

10-1-2018

The Future of Undergraduate Biblical Higher Education: ABHE and the Bible College Movement

T. Scott Womble

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Womble, T. Scott, "The Future of Undergraduate Biblical Higher Education: ABHE and the Bible College Movement" (2018). *Doctor of Ministry*. 285.
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/285>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

THE FUTURE OF UNDERGRADUATE BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION:
ABHE AND THE BIBLE COLLEGE MOVEMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

T. SCOTT WOMBLE

PORTLAND, OREGON

OCTOBER 2018

Portland Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

T. Scott Womble

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on October 10, 2018
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics and Future Studies.

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Tim Dolan, PhD

Secondary Advisor: Derek Voorhees, DMin

Lead Mentor: Leonard I. Sweet, PhD

Expert Advisor: Todd Hiestand

Copyright © 2018 by T. Scott Womble
All rights reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
ABSTRACT	x
SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM.....	1
A Typical Story.....	1
How the History of the Bible College Movement Informs Us Today	1
Impetus for the Movement.....	2
Origins of the Movement.....	6
Growth of the Movement.....	7
The Accreditation Era of the Movement (1947-present).....	9
Key Takeaways from Past Examination.....	11
The Current State of ABHE.....	14
Canadian Members of ABHE	15
United States Members of ABHE	16
Summary of the Canadian and United States Members of ABHE	18
Challenges for ABHE Institutions Discovered by Barna Group	19
Further Challenges for ABHE.....	23
Rising Costs and Student Debt	24
Enrollment Challenges	27
Governmental Concerns	28
Culture and the Changing Landscape of Higher Education	29
The Dying Rural Church	30
Summary.....	32
SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS.....	34
The University Model: CCCU as a Case Study.....	34
A Brief History of CCCU	35
Fall 2016 Undergraduate Enrollment	36
Growth Rates.....	37
Analysis of Peak Enrollment	38

Consecutive Years of Growth.....	39
Regional Breakdown	40
Graduating Students with Religious Focused Majors	42
Analysis of the Bible Core for CCCU Members that Left ABHE.....	44
Faith Integration at CCCU Institutions.....	46
Final Thoughts	48
Shorter Programs and Competency-Based Education	48
Reductions, Online Learners, and Adult Learners	51
Summary.....	55
SECTION 3: THESIS	56
Moving Toward a Collaborative Model.....	56
A Metaphor for Collaboration.....	58
Bible Colleges & Universities Must Work Together.....	59
Leaders Can Collaborate.....	59
Institutions Can Collaborate	60
Institutions Can Merge	62
Greater Collaboration with Churches and Parachurch Organizations	63
Collaboration with Megachurches	65
Research Process	66
Respondents to Survey Requests	67
Health of Megachurches.....	68
Survey Results: Teaching Institutes	69
Survey Results: Internships	72
Survey Results: Residency.....	75
Survey Results: Hiring Practices.....	75
Survey Results: Relevancy of Bible Colleges	78
Survey Conclusions.....	79
Summary.....	81
SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION.....	83
SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION	84
SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT.....	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Teaching Institutes	70
Figure 2 Internships	73
Figure 3 Hiring Practices.....	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 ABHE Membership History	10
Table 2 Reasons for Not Attending a Bible College.....	20
Table 3 Would You Attend?.....	22
Table 4 At This Point, What Types of Schools Are You Planning on Applying To?	22
Table 5 Does the Bible College Definition Change Your Interest?.....	23
Table 6 Fifteen Institutions that Left ABHE with Current UG Enrollment Over 500.....	24
Table 7 CCCU Fall 2016 UG Enrollment Among U.S. Members	36
Table 8 Five CCCU Institutions Over 5,000 in UG Enrollment	37
Table 9 Six Institutions with 20 Percent Growth from F14 to F16	37
Table 10 Member Breakdown by Accrediting Agency	40
Table 11 Member Breakdown by Census Bureau	41
Table 12 ABHE & CCCU Total Enrollment by Census Bureau.....	41
Table 13 Bible/Theology Core of CCCU Member Institutions Once with ABHE	45
Table 14 Bible/Theology Core of CCCU Associate Institutions Once with ABHE	46
Table 15 Comparing UG Enrollment for U.S. Membership of CCCU and ABHE.....	48
Table 16 How Open Would You Be to Attend a Bible College?	53
Table 17 Breakdown of 155 Respondents.....	67
Table 18 Top Seven Denominations/Affiliations that Responded	68
Table 19 Teaching Institutes: Analysis by Church Size	70
Table 20 Teaching Institutes: Analysis by Denomination	71
Table 21 Internships: Analysis by Church Size.....	73
Table 22 Internships: Analysis by Denomination.....	74
Table 23 Hiring Practices: Analysis by Size	77
Table 24 Hiring Practices: Analysis by Denomination.....	77

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABHE</i>	The Association for Biblical Higher Education
<i>BG</i>	Barna Group
<i>BHE Collaborative</i>	Biblical Higher Education Collaborative
<i>CBE</i>	Competency-Based Education
<i>CCCU</i>	The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
<i>CIHE</i>	Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
<i>HLC</i>	Higher Learning Commission
<i>IPEDS</i>	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
<i>LGBT</i>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
<i>MOOC</i>	Massive Open Online Course
<i>MSCHE</i>	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
<i>NWCCU</i>	Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities
<i>SACSCOC</i>	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
<i>TRACS</i>	Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools
<i>UG</i>	Undergraduate
<i>WASC</i>	WASC Senior College and University Commission

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all who labor in training others to serve the kingdom of God. May we work together to serve our Lord Jesus well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I often wonder what I would be doing today if it were not for St. Louis Christian College (SLCC). If it were not for the countless men and women who supported and helped sustain the College for decades, I may have never entered the ministry. I want to thank Chris Cable, who made my first impression of SLCC a favorable one. And, of course, I want to thank the faculty who invested in me. In particular, both Bob Kurka and Bill Baker inspired me and instilled in me a love for the church, the academic world, and the necessity of missions.

I would also like to recognize the amazing faculty at Lincoln Christian Seminary. Bob Lowery and Gary Hall showed me what academic rigor was all about, and it is because of them that I was well prepared for doctoral studies.

I would like to acknowledge all of the people at George Fox University who made my time as a doctoral distance student quite manageable. Besides Loren Kerns, Clifford Berger, and Heather Rainey, I must recognize how incredibly the library staff handles distance-only students. A special thank you is due to my dissertation advisor, Tim Dolan, who provided needed encouragement about the importance of this project. Also, Derek Voorhees provided valuable input and Todd Hiestand served as a consultant for my website. And, of course, I would like to thank Leonard Sweet, the mentor of the Semiotics and Future Studies program. I am amazed at how Len is able to juggle so many things and find time to invest in so many people. Most of all, I marvel at Len's ability to see what so many of us simply cannot.

Finally, I must thank my best supporters, my wife (Lisa) and children (Mandi and Michael). Besides being my primary support, Lisa has always served as my primary

editor. For this project, I also enlisted both of my children to edit as well. Thank you for the time you spent helping me.

ABSTRACT

The Bible college movement can trace its roots to the late nineteenth century and was given greater credibility when the accreditation era began in 1947. Today, the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) is still the leader of the Bible college movement. But a quick glance at the sixty-three ABHE institutions (64%) with undergraduate enrollment under 250 raises concern. Furthermore, 31 percent have enrollment under 100.

Rising costs and escalating student debt are creating enrollment challenges. The smallness of most Bible colleges makes them particularly vulnerable, especially since many lack endowments. Adding to the problem is the changing landscape of higher education, a dying rural church, and looming governmental concerns. While many paths could lead to greater enrollment and stability for Bible colleges, proactive collaboration is the most promising.

Section 1 explains the depth of the problem. The history of the Bible college movement is reviewed and key takeaways are gleaned from past examination. Also, an analysis of the current state of ABHE is explored, with current challenges revealed. Finally, a critical list of concerns is explored. As other proposed solutions to the thesis are investigated in Section 2, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities model is used as a successful case study. Additionally, shorter programs, competency-based education, online education, and adult learners are studied. Section 3 argues the thesis that collaborative effort is the best proposed solution. An in-depth study of how megachurches may fit into the equation is included. Section 4 describes the Biblical Higher Education Collaborative website which was constructed to foster collaborative

efforts between Bible college and university leaders. Section 5 describes the content of the website, which includes a monthly podcast with a leader in biblical higher education. Finally, Section 6 includes a postscript of how undergraduate biblical higher education may be reimagined.

SECTION 1:

THE PROBLEM

A Typical Story

Typical Bible College (TBC) has been educating Christians for over forty years. In spite of its longevity, however, it has not grown significantly. When enrollment peaked ten years ago, with 400 undergraduate (UG) students, operations were difficult but manageable. In recent years, TBC has been in steady decline, joining dozens of other Bible colleges throughout North America with total enrollment under 250. At present, TBC struggles to fill classes with enough students to create a vibrant learning environment.

TBC dabbles in educating non-traditional students through evening and online programming, but for the most part does business like it did decades ago. As TBC's leadership clings to the college's historical identity, they are unwilling to relocate, rebrand, merge or consolidate with sister institutions. Thus, TBC struggles for survival in an ever-changing world with soaring educational costs. TBC leadership is mistaken to think that simply working harder will keep the ship afloat, as they must adapt to student needs and find creative ways to increase enrollment if they want to balance the budget.

How the History of the Bible College Movement Informs Us Today

While biblical higher education was once managed by universities and seminaries, the end of the nineteenth-century saw the rise of a third institution: the Bible institute/college. The Bible college movement has since trained thousands to serve the

needs of the Church, and the world at large. Today, the Bible college movement faces many challenges, some of which can be best understood by reflecting on the history of the movement.

Impetus for the Movement

Bible colleges came into existence when social, educational and philosophical issues highlighted the need for conservative biblical education that would better meet the church's needs. Two primary factors were the changing universities and the practical need for Christian workers.

To understand how the universities began changing, one must first know their history. "Each of the nine colleges founded during the colonial period were prompted by Christian motivation,"¹ says Witmer. But while the universities were founded with Christian education in the forefront, these concerns began to fade. For example, "While the majority of college graduates of the seventeenth century entered the ministry, this percentage dropped to 50 percent in 1750, 22 percent in 1801, and 6.5 percent in 1900."²

The climate change in the universities was the result of the philosophies of the times (rationalism, modernism, and naturalism) and the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. The terms of the Morrill Land Grant Act included that a state provide at least one college to teach agriculture and the mechanic arts. Morrill also created tax-supported schools, enhancing the notion of separation between church and state.³ Tiffin argues that this

¹ S. A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension* (Manhasset, NY: Channel Press, 1962), 27.

² George Sweeting, "Bible Colleges and Institutes: Chronicling the Vision of a Century," *Christianity Today* 26 (February 5, 1982): 39.

³ C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 335.

effectively ended “the close union between organized religion and higher education.”⁴

Tiffin goes on to say that professors and researchers at these universities that emphasized vocational education “sought knowledge for its own sake by any method ... Professors were more concerned with theoretical than practical matters (therefore, universities produced more theologians than pastors).”⁵

The transformation of higher education may have been the most important factor giving rise to the Bible colleges in the late nineteenth century, but the practical need for Christian workers was a close second. While one might be tempted to conclude that the former created the latter, this is only partially true. Numerous factors contributed to the need for a more trained Christian workforce. The “seminaries were not producing men fast enough who had a pioneer evangelistic fervor.”⁶ Furthermore, in the wake of revivalism, the “missionary societies were totally unprepared”⁷ to train large numbers of uneducated workers, as they normally prepared the highly educated.

The great revivals set the stage for a tremendous evangelistic movement by stirring servants of the Church to become more actively involved in her mission. Due to the likes of Charles Finney (1792-1875) and Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), revivalism swept through the United States in the nineteenth century. Revivalism had two practical

⁴ Gerald C. Tiffin, “The Interaction between the Bible College Movement and the Independent Disciples of Christ Denomination” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1968), 9.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Harold W. Boon, “The Development of the Bible College or Institute in the United States and Canada since 1880” (PhD diss., New York Universities, 1950), 37.

⁷ Eavey, 337.

outcomes. First, “after the Civil War there was an intense missionary movement.”⁸ Goen says slavery was an evil that “infected all of America’s institutions, compromised its most fundamental values.”⁹ The Church was not exempt from the divisiveness caused by slavery, but after the war ended both the country and the Church began to heal. With eyes off of internal issues, the Church fixed her eyes on the necessity for missions.

And second, the awakenings created zealous servants who desired training for Christian service. Due to the war, both poverty and moral degeneration had grown.¹⁰ Postwar revivals created a yearning for more “personal righteousness.”¹¹ As Christians dedicated their lives to God, many wanted to be trained for service. Thus, the Bible colleges arose and set out to instruct this new category of students, primarily for lay ministry and missions work.

“Although the Bible college movement is primarily a North American innovation... the leaders of the earliest Bible schools found inspiration in the efforts of nineteenth-century English religious leaders.”¹² H. G. Guinness (1835-1910), a major influence on the Ulster Revival¹³ in northern Ireland that spread across Britain, said, “We

⁸ William S. McBirnie Jr, “A Study of the Bible Institute Movement” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1952), 27.

⁹ C. C. Goen, “*Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War*” (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 141.

¹⁰ Arthur Charles Cole, *The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 420.

¹¹ Samuel S. Hill, “Religion and the Results of Civil War,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Regan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 360-84.

¹² William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 157.

¹³ David Hampton and Myrtle Hull, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 147.

were greatly impressed with the conviction that a great amount of precious spiritual power was being allowed to run to waste.”¹⁴

The spiritual power to which Guinness referred was the poor and those who did not wish to spend long years in training. Guinness goes on to say: “Many a young man came to us for counsel, eagerly longing to consecrate his life to missionary work, but without either the leisure or the means, or perhaps even the inclination, for a long and elaborate course of study.”¹⁵

Echoing Guinness, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), the legendary Baptist preacher from England, said,

No college at that time appeared to me to be suitable for the class of men that the providence and grace of God drew around me. They were mostly poor, and most of the colleges involved necessarily a considerable outlay to the student; for even where the education was free, books, clothes, and other incidental expenses required a considerable sum per annum.¹⁶

These observations were instrumental in the formation of Bible colleges in America. For example, people were “reluctant to commit eight to ten years”¹⁷ of their lives towards study. Church leaders advised them that such preparation was not necessary and that a year or two of Bible college training was more than adequate.¹⁸ Another example of how American Bible colleges kept in step with the schools abroad is how they also reached out to the poor and uneducated (e.g., did not complete high school).

¹⁴ H. G. Guinness, *The Wide World and Our Work in It* (n.p: n.d), 23-26, quoted in Boon, 26.

¹⁵ Guinness, 23-26, quoted in Boon 27.

¹⁶ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 134.

¹⁷ Ringenberg, 155.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Origins of the Movement

While Spurgeon and Guinness provided inspiration for the Bible college concept, the North American Bible college movement can be credited to A. B. Simpson (1843-1919) and Dwight L. Moody. Whereas Simpson¹⁹ emphasized training missionaries, “Moody gave priority to training home workers”²⁰ who would fill the gaps that “stand between the laity and the ministers.”²¹ The idea was that the “efforts of the regularly trained clergy must be supplemented by those of the less well trained but often more zealous Christian lay workers.”²² Like Spurgeon and Guinness overseas, Simpson and Moody provided schools with minimal training and low cost. In setting up specialized Bible training schools (e.g., restricted in curricula²³ that trained people for practical Christian work²⁴), they provided a model of learning that would change the landscape of higher education.

¹⁹ In 1872 Simpson began Missionary Training College, now known as Nyack College, in New York City. Boon notes (29) that Simpson was impressed by Hudson Taylor’s ability to recruit missionaries with no college experience to China Inland Mission. In 1887 Moody began Bible-Work Institute of Chicago Evangelization Society, now known as Moody Bible Institute.

²⁰ Ringenberg, 159.

²¹ Will H. Houghton, Charles Thomas Cook and Dwight Lyman, *Tell Me About Moody: An International Centenary Tribute to the Foremost Evangelist of Modern Times* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott: 1936), 57-58.

²² Ringenberg, 155.

²³ Tiffin, 16.

²⁴ McBirnie, 21.

Growth of the Movement

During the early years, it was typical for the schools to begin as night courses in a growing church.²⁵ They were quick programs, most often not being more than one or two years in length.²⁶ Many called themselves “institutes,” as they granted diplomas for brief study.

From the end of World War I (WWI, 1914-18) to the outset of World War II (WWII, 1939-45), there was, as Geiger describes, “mass higher education.”²⁷ Enrollments in all types of colleges surged, as more people were completing high school. For example, in 1900 about 95,000 graduated, whereas by 1924 the number reached 500,000.²⁸

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s some of the schools began expanding their programs from two to three years, adding specializations of study (e.g., pastoral studies).²⁹ But “programs were extremely diverse, commonly accepted standards unknown, and quality sometimes questionable from an educational perspective.”³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., 29.

²⁶ Ringenberg, 163.

²⁷ Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 423, <http://public.eblib.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1740482>.

²⁸ Ibid., 429.

²⁹ Ringenberg, 163-64.

³⁰ Michael J. Anthony, Warren S Benson, Daryl Eldridge, and Julie Gorman, *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 19.

