

***Christian Leadership to Change the World***

***The Mission and Identity of the School of Undergraduate Studies\****

\*Unanimously approved and affirmed by the faculty, staff, and student leadership of the School of Undergraduate Studies on Tuesday, November 23, 2010

# **School of Undergraduate Studies**

## ***Leadership Team***

Gerson Moreno-Riano, Ph.D.  
Dean

Donna Holcomb, M.A.  
Associate Dean of Students

Michael Pregitzer, M.S.  
Assistant Dean of Instruction

Donna Curtis, M.Ed.  
Faculty Recruitment Coordinator







Allyson Sabin, MBA  
Director of Operations

Tim Morse, M.Ed.  
Special Projects Manager

Bethany Varner, BA  
Assistant to the Dean

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## Introduction

In 2005, Regent University launched a new and bold educational initiative – the School of Undergraduate Studies. The expectations for this school have been clear: Foster an atmosphere of Christian academic excellence with a large and continually growing enrollment of Christian, as well as non-Christian students. These expectations in some sense have become an intrinsic part of the school's identity. However, given that these expectations are a part of every school at Regent University as well as many other institutions of higher education, the questions remain concerning what truly is the unique and distinct identity of the School of Undergraduate Studies and, therefore, what are its unique and distinct mission, values, and curricula.

In the modern environment of higher education, the challenge to locate a school's identity is often subject to competing desires within a spectrum bracketed by a utilitarian approach and a traditional liberal arts approach. While few institutions fully commit to either path, every college or university must decide which one has priority.

The School of Undergraduate Studies must operate within the vision and mission of Regent University summarized in our motto, *Christian Leadership to Change the World*. Every organization within an institution must subscribe to and support the institution's ideal, the mission and vision that should drive all activities and thinking. While not every student comes to Regent to become a Christian leader to change the world, many do, and, moreover, it is the single vision that motivates the faculty and staff at this University. It is why we are here. It is who we are. It is who we want our students to become.

It is with this goal in mind that the School of Undergraduate Studies believes that utilitarianism must submit to the liberal arts. We agree with Spears and Loomis (2009) when they suggest that "education and its processes are not reducible to a utility function. Where education does have utility...[it] is secondary to higher and nobler ends" (p. 173) John Ashcroft echoes this sentiment of noble pursuits in his discussion of leadership: "Leadership is about noble objectives and places that elevate people above their current situation" (Hughes, 2009). The University motto dictates the priority of the liberal arts. To be a good Christian leader, the student must be able to answer the existential and metaphysical questions, *What is a Christian? What is a leader? What is "good"?* In order to change the world, the student is faced with profound questions, *What is change? Why should the world change? What should the world change to? What is the "world"? How do I make sense of the world?* The responses to these "noble objectives" serve as the cornerstone upon which leadership thrives.

As a school that reveres the truth of the Bible, the lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation, and the work of the Holy Spirit, we must therefore affirm that truth and objective reality exist, and that there are answers to these questions. As utilitarianism and pragmatism reject objective truth, the School of Undergraduate Studies cannot sow seeds of knowledge in that soil. The liberal arts honor objective truth and humble service providing fertile ground in which to share God's truth and reality and cultivate better human beings.

Furthermore, Christians must be dedicated to studying the attributes of God that He shares with us as His image-bearers. While a utilitarian approach to education acknowledges the godly attributes of work and skills, the liberal arts foster understanding of human nature as reflected in

God's attributes of knowledge, wisdom, creativity, truthfulness, and those reflected as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22 English Standard Version). A Christian leader must reflect the character of the God he or she serves, and this character is lived out through the human heart and must be cherished: "Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23). The School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to educating students holistically as human beings created in the image of God. It is our intent to craft an identity that honors this goal to the glory of Jesus Christ.

To that end, the following provides a description and justification for the proposed vision and mission of the School of Undergraduate Studies and for the implications of these upon the school's current name, structure, and curricula.

## Vision

The School of Undergraduate Studies shares the powerful vision of the entire University to cultivate and develop *Christian leaders to change the world*.

## Mission

Our mission is to graduate exceptional students deeply committed to Christ's calling to cherish character, challenge culture, and serve the world.

