

EXPECTATIONS!

Looking Ahead to a Consolidated University

The Consolidation: A student-Centered Focus

As one who has worked in higher education in Missouri, California and Florida, I am extremely impressed by how intent the leadership, faculty and staff are focused on the student-centered aspects of the consolidation of CBC, Evangel and AGTS. The missions of the institutions have been considered sacred and the essence of each institutional mission has been reflected in the new Evangel mission statement, "... Committed to excellence in educating and equipping students to become spirit empowered to impact the church and the world". In the student-centered planning process much attention is given to assessing the academic programs and services to determine how improvements can be made to more effectively educate and equip our students to be the best they can be with their God given gifts and abilities. By bringing the institutions together there will be greater potential for comprehensive student growth and improved financial circumstances.

The consolidated university provides the framework for exploring more effective ways of integrating the educational disciplines with faith and spiritual formation to meet the many challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. The consolidation provides for and encourages the development of pilot and experimental programs that will add value to the student's educational experiences and prepare them in a more holistic way and in some cases in a much timelier manner. One example would be the development of the six year M. Div program or maybe a five year M. Div program which integrates three years of undergraduate and two years of graduate study. Other models may include interdisciplinary degree programs with a combination of ministry preparation and a concentration in business or communications or other combinations to better equip our students to be more effective pastors, missionaries and servants in other career fields as well. Students broaden their prospective and gain a great deal from the social and academic interaction.

Leaderships' interest in pilot and experimental programs is in part motivated by the increasing size of student debt upon graduation. The shift from a grant-based to a loan based educational system has increased time for degree completion. Consolidation provides for greater potential to increase coordination and cooperation among academic departments and allow for the development of new and creative models such as the fast track M. Div programs and other options. This will help some students to graduate more quickly so they can pursue their ministries and careers without being encumbered with excessive debt.

I strongly support the consolidation efforts because I am convinced that by bringing the three institutions together with their respective traditions and missions the educational experiences for all students will be enriched; it will encourage mutual respect for all academic programs and will help facilitate new and creative options that are essential as we educate and equip students to impact God's Kingdom at home and abroad.

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Consolidation subject to the approval of the Higher Learning Commission.