

**ASSESSING FAITH-LEARNING INTEGRATION  
IN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE BUSINESS PROGRAMS**

by

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## **Abstract**

Regional and professional accrediting bodies are increasingly promoting outcomes assessment for evaluating institutional performance. This trend toward outcomes assessment presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Christian colleges. The opportunity comes from the recognition that institutions should be evaluated based on their individual missions. Along with its educational goals, the spiritual mission, vision, and objectives of a Christian university become evaluation foci. If the institution has objectives that include such items as spiritual growth of students, ethical decision-making, and the integration of faith and learning, then progress toward those objectives must be evaluated.

At most Christian colleges and universities, the integration of faith and learning (and, by implication, of faith and practice) is a primary objective. Within the business program, the integration of faith and learning, and of faith and business practice, is both an objective and often a key desire of the business faculty. Yet most business faculty struggle somewhat with how to integrate faith and learning, and struggle even more with the concept of how to assess the integration of faith and learning.

In this paper, the concept and process of outcomes assessment is briefly examined. Specifically, the goal of outcomes assessment, the outcomes assessment process at the program level, the characteristics of effective outcome assessment, and the costs and benefits of outcomes assessment are discussed. Consideration is also given to how the outcomes assessment process works within the context of Christian college business programs. Examples of and methods for integrating faith with learning and practice, and assessing the effectiveness of this integration within the business program, are discussed. This includes the roles played by student evaluations of classroom teaching, student evaluations of advisors, end-of-course and end-of-program assessment methods, faculty evaluations of course outcomes, alumni evaluations, employer evaluations, and portfolios in assessing faith-learning integration. This paper is intended to serve as background for a panel discussion on assessment of faith-learning integration, where questions are considered, issues are discussed, and best practices are shared.

## Introduction

Regional and professional accrediting bodies are increasingly promoting outcomes assessment for evaluating institutional performance. This trend toward outcomes assessment presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Christian colleges (Bovee, Roller, & Andrews, 2000). The opportunity comes from the recognition that institutions should be evaluated based on their individual missions. Along with its educational goals, the spiritual mission, vision, and objectives of a Christian university become evaluation foci. If the institution has objectives that include such items as spiritual growth of students, ethical decision-making, and the integration of faith and learning, then progress toward those objectives must be evaluated.

At most Christian colleges and universities, the integration of faith and learning (and, by implication, of faith and practice) is a primary objective. Within the business program, the integration of faith and learning, and of faith and business practice, is both an objective and often a key desire of the business faculty. Yet most business faculty struggle somewhat with how to integrate faith and learning, and struggle even more with the concept of how to assess the integration of faith and learning.

In the first section of the paper, the concept and process of outcomes assessment is briefly examined. Specifically, the goal of outcomes assessment, the outcomes assessment process at the program level, the characteristics of effective outcome assessment, and the costs and benefits of outcomes assessment are discussed. The second section considers how the outcomes assessment process works within the context of Christian college business programs. The third section focuses on methods for integrating faith and learning, and faith and practice, and assessing the effectiveness of this integration within the business program. This includes the roles played by student evaluations of classroom teaching, student evaluations of advisors,

end-of-course and end-of-program assessment methods, faculty evaluations of course outcomes, alumni evaluations, employer evaluations, and portfolios in assessing faith-learning integration. The final section illustrates an example of a qualitative, content-rich approach to outcomes assessment of faith-learning integration. This paper is intended to serve as background for a panel discussion on assessment of faith-learning integration, where questions are considered, issues are discussed, and best practices are shared.

### **Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education: An Overview**

The ultimate goal of outcome assessment, at both the institutional and program levels, is to ensure the fulfillment of explicit and implicit obligations to relevant stakeholders, in other words, to ensure institutional and program integrity. Institutions of higher education must continually evaluate the extent to which their academic (and other) programs contribute toward the accomplishment of their stated mission, goals, and objectives.