### **Called to *Cherish* Character**

Alexis de Tocqueville (1990) defined character as "habits of the heart" (p. 299), a notion supported by Aristotle's claim that humans "complete perfection through habit" (Aristotle, trans. 1985, 2.1.1104a5, p. 36), and affirmed by Scripture as the heart reflects the real person (Prov. 27:19) and, therefore, must be cherished as the "wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23). Character defines who we are. A Christian leader must have a godly character. Christ calls men and women to a life honoring to Him. Even in a fallen state, human beings are still in God's image (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 9:6; James 3:9) and while moral purity has been lost and the intellect has been corrupted, God has graciously provided a path to progressively restoring God's image in us through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:10). Our character becomes more and more refined as we are "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29) fulfilling the promise that "when he appears we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Our moral and spiritual character is "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18). Through God's grace we are able to be like Him in knowledge, wisdom, truthfulness, creativity, service, redemption, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22).

What does the character of God look like in us? Throughout the Old and New Testaments, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (Ex. 4:6; Col. 1:9-10) are praiseworthy character traits among godly men and women. The book of Proverbs begins with an exhortation "to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight" (1:2), to "let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance" (1:5), and to understand that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"(1:7). True wisdom comes only from the Lord and "from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:8) and only through that wisdom

will one “understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (2:9-10). The wisdom of Solomon is recognized in 1 Kings 3:12 as God gives him “a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.” The theme of godly wisdom continues into the New Testament as the Apostle Paul distinguishes between the “wisdom of the world” and the “wisdom of God.” God has “made foolish the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor. 1:20-24) while exalting the “secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). God’s wisdom comes from an acknowledgement that all knowledge and understanding comes from Him and that His glory must be the chief aim; it is a humble and dependent wisdom. This is a holistic wisdom that understands all of reality through God’s revelation in Scripture and in His creation. This is the wisdom that we want to foster in our students.

The knowledge and wisdom of God leads directly to the truth. The triune God is “perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16; 1 John 3:20), the truth (John 14:6; John 18:37) and the final standard of truth (Ps. 117:2; Ps. 119:151,160; Rom. 1:25). As image-bearers, we should courageously and uncompromisingly pursue the truth in all areas of life and academic disciplines. Affirming Augustine’s Biblical worldview that all truth is God’s truth, we can dedicate our lives to the pursuit of knowledge wherever it may lead. Truth also matters in personal relationships; Paul exhorts us to put “away falsehood, [and] let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). We ought to love the truth and hate lies (Prov. 12:22). And, finally, we must be committed to the truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16).

With God’s wisdom comes a personal commitment to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Above all, love is the greatest divine attribute that humans can imitate (1 Cor. 13:13) as it ultimately defines who God is (John 4:8). Love is self-sacrificing (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8) and embodies the greatest of all commandments to love God and love others (Matt. 22:37-39). It is through acts of love that the world will know who belongs to Christ (Matt. 5:43-48; John 13:35). A person ruled by love reflects the self-giving love of the Trinity (John 17:10) and a life lived “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3). In particular, James warns of the dangers associated with pride and the reward for humility: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God” (James 4:6-7). A humble heart makes for a strong leader and that heart must be cherished above all else (Prov. 4:23). Finally, through humility we are able to serve as the Lord served us (Mark 10:45).

A godly character should be cherished as a wonderful gift from God. The Greek word for “cherish” is *thalpo*, which means to “foster with tender care” (see Eph. 5:29). As a person is to nourish and cherish his or her own body, he or she should nurture, sustain, and care for godly character (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:14-16). The Apostle Paul encourages his readers to live a life of obedience to God: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:8-9). This is a character to be cherished.

## **Called to *Challenge* Culture**

Grounded in a Biblical worldview, a Christian leader must evaluate all viewpoints and ideas through the lens of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), and be willing and able to challenge the non-Biblical presuppositions, assumptions, and truth claims of the culture in which he or she lives. Without disengaging from the culture, he or she must join in God's redemptive purposes for the culture in science, the arts, literature, history, politics, economics, commerce, education, law, and theology by gaining a deep understanding of these subjects and institutions.