As the ending of WWI helped boost enrollment, likewise did the ending of WWII. The overseas experience caused many veterans to return home with a newfound vision for missions' work.³¹ In summary, the Bible college movement steadily grew during the first half of the twentieth-century. Kallgren³² reported that, from 1900-50, 177 Bible institutes/colleges had been started (82 from 1941-50).

Boon's 1950 dissertation shows that in the first 65 years of the movement (1882-1947, the pre-accreditation era), 167 schools were started.³³ That figure is helpful when considering Boon's further assessments.³⁴ First, he asserts that 140 schools (84%) were thought to still be functioning. Second, 19 of the schools did not charge tuition. Third, Boon did a more in-depth study of 49 schools that represented a cross section of the entire movement and found that only 19 offered degrees. The remaining 30 offered three-year diploma programs. Finally, Boon also discovered 66 of 111 schools that responded to his survey were interdenominational.³⁵ The remaining 45 represented 11 different denominations. Boon's analysis offers a good overall understanding of the movement in the pre-accreditation era.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Robert Carl Kallgren, "Bible Colleges: Their Present Health and Possible Futures" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1988), 29.

³³ Boon, 156.

³⁴ Ibid., 44-69, 99-100.

³⁵ By contrast, seminaries are usually connected to a specific denomination.

The Accreditation Era of the Movement (1947-present)

In 1947, the Accrediting Association of the Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges (AABIBC) was formed and 40 institutions applied for charter membership.³⁶ In 1957, AABIBC changed their name to Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) to emphasize the expected academic level.³⁷ By 1960, about “half of the schools in North America identified themselves as Bible colleges rather than Bible institutes.”³⁸ Anthony asserts that by 1960, the movement “had started to carve out a legitimate place in North American higher education,”³⁹ as there were now 248 schools.

Today AABC is known as the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) and has formal relationship with approximately 200 schools in North America.⁴⁰ ABHE’s mission statement is: “ABHE is the quality and credibility resource partner that connects efforts among Christian postsecondary educational institutions and with others invested in serious Bible learning that shapes a life of godly influence and service to the most effective means for maturing, thriving, and sustaining.”⁴¹ ABHE is the largest national Christian college accrediting association recognized by the Department of Education.⁴²

³⁶ Boon, 47.

³⁷ Eavey, 345-46.

³⁸ Ringenberg, 164.

³⁹ Anthony, 72.

⁴⁰ “ABHE History,” The Association for Biblical Higher Education, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www.abhe.org/about-abhe/abhe-history/>.

⁴¹ “ABHE Mission,” The Association for Biblical Higher Education, accessed October 5, 2018, <https://www.abhe.org/about-abhe/abhe-mission/>.

⁴² “Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies,” U.S. Department of Education: The Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/agencies.aspx>.

Annual statistical reports from ABHE indicate membership has steadily grown since its inception, as shown in Table 1. While total ABHE membership has grown, the average UG enrollment at member institutions reached a peak in 1975 and has steadily

Table 1 ABHE Membership History

	Members	Total UG Enrollment	Average UG Enrollment
1952	27	8,059	298
1960	37	10,102	273
1970	50	20,058	401
1975	56	27,081	484 (peak)
1980	74	31,471	425
1990	91	31,024	341
2000	89	33,058	371
2010	97	34,399	355
2015	101	29,787	295

Source: ABHE “Statistical Highlights” Reports in ABHE library.

declined since. This supports Ringenberg’s conclusion that the “growth pattern of the 1970s had not continued,” causing major concern among Bible college leaders in the 1980s.⁴³ Furthermore, this indicates that a large number of small schools make up the ABHE membership, schools typically challenged with financial stability. Today, ABHE is not the only Christian accrediting association for higher education. The Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS)⁴⁴ was founded in 1979 and

⁴³ Ringenberg, 169.

⁴⁴ Henry Morris says, “A sort of product of the ICR Graduate School (ICRGS) is the creationist accrediting organization TRACS.” He adds, that due to the “prejudice against creation-science,” the ICRGS had little chance of gaining accreditation until TRACS was created. Henry M. Morris, “The ICR Graduates,” Institute for Creation Research, September 1, 2003, <http://www.icr.org/article/495/>.

today has 58 members.⁴⁵ TRACS received CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation) recognition in 2001.⁴⁶

Key Takeaways from Past Examination

An understanding of the history of the Bible college movement helps us recognize some of the problems Bible colleges face today. First, it was mentioned that a “transformation of higher education” gave rise to the movement. Today, another transformation is taking place as many Bible colleges are becoming liberal arts universities and obtaining regional accreditation. The result is that the larger Bible colleges are leaving ABHE and the Bible college movement behind.

Second, the revivals of the nineteenth century awakened the hearts of many who desired training for Christian service. Today, only 31 percent of American adults are practicing Christians.⁴⁷ The Barna Group (BG) adds, “Americans are attending church less, and more people are experiencing and practicing their faith outside of its four walls. Millennials in particular are coming of age at a time of great skepticism and cynicism toward institutions—particularly the church.”⁴⁸

Third, the early Bible colleges were educating the poor and those who did not wish to spend considerable time in training. Today, accredited Bible colleges rely heavily

⁴⁵ “Member Institutions,” Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, accessed June 15, 2018, http://www.tracs.org/TRACS_Members_all.html.

⁴⁶ “What is the Best Type of Accreditation?” Baker’s Guide: Christian Online Learning, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.bakersguide.com/faqs/153-faq/accreditation-and-online-degrees/374-what-is-the-best-type-of-accreditation>.

⁴⁷ The Barna Group, “The State of the Church 2016,” Barna, September 15, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

on ACT/SAT scores for acceptance standards and essentially ignore students who do not score well. Furthermore, with Title IV federal financial aid funds being on the line, accredited institutions must concern themselves with default rates.⁴⁹ Thus, accepting “at risk” students can become risky business for institutions. Also, undergraduate higher education, which includes Bible colleges, has outpriced the poor. Federal financial aid seldom covers a student’s total bill, causing students to take out loans; the result is the poor being strapped with debt that will be difficult to ever repay. And because a bachelor’s degree has become the standard, four to five years of training is required today—a stark contrast to the early institutes.

Fourth, while D. L. Moody set out to train the laity (“gap men”) at his institute,⁵⁰ today the Bible college exists with the primary purpose of training those who desire to enter full-time paid ministry. While Bible colleges have “certificate” and “audit” options, they are often not attractive options to adults who weigh cost and time spent against the end payoff. Thus, the same problem which existed in D. L. Moody’s day has come full circle, as the laity are often found wanting for training.

Fifth, the Bible college movement grew in the early twentieth century as high school graduation rates climbed. The same cannot be said today, as the National Center for Education Statistics projects a 2 percent decrease of high school graduates between

⁴⁹ Institutions that have excessive borrowers who are in default on their student loans can be “subject to loss of Direct Loan Program and/or Federal Pell Grant Program.” “Official Cohort Default Rates for Schools,” Federal Student Aid, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/defaultmanagement/cdr.html>.

⁵⁰ At the outset, Moody held two and three week training sessions throughout the city and eventually held training at the Chicago Avenue Church. “In September 1889, came the formal opening of the first building of the Bible Institute for Home and Foreign Missions of the Chicago Evangelization Society.” Dorothy McKay Martin, *Moody Bible Institute: God's Power in Action* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 20-21.

2009-10 and 2022-23.⁵¹ Another study says that by 2030, there will be roughly 200,000 less high school graduates than in 2017.⁵²

Sixth, Bible colleges surged after WWI and WWII, as veterans returned home with a vision for missions' work. While it is unknown if something similar occurred after the Vietnam War, what is known is that college enrollment grew in her wake. "The percentage of young men attending college climbed rapidly from 1966 through 1972."⁵³ The "change was probably caused by a combination of some men's avoiding the draft and others' using the G.I. Bill."⁵⁴ According to ABHE records, their average UG enrollment reached a peak in 1975-76 with 484 undergraduates per institution.⁵⁵ Since 1975, a steady decline has continued with 2015 seeing a mere 295 undergraduates per institution.

In summary, key factors that previously helped the Bible college movement grow do not exist today. The current transformation of higher education is creating a Bible college movement that is, for the most part, void of larger leading colleges. To say the least, there is no current wave of Christian revival to produce a pool of incoming students. While past Bible colleges embraced the poor, today's Bible college often underserves this segment of the population. One example of how the current approach to

⁵¹ W. J., Hussar and T. M. Bailey, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2022* (NCES 2014-051). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), 8.

⁵² "Projections of High School Graduates Through 2032," accessed June 15, 2018, <https://knocking.wiche.edu>.

⁵³ "College Enrollment Linked to Vietnam War," The New York Times, Archives, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/09/02/us/college-enrollment-linked-to-vietnam-war.html>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Every single annual report in the ABHE library that tracks this information was examined. While ABHE was formed in 1947/48, existing data begins in 1952/53.

admissions is not accounting for the needs of the poor is failure to acknowledge they are often unable to score well on the ACT/SAT.”⁵⁶ While D. L. Moody and others trained laity, the current Bible college model is generally too costly to reach this group. With future high school graduation rates in decline, the competition for students will only increase. And issues involving war have not helped the Bible college movement for over forty years. Simply put, one of the problems facing Bible colleges is that major issues of the past that helped grow the movement are no longer of impact and current trends bring the reverse effect.

The Current State of ABHE

Not only is the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) historically linked to the Bible college movement, ABHE is the largest Christian college accrediting association recognized nationally by the Department of Education.⁵⁷ Thus, it only seems appropriate that ABHE should be studied as one attempts to assess the health of the Bible college movement.

At a quick glance, it appears that ABHE has fallen on difficult times. First, no growth has been seen in the total number of colleges accredited between 2007-08 and 2015-16, as the number still stands at 101. Furthermore, the total UG student headcount

⁵⁶ As an example, average ACT composite scores for Whites in 2016 was 22.2, whereas Black/African Americans averaged 17.0. An ACT score of 17 does not meet acceptance standards at many schools. “The ACT Profile Report – National: Graduating Class 2016,” accessed October 5, 2018, https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/P_99_999999_N_S_N00_ACT-GCPR_National.pdf.

⁵⁷ “Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies,” U.S. Department of Education: The Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/agencies.aspx>.

has dropped from 38,617 (the peak headcount reached in 2011-12) to 29,787 (2015-16), a 23 percent decrease in just five years. During this same period, the average UG headcount per institution dropped from 386 to 295. ABHE reached its peak in average UG headcount in 1975-76 with 484 per college. Given these observations, one must wonder about the current health of ABHE and its member institutions.

Canadian Members of ABHE

At present there are seventeen Canadian members with an average UG headcount of 225.⁵⁸ Of seventeen schools with data from 2010-11 to 2015-16, only eight institutions (47%) have grown. Inspection of the fourteen schools with data over the last ten years (2006-07 to 2015-16) is worse, revealing that only two (14%) have grown. Data from 2000-01 to present is consistent, with only two schools showing growth over that period. In other words, they have clearly faced difficult times over the past sixteen years.

At this point, the data gets somewhat confusing. Examination of the statistics from the same fourteen schools (2000-01 to 2015-16) reveals that while the UG enrollment of eleven of them (79%) peaked during this period, only three of these (21%) peaked over the last ten years, and only one (Vanguard College) peaked over the last six years. Furthermore, of sixteen present schools studied, only three (19%) have seen growth the past two consecutive years (Prairie College leads the way with three consecutive years of growth). Thus, while most Canadian schools reached an all-time

⁵⁸ ABHE does not factor programmatic schools (e.g., Ambrose University) into the headcounts. All of the statistics for the Canadian members are based on the annual “Statistical Highlights” report that ABHE publishes.

attendance high at some point since 2000-01, the overall analysis is not encouraging, as growth over the last five to ten years has halted.

Regarding the seventeen current members (this excludes Ambrose), total UG enrollment stands at 3,597. There is only one institution with an UG headcount over 500. Tyndale University College's 591 UG headcount makes up 16.4 percent of the Canadian total headcount. There are five schools with headcounts of 250-499 and eleven under 250. Quite alarming are the six institutions with headcounts under 100. In summary, eleven of seventeen institutions (65%) have UG enrollment of 250 or lower, showing the vulnerability of the Canadian institutions as a whole.

United States Members of ABHE

Forty-three institutions have left ABHE since 1990. Eleven of these (26%) have closed and seven (16%) have merged. A most bothersome statistic is that six of the eleven closures occurred in the past ten years, a closure every 1.7 years. This cannot be good news.

Perhaps more alarming is that of the remaining twenty-six schools that left ABHE, twenty (77%) have regional accreditation. This may suggest that when many Bible colleges acquire regional accreditation, they no longer see the need to remain accredited with ABHE.⁵⁹ Also, thirteen of the twenty-six (50%) remaining schools that left are now members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Some institutions do not see the need to pay dues to two accrediting associations. Furthermore, students wishing to transfer credits to liberal arts universities have more success when the transferring institution has regional accreditation.

⁶⁰ "Members & Affiliates," Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed April 11, 2017, http://cccu.org/members_and_affiliates.

This points to the fact that some schools abandoned the Bible college model to become universities that offer liberal arts degrees. It is probably worth noting that thirteen of twenty (65%) who maintain regional accreditation are also members of CCCU. Only one of the twenty-three (4%) schools that left ABHE now hold accreditation with the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), a smaller agency which accredits sixty schools.⁶¹

At present, eighty-two⁶² institutions make up the United States membership. Compiled data from seventy-three institutions for Fall 2016 reveals an average UG enrollment of 339.⁶³ Inspection of the data from seventy schools from Fall 2014 to Fall 2016 shows that only twenty-seven (39%) grew during this period. The growth rate over the past ten years is more encouraging, as twenty-eight of fifty-five (51%) reported growth from Fall 2007 to Fall 2016.

Consideration of the time frame for peaked attendance is also informative. Of the forty schools with a minimum of complete data from Fall 1990 to Fall 2016, three (7.5%) peaked attendance in Fall 2016. Only seven, however, have peaked attendance in the past three years, a mere 17.5 percent. And only eleven of forty have peaked attendance since Fall 2010 (27.5%).

⁶¹ "Member Institutions," Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, accessed April 20, 2017, http://tracs.org/TRACS_Members_all.html.

⁶² IPEDS did not have enrollment data for nine institutions.

⁶³ All of the statistics for the United States members are based on information gathered from two sources of the National Center for Education Statistics. The first is "Compare Institutions," Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), The National Center for Education Statistics, accessed June 25, 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/home/usethedata>. The second is "College Navigator," The National Center for Education Statistics, accessed June 25, 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

Another intriguing way to analyze the statistics is to consider how many consecutive years of growth an institution has maintained. Of seventy-three schools with complete data, only two (3%) have grown the past four consecutive years; six (8%) have grown for at least three consecutive years. This would seem to indicate that most ABHE schools are struggling to figure out how to thrive in today's higher educational climate.

Summary of the Canadian and United States Members of ABHE

A troubling statistic shows that of the ninety-nine ABHE institutions, sixty-three have UG enrollment of 250 or under, a staggering 64 percent. Furthermore, 31 percent of ABHE UG institutions have enrollment of 100 or below. Fall 2016 IPEDS⁶⁴ information revealed only four institutions with UG enrollment over 1,000: Ohio Christian University (4,213), Moody Bible Institute (2,827), Lancaster Bible College (1,472), and Grace Bible College (1,000). Michael James, in his 2015 dissertation, raised an interesting question when he wrote, "The fact that there are no ABHE member schools larger than 3,500 students is worth noting. What causes ABHE schools to fail to grow beyond that size or, possibly, give up their ABHE membership as they get larger?"⁶⁵

When studying institutional growth over the past three years (Fall 2014-Fall 2016), thirty-two of eighty-six institutions showed an upward trend (37%). It should be noted, however, that growth can be represented by showing any improvement in enrollment. For example, of the five Canadian institutions that demonstrated growth, the

⁶⁴ Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

⁶⁵ Michael F. James, "Riding the Wave: America's Changing Demographics and Its Effect on the Enrollment and Financial Strength of Private Colleges and Universities" (EdD diss., Creighton University, 2015), 67-68.

total additions were only: 10, 14, 24, 38, and 74. As a comparison, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) saw 45 percent of their members grow over the same period.⁶⁶ One last figure may draw concern. Only 2 percent of ABHE institutions have shown five consecutive years of growth, while CCCU exhibits 10 percent.

Challenges for ABHE Institutions Discovered by Barna Group

In 2015, ABHE commissioned Barna Group (BG) to conduct a “groundbreaking study on the landscape of biblical education.”⁶⁷ The research, carried out from May to November 2015, represents “one of the most comprehensive and detailed projects ever undertaken by Barna Group in its 30-year history.”⁶⁸ In all, approximately 6,000 people were surveyed.⁶⁹

ABHE stakeholders (current ABHE presidents, staff, faculty and trustees) believed the biggest challenges and threats facing their institutions, or biblical higher education as a whole, were student recruitment (74%) and the increasing cost of education (73%).⁷⁰ These concerns are certainly valid and the BG study revealed a depth to the issues.

⁶⁶ This is based on enrollment data provided by The National Center for Education Statistics and membership provided by CCCU. “Search CCCU Institutions.” The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed September 13, 2017, https://www.cccu.org/members_and_affiliates/.

