgate Christian principles; nevertheless, their primary purpose is academic.

Sixth, because of the public nature of theatre performance and the expectation that theatre should reflect the values of the institution, careful communication and planning (both long-range and strategic) are imperative. As the Coalition suggests, theatre departments should take into consideration community expectations and strive to understand all the various constituency groups (and their unique proclivities) that comprise their audience. This can be accomplished in the following ways:

a) Theatre departments should make every effort to get to know the individuals in their audiences and their expectations.

- b) Theatre departments should work closely with administrators ahead of time when potentially controversial materials are being considered for performance.
- c) Theatre departments may need to communicate the nature of copyright laws and the protection they provide for published playwrights. It is likely that many members of the college community are not aware of the legal and ethical ramifications of even minor script alterations, though this is somewhat less an issue in academia than it is in the profession.
- d) Theatre faculty members should provide dramaturgical resources to play participants and audience members, thereby demonstrating the historical, cultural, literary, religious and/or cross-disciplinary connections to the play script and production concept. This kind of research project supports the artistic efforts of the production team, provides an opportunity for cross-disciplinary connections, and affords a valuable opportunity to connect academic learning outcomes with a Christian mission.
- e) Immediately following productions, theatre departments could host “talk-backs,” a practice that is common at Lipscomb University and many other schools, to encourage discussion about the themes of the play in the context of both Christian faith and interdisciplinary connections.
- f) Theatre departments could develop a tiered system of play production. In order to be actual “theatre,” the creative impulse behind dramatic literature is fulfilled only in the presence of an audience; however, the audience need not always be a “public” one. For example, a first tier performance may be at the interdepartmental level, open only to the theatre or performing arts areas; a second tier may be a campus-wide performance, but not for the “general” public; a third tier performance may be open to the general public. Departments can creatively organize its dual aims by selectively engaging audiences according to their role in the educational community, such as Lipscomb and York are already doing. At Lipscomb, for example, complete academic

freedom characterizes classroom study, but plays for mainstage productions are very carefully vetted. Lipscomb cooperates with its resident theatre company, the Blackbird Theatre (see Chapter Four) and other local professional companies for exploration of dramatic works that might conceivably draw sharp criticism if produced on the Lipscomb University stage. York, too, employs a tiered system, with different criteria for its fall comedy, spring drama, student-directed one-acts, and off-campus forensics competitions based on audience make-up and expectations.

g) Departments' careful selecting of plays from across the spectrum of dramatic literature, along with specific communication to audience members, would help to satisfy all constituents. Theatre departments may wish to develop a system of communicating to audience members the nature of a production and its target audience, such as the type of rating system Lipscomb has developed. Theatre departments meet learning outcomes and satisfy public audiences by providing a variety of genres and styles of play productions throughout an academic year and from season to season.

In conclusion, the identity of Churches of Christ affiliated colleges ultimately depends upon the outcome of the redefinition process currently underway among many of its leaders and other actively practicing members. The scrupulously rational Enlightenment paradigm that has traditionally governed the pedagogical methodologies at schools affiliated with Churches of Christ—and the associated suspicion of the arts and imagination in general—seems to be receding. At a time when the learning environment at these schools is becoming more friendly to the integration of faith and learning, theatre departments may now be capable of thriving in ways not been possible in previous eras.

The three schools selected for this study are strongly committed to both their academic and Christian missions. Therefore, the strains between both worlds continue to affect theatre

programs in concrete ways. The history of the relationship between Christianity and theatre shows that while each generation poses new questions about this dialectic, the tensions are ever-present, even if sometimes not obvious. Todd E Johnson and Dale Savidge, co-authors of *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue* (2009), explain:

Christian artists in particular live with tension between morality and aesthetics—the sometimes contradictory demands of their conscience and religious traditions (or criteria set upon them by keepers of Christian morality), on the one hand, and the freedom of imaginative expression demanded by theatre, on the other. [...] [T]his tension is an inherent and healthy part of living the life of a believer artist. (99)

These tensions, far from being detrimental, may even enhance the learning environment as the worlds of academics and Christian faith provoke, challenge, and enrich each other in the years to come.