As Aristotle informed Aquinas, Euclid informed Pascal, and Cato informed Washington, non-Christians have had and continue to have much to offer Christians and culture. As H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) observes, "It is doubtless true that culture is wicked; but when Tolstoy affirms that there is nothing good in it he assumes that he has transcended his relative standpoint and can judge with the judgment of God" (p. 239). Through God's common grace, politicians, doctors, teachers, lawyers, journalists, firefighters, police and others who do not bow the knee to Christ are able to serve in sustaining His world as there is no aspect of human culture over which Christ does not rule (Eph. 1:22).

As Christian leaders, we can accept the culture's accomplishments, but we must also challenge its reliance on the "wisdom of the world" and stand firm for the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:20-24; 1 Cor. 2:7). As Niebuhr (1951) writes regarding Augustine's views on Christ's cultural transformative power: "The life of reason above all, that wisdom of man which the wisdom of God reveals to be full of folly, is reoriented and redirected by being given a new first principle...faith in God" (p. 214).

Daniel provides a Biblical example of a godly man who understood and excelled in the culture in which he found himself (Dan. 6:3), stood firm against ungodliness (Dan. 6:10-11) and blessed it (Dan. 6:16-28). Daniel is given by God "learning and skill in all literature and wisdom" (Dan. 1:17) so that "in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of [him], he found [him] ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom" (1:20). While not compromising his principles and continuing to set his heart on understanding before God (Dan. 10:12), Daniel becomes an influential leader in a foreign land by both challenging and serving in the culture (Dan. 6:25-28).

A Christian leader must also be willing to humbly, but boldly, give a defense of the faith (1 Pet. 3:15) and offer a Biblical perspective "destroy[ing] arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (2 Cor. 10:5). The Apostle Paul warns to let "no one [take] you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition..." (Col. 2:8). Challenging culture requires a keen awareness of the errors in "human tradition."

Equipped with his or her knowledge of the Lord and the culture, and Christ-like character, the Christian leader can transform culture with both courage and grace seeking to both defend the faith (1 Pet. 3:15) and share the gospel to redeem and reconcile the world to Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). This courage extends to standing strong in the face of persecution (Phil. 1:29) and not being ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). As Peter and the apostles continued to preach over the objections of the council and high priest (Acts 5: 27ff), the Christian leader must have the courage to "obey God rather than men" and stand firm against a culture that resists and rejects

the gospel message. Like Paul at the Areopagus, we should be able to offer a reasoned, informed, and inspired apologetic to a fallen, deceived, and sinful world (Acts 17:22ff). And like Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, the Christian leader must be willing to study and become knowledgeable of the culture in order to more effectively engage and respond to it.

Finally, in challenging culture, the Christian leader must be mindful of the temptations of the world, deeply reflecting on the desires of his or her heart (Luke 6:43-45), committed to removing idols which compete for worship that is rightfully God's (Ezek. 14:6), and quick to confess and repent of sin and be restored to a right relationship with Christ (1 John 1:9).

### **Called to *Serve the World***

The Christian leader is called to a life of Biblical service: "It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28). Just as Christ in his humility served and transformed the world (Phil. 2:1-11), we are to "shine as lights in the world" (v. 15) and redeem it for Christ. Christ has called us to be ambassadors of Him (2 Cor. 5:20), reconciling the world to Him, acting redemptively to call people out of sin, and proclaiming the hope of transformation through Him. Moreover, in fostering redemptive change, we must act, as faith is made complete by works (James 2:22). Change comes through Spirit-led service that builds businesses, helps the poor, feeds the hungry, ministers to the lost, disciples believers, governs citizens, educates children, manages homes, and faithfully serves the Kingdom. Paul, Timothy, Peter, James, Matthew, Luke, Moses, Esther, Ruth, Joseph, Daniel, David, and Abraham are just a few of Biblical figures who acted in faith and obedience to change history – to change the world. Aristotle noted that "we must already in some way have a character suitable for virtue, fond of what is fine and objecting to what is shameful" (Aristotle, trans. 1985, 14.12.1179b30, p. 292) but he also stressed that character must be developed and taught and that "we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions" (Aristotle, trans. 1985, 2.1.1103b1, p. 34) A Christian leader must serve in whatever sphere of influence that he or she finds himself or herself with the goal to make it better, to free it from the effects of sin, and redeem it for the Kingdom of God.