⁶⁷ Barna Group, *Biblical Higher Education Market Research Analysis* (Ventura, CA: Booklet for ABHE Annual Meeting, 2016), 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ There were “4,470 for the main study and approximately 1,500 for the institution-focused research.” Ibid. The 4,470 was made up of general population (1,011), prospective Christian students (1,264), Christian parents of prospective students (550), faith leaders (980), and ABHE stakeholders (665). Ibid., 5.

In regards to the concern over student recruitment, an alarming conclusion was that “18% of U.S. Christians have never heard of Bible colleges and 41% know only that they exist.”⁷¹ In fact, “Only one-third of prospective students (33%) say they know a lot or a good amount about Bible colleges.”⁷² This may indicate that the challenge of recruitment is even worse than feared.

BG posed the following question: “Earlier you mentioned that you are not planning on applying to a Bible college. Which, if any, of the reasons below explain why you are not interested?”⁷³ Table 2 shows the three responses that made up 74 percent:

Table 2 Reasons for Not Attending a Bible College

I’m not sure what a Bible college could offer me	28%
I generally don’t know much about Bible colleges	28%
I don’t know the names of any specific Bible colleges	18%

These answers show that prospective Christian students know little about Bible colleges and that the movement as a whole must do a better job in establishing their presence in the higher education community.

The news, however, gets worse. BG concluded that, “Openness to attending a Bible college is low among Christian prospective students when compared to other school types.”⁷⁴ This led to BG concluding that the church ecosystem is faltering as a feeder.⁷⁵ As discussed later, the dying rural church is contributing to this problem.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 20.

In addition to the student recruitment challenges, the increasing cost of education was of great concern among ABHE stakeholders. Without asking a direct question about costs, BG found this to be a justifiable source of trepidation. BG says, “The cultural narrative is that college is about increasing your career and financial opportunities.”⁷⁶ The study revealed that “48% of prospective students are going to college to gain practical job skills or to increase earning potential.”⁷⁷ Neither aspect of that statement is good news for Bible colleges, as they are typically narrowly focused on developing students for one primary skill – vocational ministry readiness. And, of course, the earning potential from a non-profit employer (most often a church) for a student coming straight out of college is very poor. There can be no doubt that the high cost, coupled with the low earning potential, is a major disincentive for students as they consider Bible college as an option.

Furthermore, BG discovered that the “top priority for traditional-aged prospective students is to determine their career path (56%).”⁷⁸ Again, due to the narrow educational focus of Bible colleges, students are not afforded a variety of options for study and experimentation. Parents have even stronger views, as 70 percent of Christian parents say “determine career path” is a major goal they have for their child’s experience in college. This is compared to a mere 20 percent of parents who indicate that “learning about the Bible” is a major goal.⁷⁹ Career was such a strong indicator in this study that it led BG to

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 7.

list “career, career, career” as their top conclusion that should be addressed by Bible colleges.⁸⁰ Ironically, this third (and perhaps most important) factor uncovered by BG did not appear to be a major concern for ABHE stakeholders.

The desire for job skills, earning potential and career determination appear to be the three major forces that indicate why prospective Christian students prefer to attend a Christian university over a Bible college. This is in spite of the fact that attending a Christian university typically costs much more than a Bible college. Tables 3 and 4⁸¹ reveal that Bible colleges are lagging behind Christian universities in recruitment potential.

Table 3 Would You Attend?

	<u>Bible College</u>	<u>Christian College or University</u>
Would definitely attend	14%	22%
Would likely attend	10%	18%
Are open to considering	33%	38%
Would likely not attend	25%	12%
Would definitely not attend	18%	10%

Table 4 At This Point, What Types of Schools Are You Planning on Applying To?

	<u>Bible College</u>	<u>Christian College</u>
Traditional (19 and under)	15%	42%
Traditional, post-high school (20-25)	13%	25%
Non-traditional young adults (26-39)	21%	34%
Non-traditional mid-life (40+)	14%	27%

BG also uncovered a rather interesting result with the following question:⁸²

Read the definition below which describes Bible colleges. Does this definition change your interest in Bible colleges? *“Bible colleges offer programs and hands-on experiences in ministry as well as other professions that help students live out their calling from God. They typically require 21-30 credit hours of*

⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁸¹ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸² Ibid., 9.

Bible/theology classes, promote Christian discipleship and require students and faculty to abide by a covenant of belief and conduct consistent with biblical faith.”

Unfortunately, Bible colleges did not fare well in the results, as 69 percent were either unmoved or even less interested in Bible colleges after reading this. The specific results are shown in table 5. The BG study shows that challenges among ABHE colleges abound and must be addressed with “adaptive solutions.”⁸³

Table 5 Does the Bible College Definition Change Your Interest?

I learned something new, but my interest level hasn't changed	45%
This definition makes me more interested in Bible colleges	31%
I didn't learn anything new and my interest level hasn't changed	15%
This definition makes me less interested in Bible colleges	9%

Further Challenges for ABHE

A clear problem ABHE has faced is seeing members obtain regional accreditation and eventually leave. Table 6 lists fifteen schools that have left ABHE and are currently exceeding enrollment of 500. There are many significant things to take note of in this list. First, schools of this size would bring stability to ABHE as a whole, if they remained. Second, just as megachurches provide training for smaller churches, these larger schools could be providing valuable training for the smaller ABHE colleges. And, of course, they could assist in a very practical way by sharing resources for cooperative purposes (e.g., sharing technology). Finally, the flight of these institutions (and their enrollment success) signals a significant change in the Bible college landscape, as many are moving towards a university model.

⁸³ Ibid., 21.

Table 6 Fifteen Institutions that Left ABHE with Current UG Enrollment Over 500

	F16 UG Enrollment	Last Year with ABHE
Colorado Christian University	6,307	93/94
Southeastern University	5,055	98/99
Point University	1,954	93/94
Mid-America Christian University	1,898	98/99
Southwestern AOG University	1,774	01/02
Toccoa Falls College	1,252	11/12
North Central University	1,080	90/91
Crown College	1,059	06/07
Corban University	1,022	95/96
Northwest University	938	94/95
Emmanuel College	920	91/92
Central Baptist College	827	94/95
Arizona Christian University	820	09/10
University of Valley Forge	810	00/01
Simpson University	790	90/91

Source: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

At present, ABHE has five programmatic⁸⁴ only schools: Bethesda University, Cairn University, Hope International University, Johnson University, and William Jessup University. The Fall 2016 UG enrollment figures for these schools were as follows: Bethesda (293), Cairn (740), Hope (961), Johnson (1,050), and William Jessup (1,165). Instead of ABHE claiming the full 4,209 headcount, they only claim the students associated with the biblical/theological and ministry degrees. Whether or not these schools remain with ABHE for the long haul remains to be seen.

Rising Costs and Student Debt

The cost of attending college has increased at an alarming rate. “In 2015, tuition overall was approximately three times higher than it had been in 1980, even when

⁸⁴ “Programmatic accreditation applies to biblical/theological/ministerial programs, divisions or schools within liberal arts or comprehensive institutions.” “Accreditation Frequently Asked Questions,” The Association for Biblical Higher Education, accessed August 30, 2018, <https://www.abhe.org/accreditation/faqs/>.

accounting for inflation.”⁸⁵ There is slightly better news for private institutions, as “Over the last 30 years (1984–2014), tuition rates at private institutions have risen 146%.”⁸⁶ To add insult to injury, the prices of textbooks have “grown at a rate even faster than tuition and fees.”⁸⁷ Equally depressing is that the median family income has hardly changed since the 1970s. “In 1974, families earned \$62,000 per year (in 2015 dollars). In 2015, the median family income was \$64,000.”⁸⁸ It is of no surprise that cost has impacted both the enrollment and retention of students. As tuition has increased, first-time freshmen have decreased.⁸⁹ Furthermore, finances are a “major reason” why students leave private Christian universities.⁹⁰

Financial aid is also an issue, as “aid increase has not kept pace with skyrocketing tuition and fees.”⁹¹ Clawson and Page provide an example by saying, “Thirty years ago, state and local governments put in \$3.99 for every dollar that students and parents paid; today states put in \$1.76 for every dollar, less than half what they contributed a

⁸⁵ Emily Rose Oachs, *The Rising Cost of Education*. Special Reports (Minneapolis, MN: Essential Library, an imprint of Abdo Publishing, 2017), 9.

⁸⁶ Eileen E. Hulme, David E. Groom, Jr., and Joseph M. Heltzel, “Reimagining Christian Higher Education,” *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016): 96, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107348>.

⁸⁷ Oachs, 10-11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁹ Richard Holaway, “An Investigation of the Trends in Pricing for Christian Higher Education and Its Relationship to Perceived Quality” (DBA diss., George Fox University, 2016), 79, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dbadmin/7>.

⁹⁰ Heather Hadlock, “Student Departure Decisions at a Private Christian University: Differences in Student Expectations and Experiences,” (EdD diss., Dallas Baptist University, 2012), 89.

⁹¹ Oachs, 9.

generation ago.”⁹² Also, “The government’s declining contribution to the Pell grant initiative”⁹³ harms lower income students and results in more student loan debt.

Increased costs and declining aid equal more student debt. Oachs sadly states, “In 2015, the country broke another record: student loan debt had surpassed \$1.3 trillion. More than 40 million borrowers held this staggering amount of debt.”⁹⁴ Additionally, “the total amount of outstanding student debt in 2013 was two and a half times larger than in 2004.”⁹⁵ And finally, staggering as it may seem, “In 2010, for the first time in the Unites States, the total amount of student loan debt surpassed the total amount of credit card debt.”⁹⁶

As Flynn points out, the problem of student debt may be worse for students who intend to enter ministry. After all, many small churches simply cannot pay a minister a salary that will cover living expenses that include high student loan debt. And “Many missions sending agencies will not place missionaries on the field if their debt exceeds a certain level.”⁹⁷

⁹² Dan Clawson and Max Page, *The Future of Higher Education: Framing 21st Century Social Issues* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 50.

⁹³ Hulme, Groom, Jr., and Heltzel, 96.

⁹⁴ Oachs, 54.

⁹⁵ Jesse P. Rine and David S. Guthrie, “Steering the Ship Through Uncertain Waters: Empirical Analysis and the Future of Evangelical Higher Education,” *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016), 13, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107347>.

⁹⁶ Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, and Noel/Levitz National Center for Staff Selection and Development, *Charting the Terrain of Christian Higher Education in America: A Profile of the Member Institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities* (Washington, DC: Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2012), 57.

⁹⁷ James T. Flynn, “MOOCs: Disruptive Innovation and the Future of Higher Education,” *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 156, <http://journals.biola.edu/ns/cej/volumes/10/issues/1/articles/149/>.

Unfortunately, the problem of debt extends beyond the ability to attend college. “As of 2015, approximately 7 million people, or 17 percent of borrowers, were in default on their loans. For debt-ridden college dropouts, default rates are four times higher than they are for graduates.”⁹⁸ This points to a big problem as “Approximately 63 percent of borrowers in default did not complete their degree.”⁹⁹ In other words, the desired degree that was to assist in finding a job with better earning potential was never completed. Thus, in theory at least, the student never moved up the pay scale and instead is strapped with student loan debt that he/she is unable to pay. Under this scenario the end result is clear; the poor only get poorer.

Enrollment Challenges

In 2016, ABHE reported total UG enrollment at 29,787, the first time they dipped under 30,000 since 1997. The 29,787 students in 2016 also represent a drop of 3,590 from 2015.¹⁰⁰ ABHE members are being swept along with the tide, as “College enrollment in the United States declined for the sixth straight year”¹⁰¹ in Fall 2017. In conjunction with the cost factor, cheaper offerings of online education may be impacting enrollment at traditional institutions. Harvard Business School professor, Clayton

⁹⁸ Oachs, 62.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ ABHE annual “Statistical Highlights” reports in ABHE library.

¹⁰¹ Larry McKinney, “College Enrollment Trends,” Christian Academia Magazine, January 30, 2018, <http://christianacademiamagazine.com/college-enrollment-trends/>.

Christensen, believes that “disruptive innovations” like this will result in “half of American universities” closing or going bankrupt within ten to fifteen years.¹⁰²

Whether Christensen’s bleak prediction is correct or not, enrollment is clearly a current challenge. Megachurches can also present some challenges, as they sometimes train people from within, essentially choosing to bypass formal training at the Bible colleges and seminaries. McKinney, former Executive Director at ABHE, concludes that “This has grown out of the frustration and perception that classical theological education has not adequately prepared men and women for leadership in 21st-century churches.”¹⁰³

McKinney summarizes the overall enrollment issue by saying, “Enrollment challenges are greater than ever for private, Christian higher education, given the fact that institutional budgets are so heavily student-driven, and Bible colleges are no exception.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the fact that so many Bible colleges lack strong endowments makes high enrollment all the more critical. With this factor taken into consideration, Bible colleges seem more at risk to fulfill Christensen’s prediction.

Governmental Concerns

Bible colleges face challenges beyond financial and enrollment difficulties. Of great concern for all Bible college administrators is the future of federal student aid (Title IV), aid that is linked to Title IX that protects people from sex discrimination. Title IX

¹⁰² Doug Lederman, “Clay Christensen, Doubling Down,” Inside Higher Ed, April 28, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/04/28/clay-christensen-sticks-predictions-massive-college-closures>.

¹⁰³ Larry McKinney, “Biblical Higher Education: Past Commitments, Present Realities, and Future Considerations,” *Biblical Higher Education Journal*, no. 8 (Spring 2018): 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

says, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”¹⁰⁵ If federal laws strip Bible colleges of specific religious freedoms (e.g., denying admittance of transgender persons) and the colleges refuse to bend, all federal funding could be removed. This would have a catastrophic impact on Bible colleges and universities that lack significant endowments.

Such possibilities seem realistic, as the Obama administration “interpreted Title IX as prohibiting discrimination ‘based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status.’”¹⁰⁶ While “the Trump administration rescinded the Obama directive,”¹⁰⁷ the concern remains as LGBT rights is a hot political item that is unlikely to go away anytime soon.

Culture and the Changing Landscape of Higher Education

A host of culturally specific issues has stressed the foundation of biblical higher education. For example, “The shifting of the U.S. ethnic and racial demographics, the proliferation of advanced digital technologies and data, and the move from traditional degrees to continuous learning platforms have created an unstable environment to which

¹⁰⁵ “Title IX and Sex Discrimination,” U.S. Department of Education, revised April 2015, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html?exp=0.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Gjelten, “Christian Colleges are Tangled in Their Own LGBT Policies,” NPR, March 27, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/03/27/591140811/christian-colleges-are-tangled-in-their-own-lgbt-policies?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20180328.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Christian higher education must adapt in order to remain viable and ultimately to thrive.”¹⁰⁸ There is even a “growing concern about the perceived value of a university degree”¹⁰⁹ in general.

One must also consider the learning styles of Millennials. Pessia maintains that “Millennials possess a mindset that expects quick, easy access to any information at any time. They desire technologically enabled activity and position themselves to construct social learning.”¹¹⁰ Bible colleges must adapt and shift from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered model.¹¹¹ To survive, Bible colleges must “provide more flexible and relevant approaches to education that will meet the needs of an ever-changing society.”¹¹²

The Dying Rural Church

In 2017, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported “the rural population is shrinking for the first time on record, due to several factors, including long-term outmigration of young adults, fewer births, increased mortality among working-age adults, and an aging population.”¹¹³ Additionally, “Rural employment has not returned to

¹⁰⁸ Hulme, Groom, Jr., and Heltzel, 95.

¹⁰⁹ John Reynolds and Jon Wallace, “Envisioning the Future of Christian Higher Education: Leadership for Embracing, Engaging, and Executing in a Changing Landscape,” *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016): 106, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107340>.

¹¹⁰ Wayne Joseph Pessia, “Millennial Learners and the Missions of the Members of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities and the Association of Biblical Higher Education” (EdD diss., Ashland University, 2014), 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹² Hulme, Groom, Jr., and Heltzel, 96.

¹¹³ USDA – United States Department of Agriculture, *Rural America at a Glance: 2017 Edition*, Economic Information Bulletin 182, November 2017, 1, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/85740/eib-182.pdf>.

its pre-recession level, and job growth since 2011 has been well below the urban growth rate.”¹¹⁴ The USDA goes on to show that the population loss is widespread, as “The number of nonmetro counties losing population reached an historic high of 1,351 during 2010-16, with a combined population loss of just under 790,000.”¹¹⁵ While 462,000 have moved out of rural areas since 2010, there has only been a natural gain of 270,000 (more births than deaths).¹¹⁶

Roth offers some hope when he says, “Rural places that lie near big cities and that have ‘significant natural amenities’ ... have experienced growth. For small towns and rural counties far removed from hip cities and lovely mountains, population movement has mostly been one way: out.”¹¹⁷ In other words, rural areas that serve as extensions to large metropolitan areas have a better chance of survival.

Many Bible colleges were founded before the interstate highways were even authorized in 1956. Thus, numerous Bible colleges sit in rural areas without a large metropolitan area serving as a natural feeder to the institution. These colleges greatly depend on the rural areas.

The rural communities, however, have a multi-layered impact on all of the Bible colleges. First, as population in rural areas wanes, so does church attendance, and ultimately church support for Bible colleges. Second, rural churches (often with conservative values) have long encouraged their young people to try Bible college.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Brad Roth, *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2017), 23.