**APPENDIX A**

## Questionnaire

With which college or university are you currently affiliated?

Lipscomb University     Pepperdine University     York College

Check all that apply:

- Faculty  
 Staff  
 Student  
 Administrator  
 Alumni  
 Parent

If Student: how many credit hours completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Male     Female

Age:

- 18-24  
 25-34  
 35-44  
 45-54  
 55+

Which best describes your current religious affiliation?

- Agnostic  
 Atheist  
 Catholic  
 Churches of Christ  
 Evangelical Protestant  
 Mainline Protestant  
 Other

Highest level of education:

- High School Diploma  
 Some College  
 Bachelor's Degree  
 Graduate Studies  
 Advanced Degree (M.A., Ph.D., etc)

If you have a college degree, which best describes it:  
 \_\_\_\_\_Arts      \_\_\_\_\_Sciences      \_\_\_\_\_N/A

Approximately how often do you attend artistic activities (plays, concerts, museum etc.) per year?

- \_\_\_\_\_0-1  
 \_\_\_\_\_2-5  
 \_\_\_\_\_5-10  
 \_\_\_\_\_10-15  
 \_\_\_\_\_15+

Which best describes your attendance at campus theatrical productions:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I go to as many as I can.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I go only to those which interest me personally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I go to support a student or students whom I know personally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I go to support my school and/or theatre department  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I rarely attend

Rank the following in order of importance from 1 through 5, with 1 being the most important, and 5 being the least important.

The purpose of theatre at your institution should be:

- \_\_\_\_\_ an extracurricular activity  
 \_\_\_\_\_ a component of education in the humanities  
 \_\_\_\_\_ for professional training for theatre majors  
 \_\_\_\_\_ for evangelism and promulgation of Christian principles  
 \_\_\_\_\_ for entertainment and enjoyment

What makes your school a Christian school?

- \_\_\_\_\_The institution is operated by persons of faith  
 \_\_\_\_\_There are multiple devotional and spiritual activities for students  
 \_\_\_\_\_The campus community is expected to follow certain rules concerning moral behavior  
 \_\_\_\_\_Faculty and staff model Christ-like behavior to students  
 \_\_\_\_\_Christian viewpoints are an integral part of classroom learning

What is the difference between any given academic course at your institution and the equivalent at a secular institution?

- \_\_\_\_\_Professors care about his/her students  
 \_\_\_\_\_There is a prayer or scripture reading before class

\_\_\_\_\_ Students are encouraged to reflect on their coursework in light of Christian faith

\_\_\_\_\_ Course content would exclude those topics or persons which are offensive to Christian principles

\_\_\_\_\_ There is really no difference between academic courses at my institution and secular university

For the following items, please respond with one of the following: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Agree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The study of theatre is a way by which students come to understand others and themselves.					
I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language.					
Students who have abilities the performing arts should be encouraged to develop and use those abilities.					
Performances given on our campus should be used as a tool of evangelism.					
Students who attend our institution should not be exposed to non-Christian viewpoints.					
Plays selected for performance on our campus should include plays from the canon of dramatic literature.					
There is evil in the world, so plays will contain evil also.					
The study of theatre is a necessary component of a college liberal arts curriculum.					
When I see an actor portray something evil onstage, I wonder if that is how that person really behaves.					
Participation in the theatre is conducive to a student's holistic education.					
An actor should not portray a character who is drunk.					
I expect that it any play produced on our campus will be suitable for children to attend.					
There are unfair restrictions placed on our theatre department regarding what plays they produce.					
An actor who portrays a sinful act onstage is condoning that sin.					
Human beings are creative because they are made in					



the image of a creative God.					
Plays presented on our campus should reflect the morals and values of the institution.					
A theatre major does not really fit into our identity as a Christian college.					
An actor should not portray a character who commits murder.					
Our theatre should be doing plays which are uplifting and lighthearted.					
A career in the secular theatre is not appropriate for a Christian.					
Plays produced on our campus should reflect the academic mission of the college.					
If a play contains bad language, it should be edited (removed) from plays presented on this campus					
The theatre department makes good choices for plays they select to produce on campus.					