The importance of effective outcomes assessment at all levels of the institution has accelerated in recent years due to the combined pressures of an increasingly competitive environment in higher education and the subsequent demands for increased accountability for results from institutional stakeholders, such as students, parents, and employers. Demands for increased accountability have, in turn, manifested themselves in the form of more stringent requirements by government regulators and both regional and specialized accrediting bodies for the design and implementation of effective outcomes assessment plans. The challenge of carefully articulating, balancing and assessing institutional and program-level commitments to educational stakeholders (students, parents, employers, communities, faculty, donors, etc.) is daunting, but for both philosophical and competitive reasons it is imperative. To a great extent, the

effectiveness with which this challenge is met is likely to determine the fate of many institutions and programs in the months and years to come. Effective outcomes assessment continues to help shape the competitive landscape in higher education.

### Program-Level Outcomes Assessment

Because the focus of this paper is the assessment of the integration of faith with learning and practice at the program-level, a brief review of the process of outcomes assessment at the program-level is warranted. Figure 1 highlights the critical components of the outcomes assessment process at the program-level.

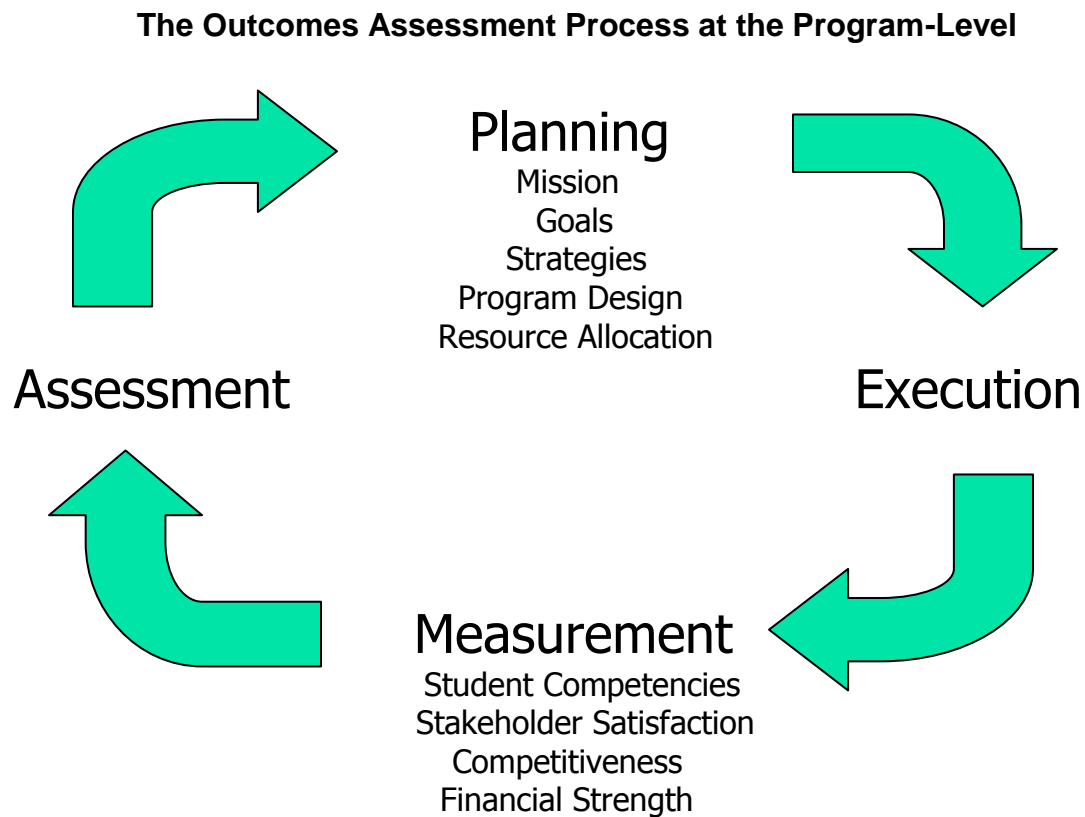


Figure 1

The essential starting point for effective outcomes assessment is the development of strategic and operating plans for the program. These plans should be consistent with