Students from rural areas have even been described as a Bible college's "bread and butter." Finally, Bible colleges often do not have large endowments and depend on high enrollment and church support; and a great deal of that support comes from rural churches.

Hoskins states, "The number of people who attend church across much of rural America is dropping rapidly. In some rural counties, as much as 75% of the population do not attend a church."¹¹⁸ Rural population decrease almost has a symbiotic effect on Bible colleges. As rural areas decrease, rural church attendance decreases (some even die), and Bible colleges get caught in the rolling tide.

Summary

Exploration of the history of the Bible college movement and its current state reveals several challenges to the movement. Among the problems surveyed were: large Bible colleges abandoning the model to become liberal arts universities, the views of Millennials towards the Church, acceptance standards that often exclude "at risk" students, rising costs of attending college and the resulting student debt, declining high school graduation rates, lack of Christian revival, narrow curricula that does not meet the present aim of students who desire career options and good earning potential, declining enrollment, governmental concerns that could eventually impact the reception of federal financial aid, changing racial demographics, slow adaptation to new technologies, a

¹¹⁸ Rob Hoskins, "What You Don't Know About Rural America: 3 Common Misconceptions," *The Exchange in Christianity Today*, June 13, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepti.html>.

decreased perception of the value of a college degree, and the dying rural church. While such a long list of problems may seem ominous, Section 2 will provide a healthy list of solutions and Section 3 will disclose what is considered as the best solution.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

While collaborative efforts seem like the best way forward for the survival of Bible colleges, there are many possible roads to travel. Some of the proposed solutions may seem like compromises, missteps, passing fads, or simply insufficient for the challenges of the day. All of them, however, should be considered as the changing landscape of higher education requires bold leaders who have the courage to be proactive shakers of the Bible college movement.

The University Model: CCCU as a Case Study

The U.S. Department of Education states there are just over 1,000 degree-granting institutions “which define themselves as religiously affiliated.”¹¹⁹ Today, 144 institutions across the United States and Canada affiliate with The Council of Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU).¹²⁰ CCCU is one of the largest religiously affiliated higher education organizations in the United States, as their membership is exceeded only by The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)¹²¹ and The Association of Theological Schools (ATS).¹²² While many ABHE institutions appear to be in

¹¹⁹ “Our Place in Higher Education,” The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed July 12, 2018, <https://www.cccu.org/about/#heading-our-place-in-higher-education-2>.

¹²⁰ “Search CCCU Institutions,” The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed July 12, 2018, https://www.cccu.org/members_and_affiliates/.

¹²¹ Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, accessed November 23, 2017, <http://www.accunet.org>. Also see, “Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.” PopFlock, accessed November 23, 2017, http://www.popflock.com/learn?s=Association_of_Catholic_Colleges_and_Universities.

¹²² The Association of Theological Schools, accessed November 23, 2017, <https://www.ats.edu>. ATS membership consists only of graduate schools.

enrollment crisis, CCCU as a whole appears to be thriving. Thus, the university¹²³ model of CCCU members must be considered as a long-term solution to dying Bible colleges.

A Brief History of CCCU

“The CCCU was founded more than 40 years ago with a purpose that was simple to state but lofty in ideal: Create a broad association of Christian colleges that would support promotion and leadership activities for member schools and provide a unifying voice for Christian higher education in the public square.”¹²⁴ The organization was initially formed as the Christian College Coalition in 1976.¹²⁵

In 1995, the organization changed its name to the Coalition for Christian Colleges & Universities and also created “affiliate membership.” The result “led to the admission of more than forty such institutions by the end of 2000.”¹²⁶ The new name was short-lived, as just four years later the organization settled on their present name. Patterson says that by 2005 the total membership reached 177.¹²⁷

In July 2018, United States and Canadian membership sat at 144 (114 governing members and 30 associate members).¹²⁸ For Fall 2016, the 110 governing members in the

¹²³ While some ABHE institutions are also universities, an analysis of CCCU members is a clearer distinction to study.

¹²⁴ “About the CCCU,” The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed November 29, 2017, <https://www.cccu.org/about/>.

¹²⁵ James Patterson, *Shining Lights: A History of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 44.

¹²⁶ James Patterson, *Shining Lights and Widening Horizons: A History of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2001-2006* (U.S.A: Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2006), 7.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁸ “Search CCCU Institutions.”

United States totaled 226,108 UG students.¹²⁹ CCCU’s current mission states, “The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities is a global higher education association dedicated to a transformative mission: ‘To advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform the lives of students by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.’”¹³⁰

Fall 2016 Undergraduate Enrollment

The Fall 2016 UG enrollment figures were calculated from the 110 governing members of CCCU of the United States that were listed on their website on September 13, 2017. Total enrollment was 226,108, an average of 2,056 per institution (see table 7). By comparison, the United States members of ABHE had total UG enrollment of 24,760 for Fall 2016, an average of 302 per institution (this does not factor in nine schools for which IPEDS does not have information).

Table 7 CCCU Fall 2016 UG Enrollment Among U.S. Members

School Size	Total Institutions	Total Enrollment	Ave Enrollment	% of Total Enrollment
9,000s	1	9,752	9,752	4%
8,000s	0	-	-	-
7,000s	1	7,135	7,135	3%
6,000s	2	13,244	6,622	6%
5,000s	1	5,055	5,055	2%
4,000s	4	17,963	4,491	8%
3,000s	10	33,881	3,388	15%
2,000s	23	58,116	2,527	26%
1,000s	45	64,088	1,424	28%
1-999	23	16,874	734	7%

Source: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

¹²⁹ “Compare Institutions,” The National Center for Education Statistics, accessed November 25, 2017. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/home/usetheedata>.

¹³⁰ “About the CCCU,” The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://www.cccu.org/about/>.

The sixty-eight schools ranging from 1,000 to 2,999 make up 54 percent of CCCU total enrollment. And while only five total institutions are over 5,000 in enrollment, those make up 15 percent of total CCCU enrollment. See table 8 for the five institutions.

Table 8 Five CCCU Institutions Over 5,000 in UG Enrollment

Indiana Wesleyan University	9,752
Azusa Pacific University	7,135
California Baptist University	6,937
Colorado Christian University	6,307
Southeastern University	5,055

Source: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

Growth Rates

Growth rates for 110 institutions were analyzed by studying Fall UG enrollment figures. Because IPEDS does not provide comprehensive information for Milligan College, they were not part of the study. Thus, only 109 institutions were calculated.

Evaluation of three-year growth rates revealed that 45 percent (49 of 109) of the CCCU governing members saw growth from Fall 2014 to Fall 2016. Fifteen members grew 10 percent or greater. Another fifteen members, however, encountered a negative growth rate that exceeded -10 percent. Table 9 shows six institutions that saw 20 percent growth. It may be noteworthy

Table 9 Six Institutions with 20 Percent Growth from F14 to F16

	Growth	F14	F16
Regent University	50.8%	2,374	3,580
Southeastern University	47.1%	3,436	5,055
University of the Southwest	44.8%	366	530
Toccoa Falls College	36.1%	920	1,252
Point University	28.4%	1,522	1,954
Trevecca Nazarene University	24.7%	1,677	2,092

Sources: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> and “Compare Institutions,” Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/home/usethedata>.

that five of the schools are located in southern states and have regional accreditation with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).¹³¹ University of the Southwest (New Mexico) stands as the exception and their total enrollment is only 530.

An examination of the ten-year growth rate is more encouraging as 58 percent (63 of 109) grew between Fall 2007 and Fall 2016. Six institutions even grew by over 100 percent: Point University (394.7%), Colorado Christian University (228.3%), Regent University (193.4%), Central Christian College of Kansas (178.3%), California Baptist University (133.3%), and William Jessup University (128.9%). Again, a breakdown by geography proves interesting as four of the six are in warm climates: Point and Regent are in the south, and California Baptist and Williams Jessup are on the west coast. While both Colorado Christian and Central Christian are with HLC,¹³² the Census Bureau¹³³ places Colorado Christian in the West. In other words, Central Christian is the only school truly in the Midwest.

Analysis of Peak Enrollment

Study of when institutions peaked UG enrollment was fruitful. Analysis¹³⁴ of 109 current CCCU governing members reveals a healthy collective. Seventeen (16%) schools

¹³¹ “Membership Directory,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://sacscoc.org/membershipInfo.asp>.

¹³² “Directory of HLC Institutions,” Higher Learning Commission, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://hlcommission.org/Directory-of-HLC-Institutions.html>.

¹³³ “List of Regions of the United States,” Wikipedia, accessed November 18, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_regions_of_the_United_States.

¹³⁴ Schools with complete data from Fall 1990 to Fall 2016 were studied.

peaked enrollment in Fall 2016. A breakdown by Census Bureau regions reveals that ten (59%) are in the South, five (29%) are in the West, two (12%) are in the Midwest, and zero are in the Northeast. Once again, this seems to imply that warmer regions are attracting more students. The Midwest has a robust 37 institutions, but few are flourishing. Besides the institutions that peaked in Fall 2016, research indicated that forty-one (38%) peaked during the period of Fall 2014 to Fall 2016, and sixty-five (60%) peaked during this present decade.

Enrollment figures, however, can change quickly as proven by a close examination of the twenty-four schools that peaked from Fall 2010 to Fall 2013. While this group is part of the 60 percent that peaked during this decade, it is questionable that the statistic says much about the current health of the institutions. Of the twenty-four schools that peaked from 2010-2013, only six (25%) have negative growth of -10 percent or less. Twelve had negative growth of -10 percent to -20 percent and six had negative growth that exceeded -20 percent.

Consecutive Years of Growth

For each of the 110 governing members in the United States, enrollment was researched for 1980, 1985, and 1990-present. As stated previously, however, IPEDS does not provide data for Milligan College prior to Fall 2015. Thus, only 109 schools are figured. A study of consecutive years of growth revealed that only 43 of 109 (39%) saw positive growth for Fall 2016. This is the one area where ABHE compares nicely, as 28 of 73 (38%) also saw growth. Eleven (10%) CCCU institutions have seen at least five consecutive years of growth, with Trevecca Nazarene University (17 years), California Baptist University (16), and Anderson University-SC (11) leading the way. When

looking at the five-year mark, ABHE lags with only 2 of 73 (3%) having grown the past five consecutive years.

Regional Breakdown

There are six regional accrediting agencies in the United States: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and WASC Senior College and University Commission (WASC).¹³⁵ Table 10 shows the CCCU member breakdown by accrediting agency.

Table 10 Member Breakdown by Accrediting Agency

	Total Members	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment
HLC	46	93,521	2,033
SACSCOC	38	79,729	2,098
WASC	12	32,193	2,683
MSCHE	7	11,541	1,649
NWCCU	5	6,683	1,337
CIHE	2	2,441	1,221

Sources: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>. Each accrediting agency web was also consulted.

The regional accrediting agencies, however, do not accurately reflect the primary regions of the United States. A great example is that HLC, once called North Central Association, does not solely reflect north central institutions. Few people would consider Arizona or New Mexico as being north central. This is the reasoning for using the Census Bureau regions as a more accurate representation of where schools are placed in the country.

¹³⁵ CIHE is northeast (6 states), HLC is generally north central (19 states), MSCHE is also northeast (5 states), NWCCU is northwest (7 states), SACSCOC is south (11 states), and WASC is California and Hawaii (2 states).

Most CCCU institutions are not in the “north central” region of the United States but are instead in the South. This more accurate understanding also creates a larger divide in average enrollment. By using accrediting agencies as our guide, SACSCOC average enrollment was only 65 more students than HLC. But when the states are placed in more appropriate regions, the South has average enrollment that is 203 greater than the Midwest. Table 11 shows the breakdown by Census Bureau regions.

Table 11 Member Breakdown by Census Bureau

	Total Members	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment
South	45	95,434	2,121
Midwest	37	70,979	1,918
West	19	45,713	2,406
Northeast	9	13,982	1,554

Source: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

As one studies enrollment trends, a comparison of the geographic locations of CCCU and ABHE members may be helpful. Table 12 shows total enrollment based on geographic breakdown. As stated previously, the growing CCCU members seem to be prominent in warm climates, especially in the south. Perhaps this indicates that part of

Table 12 ABHE & CCCU Total Enrollment by Census Bureau

<u>ABHE</u>		<u>CCCU</u>	
Midwest	52%	South	42%
South	24%	Midwest	31%
Northeast	13%	West	20%
West	11%	Northeast	6%

Source: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.

CCCU’s success surrounds location, an opportunity that ABHE members may have to explore. It should be pointed out that ABHE currently has a meager 35 percent of total UG enrollment in warm climates (south and west), while CCCU maintains 62 percent.

Graduating Students with Religious Focused Majors

The 110 CCCU governing members in the United States granted 46,919 bachelor degrees in Spring 2016. College Navigator provides two areas of religious focused majors that institutions can report: Philosophy & Religious Studies (PRS) and Theology & Religious Vocations (TRV). For Spring 2016, there were 396 PRS graduates and 2,712 TRV graduates. The result is 6.6 percent of CCCU students who earn bachelor degrees are involved in religious studies. The South exceeds the average at 7.6 percent. Interestingly, the larger the number of graduates per region also produces a larger percentage of religious focused majors. The South graduated 17,532, the Midwest graduated 15,750 with 6.5 percent having religious focus, the West graduated 10,146 (5.6%), and the Northeast graduated 3,491 (4.9%).

Consideration of thriving institutions is of great interest here. Previously, institutions flourishing in four statistics have been mentioned: enrollment over 5,000, three-year growth rate of 20 percent or greater, peaked enrollment for Fall 2016, and at least five consecutive years of growth. Southeastern University, the only institution on all four lists examined, has the fourth highest percentage (26.7%) of religious focused bachelor degrees received for Spring 2016. California Baptist University, Toccoa Falls College, and Trevecca Nazarene University made three of the four lists. California Baptist is well below the 6.6 percent average with a 3.5 percentage. Toccoa Falls, however, is first on the list at 34.1 percent; they are the only institution over 30 percent. Trevecca Nazarene is at 8.9 percent. The institutions of the South are well above average, but California Baptist of the West is well below average.

Seven institutions made two of the four lists: Missouri Baptist University (4.5%), Regent University (12.6%), University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (3.2%), Point Loma Nazarene University (1.5%), Anderson University-SC (6.7%), George Fox University (2.5%), and Point University (17.3%). Three institutions (all from the South) exceed the 6.6 percent average and four fall below (two from the West, one from the Midwest, and one from the South).

At this point, we must also consider the institutions of CCCU with the largest undergraduate enrollment: Indiana Wesleyan University (9,752), Azusa Pacific University (7,135), California Baptist University (6,937), Colorado Christian University (6,307), and Southeastern University (5,055). Indiana Wesleyan produced 2,804 bachelor degrees in Spring 2016, but those with religious focus were only 4.4 percent. Azusa Pacific had 1,967 graduates with 3.2 percent and Colorado Christian had 596 graduates with 8.2 percent. As previously stated, California Baptist was 3.5 percent and Southeastern was 26.7 percent. The three largest schools are well below the 6.6 percent average but the two schools rounding out the top five are well above.

Broadening the analysis to the four institutions with enrollment between 4,000-5,000 does not shed any further light, as two are above the average and two are below: Lee University (4,821) is at 19.8 percent, Missouri Baptist University (4,632) is at 4.5 percent, Harding University (4,419) is at 3.5 percent, and Biola University (4,091) is at 9.7 percent. This small sample size suggests that size does not play a significant factor in the percentage of religiously focused graduates.

Again, Spring 2016 showed 396 PRS graduates and 2,712 TRV graduates. In other words, 3,108 students graduated with majors in either Philosophy & Religious

Studies or Theology & Religious Vocations. While one may wonder how many of these students graduated with the intent to work in churches and/or missions, it seems significant to point out that some growing CCCU institutions are clearly intent on preparing students for ministry. The conclusion is that Bible colleges who reinvent themselves as liberal arts universities do not have to sacrifice their mission of educating students for ministry.

Analysis of the Bible Core for CCCU Members that Left ABHE

Bible colleges considering whether or not moving to a university model is beneficial for growth and survival should also consider the end result of the Bible core. ABHE requires that all members maintain a Bible/Theology core of thirty credits hours in their curriculum. When schools leave ABHE, they often lower their Bible/Theology core. There are presently thirteen governing members of the CCCU who once maintained accreditation with ABHE. Table 13 provides a list of the institutions with their present Bible/Theology core requirement for a bachelor degree.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Institutions do not always call this core Bible/Theology. A study of these thirteen institutions revealed that the core is called a variety of things such as: religion, worldview, Christian studies, and cultural and philosophical foundations. It should be noted that College Catalogs for these schools were examined during Fall 2016.

Table 13 Bible/Theology Core of CCCU Member Institutions Once with ABHE

	<u>Bible/Theology Core</u>
Azusa Pacific University	18
Biola University	30
Colorado Christian University	12
Corban University	24
Crown College	24
Emmanuel College	18
Kentucky Christian University	12
North Central University	18
Northwest University	12
Point University	15
Simpson University	21
Southeastern University	18
Toccoa Falls College	15

Source: Data from College Catalogs of each institution.