If you wish to add any comments, please write them in the space provided. Thank you for your time!

**APPENDIX B****Research Information Sheet**

Title of Study: *Models of Faith and Learning in Theatre at Colleges and Universities Affiliated with Churches of Christ: Selected Case Studies*

Principal Investigator (PI): Catherine Parker  
Wayne State University Ph.D. Candidate  
248-568-2701

**Purpose:**

You are being asked to be in a research study to assess attitudes of faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, students, and parents affiliated with York College, Lipscomb University, and Pepperdine University towards the relationship between theatre and Christian faith. This study is being conducted at Wayne State University.

**Study Procedures:**

If you choose to take part in the study, you will be asked to complete a brief online questionnaire regarding your views about the institution with which you are affiliated and your views about theatre. The questionnaire is completely anonymous, and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer some brief demographic questions and several closed-ended questions regarding your values and opinions about faith, learning, and theatre. Following the questions, space is provided for any comments you may wish to provide. Once the questionnaire is completed, your participation in the study is concluded.

**Benefits**

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

**Risks**

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study. This study meets the technical definition of a “minimal risk” study.

**Compensation**

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality**

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept without any identifiers.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

Taking part in this study is voluntary.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Catherine Parker at the following phone number: 248-218-2154. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Participation:**

By completing the questionnaire you are agreeing to participate in this study.

**APPENDIX C****Survey Comments**York:

We need to encourage the arts more in worship, but we also need to keep differentiating between church and college. Where will our Christian artists go if we can't do "real art" on our campuses?

I think that there are more views other than those presented in the statements placed in the ranking questions. Also, I would rather discuss some of the statements above rather than label them with agree or disagree. I believe that Theatre can be presented without the actual performance of sex and bad language and still be very creative sometimes even more creative than just using bad language.

I do have a personal problem with very "heavy" plays. I just do not enjoy them. They certainly can be produced on campus, but I probably will not go.

Unfortunately, the college does have to "please" parents, donors, towns people, so the plays do have to have a few restrictions on them. Our theater person does a very good job, I feel, of doing "real" productions yet putting the York College stamp of approval on them.

Having the arts on a Christian campus is very important. God gives every one of his children gifts that can be used to glorify him. Theatre is a reflection on humanity itself and just because it includes characters that are morally incorrect doesn't mean that the whole play is morally incorrect. Sometimes a play is trying to teach something moral through things that are immoral.

I think the "ranking 1-5" section was confusing and difficult to complete. Some of those things do not even exist on my campus (i.e., scripture reading or prayer before class) so I didn't know how to rank the "importance" of something I don't have.

Otherwise, thanks for doing this study! Some of this information really needs to be measured and communicated. Do you think you could send a copy of your dissertation to the schools you sent this out to? I personally would LOVE to read it. Thanks.

York College has one of the finest Theater Departments anywhere. It has been an honor and a privilege that my child can go to such a fine institution.

Pepperdine:

I am at Austin Graduate School of Theology, not currently affiliated with any of the school above, though I did two degrees at Pepperdine University.

Best of wishes with your dissertation!

To say that being a theatre major or acting as a sinful character is a sin is plain wrong.

Pepperdine is doing Les Mis this fall, which I think is an excellent opportunity to expose students to theatre. It is not a happy story, but does include Christian themes, and reflects on life.

Religion should not hold an influence over what plays are shown on campus. Creativity should be free-flowing, and not restrictive at all i.e. religion should not inhibit this creativity.

Lipscomb:

You all are doing a great job in a challenging environment. Stay the course!

I believe we are exposed to so much violence, obscene language, vulgarity and negativity by just being a part of this world, that your theater productions should help counter act this, rather than be a part of the world and what it says are appropriate/acceptable standards. When I attend Lipscomb productions, I do expect and hope for much, much higher standards of what is portrayed than the world holds. Let's be different, for sure, but in a Christian way. Just a thought. Best wishes to you!!

I think the theater department deserves complete authority over their play choices and artistic freedom in what they choose to portray. If a play is children-appropriate, we will advertise it as such. Do not limit the talent of the theater department.