Serving the world also occurs as we participate in God's creative process. The Christian leader is called to be a co-laborer with God in His care for His creation (1 Cor. 3:9). "In the beginning" God created (Gen. 1:1) and as His image-bearers (Gen. 1:27), so can we. The Christian leader can imitate and join in the actions of the Triune God, becoming a co-creator of art, music, business, books, buildings, ideas, services, products and anything else that can be imagined. Imagine the difference a Christian can make through creativity and innovation. As A. Wolters (2005) writes, "We are called to engage in the ongoing creational work of God, to be God's helper in executing to the end the blueprint for his masterpiece" (p. 44). As a co-creator, the Christian leader has the knowledge and skills to develop new and innovative ways to address problems and issues, solutions that can serve and change the world for God's glory.

## Identity

The School of Undergraduate Studies is a Christ-centered, Biblically-grounded academic community shaped by and dedicated to the ideals of transformation, holism, and inheritance.

### Transformed Lives

Transformation is essential to the Christian experience. As believers, we are continuously transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). The word for “transformed” (Rom. 12:2) in the Greek is “metamorphoo,” which is the same word for “transfigured” used in Mark 9:2 to describe the revelation of Christ’s deity; literally, the word means “change in form.” The School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to nurturing this radical change in our students as new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) as “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18). This transformation “comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Minds and character will be changed. This transformation results in a worldview that will help the student see reality the way God says he or she should see it. This is a worldview that will redefine science, the arts, literature, history, politics, economics, commerce, education, family, law, theology, and philosophy for our students. John Ashcroft states that “leadership is about noble objectives and places that elevate people above their current situation” (Hughes, 2009). This worldview will change relationships, families, households, companies, schools, governments, and nations. The students’ transformation will, in effect, transform the world.

This transformation is a lifelong process as the Apostle Paul witnesses to us in Philippians 4:10-13; he learned to be content in all situations, revealing that there was a time when he was not. At one time, Saul was a great persecutor of Christians, but his *metamorphosis* to the Apostle Paul changed him into the great defender of the faith. Paul had been transformed. As transformation is foundational to the Christian walk, the School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to delivering courses and experiences that are designed to change students. We will engage the student’s mind and heart and body and soul in order to encourage and support intellectual, spiritual, and emotional transformation. When we came to Christ, God accepted us as we were; since then, He has worked in our lives to change us into the image of His Son. The School of Undergraduate Studies will help our students on that journey. That journey will be academically and spiritually rigorous and will inspire students to serve others as Christ taught us (Matt. 20:26-28). The School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to exemplifying service and encouraging service among our students, equipping them with the practical experience to reach others and transform culture. A changed heart results in active hands.

### Holistic Life

The School of Undergraduate Studies assumes a holistic approach to learning and life. In Matthew 22:37 Christ commands that we must love the Lord with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. This reflects the totality of the human being: there is nothing that should be reserved for the self in our relationship with the Lord. Our commitment to the knowledge and love of the Lord must be total. The School of Undergraduate Studies is dedicated to helping students grow in their commitment to Christ and in godly character through discipleship and mentoring. As transformation comes through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2), students will

experience a vigorous intellectual environment designed to help them see God as the creator and sustainer of all knowledge and wisdom. As it is through faith alone that we come to Christ and by faith that we change and grow in His likeness, the School of Undergraduate Studies supports a vibrant faith community. We are committed to helping students better understand and experience their faith. To that end, worship is essential to spiritual growth and the School of Undergraduate Studies offers students many opportunities through regular chapel and special events to praise and worship the Lord in community.

The School of Undergraduate Studies also acknowledges that the spiritual is not superior to the body and vice versa. Augustine affirmed that, "Man is neither body alone, nor the soul alone but both together. And therefore the highest good, in which lies the happiness of man is composed of goods of both kinds, bodily and spiritual" (Augustine, trans. 1876, 19.3, p. 504). The School of Undergraduate Studies has a vibrant campus life that encourages intramural sports, community events, and informal activities. We are dedicated to helping our students grow in mind and heart, and encouraging care for the body as well as the spirit.