Only Biola University remains in step with the current ABHE requirement of 30 credit hours. The average Bible/Theology core of these thirteen institutions stands at 18.2 credit hours. While moving from a Bible college only to a liberal arts university model often helps institutions grow, this is not always the case. Three of these thirteen institutions have encountered negative growth since leaving ABHE: Crown College, Kentucky Christian University, and North Central University.¹³⁷

Some of the institutions have experienced great growth, specifically Azusa Pacific (2nd largest CCCU institution), Colorado Christian (4th largest), Southeastern (5th largest), and Biola University (9th largest). Azusa's Bible/Theology core is 18, Colorado Christian is 12, Southeastern is 18 and Biola is 30. While Biola has maintained course, these figures may indicate that a weakened Bible/Theology core is often good for growth. Liberal arts degrees seem to necessitate a weakened Bible/Theology core. After all, there are only so many courses one can place in a degree program. As Biola University shows,

¹³⁷ It must be acknowledged that these schools may have moved to the university model while still with ABHE.

however, moving to a liberal arts university model does not necessarily call for a weakened Bible/Theology core.¹³⁸

There are also five associate members of CCCU who once had accreditation with ABHE. Table 14 lists the institutions with their Bible/Theology core. The average Bible/Theology core for these five is 20.4 credit hours. Multnomah was most recently

Table 14 Bible/Theology Core of CCCU Associate Institutions Once with ABHE

	<u>Bible/Theology Core</u>
Arizona Christian University	18
Mid-Atlantic Christian University	18
Multnomah University	30
Southwestern Assemblies of God University	18
University of Valley Forge	18

Source: Data from College Catalogs of each institution.

with ABHE in 2014-15 and still maintains the 30-hour core. Multnomah is also the only school of the five that has not experienced growth since leaving ABHE; they are a mere 2 students. Mid-Atlantic, however, has only grown by 29 students in their six years since leaving ABHE.

Faith Integration at CCCU Institutions

Joeckel and Chesnes conducted a rather significant survey of CCCU faculty and students and published the results in 2012.¹³⁹ 1,907 participants “at ninety-five of the then

¹³⁸ “Depending on the particular major, every Biola student will take approximately 74 credits of core curriculum composed of 44 credits in Arts and Sciences and 30 credits in biblical studies. These classes will ensure a robust academic experience and lay the groundwork for your major. Core curriculum classes span a variety of disciplines, including English, math, science, history, language, communications, fine arts and physical education. In addition, biblical studies courses are now a part of the core curriculum.” “Core Curriculum (GE),” Biola University, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://www.biola.edu/academics/undergrad-education/general-education>.

¹³⁹ Samuel Joeckel and Thomas Chesnes, *The Christian College Phenomenon: Inside America's Fastest Growing Institutions of Higher Learning* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012).

105 members of the CCCU participated, a nearly 22% response rate.”¹⁴⁰ They discovered that only 68.9 percent of faculty surveyed indicated they were either strongly or somewhat conservative.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, 59.8 percent of students indicated the same.¹⁴² When asked if courses taken enhanced their faith, however, 77.8 percent of students believed so.¹⁴³ Joeckel and Chesnes concluded, “According to our data, member institutions of the CCCU are places that succeed in cultivating faith and integrating that faith with learning.”¹⁴⁴ The authors added analysis of requirements for faculty hiring in years past versus today. They maintain:

Today, basic evangelical doctrinal commitment and evidence of personal faith in Jesus Christ are still required, but one of the most characteristic tests in hiring is whether the candidate is willing to engage in the integration of faith and learning in his or her discipline. . . . Teaching at a Christian college is expected to mean that one is exploring the issue of what difference Christianity makes to one’s academic discipline and the way it might help shape the lives of one’s students.¹⁴⁵

While the Bible/Theology core at CCCU institutions may be minimal, if member institutions are succeeding with faith integration within a student’s given academic discipline, then one might conclude that students are being prepared well with adequate Christian influence.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴² Ibid., 89.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 92.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 322-23.

Final Thoughts

While trudging through the plethora of data on both IPEDS and College Navigator can be overwhelming and exhausting, the information one can garner provides valuable insight into the trends of each institution, as well as the overall health of CCCU. Total enrollment of 226,108, and an average of 2,056 per institution is indeed a good sign for CCCU. Also, the fact that seventeen institutions peaked enrollment in Fall 2016 must be good news. However, the fact that only 45 percent of CCCU members had positive three-year growth rates could point to future struggles.

Of importance is that every piece of data analyzed showed greater health for CCCU over ABHE (see table 15). As Bible colleges struggle in deciding on the proper course of action to take to achieve stability and growth, it may be helpful to consider the university model.

Table 15 Comparing UG Enrollment for U.S. Membership of CCCU and ABHE

	CCCU	ABHE
F16 UG Enrollment	226,108	24,760+
F16 UG Average Enrollment	2,056	302
F15-F16 – How Many Members Grew	39% (43 of 109)	38% (28 of 73)
F14-F16 (3 years) - How Many Members Grew	45% (49 of 109)	39% (27 of 70)
F07-F16 (10 years) - How Many Members Grew	58% (63 of 109)	51% (28 of 55)
Peaked UG Enrollment in F16 (<i>data F90-F16</i>)	16% (17 of 109)	7.5% (3 of 40)
Peaked UG Enrollment in F14-F16	38% (41 of 109)	17.5% (7 of 40)
Peaked UG Enrollment in F10-F16	60% (65 of 109)	27.5% (11 of 40)
Members with 5+ Years of Consecutive Growth	10% (11 of 109)	3% (2 of 73)

Sources: Data from “College Navigator,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> and “Compare Institutions,” Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/home/usethedata>.

Shorter Programs and Competency-Based Education

As the high costs of college discourage students from attending, one solution is to find creative measures to shorten the time required to obtain a bachelor degree. For

example, if a student can obtain a bachelor degree in three years they can forgo paying for room and board in the fourth year. Among the colleges already offering three-year degrees are Grace College (IN)¹⁴⁶ and St. Louis Christian College (MO).¹⁴⁷ Online learning has provided the flexibility (e.g., students at St. Louis take a few online courses in the summer) needed to make the three-year degrees a viable option for students.

Furthermore, institutions may want to reduce their bachelor degrees to the minimal ABHE requirement of 120 credit hours. There are still Bible colleges offering bachelor degrees in excess of 130 credit hours.¹⁴⁸ Reduction of credit hours not only saves the student tuition, but it could also prevent the student from taking an extra semester that requires room and board.

Competency-based education (CBE) is also an intriguing option that can save a diligent student significant time in college. The Competency-Based Education Network defines CBE by saying:

Competency-based education combines an intentional and transparent approach to curricular design with an academic model in which the time it takes to demonstrate competencies varies and the expectations about learning are held constant. Students acquire and demonstrate their knowledge and skills by engaging in learning exercises, activities and experiences that align with clearly defined programmatic outcomes. Students receive proactive guidance and support from faculty and staff. Learners earn credentials by demonstrating mastery through multiple forms of assessment, often at a personalized pace.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ “Bachelor’s in 3 Years,” Grace College, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://www.grace.edu/about/bachelors-in-3-years/>.

¹⁴⁷ “Accelerated 3-Year Bachelor Degrees,” St. Louis Christian College, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://stlchristian.edu/academics/programs/day/three-year-bachelor-degrees>.

¹⁴⁸ One example will suffice. Faith Baptist Bible College offers B.S. and B.A. degrees that range from 130-142 credits (from their most recent catalog posted on their web). “2016-17 College Catalog,” Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://www.faith.edu/assets/uploads/2017/01/2016-2017-College-Catalog-Revised-Edition.pdf>.

¹⁴⁹ “What is Competency-Based Education,” Competency-Based Education Network, accessed August 25, 2018, <http://www.cbenetwork.org/competency-based-education/>.

Horizon College & Seminary (Saskatoon, SK) is an ABHE member that utilizes the CBE model. Horizon says, “CBE bridges the gap between learning and real-world work. Horizon helps students become competent in areas that real-world Christian leaders identify as essential for ministry success.”¹⁵⁰

CBE stands out in two distinct ways:

The first is that it reorients the educational process toward demonstrated mastery and the application of knowledge and skills in the real world. This reorientation builds a bridge between academics and employers, resulting in a better understanding of the knowledge and skills that students will need to succeed in work and in life. The second is that, while it can be a tactic or a tool to improve teaching and student learning, CBE’s greatest strength is that it provides a means for helping quality and affordability co-exist in higher education.¹⁵¹

Western Governors University, an online university, is one such institution where affordability is being addressed. “The average student at Western Governors complete a bachelor’s degree in about 2 ½ years for a price tag in the neighborhood of \$15,000.”¹⁵²

While some find issue with CBE, Johnstone and Soares maintain that “Successful models demonstrate that competency-based education (CBE) can fit into existing campus structures, if certain principles are followed.”¹⁵³ They cite four key items:

- The degree reflects robust and valid competencies.

¹⁵⁰ “What is Competency Based Education (CBE),” Horizon College & Seminary, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://www.horizon.edu/about-horizon/competency-based-education/>.

¹⁵¹ Sally M. Johnstone and Louis Soares, “Principles for Developing Competency-Based Education Programs,” *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 46, no. 2 (2014): 14.

¹⁵² Jeffrey J. Selingo, “Opportunities for Innovation: Reimagining the Next Decade of Higher Education for Public Comprehensive Universities,” in *The University Next Door What Is a Comprehensive University, Who Does It Educate, and Can It Survive?*, eds. Mark Schneider and KC Deane (New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University, 2015), 189.

¹⁵³ Johnstone and Soares, 13.

- Students are able to learn at a variable pace and are supported in their learning.
- Effective learning resources are available any time and are reusable.
- Assessments are secure and reliable.¹⁵⁴

Moving to a CBE model is a substantial change and many are reluctant to adopt something that stands against the industry standard we call the Carnegie Unit (a time-based standard). But before one dismisses CBE too quickly, we should consider the following compelling quote: “Every educator knows and accepts that students have different learning styles and learn at different paces. So what is the logic of a time-based system in which students are required to show up at school buildings for fixed periods?”¹⁵⁵

Reductions, Online Learners, and Adult Learners

Because many options tend to overlap one another, it seems best to discuss some of them as a group. One possible solution may be summed up with the word “reduction.” In an attempt to control costs, many institutions are already reducing full-time faculty and staff. Some may also want to consider selling their present campus and leasing a more inexpensive space. Besides cost reductions in staff, property insurance and taxes, and more, another item to consider is that older colleges often come with buildings that need significant renovation, resulting in a need for big dollars that small Bible colleges do not

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Fred Bramante and Rose Colby, *Off the Clock: Moving Education from Time to Competency* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012), 53.

have. The biggest challenge with moving into a leasing situation is probably working out the residential housing issue.

Reduction can also be achieved with a refocused target audience. Nazarene Bible College (CO),¹⁵⁶ an ABHE member, has reduced overhead by selling assets (the campus is being sold) and moving to online-only education. Even Fuller Theological Seminary¹⁵⁷ has closed some campuses as they refocus on meeting the needs of online students.¹⁵⁸ Most recently Fuller announced that they are selling their main campus in Pasadena, CA and moving to Pomona, CA. The new campus will be more accessible “with lower surrounding housing costs.”¹⁵⁹

As leaders consider reductions and refocus, another element to consider is being more specialized in their offerings. In other words, offer less and become known for something specific. Colleges and universities may need a “niche” that makes them stand out from the crowd, a reason why students would want to attend.

One such “niche” that Bible colleges may want to explore is adult learners (see table 16).¹⁶⁰ Barna Group (BC) concluded that Bible colleges have an opportunity to

¹⁵⁶ “History,” Nazarene Bible College, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.nbc.edu/about/history.php>.

¹⁵⁷ According to College Navigator, Fuller had 2,435 seminary students in Fall 2016.

¹⁵⁸ “Fuller Theological Seminary closes some campuses,” Christian Today,” July 19, 2017, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/fuller-theological-seminary-closing-some-campuses-welcome-online-shift/110932.htm>.

¹⁵⁹ Roger Vincent, “Fuller Theological Seminary leaving Pasadena and putting campus up for sale,” Los Angeles Times, May 23, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-fuller-seminary-20180523-story.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Barna Group, *Biblical Higher Education Market Research Analysis*, 13.

grow the non-traditional market.¹⁶¹ This was supported by how different age groups answered the question,

Table 16 How Open Would You Be to Attend a Bible College?

	Would definitely attend	Would likely attend	Open to considering	Would likely not attend	Would definitely not attend
Traditional (age 19 and under)	10%	11%	38%	30%	12%
Traditional, post-high school (20-25)	6%	11%	36%	31%	16%
Non-traditional young adults (26-39)	21%	12%	28%	21%	19%
Non-traditional mid-life (40+)	14%	8%	31%	23%	25%

Source: Barna Group, *Biblical Higher Education Market Research Analysis* (Ventura, CA: Booklet for ABHE Annual Meeting, 2016), 13.

“How open would you be to attend a Bible college?” Thirty-five percent of non-traditional adults said they “would definitely attend,” outdistancing the traditional students (only 16%) by a wide margin.

The opportunity to reach non-traditional students is also supported by combining “definitely” and “likely” attendees. Non-traditional young adults (33%) and non-traditional mid-life (22%) are more attracted to Bible colleges than traditional students (21%) and traditional, post-high school (17%). With non-traditional student numbers being so much better, it makes one wonder if this may also indicate stronger mission match, and therefore, greater potential retention rates. It is also worth noting that 83 percent of non-traditional students “say online education is an important option to them.”¹⁶² Therefore, Bible colleges should look beyond the traditional classroom to reach many of their prospective students. Furthermore, with online education readily available,

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶² Ibid., 7.

it stands to reason that the non-traditional student pool (age 26 or greater) could actually be larger than the traditional student pool (age 19-25).

It should also be noted that of the six largest schools in ABHE, five report 43 percent (or greater) of their student population is 25+ years-old. Three of the six exceed 56 percent or more. In other words, they are growing the “non-traditional market” that BG mentions. This notes a significant shift in strategy.

While refocusing towards online or adult learners may be very effective, it is important to point out that there is not one clear path to enrollment growth. It was previously stated that four enrollment categories (high enrollment, growth rate, recent peak enrollment, and consecutive years of growth) were studied with CCCU members. Southeastern University made all four lists and California Baptist University, Toccoa Falls College, and Trevecca Nazarene University made three of the four lists. Southeastern finds success with traditional students, California Baptist with both adult-learners and females, Trevecca Nazarene with part-time students and on-campus adults, and Toccoa Falls with distance-only students. All four schools are also of different denominational persuasions (Assemblies of God, Baptist, Nazarene, and Christian Missionary Alliance). But climate is once again a common factor, as three are in the South and one is in the West.

A study was conducted of the top achieving ABHE institutions as well. The determined categories were: enrollment over 1,000, three-year growth rate of 20 percent or greater, peaked enrollment for Fall 2016, and at least three consecutive years of growth. Grace Bible College made all four lists, Ohio Christian University made three of the four lists, and both Allegheny Wesleyan College and SUM Bible College made two

lists. Grace excels with online learners (64%), while Ohio Christian shows achievement with adult learners (65% age 25+), females (64%), and part-time students (41%). With only 79 students, Allegheny Wesleyan may not be the best example, but it should be noted that 89 percent of their students are under age twenty-five and 66 percent are female. Lastly, SUM Bible has 81 percent of their students enrolled in distance-only education, with 80 percent being out of state. In summary, while refocusing towards adults or online may be working for some, there does not appear to be one magic bullet; schools find success through a variety of methods.

Summary

While exploring possible solutions to the problems facing the Bible college movement, CCCU was examined as a case study. It was discovered that the liberal arts university model is healthier than the Bible college model. Besides enrollment being quite larger, the present 3-year growth rates are higher. Also, when compared to ABHE, CCCU had a greater percentage of schools peaking attendance in Fall 2016. Lastly, Biola University has proven that a liberal arts university can still maintain a robust Bible core.

Other possible solutions included: shorter programs, competency-based education, reductions, becoming a niche college, moving towards online learning, and growing the adult market. While these propositions are worth consideration, Section 3 offers collaborative effort as the best step forward.

SECTION 3:

THESIS

Moving Toward a Collaborative Model

As Bible colleges struggle with survivability, several possible solutions can be assessed. Persistence may require a combination of responses, but collaboration is key to both future survivability and effectiveness. While collaboration comes in many shapes and sizes, it is of great importance that institutions (re)sign from isolation to collaboration, as the Body of Christ must collectively work together to address the current challenges associated with biblical higher education. It is through collaborative effort that Bible colleges will be financially stable, affordable, and effectively preparing people for ministry to reach the world for Christ.