While theatre on a Christian University campus does not need to always teach a moral or spiritual lesson, it should not contain bad language or sexual conduct unbecoming of a Christian. There are many lighthearted musicals and comedies that can be performed on the stage of a Christian University.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Because theatre tends to be an area where gay professionals -- and students -- become “out and proud,” theatre departments at Christian universities should provide a respectful, Christ-like environment for gay students. Yet when the situations arise, the departments also need to remind all students that the Bible clearly states that sexual behavior should only occur between husband and wife – one man, one woman, for life.

Gratuitous or explicit violence, language, and/or sex should not be part of a production on a Christian campus. A creative director can make the point offensive and well without making it obscene.

I know I am different than most “consumers” in that I check movie review websites for the language content (& other types of content) of movies before I choose to watch one. There are words that I find obscene and offensive and choose not to hear. There are other words that I can

""tolerate"" if they are not excessive. (And if I was sitting next to Jesus would I tolerate it?- that's an embarrassing question to ask myself !)

You cannot please everyone, but I would hope that there would be a lot of thought put into choosing to use foul language (which words/how much) in any production on a Christian campus.

I believe that anyone can be a Christian and hold onto their Christian values in whatever profession they choose.

I also wonder if there might be many careers that have more obstacles (to “walking the walk”) than others? All Christians (no matter their career choice) should be aware of the temptations and be mindful to be on their guard against the lures of sin.

Those who find these things offensive shouldn't go. Assuming that an actor is so good at the part he or she portrays that they could really be that person good or evil means to me that the actors perform their parts very well. In other words, they are ACTING and they are good at it. It also means that our theater department is also good at doing their jobs! They all know their true selves.

I believe that we owe a huge amount of respect to the work of the “playwright” and to the form in which the work was written. Censorship should be “minimal” at best.

Theatre allows students to see the world as Jesus did...in its beauty and in its ugliness. “In” the world but not “of” the world. Our students have amazing hearts and minds to discern which “characters” or “performances” they want to emulate in their own lives and which they do not. Jesus was a master story teller and the characters he used to illustrate life lessons were not always good or perfect.

The issue of the appropriateness of theater productions should be considered in light of the community. There is balance to be maintained not only for the participating students but also for the audiences who attend. You don't want to kill your theater program with productions that the community is not interested in seeing or that the majority of them would be offended by; however, you still need to be able to include productions with powerful and serious themes that deal with the reality of culture and the world in which we live. Decisions about which productions to present to the given context and community requires discretion and wisdom so that the overall educational experience for participating students is a positive one. It would be harmful to students for them to pour the required work and labor into a production that the campus community and theater audience will reject as offensive or something they would not be interested in attending. I would question the value of that educational outcome for anyone. Therefore, regardless of whether it is a faith-based institution or not, the greater context needs to be considered in the selection of productions to build enthusiastic participation and involvement by the community in the theater program and most importantly in the students and their

educational outcomes. Theater programs face great challenges in the context of shrinking institutional budgets and reduced funding for education; therefore, the health of the overall theater program must be foremost in the minds of the decision-makers and the decisions may not be the same from one institutional and community context to the next.

For theatre to really resonate with me, it needs to represent authentic emotions and struggle (even comedies). I don't think that is possible if you are restricted from portraying the fallen nature of our world. I think the best theatre teaches us about ourselves and our struggle with our own fears, desires, and broken social structures.

Christian thespians can evangelize to other cast member and be Christ to anyone who stay to meet the cast or comes in contact off stage. I think asking if they can be in secular productions is like asking if Christian business majors have to choose work in Churches or Christian NGOs to be really Christian. If they don't, being Christian may be harder, but almost any work situation can still afford plenty of opportunities to serve God's Kingdom.

I answered with a lot of neutrals because I'm fairly unfamiliar with Theater in general and as a major. Also due to not having given this much thought (theater/Christianity) can't really give thoughtful responses. I don't think many of the statements can be agreed with as a yes/no response, therefore neutral.