and supportive of the institutional strategic plan and, as with the institutional plan, should identify goals and strategies that balance the needs of the program's stakeholders. The allocation of financial (and other) resources should be directed by the strategic priorities set forth in the planning process and delineated in the program budget. The execution of the strategic and operating plans generates results (with respect to each of the relevant stakeholders) that need to be carefully measured and evaluated. Broadly speaking, these results include learning outcomes; student, alumni, and employer satisfaction; competitive and financial strength; and reputational effects. More specifically, progress with respect to each of the strategic planning goals and objectives should be evaluated. It is important to remember, however, that assessment and measurement are not synonymous. Many critical goals, such as effective faith/learning integration for instance, may be difficult or impossible to effectively measure using quantitative measures. This does not, however, preclude a careful evaluation of goal effectiveness using necessarily more qualitative analytical techniques. Ultimately, effective program outcomes assessment will influence future planning and execution.

#### Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Assessment

An effective program-level outcomes assessment process should demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. **It should be mission and goal-driven.** The outcomes and processes assessed should be derived from a careful analysis of program mission and priorities and stakeholder expectations.
2. **It should be improvement-focused.** The goal of program outcomes assessment should remain focused on accomplishing the stated mission and exceeding stakeholder expectations, with an eye toward both effectiveness and efficiency, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

3. **It should assess program effectiveness and efficiency.**
4. **It should be continuous.** The reality is that to ensure continuous improvement; planning, execution, measurement, and assessment will often occur nearly simultaneously. In fact, this is one of the greatest challenges associated with effective outcomes assessment and continuous improvement; to be effective it must be a never-ending process.
5. **It should be strongly tied to the planning and budgeting processes.** In order to “close the loop” in the outcomes assessment process, assessment feedback must be incorporated into subsequent planning and budgeting activities, as corrective improvement measures are proposed. As a result, proposed strategic and operational improvements become mission-focused.
6. **It should utilize multiple measures, sources, and time frames.** For example, in assessing the relevance of program curriculum, one might survey students during and after a course and after graduation. Input might also be sought from employers, either via surveys or focus groups. Faculty might also be asked to reflect on student feedback regarding appropriate improvements.
7. **It should be a broadly supported and owned process.** Involvement and support by all relevant stakeholder groups in the assessment process increases the likelihood of its effectiveness.
8. **It should be institutionally driven and supportive.** As noted earlier, the program-level strategic plan (on which the outcomes assessment process is based) should be consistent with and supportive of institutional plans. As such, program-level outcomes assessment should support continuous improvement efforts institutionally.

9. **It should assess processes as well as outcomes.** In addition to careful planning and strategy supportive resource allocation, an important determinant of program success is the effectiveness of the various processes through which strategic initiatives are executed. Thus, effective outcomes assessment should pay careful attention to process evaluation and improvement as they relate to desired outcomes.

#### Costs and Benefits of Outcomes Assessment

Institutions and programs that implement effective outcomes assessment plans and processes should realize a number of benefits. Program-related activities, processes, and planning should become more results-oriented and stakeholder-focused. As stakeholders accrue the benefits of continuous program improvement, their level of satisfaction and loyalty should increase, strengthening the program/institution's perceived competitive advantages. An effective outcomes assessment process also creates a renewed sense of stewardship and accountability toward stakeholders for the resources with which programs and institutions have been entrusted.

One should not, however, underestimate the very real costs associated with outcomes assessment. Perhaps the greatest cost is the investment of time necessary for effective planning, execution, measurement, and assessment. Because the process is continuous, involves multiple constituencies, and necessitates consensus building, it is very time intensive when managed effectively. There is also often some resistance to increased accountability for stated outcome objectives, particularly when inadequate resources are allocated or when strategy-supportive processes are inadequate to deliver the desired outcomes.

Each institution and its programs must carefully evaluate these costs and benefits as they consider their commitment to outcomes assessment activities. The

increasingly competitive landscape in higher education and the resulting demands from multiple stakeholders for measurable results, are increasing the relative benefits of effective outcomes assessment at both the institutional and program levels.