In 2016, strategy consultants Parthenon-EY released a significant study titled, “Strength in Numbers: Strategies for Collaborating in a New Era for Higher Education.”¹⁶³ They describe three eras of higher education:

Until recently, colleges and universities had enjoyed the benefits of two lengthy and successive expansion periods in the history of higher education. The first, which lasted from 1968 to 1990, witnessed the Cold War and baby boomers usher in unprecedented growth in spending and enrollments. The second era, from 1991 to 2010, saw technology transform teaching, learning, and research as well as increased demand for a degree from students of all ages. Higher education is now firmly situated in a third era, which is marked by diminished state and federal spending, lagging personal incomes of college-going families, and increased accountability around outcomes, particularly the view that the role of colleges is to prepare graduates for a job.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ “Strength in Numbers: Strategies for Collaborating in a New Era for Higher Education,” Parthenon-EY, 2016, https://cdn.ey.com/parthenon/pdf/perspectives/P-EY_Strength-in-Numbers-Collaboration-Strategies_Paper_Final_082016.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

The conclusion reached is that this new era “demands a significant shift in strategy for institutions around the idea of collaboration and the development of much deeper partnerships than higher education has ever seen before.”¹⁶⁵ In particular, institutions with enrollment under 1,000 need a strategy shift, as they are at greater risk than larger institutions. Parthenon-EY elaborates by saying additional factors put an institution at even greater risk. They cite¹⁶⁶ the following as significant risk factors:

- Enrollment under 1,000 students
- No online programs
- Annual tuition increases of more than 8%
- Tuition discount rate higher than 35%
- Dependent on tuition for more than 85% of revenue
- Endowment that covers less than 33% of expenses
- Debt payments more than 10% of expenses
- Deficit spending

Parthenon-EY explains, “The fundamental problem is that there are too many institutions chasing too few students. ... The biggest decline in enrollment has been among small colleges, those with fewer than 1,000 students. ... Since 2010, their enrollment has fallen by more than 5%.”¹⁶⁷ They go on to say that collaboration is the answer to the problem. They rightfully argue, “What is most needed for this new era is a

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 6.

change in mindset among higher education leaders: they need to stop thinking that the only path forward is one that they take alone.”¹⁶⁸

A Metaphor for Collaboration

Collaboration does not seem to come either naturally or easily. Instead, things like tradition, nostalgia, and pride interfere with the opportunity to better a situation by cooperating with others. Due to this seemingly natural aversion, a metaphor will be presented to help people envision the power of collaboration. After all, Lakoff and Johnson maintain that “human thought processes are largely metaphorical.”¹⁶⁹ Geary adds, “Metaphorical thinking is the way we make sense of the world.”¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, “The best metaphors invite us to picture astonishing events,”¹⁷¹ says Geary.

Morris speaks of the importance of creating a metaphor to help shape organizational culture, and offers a “web” as metaphor for collaboration.¹⁷² While “web” provides a good picture of “relationships,” a better metaphor is needed that invites us to “picture astonishing events.” A proposed metaphor that does just that is a symphony. A symphony is magnificent. The word “symphony” might bring to mind a full orchestra

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

¹⁷⁰ James Geary, *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011), 10. The power of metaphor can capture a person and have a seemingly endless influence. *Aqua Church 2.0* is one such book that speaks endlessly through metaphor. As an example, Christians should orient to the north star – Jesus Christ. Leonard Sweet, *Aqua Church 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷² Marie S. Morris, “Metaphors Matter: Organizational Culture Shaped by Image,” in *Thriving in Leadership Strategies for Making a Difference in Christian Higher Education*, ed. Karen Longman (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 207, 220.

with its vast array of instruments, or perhaps the extensive musical composition the orchestra would play. Both images are grand and astonishing in nature. A symphony orchestra provides an awesome image of diversity where each member is vital to the overall success of the group. And, of course, through collaboration the orchestra, brings to life a majestic musical composition. Thus, a symphony is proposed as a metaphor so leaders of institutions can not only see collaboration, but also visualize the amazing result that can occur when all come together under the direction of one conductor, the Holy Spirit.

Bible Colleges & Universities Must Work Together

Leaders Can Collaborate

ABHE holds their Annual Meeting each February in Orlando, Florida. It is a great opportunity for people to connect and gain valuable insights. It also provides needed encouragement that can spark leaders towards making necessary changes that will enhance the institutions they serve. But in today's world of online connectivity, there is really no reason to solely connect once a year. Given the previous discussion on the importance of collaboration, leaders can, and should, work together on an on-going basis. A once a year gathering simply will not build the type of collaborative effort required for symphonic impact. With a full orchestral approach, leaders can continually encourage one another by sharing their success stories. They can also intentionally share their thoughts on critical issues with one another. And ultimately, leaders can proactively work on creative collaborative solutions that address some of the challenges of the day.

As an example of the latter, it was pointed out in Section 1 that Barna Group discovered that Christians in the United States know very little about Bible colleges (18% have never even heard of them). Bible college leaders could collectively address this problem. Two examples will suffice. First, leaders could collaborate to create a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) which could be used to gain exposure. While leaders are often resistant to ideas that do not pay immediate dividends and benefit self, a display of strong unity would provide a good witness and demonstrate kingdom thinking. A MOOC on the *Life of Christ*, for example, could reach people globally¹⁷³ at little cost, and also bring awareness to Bible colleges. Second, leaders could work towards developing some “master classes”¹⁷⁴ and bring together outstanding professors from a variety of institutions to teach online courses at a low cost for students. While the idea may seem to undermine the necessity of Bible college training, it could be argued that the exposure of high-quality content to a new group of prospects may outweigh the concerns.

Institutions Can Collaborate

If leaders can collaborate, colleges can do the same. It is rather interesting that part of CCCU’s vision in the 1970s included the “potential for cooperative programs.”¹⁷⁵ ABHE members need to catch the same vision of cooperation. In 2012 McKenna stated,

¹⁷³ Ideas that have a “missional approach to the world” should be considered. Karen E. Boden, “The Next Frontier in Making Disciples: 21st-Century Technology Use in CCCU Member Institutions,” *Christian Higher Education* 11, no. 4 (Sept/Oct 2012): 272. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2010.492742>.

¹⁷⁴ See masterclass.com or thegreatcourses.com for further understanding.

¹⁷⁵ David L. McKenna, *Christ-Centered Higher Education: Memory, Meaning, and Momentum for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 63.

“No college or university can do it alone. . . . through cooperative action, Christ-centered colleges and universities can become a creative network leading the way with high impact at the points of penetration into the character of our culture.”¹⁷⁶

Whether it is sharing information technology, library resources and oversight, financial aid departments, programs, and even faculty, institutions need to begin thinking about how collaboration can be beneficial. “A commitment to good stewardship of the resources of the Kingdom will eventually call upon these schools (and others) to relationships of collaboration,”¹⁷⁷ says Blair.

Beyond sharing a few things here and there, institutions may want to consider the creation of a consortium. Berler describes a consortium as “a network of colleges and universities, usually within close proximity, that share academic and extracurricular resources open to all students across all institutions.”¹⁷⁸ She continues by saying:

Successful consortia are widely distributed all over the United States, from the Five Colleges in Western Massachusetts, The Claremont Colleges of Southern California, the Big Ten Academic Alliance, to the Atlanta Center University Consortium. They combine the power of institutions to offer students opportunities and outcomes that magnify the quality of the college experience.¹⁷⁹

Bible college leaders may want to study consortiums like these and create agreements that benefit both the institutions and the students.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 151.

¹⁷⁷ Anthony L. Blair, *Church and Academy in Harmony: Models of Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 110.

¹⁷⁸ Nina Berler, “College Consortia: A Cooperative Model That Offers Students Greater Value,” *Forbes*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/noodleeducation/2017/02/01/college-consortia-a-cooperative-model-that-offers-students-greater-value/#18c938711bae>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ DiChiara offers a good resource as he provides helpful guidelines for consortium developers, as well as characteristics of successful consortium. Phillip DiChiara, “A New Way to Design and Deliver Higher Education Consortium,” in *Consolidating Colleges and Merging Universities: New Strategies for*

Institutions Can Merge

Perhaps the next logical step beyond the sharing of resources and consortium agreements, is actual full merger. Since 2012, there have been five mergers by ABHE members:

- Central Bible College merged with Evangel University (2012)
- Florida Christian College merged with Johnson University (2012)
- Washington Bible College & Capital Bible Seminary merged with Lancaster Bible College (2013)
- Nebraska Christian College merged with Hope University (2016)
- Southeastern Bible College merged with Piedmont International University (2018)

With 31 percent of ABHE UG institutions maintaining enrollment of 100 or below, it seems likely that more are to follow.

Reynolds and Wallace predict that:

It is likely that in the not-too-distant future, increasing numbers of institutions will need to engage in significant merger and acquisition conversations. As the cost of doing business in a highly competitive education sector increases, leaders will be forced to decide which is more critical: the survival of any singular Christian college or university or the collective survival of Christian higher education. The collaborative synergy of multiple institutions merging to fulfill the mission of Christian higher education may result in increased financial sustainability and a broader outlook on the role of Christian higher education in impacting the world. We predict that the future will likely involve Christ-centered regional university systems that have resulted from mergers of Christian institutions in order to leverage economies of scale in both operation and academic programs.¹⁸¹

Higher Education Leaders, ed. James Martin, James E. Samels and Associates (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 159-72.

¹⁸¹ Reynolds and Wallace, 109.

While Reynolds and Wallace state that “leaders will be forced to decide,” it is a sad fact that some would rather see their college close than merge.¹⁸² When such attitudes exist, one must wonder if educating future servants for the kingdom is truly the goal of some leaders. Survival for some will mean merger, and mergers require courageous leaders¹⁸³ who can humbly submit to kingdom concerns.

Greater Collaboration with Churches and Parachurch Organizations

In Section 1 it was revealed that Barna Group (BG) discovered the “top priority for traditional-aged prospective students is to determine their career path (56%).” While liberal arts universities can address this concern more effectively than Bible colleges, it does not mean that Bible colleges cannot help students better develop job skills and make career choices. While it is assumed that the vast majority of institutions require internships, students could benefit from more robust experimentation. Schools may want to consider requiring students to complete multiple internships in a variety of settings where they are provided opportunities to work in different areas. For example, a student may be required to complete an internship at both a parachurch organization (e.g., Make-A-Wish Foundation, an area food bank, etc.) and at churches of varying sizes and location (e.g., urban and rural).

Almost twenty years ago, Banks advocated an apprenticeship model of theological education. He pointed out that the university “emphasized *knowing*, at the

¹⁸² Anonymous conversation, October 21, 2017.

¹⁸³ Leaders may want to consult the following book: James Martin, James E. Samels, and Associates, eds., *Consolidating Colleges and Merging Universities: New Strategies for Higher Education Leaders* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

expense of *doing* and *being*.”¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, he maintained that students need to “train *in* ministry rather than *for* it.”¹⁸⁵ Institutional leaders often think of the faculty as carrying the heavy lifting in educating the students. However, they may want to explore more collaborative “hands-on” learning that would allow church/parachurch leaders to share in a greater part of the load. SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary¹⁸⁶ is an institution that does just this. SUM partners with approximately fifty churches throughout the United States to launch cohorts at each location. SUM maintains their academic standards by utilizing Zoom for synchronous online learning, and at the same time leverages the strength of a church to enhance a student’s education. SUM has been on a steady growth pattern for years¹⁸⁷ and has found that collaboration with churches is highly effective. SUM’s enrollment success shows the power of a symphonic model that embraces diverse members to fulfill a single mission.

Increased collaboration between educational institutions and churches/parachurches would lead to more comprehensive job exploration opportunities and help students make more informed decisions as to whether ministry is indeed the career path of their choice. Additional required internships would also provide students with a greater relational network, increased employment references, and ultimately a better foundation for success in ministry.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 135.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁸⁶ SUM Bible College & Theological Seminary, accessed August 25, 2018, <http://sum.edu>.

¹⁸⁷ According to IPEDS, SUM UG headcount was 84 in Fall 2007. In Fall 2016, UG headcount was 556.

Another intriguing model of collaboration between colleges and churches modifies the reduction concept (See Section 2) of selling the campus and leasing a smaller building. Instead, colleges could sell their campus and set up operations at a large church. Nazarene Bible College was previously mentioned as a Bible college that is selling their campus and moving to a 100% online model. In the process, they also moved their administrative team to the Church of the Nazarene's Global Ministry Center (KS).¹⁸⁸ While their example may demonstrate a natural fit, there is little doubt that other Bible colleges could do something very similar.

Collaboration with Megachurches

Some megachurches¹⁸⁹ already have teaching institutes. Because this fact would suggest some impact on biblical higher education, an in-depth survey was conducted during Spring 2018 to try and determine if megachurches were having a positive or negative impact on Bible colleges. A second issue that contributed to the impetus for the survey surrounded the question of whether megachurches could educate the next generation of Church leaders. This question arises from the worst-case scenario of Bible colleges collapsing from government changes that could strip them of financial aid.¹⁹⁰ If such a scenario became a reality, could megachurches step in and pick up the pieces?

¹⁸⁸ "History," Nazarene Bible College, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.nbc.edu/about/history.php>.

¹⁸⁹ Megachurches average 2,000 or more in attendance each week.

¹⁹⁰ Bible colleges without tremendous endowment would close if government interpretations over lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues ultimately impact financial aid received. It is entirely possible that megachurches could step in to pick up the pieces. Under this scenario, both the Department of Education and accrediting associations (e.g., ABHE and TRACS) would be left out of the equation. Thus, LGBT issues could ultimately bring down both the Bible colleges and biblical higher education accrediting agencies.

Finally, the survey aimed at ascertaining how open megachurches are to cooperating with Bible colleges.

Research Process

In an attempt to better understand trends in megachurches, I conducted an online survey¹⁹¹ during spring 2018. The Hartford Institute for Religion Research “2015 Megachurch Report” was the resource utilized to identify the 1,550 megachurches in the United States.¹⁹² One church in the report was double-listed and two churches have since merged, leaving the actual megachurch number from the 2015 report at 1,547. Forty-five of the church websites were not written in English, and eighty-six provided no means for online communication. Thus, the total number of churches solicited for feedback totaled 1,416.

When churches did not respond to the initial solicitation, they were contacted a second time. Every effort was made to contact either the senior minister or executive minister. With some churches, especially gigachurches, it was difficult to email a senior staff member directly. In such cases, an email was sent to an executive assistant or other key leader. When Facebook or an electronic contact form had to be used, initial contact was made with someone the church assigned to these tasks. In cases when they responded, they were asked to forward the survey request to a senior staff member.

¹⁹¹ SurveyMonkey, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.surveymonkey.com>.

¹⁹² “Database of Megachurches in the U.S.,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed January 23, 2018, <http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/megachurch/database.html>. For sake of clarity, it is important to note that the report includes churches that are actually “gigachurches” (10,000 or more in weekly attendance).

The survey consisted of five primary questions with follow-ups. In an effort to gather greater participation, the survey was intentionally short.¹⁹³ The topics were: teaching institutes, internships, residency, hiring practices, and relevancy of Bible colleges.

Respondents to Survey Requests

In total, 190 of 1,547 megachurches completed the survey (12.3%). Of the 1,416 churches actually solicited, 13.4 percent completed the survey. Thirty-five of the churches that responded to the survey are no longer megachurches,¹⁹⁴ leaving the actual usable number of completed surveys at 155. Because there are 1,512 megachurches (1,547 minus 35), the most accurate figure is to say that 10.3 percent of the known megachurches responded to the survey.

Given there are more megachurches than gigachurches, we should expect to have a greater number of respondents in the lower attendance range. As an example, the 2015 study reported 808 churches ranging 2,000-2,999 and only 90 gigachurches. Table 17 provides a breakdown of the 155 respondents, by size.

Table 17 Breakdown of 155 Respondents

Present Church Size	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
2,000-2,999	62	40.00%
3,000-3,999	35	22.58%
4,000-4,999	12	7.74%
5,000-9,999	29	18.71%
10,000+	17	10.97%

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

¹⁹³ Average time of completion was 6 minutes 20 seconds.

¹⁹⁴ All churches that reported weekly attendance under 1,800 were thrown out of the study. Because church attendance is so fluid, it was decided to keep the churches that still remained at 1,800 or greater.

Each respondent was asked to provide denominational affiliation. It is interesting to note that several respondents who clearly had denominational history listed themselves as nondenominational,¹⁹⁵ something also reflected in many church name changes. In total, there were twenty-eight affiliations provided. The seven affiliations that were most frequently identified (five times or more) are provided in table 18.

Table 18 Top Seven Denominations/Affiliations that Responded

<u>Denomination</u>	<u># of Respondents</u>	<u>% of Respondents</u>
Nondenominational	43	27.74%
Christian Churches/Churches of Christ	27	17.42%
Southern Baptist	23	14.84%
Assembly of God	12	7.74%
United Methodist	9	5.81%
Calvary Chapel	8	5.16%
Converge Worldwide – Baptist General Conference	5	3.23%

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Health of Megachurches

While the research is not about the health of the phenomenon called the “megachurch,” the well-being of the movement is important if they are indeed having influence on Bible college enrollment. Furthermore, an attempt to understand the future of the megachurch is key to the Bible college movement if many ultimately choose to work in cooperation with them to educate future Christian leaders. With attendance being one indicator of health, the weekly attendance provided by respondents was compared to the figures provided in the Hartford Institute’s 2015 study. Analyzation of the results indicated that 70 grew in attendance, 102 declined, 17 remained virtually the

¹⁹⁵ This is not surprising, as it was stated that “Denominational and congregational connections matter less.” Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, “Recent Shifts in America’s Largest Protestant Churches: Megachurches 2015 Report,” accessed April 17, 2018, http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/megachurch/2015_Megachurches_Report.pdf, 10.

same,¹⁹⁶ and 1 is unknown. Thus, 54 percent showed decline, while only 37 percent had attendance increase. If megachurches are to play a role in the future of Christian higher education, this trend sounds alarm. Of course, the question of how many new megachurches have arrived on the scene since the 2015 study is still unknown.