I think the biggest problem is those who don't appreciate the development of a play and can only see the individual parts. In my opinion the best way, out side of personal experience, is to see the results of bad choices. Even more so if there is resolution that results in it making the person a better steward of what they have given to them.

Some of the questions don't allow for nuance in the answers. For example, with respect to bad language, I think there is probably a threshold beyond which a play on campus should not go. I am also unclear what you mean by language like "tool for evangelism." I don't think plays should be sermons or necessarily overtly Christian in messages. But I like the idea of talk-back sessions where Christian faith can be brought into conversation with the plays.

From all I have seen, LU's theater dept. does a very good job.

Since the Lord God in editing scripture allowed evil to remain and be represented as evil I feel we do a disservice to ourselves and others and we dishonor Him if we refuse to show evil. It is as if we are telling the creator of the universe that we can do a better job than He did by editing out all the stuff we think is bad.

To explain any discrepancies between my answers, I would generally expect plays at our school to be appropriate for children. However, I would also expect a "warning" if the play might contain situations that I might not want my child to see and would be find if the school were doing a more dramatic play with darker subjects, within reason.

I think the public should be informed if a play is not suitable for children. I think there are some words which should be used at a play at Lipscomb but the softer curse words are fine if it is in the play.

I do not believe that every play must always be appropriate for children, but I do think there should be family friendly options every semester.

I do not believe that every play should be free of 'sinful acts' but I do not think that we should be putting on plays that portray a sinful world view as a positive."

Vital to our arts programs but sometimes difficult in a Christian institution. Our department makes great choices to provide a great atmosphere for our majors and our community.

The theatre that I have personally seen on campus has reflected the mission of the school. I believe in students being able to be creative; however, as Christians, we should always consider how our actions glorify God. Because of that, there is some content in plays that I believe to be inappropriate for our campus.

If I could go to more performances I certainly would. I have seen some incredible plays at Lipscomb!

I believe students who have an interest in theatre and want to pursue that goal should be encouraged to do so. God gives each person different talents, and while I may not be comfortable on stage, some people are. I believe God gives each person gifts to use for His glory, so if a person is acting on stage to achieve this in his/her life, then he/she should be encouraged to do so. I believe our institution has a solid reputation in the community, and we got this by being and presenting people and work that is kind and of good character. I don't believe ANY department on campus should do things that would hinder this reputation or that doesn't adhere to the traditions that make us unique, theatre or otherwise.

Language was mentioned a couple times, I think the difference between portraying murder or a drunk is just that it is portraying it, where as foul language actually requires saying it out loud. The same reasoning that nudity is not permissible even if a play called for it. There is no good reason why simple words cannot be substituted for bad language. It does not add any value and I usually walk out or turn the channel when it is used receptively. Just my thoughts, thanks

As far as behavior simulated or offensive language being used -- I would agree that it is permissible if not gratuitous, rewarded or put in a positive light in the whole context of the play.

As far as selection of plays, they should not all be uplifting and light-hearted since life is not that way but I wouldn't want to attend all one or the other -- a mixture is good.

I do not feel I have been involved enough to make clear judgements on several of these questions.



The best production I've seen at Lipscomb was Les Miserables. I believe we reached new heights with that production!

Some of the wording of these questions made them difficult to understand. Some questions were difficult to answer as worded. "I expect that plays produced on our campus will not contain any bad language" I would like it if one could go to our plays and not hear bad language, but currently I "expect" that's what will happen nonetheless.

At Lipscomb, we are blessed to have an encouraging atmosphere for Theater.

I believe strongly that theater/art can be appreciated for its artistic value regardless of whether it has Christian value. I also believe that we are called to steward the gifts and talents of our students, and those that are gifted in theater and the performing arts should be encouraged to develop those gifts. In any case, the arts often lack Christian believers, and encouraging our students to faith to participate in the arts in the community or as a career will give them excellent opportunities to witness to non-believers.

The answers to these questions are general. For example, the one about a character that commits sins and crimes, such as murder. I immediately thought, "If you exclude those, that would mean you couldn't do a lot of Shakespeare, or even classic comedy, such as Arsenic and Old Lace. I'm not supportive of gratuitous violence, but obviously there's a lot of theatre that presents crimes, including murder, that doesn't advocate for the crime. I realize there are plenty of works that are in poor taste, but that's a different issue.