The life of the mind and a life of service are integrated into the School of Undergraduate Studies experience. The liberal arts and sciences are fully integrated into the structure of the School of Undergraduate Studies unified under one vision and mission. Through this unity, a Christian worldview informs our perspectives on science, the arts, literature, history, politics, economics, commerce, education, law, theology, and philosophy which we share with our students. Students who wish to lead in these fields are not only required to learn but also to serve in these areas. *Leadership Learning for Life™* is a School of Undergraduate Studies initiative which incorporates character, knowledge, and service into leadership development. Students develop the knowledge, skills, and character to become productive and redemptive agents in the world.

### **Living Inheritance**

The German thinker and writer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, once wrote: "Enjoy what thou hast inherited from thy sires if thou wouldst really possess it. What we employ and use is never an oppressive burden; what the moment brings forth, that only can it profit by" (Catrevas, Edwards, & Browns, 1957, p. 309) Inheritances are gifts from the past to be used in the present to benefit the future. An inheritance should not be an oppressive burden, but a blessing. The School of Undergraduate Studies stands at the intersection of many inheritances: Regent University, the American founding principles, Christian liberal arts, the earth, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to sharing these inheritances with our students so they can be blessed and bless generations to come.

In 1978, M.G. "Pat" Robertson established Regent University (originally, CBN University) for the special purpose of preparing leaders who would not only succeed in their professions, but also advance as Christians equipped to effectively impact the world. Since then, seven foundational schools – the Seven Pillars - have defined the University, all representing critical areas of influence in human society: Communication & the Arts, Education, Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship, Divinity, Government, Law, and Psychology and Counseling. That heritage continues in the School of Undergraduate Studies as it serves to prepare students for critical leadership roles in areas including business, education, communication, the arts, religion, and government. Regent University also has a long tradition of excellence, innovation, and global

reach, qualities we will continue to honor. The School of Undergraduate Studies values the American founding principles of freedom and liberty and acknowledges the profound influence of the Biblical tradition on the United States and all of Western civilization. The School of Undergraduate Studies is committed to helping students understand the implications of this inheritance for their own lives, and the lives of others here and around the world.

The School of Undergraduate Studies is also a benefactor of the Christian liberal arts heritage. The academy was built on the seven liberal arts of grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, all of which rest on Biblical truth. The study of the liberal arts was motivated by discovering God's truth and serving the world. At the School of Undergraduate Studies, we have embraced that inheritance to cultivate literature, speech, writing, math, music and arts, and science within our students. We have inherited the writing, scholarship, traditions, and structure of those that came before us. To study the liberal arts is not only an exercise in knowledge and skill acquisition, but in identity acquisition. The Christian identity is intertwined in the liberal arts. At the School of Undergraduate Studies we acknowledge that we are heirs to this inheritance and boldly offer it to our students.

The earth was given to human beings to rule over and take dominion (Gen. 1:28) and we are to act as stewards caring for what God has given to us (Gen. 2:15). To be a steward means to be entrusted with the authority given by the ruler. In Genesis 41, Joseph is held up as an excellent example of a steward. Although he was not part of the royal family, the Pharaoh made Joseph a steward over the entire land: "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you" (Gen. 41:40). Similarly, God has given human beings stewardship over the entire earth. At the School of Undergraduate Studies we acknowledge our responsibility to appreciate and manage this inheritance and through study and service teach our students the same.

Finally, we are heirs of God (Rom. 8:17), the promise of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:11-13), the inheritance of salvation (1 Pet. 1:4), and the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Matt. 25:34). At the School of Undergraduate Studies we share and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those students who are co-heirs with Him. Also, we honor the sacrifices and contributions of saints that have preceded us, studying their works and their lives, and sharing the history that binds us as Christians and a legacy that will serve as a strong foundation for our faith and the faith of our students.

## Summary

This vision, mission, and identity serve to establish the School of Undergraduate Studies as an exceptional and unique institution of higher learning. Further, this vision, mission, and identity entail a future *renaming* of the School of Undergraduate Studies as well as the development of innovative collaborative relationships between it and the graduate schools of the University. Framed by a mission that focuses on cherishing character, challenging culture, and serving the world, the school offers students a transformational and holistic approach to learning and life. The school is poised to share the inheritance of this University, the American experience, Christian liberal arts, the earth, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ with our students who, in turn, will share them with a waiting world that needs the redemptive Spirit of Jesus Christ and the love and actions of His followers.

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