Survey Results: Teaching Institutes

Question one asked, “Do you have a teaching ‘institute’ or ‘school of ministry’ where students can receive a formal education?” Respondents could choose from: “Yes,” “No,” “No, but we have plans to begin one,” and “No, but we are discussing the idea.”

Overall Analysis. One hundred fifty-four respondents answered this question and 51 (33%) indicated having an institute/school of ministry, with 11 having plans to create one and another 10 discussing the idea. Thus, 42 percent have an institute or have plans to start one and another 5 percent are at least discussing the idea. Some respondents, however, included programs offered on their campus through agreements with Bible colleges and seminaries. In actuality, it appears that 30 currently have in-house institutes (19.5%). Figure 1 provides a visual breakdown.

¹⁹⁶ If the attendance figure provided was within 50 of the 2015 report, it was calculated as no change.

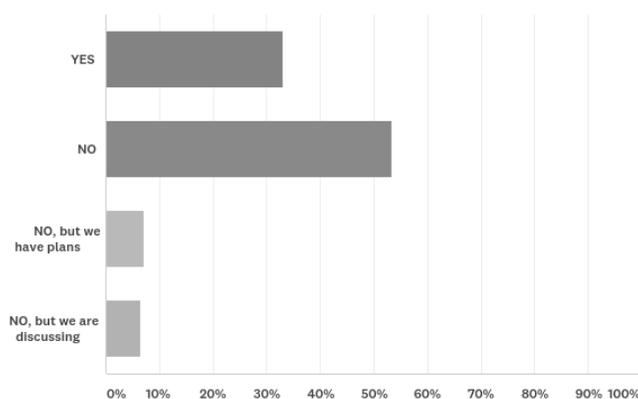


Figure 1 Teaching Institutes

Analysis by Church Size. As one might expect, the larger the church, the more likely it is to have a teaching institute. Roughly one-third of the churches in the 2,000s either have teaching institutes, have plans for one, or are discussing the idea. The figure jumps to 50 percent when a church reaches 4,000 in attendance, and 59 percent for gigachurches. For a complete breakdown of teaching institutes by church size, see table 19.

Table 19 Teaching Institutes: Analysis by Church Size

Present Church Size	# of Respondents	"Yes" (51)	"Yes & Plans" (62)	"Yes, Plans & Discussing" (72)
2,000-2,999	62	14 (23%)	17 (27%)	21 (34%)
3,000-3,999	35	11 (31%)	14 (40%)	16 (46%)
4,000-4,999	12	4 (33%)	6 (50%)	7 (58%)
5,000-9,999	29	14 (48%)	15 (52%)	16 (55%)
10,000+	17	8 (47%)	10 (59%)	12 (71%)

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Analysis by Denomination. Only six denominational groups represented at least five percent of the total respondents. Throughout the remainder of this section, only these groups will be discussed. It is evident that roughly half of the nondenominational megachurches consider beginning an institute. It should be noted that the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, who also follow this trend, are actually nondenominational.

These churches are independent but collectively have a “fellowship” and common heritage. The nondenominational trend is in stark contrast to Southern Baptists, where only about one-quarter of the churches consider the idea. This could be a result of Southern Baptist’s placing a great deal of emphasis on their seminaries.¹⁹⁷ See table 20 for the analysis by denominations.

Table 20 Teaching Institutes: Analysis by Denomination

Denomination	# of Respondents	“Yes”	Total “Yes & Plans”	Total “Yes, Plans & Discussing”
Nondenominational	43	17 (40%)	21 (49%)	25 (58%)
Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ	27	10 (37%)	11 (41%)	14 (52%)
Southern Baptist	23	4 (17%)	5 (22%)	6 (26%)
Assembly of God	12	7 (58%)	7 (58%)	7 (58%)
United Methodist	9	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
Calvary Chapel	8	4 (50%)	6 (75%)	6 (75%)

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Question two asked, “If you have a teaching institute, please describe (e.g., 1 year in length, 8 total courses). Of the 51 respondents to this question, 21 (41%) indicated they were partnering with a Bible college or seminary to offer various programs at their church. One church now has its own four-year college seeking accreditation with the ABHE. Other respondents mentioned having institutes or schools of ministry that offer certificates and diplomas. Of respondents (not partnering with a Bible college or seminary) who cited length of program, one-year was most popular (referenced ten times); two-year programs were stated six times. Sometimes “labs” or “units” were mentioned, and thus impossible to compare against “courses.” Those who cited the number of courses referenced anywhere from seven to twelve in total, with twelve being most common.

¹⁹⁷ Thoughts from Tim Dolan, May 1, 2018.

Question three asked, “If you have a teaching institute, what is the cost and average age of the students?” This question was not asked with the precision necessary to gather average cost and age of participants at church institutes. First, there were too many incomplete and incomprehensible answers. And second, the twenty-one respondents offering courses through Bible colleges and seminaries skewed the data. What was clear, however, is three churches provided the courses at no cost and five provided courses for \$100 or less.

Survey Results: Internships

Question four asked, “Do you have an internship program for undergraduate or graduate students?” Respondents could choose from: “Yes,” “No,” “No, but we have plans to begin one,” and “No, but we are discussing the idea.”

Overall Analysis. Out of 153 respondents, 112 (73%) had internship programs (see figure 2). This is consistent with Thumma and Bird’s previously report that 72-74 percent of megachurches have an internship or mentoring program.¹⁹⁸ Thirteen others have plans for starting one, while 7 are discussing the idea and 21 do not have any plans to begin an internship program.

¹⁹⁸ Thumma and Bird, 1, 6.

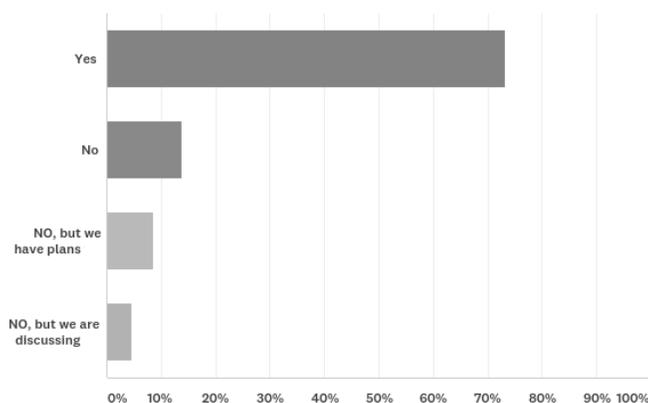


Figure 2 Internships

Analysis by Church Size. When it comes to internship programs, the size of a megachurch seems to make little difference (see table 21). All size groups show that at least two-thirds have an internship program. Of note is that 88 percent of the 17 gigachurch respondents have internship programs.

Table 21 Internships: Analysis by Church Size

Present Church Size	# of Respondents	Total "Yes" (112)	Total "Yes & Plans" (125)	"Yes, Plans & Discussing" (132)
2,000-2,999	62	40 (65%)	44 (71%)	50 (81%)
3,000-3,999	35	29 (83%)	32 (91%)	33 (94%)
4,000-4,999	12	9 (75%)	-	-
5,000-9,999	29	19 (66%)	25 (86%)	-
10,000+	17	15 (88%)	-	-

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Analysis by Denomination. When it comes to providing internships, Southern Baptists are particularly impressive, as 87 percent of the respondents said they have internship programs. Only 38 percent of Calvary Chapel respondents currently provide internships, but the sampling is small, making the trend uncertain. See table 22 for a complete breakdown of the data.

Table 22 Internships: Analysis by Denomination

Denomination	# of Respondents	“Yes”	Total “Yes & Plans”	Total “Yes, Plans & Discussing”
Nondenominational	43	32 (74%)	36 (84%)	38 (88%)
Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ	27	21 (78%)	24 (89%)	25 (93%)
Southern Baptist	23	20 (87%)	-	-
Assembly of God	12	8 (67%)	-	9 (75%)
United Methodist	9	7 (78%)	8 (89%)	-
Calvary Chapel	8	3 (38%)	5 (63%)	-

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Question five asked, “If you have an internship program, please describe (e.g., length of program and for what ministry positions).” Thumma and Bird said, “The approximate length of the average internship program is 12 months and 25% of these are done in conjunction with a recognized seminary.”¹⁹⁹ The latter part of this statement may be disputable. When asked to describe their institute or school of ministry in the previous question, only eight specifically mentioned a seminary. And when asked to describe their internship program, only 6 of 112 (5%) mentioned a seminary. Of course, this was an open-ended question that did not ask to specify partnerships with colleges or seminaries.

Thumma and Bird’s assertion that the average length of the internship program is 12 months may indeed indicate “average,” but it is not the most common. Forty-four respondents (39%) indicated length as “summer” (10-12 weeks). Twenty-seven respondents (24%) indicated either one year or one school year (9-12 months). Other answers ranged from three months to four years. While the two to four-year programs are atypical, they bring up the overall average length.

By far, the most common internship positions in megachurches are student ministry (43%), children’s ministry (30%), and worship arts (28%). Following these three

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

were: missions/outreach (13%), pastoral (12%), communications (6%), creative (6%), sports/recreation (5%), worship/technology (5%), and twenty-seven other areas.

Survey Results: Residency

Question six asked, “Do you offer residency programs?” Respondents could choose from: “Yes,” “No,” “No, but we have plans to begin one,” and “No, but we are discussing the idea.” Because “residency” was not clearly defined in the survey, this question was thrown out of the study.

Question seven asked, “If you offer residency programs, please describe (e.g., length of program and for what ministry positions?).” In spite of not defining “residency,” the open-ended responses made this question useful. One-year residency programs were most often mentioned (11 of 42, 26%). Five others (12%) stated they had two-year residency programs. Other respondents mentioned ranges from three months to four years. Perhaps the most insightful observation is that six churches (14%) said they offer residency to college (or in some cases seminary) graduates. Again, the most frequently mentioned positions available were for student ministry, worship arts, and children’s ministry. Residency for church planting was mentioned on three occasions, something that was not mentioned in the internship section.

Survey Results: Hiring Practices

Question eight asked, “How would you describe your hiring practices (e.g., do you typically hire from within or do you look elsewhere?)?” While this was an open-ended question, there were six primary responses. Of the 151 respondents, 85 (56%) either exclusively hire from within or preferred to hire from within, while only 5 (3%)

preferred to hire exclusively from outside. Sixty (40%) said they both hire from within and outside. Sixteen noted preference to hiring senior staff from the outside because it helps create culture change. The overall response is informing to Bible college graduates who intend to seek employment at a megachurch, as they should strongly consider first doing an internship (or even residency) at the church.

Question nine asked, “How often do you engage Bible college graduates for open positions?” Respondents could choose from “always,” “usually,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never.”

Overall Analysis. All of the 155 respondents answered this question, with 65 (42%) saying they “sometimes” engage Bible college graduates for open positions. Another 56 (35%) said they either “usually” or “always” engage them. With megachurches most often looking to hire from within, this seems like good news to Bible college graduates seeking employment. Figure 3 displays a visual analysis of hiring practices.

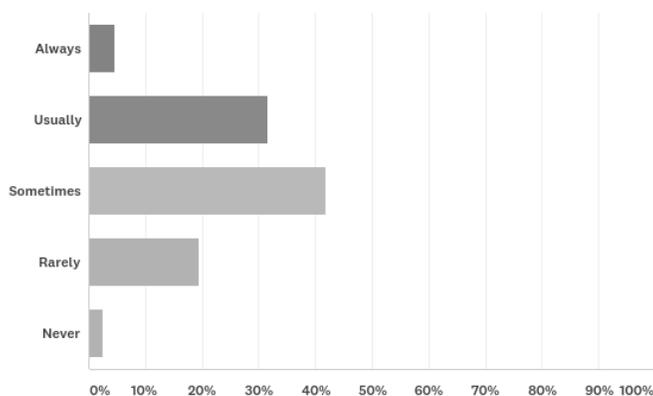


Figure 3 Hiring Practices

Analysis by Church Size. It is interesting to note that of the 34 who indicated they “rarely” or “never” engage Bible college graduates, 53 percent of those (18) have attendance in the 2,000s. One would think that the smaller churches (with smaller staff)

would be more willing to garner help from Bible college graduates. For complete information on hiring practice by church size, see table 23.

Table 23 Hiring Practices: Analysis by Size

Present Church Size	# of Respondents	Always (7)	Usually (49)	Sometimes (65)	Rarely (30)	Never (4)
2,000-2,999	62	5 (8%)	20 (32%)	19 (31%)	17 (27%)	1 (1.6%)
3,000-3,999	35	1 (3%)	12 (34%)	20 (63%)	2 (6%)	-
4,000-4,999	12	1 (8%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)
5,000-9,999	29	-	9 (31%)	14 (48%)	5 (17%)	1 (3%)
10,000+	17	-	4 (24%)	8 (47%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

Analysis by Denomination. Table 24 shows the most significant results.

Table 24 Hiring Practices: Analysis by Denomination

Denomination	# of Respondents	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Nondenominational	43	2 (5%)	12 (28%)	14 (33%)	13 (30%)	2 (5%)
Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ	27	1 (4%)	15 (56%)	8 (30%)	3 (11%)	-
Southern Baptist	23	2 (9%)	6 (26%)	12 (52%)	3 (13%)	-
Assembly of God	12	-	6 (50%)	5 (42%)	-	1 (8%)
United Methodist	9	-	-	6 (67%)	3 (33%)	-
Calvary Chapel	8	-	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	-

Source: SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect data.

The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ seem to engage Bible college graduates most often, with 89 percent saying “always,” “usually,” or “sometimes.” It is not surprising that United Methodists rank low here, as ministers are often appointed to their ministry location.

Question ten asked, “If you do engage Bible college graduates, are there particular areas of ministry that suit these graduates best?” With this question being asked three different ways throughout the survey, it is not surprising to again see student ministry, children’s ministry and worship arts at the head of the list. Following the big three were: pastoral, teaching, discipleship/small groups, any area, practical ministries, depends on gifts/skills, entry level, missions, and thirteen other areas.

Survey Results: Relevancy of Bible Colleges

Question eleven asked, “How relevant are Bible colleges in helping you fulfill your mission?” Respondents had a sliding bar where they could rate 1-100. It is curious that only 146 out of 155 answered this simple question, as it only required them to slide the bar. The average was only 53! This sends a strong message to Bible colleges, in that megachurch leaders see their survival as independent of Bible college assistance. Perhaps Bible colleges are relevant to smaller churches, but apparently not as much to megachurches.

Question twelve said, “Please feel free to elaborate on the last question (concerning the relevancy of Bible colleges).” The last question removed the phrase “helping you fulfill your mission” and attempted to focus the respondents on “the relevancy of Bible colleges.” Only 123 responded to the follow-up. Twenty-two spoke to the important role of Bible colleges, and used phrases such as: vastly important, preparation, major/critical role, rightly dividing the Word, and biblically literate. Two mentioned that it is where the “primary teachers” come from and five pointed to the “foundation” laid at Bible colleges. There was a second group of people who, while not being as outspoken as the first group, did state the following: helps our people, formal education is necessary, theological training helps us make disciples, the benefit of training and simultaneous practicums, and internships are helping close the gaps.

There was also significant feedback spoken against the necessity of attending Bible college. Two things stood out. First, eleven respondents mentioned how Bible colleges are not able to train for “practical” skills needed in the megachurch setting.

Second, ten mentioned that college graduates do not always fit the church “culture” or “DNA,” a necessary issue for successful ministry.

Five mentioned that “experience” was more important than education (most megachurch positions do not require theological training). Three said that “gifts/calling” were more important than education (degree is low priority), two that “work ethic” was more important, and two that a solid “walk with Christ” was more important. Four said that “experience” or “calling” was equal to education. Ten, while valuing education, stated that they look for seminary training and do not consider undergraduate studies sufficient.

There were also criticisms of Bible colleges. Comments included: some behind the times, pumping out average graduates, they need to be in the business of building churches (i.e., the real end to the means is not building the college), not great for preparing worship ministers, sterile/laboratory environment and internships are needed where students can own a project and even fail safely, the paradigm is inadequate (too decontextualized, intellectually framed), mentored learning is needed, and a diminished quality of students are now going to Bible college anyway (the best are not choosing ministry).

Survey Conclusions

A key query, which provided a basis for this survey, was if megachurches could be contributing to the decline of Bible colleges. Two survey questions surrounding institutes and hiring practices were aimed at disclosing an answer. First, the survey indicated that only 19.5 percent of respondents have in-house institutes. While 19.5 percent may seem negligible, if the number is accurate for representing the 1,512

megachurches, it actually represents 295 megachurches. Unfortunately, the follow-up question regarding average cost and age was ultimately not very useful. This makes the assessment surrounding if megachurches are encroaching on potential young Bible college students unknown. Ultimately, one will have to decide if roughly 300 megachurch institutes provides an obstacle to the health of Bible colleges. Not to be forgotten is that 13.6 percent (206) of megachurches surveyed are providing training through either a Bible college or seminary, proving that some megachurches are working cooperatively with existing biblical higher education institutions. Thus, one could easily argue that megachurches are strengthening the Bible colleges.