Some of the questions listed above are difficult to answer. Do I believe it is OK for an actor to portray a murderer or drunk? Yes. But, do I agree with an actor being glorified for portraying a sinful act? My answer would be, no. As a Christian institution, we should be "set apart". We should be aware of language; as well as, inappropriate attire. I have no desire to attend a play where I will hear foul language or see immodestly dressed actors/actresses. True entertainment can be found without the use of those things. All plays should not have to be "light-hearted", and I do not feel that all plays should be geared for children. But, I do believe that a Christian university should offer plays that will entertain only if our God can be glorified throughout the production. That is our mission...to glorify our God and Creator in ALL that we do!

I completed this to be helpful (hopefully) to the research, but I became frustrated that many of the items pushed me toward very artificial answers. For example, in rating 1-5 how a class at our Christian institution is different from any other, only my no. 1 has any relevance at all, in my view, yet I had to give the others some artificial value to complete the question. All the best with your work

Some of the choices are too vague to present my opinion. I would like to qualify them.

First, I strongly agree that bad language should be edited out. I don't take my children to those movies and if you have that language in a play. I do not want to attend and I would encourage those I know to not attend. We do need to uphold Christian values but...that does not mean that we can't "play a drunk" or "murder someone". The difference is you are telling a story not really being drunk or killing. When you use curse words you are really cursing. Modesty is also an issue. You can play a immodest person while still being modest. If you wore very revealing cloths then you are not acting you are really being immodest. I would also find it very difficult to appreciate a play that presented immoral behavior in a good light. If the hero of the play is drunk all the time and it all works out fine then I don't really want to see that play. The sins/actions in question should not be accepted and supported. That does not mean every play has to have an anti-drunk theme but in the same way it can't have a pro-drunk theme either. I would not tell someone about a friend and in the same sentence say he is the greatest friend in the world, he is an alcoholic and he would do anything for anyone. That is what a play is like when bad behavior is seemingly supported as fine. The correct way to present the sentence would be to end it with, "and unfortunately he is an alcoholic." The world understands this idea. They don't hold the same values we do but the values they have would also be protected. A play about a racist would never be presented to a wide audience if the racist was the hero and his actions presented as okay. Or a child molester who molest children and everyone is okay with it. You just don't do that and we should have clearer and stronger values than they have.

Criteria for choosing plays should be no different than criteria for choosing literature. The quality of the piece is most important, and at least some of the productions should provoke thought – even questioning of what we assume our students believe.

I believe that real life can be portrayed on the theater stage, but producing plays which would be deemed offensive by the majority of our constituents, just for the sake of having something edgy or offensive is not necessary.

I would love to attend all of the productions on our campus, but time and energy do not permit that

While I don't think Christian universities should omit all evil, I do feel it appropriate to edit out extreme or excessive bad language.

I spent from July 1958 through June 1959 in NY and attended the entire Broadway season. Stars included Claudette Colbert, Charles Boyer, Jason Robards, Paul Newman, Helen Hayes, Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Arlene Frances, Martin Gabel, Joseph Cotton, Walter Matthau, Robert Preston, Sir Cedric Hardwick, Ethel Merman, Jack Klugman, and Ralph Bellamy. plus others, The Lipscomb University Theater has reached new heights in quality of productions. We buy L.Univ tkts and no longer subscribe to TPAC tickets.

I think Professor Mike Fernandez is doing a marvelous job bringing an awareness about 'theatre' to the Lipscomb Community. I'm embarrassed that i havge not ben able to support the

productions more. There are ample opportunities to attend and the productions are very inviting. Thank you for having the political savvy and the 'sticktoitiveness' to make all of us proud of our theatre department.