### **Defining Faith/Learning Integration Goals**

When encouraged at the Christian college, the integration of faith and learning is the singular distinctive which sets it apart as a particularly effective learning community in the formation of truly educated, responsible Christian individuals. When an institution embraces the concept of outcomes assessment as a means of continuous improvement in its business programs, one of the most important steps in the planning process is defining the faith/learning integration goals toward which it will strive during the process. Having clear goals is an essential element in any outcomes process, as it provides the foundation upon which both the measurement and assessment processes rest. Since we, as mortals, can neither control how God's Holy Spirit uses people in the implementation of His will, nor can we quantitatively assess the change and development He brings into an individual's soul. We create these faith integration goals so as to affirm the opportunity God has to work through us and the assets of our programs to increase His relationship with the students in our charge.

Rather than focus on either the literature background of faith integration or the decision-making process by which goals are set, this section of the paper defines the factors that must be considered in the formation of faith integration goals (Figure 2). In the context of the outcomes assessment model (Figure 1), faith integration goal development is essentially a refinement process as goals are developed (along with the policies/programs used to achieve those goals) during the planning stage, programs and policies are then implemented, outcomes are measured and assessed, and the information collected is used to refine the faith integration goals and strategies.

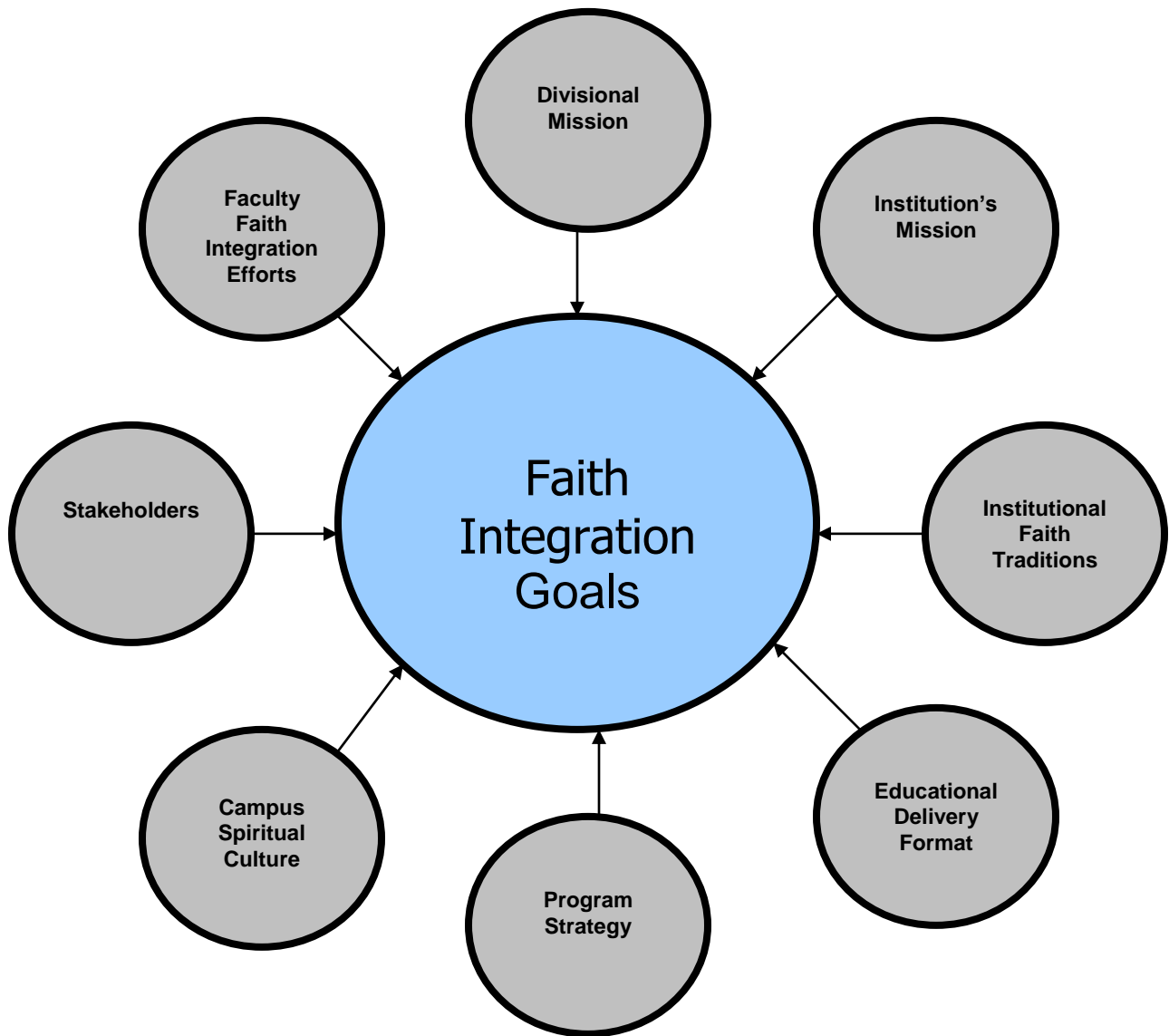


Figure 2

## Factors Influencing the Formation of Faith Integration Goals

1. **Institutional Mission** – The mission of any institution should be paramount when setting supporting goals within business programs. Institutional mission statements, which are often purposefully vague, address the degree of aggressiveness that the institution is willing to support in its pursuit of faith integration goals by defining the importance the institution places on the spiritual and faith development of its students.
2. **Institutional Faith Traditions** – Christian colleges vary widely as to the traditions and denominational backgrounds that influence doctrinal beliefs on campus. These beliefs can impact faith integration efforts directly by outlining “acceptable” religious practices upon which faith integration efforts may be based. Also, these beliefs impact faith integration efforts indirectly by contributing to the campus spiritual culture—which acts as the basis for generally accepted campus spiritual norms.
3. **Divisional Mission** – The mission statement of the school/college/division of business provides specific information as to the purposes and strategic positioning of the business programs. Generally, this mission statement, and the resulting strategic plan, provides the clearest definition of both existing and planned faith integration efforts for the business programs.