Second, fifty-six percent of respondents either exclusively hire from within or preferred to hire from within. It should be noted that some of these hires represent Bible college graduates who interned at the church. The practice of “hiring from within” is important because megachurch growth is, in part, attributed to people transferring from smaller churches (as much as 72%).²⁰⁰ The potential consequence of megachurch growth is that other churches decline, and in some cases may even close. The result may be that fewer ministry positions are available in the smaller churches. Thus, the megachurch practice of hiring from within, may have a negative impact on Bible college graduates.

A second query considered whether the megachurches are able to pick up the pieces in the event that Bible colleges collapse. With 19.5 percent having in-house institutes and 73 percent having internship programs in place, the indication would be

²⁰⁰ Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, “Not Who You Think They Are: A Profile of the People Who Attend America’s Megachurches,” June 2009, accessed April 14, 2018, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurch_attender_report.htm.

they are concerned about training up future leaders. On the other hand, megachurches may not be the best-suited group to train future leaders of small urban and rural churches.

Finally, this study provides clear evidence of cooperative effort between megachurches and Bible colleges/seminaries and points to a healthy model which may produce better trained leaders in the future. Again, 13.6 percent (206) of megachurches surveyed are providing training through either a Bible college or seminary. Megachurch leaders, however, believed the Bible college relevancy was only 53 out of a possible 100. But that concern may actually provide a clear open door to discussions that could lead to Bible colleges and megachurches collaborating for the purpose of becoming more relevant.

Megachurches are currently having influence on Christian higher education. Further study is necessary, however, as the extent to which students are foregoing Bible college in order to solely be trained at their local megachurch is still unknown.

Summary

It is worth repeating that sixty-three (64%) ABHE institutions have UG enrollment of 250 or lower. Furthermore, only four ABHE institutions have UG enrollment exceeding 1,000. When one considers the Parthenon-EY study, and its declaration that institutions under 1,000 are at great risk, a logical conclusion is that Bible colleges may be in serious trouble. The Barna study was also troubling, in that a great many Christians (41%) know very little about Bible colleges. While BG pointed out that Bible colleges may have an opportunity to grow with non-traditional students, BG stressed that today's students desire to "determine career path" (Bible colleges are very

narrowly focused) and that challenges among ABHE institutions require “adaptive solutions.”

While Section 2 offers many possible adaptive solutions, none of them can match the potency that collaboration offers. As leaders and institutions bring together their collective strengths (wisdom, creativity, resources, etc.), biblical education can be secured for future leaders. The Bible college movement needs a symphonic approach to biblical higher education. As each player does its part, something awesome can be brought to life that will bless the next generation who labor for the Church.

SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

With a long list of challenges facing biblical higher education, survival of Bible colleges is most dependent upon collaborative efforts between leaders, colleges, churches, and parachurch organizations. In an effort to stimulate collaboration among leaders in biblical higher education, a website was created.

As discussed in Section 3, ABHE holds an annual meeting each year to bring leaders together for encouragement, training, and updates. But leaders should take advantage of online connectivity and assist one another on a continual basis. While leaders occasionally call or email one another, the convenience of a one-stop gathering place is advantageous. Furthermore, it puts one in contact with the entire group as opposed to a select few. The *Biblical Higher Education Collaborative*²⁰¹ (BHE Collaborative) website was created to provide such a place. In conjunction with the website, a Facebook group²⁰² was also created to enhance communication. Additionally, a podcast is available on iTunes and is linked to the website.

Besides connecting leaders in biblical higher education, the BHE Collaborative will: support them with relevant content, encourage them by hearing shared success stories, and promote kingdom thinking and collaborative work. The BHE Collaborative will play a role in moving Bible college leaders closer together.

²⁰¹ The URL is BHECollaborative.org.

²⁰² The URL is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/222807608365875/>.

SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

The primary goal of BHE Collaborative is to promote unity and collaboration among leaders in biblical higher education, especially among those associated with ABHE. While forging a cooperative spirit is of utmost importance, supporting the group with relevant content to help inform decision-making is also a goal. It is hoped that the entire project will be an encouragement to leaders who may feel isolated or overwhelmed with the current challenges of biblical higher education. On a larger scale, the goal is help Bible colleges become sustainable for training future leaders in ministry.

While the primary audience is leaders of ABHE undergraduate institutions, hyperlinks to ABHE, CCCU, TRACS, and ATS have all been placed on the BHE Collaborative website. This is an intentional message of unity that is being communicated.

The subtitle of BHE Collaborative is “A symphonic approach to biblical higher education.” This is due to the metaphor of the symphony being promoted. The home page contains a picture of a symphony orchestra, as well as a link to another page titled, “Why a Symphony?” This page describes why the metaphor was chosen.

Prominent content on BHE Collaborative consists of three primary items: current resources, media, and success stories. The resources will include items such as: presentations, dissertations, recent studies, and enrollment data. The media section consists of a monthly “Collaborative Chat” with a leader in undergraduate biblical higher education. The chat is available as both a podcast and video. Some of the topics to be included are: retention challenges and strategies, enrollment challenges and strategies,

student debt, academic innovations, the future decline of high school graduates, adult learners, the future growth of minorities entering college, online education, faculty issues, what attracts students, Millennials, job placement, success stories, assessment, the future of biblical higher education, and stories of collaboration. Finally, success stories will be highlighted as examples and encouragement. Successful stories of collaboration are of particular interest and will be included to demonstrate the unity necessary to move the Bible college movement forward.

The overall budget for the website was minimal. A domain, hosting service and template were all purchased for less than \$200. The free templates always seem to be lacking desired features, so the decision was made to purchase a small package that contained multiple template options. The website is being hosted by BlueHost and the website is powered by WordPress. A Libsyn account to host and publish the monthly podcast was purchased for \$5 per month.

Having a personal interest in the success of this endeavor, both the website and its corresponding Facebook group will continue after graduation. A goal is to promote BHE Collaborative at future ABHE annual meetings.

Todd Hiestand, 323 Consulting, served as the expert advisor for the website. Hiestand related the following four standards²⁰³ which should be followed:

- A decent mobile experience
- A plan for marketing the site to your intended audience
- A plan for future content
- User reviews / input from your intended audience

²⁰³ Todd Hiestand, email message to author, July 25, 2018.

In describing “a decent mobile experience,” Hiestand noted that a person should be able to easily read the site “without things breaking.” When a person uses their mobile phone to access the website, the menu appears at the top of the screen for easy and quick navigation. Scrolling down also takes one through the entire home page and makes all elements available. Once a person clicks on a page, the available content appears (including embedded items). In summary, the mobile experience is very good.

Hiestand’s second standard was a marketing plan. The intention is to contact key leaders (e.g., presidents, provosts, vice presidents over academics) from ABHE, TRACS, CCCU, and ATS. Thus far, key contacts found²⁰⁴ for ABHE institutions have been contacted by email. The brief email describes the collaborative purpose, website, and Facebook page. To date, thirty-two individuals have joined the Facebook page, representing twenty-seven institutions. The Facebook page is being used to notify members of new postings to the website.

The third standard involves a plan for future content. The primary reason a “monthly” podcast was chosen is because it is a manageable plan. The August podcast is already complete, and interviewees are lined up for September, October, and November 2018. So far, finding willing participants has not been a struggle. The Facebook page will be used to solicit “resources” and “collaborative stories.” Some have already offered resources that are currently posted on the website. Posting “collaborative stories” seems to be the most challenging goal for the website. This is because it will likely involve interviews and conversion of key details to print.

²⁰⁴ Some websites do not contain contact information.

The final standard involves user reviews. The website offers a “comments” section and the Facebook group is interactive between all members. Thus, BHE Collaborative should receive the necessary feedback to help improve its product.

SECTION 6:
POSTSCRIPT

I graduated from St. Louis Christian (SLCC) in 1995 and immediately went into full-time preaching ministry. I began teaching at SLCC in 2001 and I have been employed with them for the past eighteen years. I know firsthand that a Bible college can lay a firm foundation in preparing students for service to Jesus. I also know that small Bible colleges struggle for survival. Now, as an administrator at the College, I work vigorously at making SLCC relevant and attractive to students. But I am convinced that hard work alone will not be enough to grow enrollment; change is imperative. As discussed in my thesis, (re)signing Bible colleges from isolation to collaboration is key to their future survivability and effectiveness.

As I considered the future of biblical higher education, it seemed critical that a broad array of options be explored. One of those options studied how capable megachurches would be at educating future leaders of the church. While the survey I conducted revealed some important insights, further research is needed. Most importantly, cost factors must be examined. While deliberating whether megachurches could step in for failing Bible colleges may seem like a doom and gloom scenario, the question is significant. But a much more important question is how Bible colleges and churches can partner more effectively, as I would assert that neither Bible colleges or churches should work in isolation. After all, are we not under the same conductor, the Holy Spirit? Do we not have the same end goal in mind?

Currently, the majority of students in biblical higher education go to a campus for face to face instruction. In other words, the traditional Bible college asks students to

come to them. As I reimagine biblical higher education, I see a greater emphasis being placed on taking education to people. To support this conclusion, one only needs to consider the millions of people presently taking online courses.²⁰⁵ Campus reduction leads to fewer expenses, which in turn makes biblical education more affordable. Besides online learning, which can include the “Master Class” concept, two options seem to be the way to the future: mobile equipping and true partnership with churches. Both models require increased collaborative effort.

I would define mobile equipping as taking a course(s) to a church. Instead of recruiting a single student from a church, a college will take a course to a church where an entire group of people can benefit. Additionally, new courses would have to be offered, as church leaders are often looking for practical courses to help equip lay leaders in their congregation. This concept mirrors the “gap” concern of D. L. Moody.

By “true” partnerships with churches, I mean that colleges will not simply be sending interns or supply preachers to the churches. Instead, some colleges will be considering how they may maintain operations on a church campus, thus becoming a true arm of the church. Other colleges will maintain their campus but create curricula that includes robust cooperation with area churches. At present, Bible colleges often ask the churches to help them fulfill their mission. The Bible college of the future, however, will ask churches how they may better assist them. It is this mindset of collaborative kingdom thinking (versus silo building that takes place in isolation) that is necessary.

²⁰⁵ “Report: One in Four Students Enrolled in Online Courses,” Online Learning Consortium, accessed October 16, 2018, https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/news_item/report-one-four-students-enrolled-online-courses/.

Both mobile equipping and amplified partnering demonstrate the symphonic power that can drive undergraduate biblical higher education into the future. Bible colleges exist to serve the Church and collaboration is the way forward. If the goal is to train people to serve Jesus, the Bible colleges must stop relying on a handful of students to come to them. Instead, in the future I envision, Bible colleges will collaborate and find affordable means to train more people than they ever imagined.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anthony, Michael J., Warren S Benson, Daryl Eldridge, and Julie Gorman. *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Banks, Robert. *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Barna Group. *Biblical Higher Education Market Research Analysis*. Ventura, CA: Booklet for ABHE Annual Meeting, 2016.
- Blair, Anthony L. *Church and Academy in Harmony: Models of Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010.
- Boden, Karen E. "The Next Frontier in Making Disciples: 21st-Century Technology Use in CCCU Member Institutions." *Christian Higher Education* 11, no. 4 (Sept/Oct 2012): 272-83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2010.492742>.
- Boon, Harold W. "The Development of the Bible College or Institute in the United States and Canada since 1880." PhD diss., New York Universities, 1950.
- Bramante, Fred and Rose Colby. *Off the Clock: Moving Education from Time to Competency*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012.
- Clawson, Dan and Max Page. *The Future of Higher Education: Framing 21st Century Social Issues*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Cole, Arthur Charles. *The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, and Noel/Levitz National Center for Staff Selection and Development. *Charting the Terrain of Christian Higher Education in America: A Profile of the Member Institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities*. Washington, DC: Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2012.
- DiChiara, Phillip. "A New Way to Design and Deliver Higher Education Consortium." In *Consolidating Colleges and Merging Universities: New Strategies for Higher Education Leaders*, Edited by James Martin, James E. Samels, and Associates, 159-72. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.
- Eavey, C. B. *History of Christian Education*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964.
- Flynn, James T. "MOOCs: Disruptive Innovation and the Future of Higher Education." *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 149-62. <http://journals.biola.edu/ns/cej/volumes/10/issues/1/articles/149/>.

- Geary, James. *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.
- Geiger, Roger L. *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 282.
<http://public.eblib.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1740482>.
- Goen, C. C. *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985.
- Guinness, H. G. *The Wide World and Our Work in It* (n.p: n.d). Quoted in Boon, 26.
- Hadlock, Heather. "Student Departure Decisions at a Private Christian University: Differences in Student Expectations and Experiences." EdD diss., Dallas Baptist University, 2012.
- Hampton, David, and Myrtle Hull. *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Hill, Samuel S. "Religion and the Results of Civil War." In *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Regan Wilson, 360-84. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Holaway, Richard. "An Investigation of the Trends in Pricing for Christian Higher Education and Its Relationship to Perceived Quality." DBA diss., George Fox University, 2016. <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dbadmin/7>.
- Houghton, Will H., Charles Thomas Cook and Dwight Lyman. *Tell Me About Moody: An International Centenary Tribute to the Foremost Evangelist of Modern Times*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1936.
- Hulme, Eileen E., David E. Groom, Jr., and Joseph M. Heltzel. "Reimagining Christian Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016): 95-105. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107348>.
- Hussar, W. J. and T. M. Bailey. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2022* (NCES 2014-051). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013.
- James, Michael F. "Riding the Wave: America's Changing Demographics and Its Effect on the Enrollment and Financial Strength of Private Colleges and Universities." EdD diss., Creighton University, 2015.

- Joeckel, Samuel, and Thomas Chesnes, eds. *The Christian College Phenomenon: Inside America's Fastest Growing Institutions of Higher Learning*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012.
- Johnstone, Sally M., and Louis Soares. "Principles for Developing Competency-Based Education Programs." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 46, no. 2 (2014): 12-19.
- Kallgren, Robert Carl. "Bible Colleges: Their Present Health and Possible Futures." PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1988.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*. 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Lederman, Doug. "Clay Christensen, Doubling Down." *Inside Higher Ed*, April 28, 2017. <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/04/28/clay-christensen-sticks-predictions-massive-college-closures>.
- Martin, Dorothy McKay. *Moody Bible Institute: God's Power in Action*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1977.
- Martin, James, James E. Samels and Associates, eds. *Consolidating Colleges and Merging Universities: New Strategies for Higher Education Leaders*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.
- McBirnie Jr., William S. "A Study of the Bible Institute Movement." PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1952.
- McKenna, David L. *Christ-Centered Higher Education: Memory, Meaning, and Momentum for the Twenty-First Century*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012.
- McKinney, Larry. "College Enrollment Trends." *Christian Academia Magazine*, January 30, 2018. <http://christianacademiamagazine.com/college-enrollment-trends/>.
- . "Biblical Higher Education: Past Commitments, Present Realities, and Future Considerations." *Biblical Higher Education Journal*, no. 8 (Spring 2018): 11-26.
- Morris, Marie S. "Metaphors Matter: Organizational Culture Shaped by Image." In *Thriving in Leadership Strategies for Making a Difference in Christian Higher Education*, ed. Karen Longman, 205-221. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012.
- Oachs, Emily Rose. *The Rising Cost of Education*. Special Reports. Minneapolis, MN: Essential Library, an imprint of Abdo Publishing, 2017.

- Patterson, James. *Shining Lights: A History of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- . *Shining Lights and Widening Horizons: A History of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2001-2006*. U.S.A: Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2006.
- Pessia, Wayne Joseph. “Millennial Learners and the Missions of the Members of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities and the Association of Biblical Higher Education.” EdD diss., Ashland University, 2014.
- Reynolds, John, and Jon Wallace. “Envisioning the Future of Christian Higher Education: Leadership for Embracing, Engaging, and Executing in a Changing Landscape.” *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016): 106-14, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107340>.
- Rine, Jesse P., and David S. Guthrie. “Steering the Ship Through Uncertain Waters: Empirical Analysis and the Future of Evangelical Higher Education.” *Christian Higher Education* 15, no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 2016): 4-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2016.1107347>.
- Ringenberg, William C. *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Roth, Brad. *God’s Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2017.
- Selingo, Jeffrey J. “Opportunities for Innovation: Reimagining the Next Decade of Higher Education for Public Comprehensive Universities.” In *The University Next Door What Is a Comprehensive University, Who Does It Educate, and Can It Survive?* Edited by Mark Schneider and KC Deane, 173-193. New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University, 2015.
- Shindler, Robert. *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon*. London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892.
- Simpson, A. B. “Editorial.” *The Word, Work, and World*, July 1883. Quoted in Boon, 35.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Aqua Church 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008.
- Sweeting, George. “Bible Colleges and Institutes: Chronicling the Vision of a Century.” *Christianity Today*, February 5, 1982. [https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/docview/200665039?accountid=11085](https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/georgefox.idm.oclc.org/docview/200665039?accountid=11085).

Tiffin, Gerald C. "The Interaction between the Bible College Movement and the Independent Disciples of Christ Denomination." PhD diss., Stanford University, 1968.

Witmer, S. A. *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension*. Manhasset, NY: Channel Press, 1962.