If we are to truly explore the world around us through the art of performance in theatre, being realistic is important and necessary. How can best we discuss evils in the world or the way to react to them without seeing an example of such behavior? A person portraying a murderer has not committed murder, not even in his/her heart. We put on plays for children about bible stories all the time - take the Good Samaritan for example. The people who portray the robber or those who pass by the wounded are not bad people. They are expressing a story so that the audience will gain a deeper understanding of the world and how to function in it as Christians. Putting on plays about bad circumstances or actions will not make our university bad. It will help us to understand how the world is working around us and will spark discussions about how to react to such things in our lives. We have talk backs after nearly every show for this very purpose.

I feel that theater majors should portray the realness of the characters and situations that the stories they are telling us envelope because the real world is not like Lipscomb, its not a bubble, all bad deeds are not hidden from plain sight. They teach us Life through stories, the perspectives of other people. I feel that the theater department here does a wonderful job and they show that God moves through the arts even if the rest of the world doesnt see it.

From the questions being asked, I am guessing some people really do believe portrayal of "evil" by an actor, equates to his/her being or condoning evil. Seriously... acting is best received when it's natural and realistic... thus, plays that are realistic (with depiction of both good and bad) are the best and often, it's a persons struggle with the dark side of themselves or life and their ultimate victory that is so engaging/moving. Also, you want to give your students the opportunity to act in various themes/plays etc. You can't restrict their education just because some nutjob considers something "unchristian." True faith isn't as shallow as these people.

I'm all for giving theatre departments some free reign. I just don't think they should produce anything too outrageous, like plays with character similar to Avenue Q or Book of Mormon. Plays like that could have value, but I don't think that they're appropriate for a Christian institution. However, I do prefer plays to represent diverse points of view. How could they be interesting if they were merely uplifting and light-hearted evangelism tools?

I would like to see a rise in students participating in the productions for two reasons: 1) productions are, as I stated, beneficial to a student's holistic education, and 2) are very fun and would be enjoyed by most - despite the laborious rehearsals. Also, race should not be taken into account when it comes to productions - no matter who is on the auditioning board

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**ABSTRACT****MODELS OF FAITH AND LEARNING AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
AFFILIATED WITH CHURCHES OF CHRIST: SELECTED CASE STUDIES**

by

**CATHERINE L. PARKER****May 2014****Advisor:** Dr. James Thomas**Major:** Theatre**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The Churches of Christ, a body of Christian believers descending from the nineteenth century American Restoration Movement, have a well-documented history of establishing and supporting liberal arts colleges and universities. This study of theatre programs at three of these institutions—Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University, and York College—examines the model of faith and learning operating at each school and in its respective theatre department. This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach combining a multiple case study with a self-administered Likert-scale questionnaire, illuminating the ways that the schools describe their model of faith and learning, the ways that the theatre departments at the schools interpret this model, and the ways that a cross-section of the members of these schools understands this model along with their corresponding expectations of the theatre program. Robert Benne’s definition of Christian higher education according to three components—*vision*, *ethos*, and *Christian persons*—provides the theoretical framework guiding this study. Accordingly, an “add-on” model features academic studies alongside of Christian ethos and persons, whereas an “integrated” model features some measurable degree of integration in the classroom between the worlds of faith and academics. Statistical evaluations of the survey data are reported according to

an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Correlation Coefficients. Survey data are then compared, using Benne's categories, to the case study findings. Based on results of this study, recommendations are offered to teachers and directors in theatre programs at any faith-based institution of higher learning.

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Catherine L. Parker attended Rochester College (then Michigan Christian College) and graduated summa cum laude in May 1996 with a B.S. in Psychology. The following September, she enrolled at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) to pursue a Master's Degree in Theatre Arts. While enrolled at EMU, she commuted to Rochester College to direct plays and to teach courses in Appreciation of Theatre and Oral Interpretation of Literature. Upon graduating summa cum laude from EMU in 1999, she began teaching and directing full-time at Rochester College, where she is currently employed. In the summer of 2001, Parker was invited to attend Faith and Learning conference on the campus of Pepperdine University with Richard T. Hughes. It was there that she first encountered the ideas about faith and learning that provide the theoretical framework of this study. During her work at Rochester College, Parker has developed a theatre minor, interdisciplinary concentration, and most recently, a theatre major. Parker will graduate summa cum laude with a Ph.D. in Theatre from Wayne State University in May 2014.