4. **Faculty Faith Integration Efforts** – The literature (Hasker, 1992; Holmes, 1975) tells us that the integration of faith and learning can be defined and conceptualized in many different ways. Thus, the existing faculty’s perspective on what faith integration is, their previous efforts at faith integration, and their belief in the effectiveness of those faith integration efforts will impact the eventual design of faith integration goals. Also, as the circular process of outcomes

assessment refines itself, the information collected on previous integration efforts manifests itself here.

5. **Stakeholders** – Several stakeholders will influence this process: Almighty God, students (both traditional and nontraditional), parents, alumni, faculty members, university administrators, accrediting bodies, employers, the surrounding community, and others. The weighted impact of each of these groups on faith integration goal formation is likely to be different for each institution depending upon the status of the existing relationships with each group.
6. **Campus Spiritual Culture** – Similar to an organization’s business culture, Christian colleges can vary according to the strength of their spiritual culture. A campus spiritual culture may be either strong or weak. Students in a strong culture will identify closely with the core values of the organization (Weiner, 1988). The culture provides a strong identity for its members and serves to distinguish itself from competing schools. By gaining an awareness of its campus’ culture, a business program will likely understand which methodological integration efforts will be met with the greatest degree of acceptance by the student body.
7. **Program Strategy** – The strategy for each business program provides a plan to effectively differentiate it from the competition. If differentiation is based upon the integration of faith and learning (or lack thereof) in the program, this factor must be taken into consideration.
8. **Educational Delivery Format** – As the growth trends in higher education swing toward non-traditional delivery formats, new challenges appear. What appeals to and is effective for a traditional student will not necessarily be either appealing or effective for a non-traditional student. Students in a non-traditional program

generally differ from traditional students in age, economic status, attitudes and motivations about higher education, and (in some cases) geographic location (Andrews, 1997; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Therefore, faith integration efforts aimed at students in non-traditional programs must be redesigned to account for these differences. In contrast, traditional campus-based academic programs are supported and solidified by the greater campus' spiritual culture and community.

In light of these factors, business faculty must define not only these factors, but also their relative weight as well. This model, then, structures these key variables into a cohesive framework to facilitate decision-making and goal development. This model acknowledges the differences among each Christian college business program based upon its unique set of environmental factors and strategic position. However, regardless of strategic position, a Christian college's willingness to view the unity of all God's truth and expend scholarly effort to integrate faith and learning will ensure free inquiry and produce learned scholars and practitioners.

### **Methods of Faith-Learning Outcomes Assessment**

Although faith-learning integration goals will vary considerably among institutions, we anticipate that two themes will frequently emerge: (1) that business students will develop a Christian worldview and paradigm that effectively integrates their faith with their business education, and (2) that business graduates will effectively integrate their faith and practice as business professionals. A number of methods can be used as outcomes assessment indicators for these broad faith-learning integration goals, as well as for more detailed, institution-specific goals. These methods are discussed below.

## Student Evaluations of Classroom Teaching

The classroom is a primary point of intentional faith-learning integration by faculty, so assessment of faculty performance in this area is warranted. While student evaluations have been widely criticized, they are also widely used, and thus ought to be used for something beneficial, such as assessment of faith-learning integration.

Questions that have been used to assess faith-learning integration include:

- The faculty member provided a Christian worldview in class.
- The faculty member included a devotional and prayer with each class.
- The faculty member displayed a strong Christian role model.
- How did this course affect your values (spiritual, ethical, aesthetic)?

One question that we have not seen used, but could be helpful in assessing faith-learning integration, would be, “The faculty member helped me to make useful connections between my Christian faith and the concepts of this course.” Better yet, the question could be asked in an open-ended format, such as “In what ways did the faculty member help you to make useful connections between your Christian faith and the concepts of this course?”

Some assumptions must be made when asking questions about a faculty member. For example, just because the faculty member provides a strong Christian role model and demonstrates faith-learning integration, does not necessarily have any real impact on the student, which is the goal. In addition, other factors, such as a halo/horn effect, may influence ratings on these questions in such a way that their validity is reduced. As in all research, multi-trait, multi-method approaches are necessary to ensure validity and reliability of results.

## Advisor Evaluations

One of the most important functions of faculty at Christian universities is advising. This advising may take many forms, including course selection, program/major selection, career counseling, personal counseling, and spiritual counseling. Opportunities for faith-

learning integration may take place through advising that would never occur in the classroom. At LeTourneau University, advisor evaluations are distributed in all classes once each year, providing students the opportunity to evaluate their advisors. The key question asked concerning faith-learning integration concerns the “advisor’s willingness to give personal advice or spiritual counseling as appropriate.” Perhaps a better assessment technique would be to use an open-ended question, such as “In what ways did your interrelationships with your advisor affect your spiritual values?”

### Student Reflections

Reflection is a key component of the learning process (Knowles *et al*, 1998) and can take many forms, all of which can provide indications of faith-learning integration.

- *End of class reflection* is used to make students consider what they have learned in a class session, or what questions have been raised in their minds during the class session. The professor dedicates the last five minutes or so of the class for students to write reflections on a piece of paper. If faith-learning connections have taken place, they should show up in the reflections. As a bonus, this provides a good way to take attendance.
- *End of course reflections* are also helpful in this respect. These are normally included as a concluding section in a comprehensive paper. As a guide, the paper guidelines may call for the student to reflect on the question, “How has this course affected your ability to integrate business concepts and principles with your faith?”
- *End of program reflections* are a method of program assessment that can include integration questions, such as, “How has this program affected your ability to integrate business concepts and principles with your faith?”

### Faculty Assessment of Course Outcomes

One way to promote faith-learning integration is to raise its level of awareness among faculty. At LeTourneau University, faculty members in the adult programs complete an end-of-course questionnaire concerning course modules, textbooks, and so on. As part of a similar process, faculty could be asked to reflect on specific instances within the class in which faith-learning integration occurred. They could also be asked to assess the overall success of the faith-learning integration activities in the course. The assessment process will heighten the awareness of faculty of the faith-learning integration process and goals.

### Alumni Evaluations/Reflections

As almost any educator realizes, the fruits of our labors may not become evident for months or years. It's only as our graduates live out their faith in the marketplace that we can see the results of faith-learning integration that took place during their time at our institutions. This makes the process of alumni evaluation critical. Some of the questions and/or prompts that have been used in alumni questionnaires to evaluate faith-learning integration include:

- ❑ The business courses at XYZ University helped me to integrate my faith with job-related issues and concerns.
- ❑ The spiritual mission is integrated into the academic program.
- ❑ Sufficient opportunities were presented to me to aid my spiritual growth.
- ❑ The courses that I completed helped me to recognize and deal wisely with ethical dilemmas in the workplace.
- ❑ What elements of the XYZ University experience had the greatest impact on your spiritual development?

- ❑ How would you describe the ways that your relationship with God changed and grew while attending XYZ University? What (people, programs, events, etc.) impacted your spiritual growth the most?
- ❑ What parts of the XYZ University experience were less effective in helping you to develop a closer relationship with God?
- ❑ What would you recommend that the University do to be more effective as an instrument for spiritual growth?

A later section of this paper provides a detailed look at the results of an alumni evaluation at John Brown University.

### Employer Evaluations

Another indication of faith-learning integration is the degree to which our alumni live out their faith on the job, as evaluated by supervisors. Employer evaluations can be challenging, since asking spiritual questions may not be consistent with the culture of the company or the spiritual state of the supervisor. Therefore, it is not usually possible to directly assess the extent to which an alumnus is integrating his or her faith on the job. However, supervisors can easily be asked to assess the ethical standards of the employee, which provides an indirect assessment of faith-learning integration.

### Student Portfolios

In some disciplines, student portfolios are used as a way to embody learning that has taken place over a period of time. Such portfolios often include reflections sections that can be used to assess faith-learning integration over time. The portfolios may include not only academic work, but co-curricular activities, providing a forum for reflection as to integration both inside and outside the classroom.

## **An Example of Faith-Learning Integration**

### **Outcomes Assessment from an Alumni Perspective**

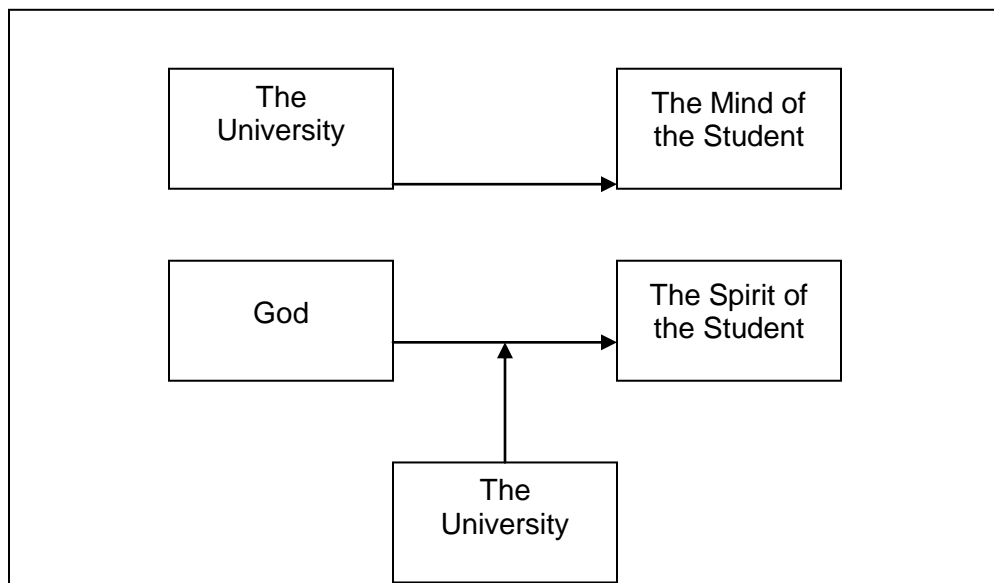
It has been established that outcomes assessment is growing in importance for colleges and universities and that the accreditation process has driven this phenomenon. The desire to create value for students by developing effective learning environments is an objective that may be universally shared by educational institutions, but the process of spiritual formation is of unique interest to the Christian community. We readily admit that “God gives the increase,” yet we strategize methods of effective facilitation of the process of spiritual formation. Trying to measure the heart is far more problematic than measuring and evaluating specific knowledge and skills. Measuring spiritual outcomes in the same manner as academic outcomes may, therefore, presuppose on God’s sovereignty, yet it is important for Christian schools to understand at some level whether or not their programs contribute to students’ spiritual development. Broad, content-rich, qualitative approaches may provide Christian schools with an effective way of understanding and documenting that spiritual formation is occurring in its students.

#### God’s Sovereignty

The diagram below (Figure 3) simplistically illustrates God’s sovereign role in the spiritual formation of students. All truth comes from God, as does man’s ability to understand and learn. This may be assumed as a basic premise.

Even so, a university, whether Christian or not, with its classes, faculty, internships, learning labs, and such, is able to directly influence the students’ acquisition of skills, knowledge, and abilities, given their capacity and motivation to learn. It is, however, God who uniquely changes hearts, perhaps using the efforts of men and women in the process. If that is true, then what is the role of the Christian institution in

this process? Are correlations between institutional strategies and spiritual outcomes valid predictors of what has been done by man or by God? Outcomes assessment measures often focus on measuring levels of accomplishment that we can perhaps even compare to other institutions. Such measures are then a reflection of the quality of the educational process. To what extent do God and man share the credit for growth? Can man claim to be privy to the wisdom that drives the pace at which each individual responds to the Spirit's conviction?



**Figure 3**

While acquisition of truth may be fundamental to spiritual growth, the Christian community should agree that the process of spiritual growth is uniquely different from other human processes for acquiring skills, knowledge, and abilities. If this is true, then how we measure and assess spiritual formation should also be handled uniquely. Trying to quantify outcomes and pinpoint precise levels of development based on complex scales that try to describe Christian behavior may not be as meaningful as attempting to establish and understand how and why Christians grow spiritually, and the answers may

be simpler than we may care to admit. We can collect vast quantities of behavioral data, but we still cannot measure one's heart.

The issue of spiritual formation was addressed very broadly at John Brown University. Do JBU students grow spiritually, and how does God touch students' hearts during their college experience? To attempt to address this, a survey was sent via e-mail to approximately 600 alumni. The vast majority of these alumni are graduates of JBU's business programs, however the sample also included some international alumni as well as general alumni. Three e-mail lists maintained by JBU were used to distribute the survey: alumni of the business and degree completion programs, international alumni, and a general alumni list. The survey consisted of four questions requiring that the alumni construct responses while reflecting on their time at JBU. The four questions were as follows:

- What elements of the JBU experience had the greatest impact on your spiritual development?
- How would you describe the ways that your relationship with God changed and grew while attending JBU? What (people, programs, events, etc.) impacted your spiritual growth the most?
- What parts of the JBU experience were less effective in helping you to develop a closer relationship with God?
- What would you recommend that JBU do to be more effective as an instrument for spiritual growth?

A majority of the alumni contacted graduated within the last ten years, but responses were received from several who graduated up to twenty years ago. Thirty-two usable, detailed responses were received, and responses were content analyzed and grouped.

## What Impacted Spiritual Growth

Questions 1 and 2 most clearly revealed students' perceptions of what was a positive spiritual influence during their college years. Although answers varied greatly, they grouped logically into three categories: relationships, formal programs, and applied ministry opportunities.

Relationships were named more frequently than any other factor as a positive factor in spiritual growth. This included relationships with peers, friends, teachers, staff, people from other cultures, student leaders, informal dorm Bible studies, roommates, and a variety of relationships, which grew into different kinds of mentoring and accountability. Of all the relationships mentioned, a relationship with peers was named more frequently than any other type. Some illustrative comments are as follows:

- ❑ "My floor's Bible study introduced me to my resident assistants who prayed with me and really challenged me to grow as I faced college and my faith for the first time."
- ❑ "I met loving and kind people who would reflect God's love. I am thankful for all of these, especially for [one student] who invited me for the first time to attend the International Bible Study."
- ❑ "Business professors' examples (praying before classes, our friendship, one-on-one interactions); sharing with other students through Bible studies in J.Alvin dorm."
- ❑ "Attending college and living in a different culture was not easy at all, but God was my strength throughout those years. He used some special people who cheered me up and taught me (through their examples and lifestyles) to grow spiritually. Most of them were my teachers, roommates, JBU staff, and host family."
- ❑ "A small accountability group that I was in with three other guys for the three years I was there."
- ❑ "Dr. Walters, one of my Bible professors, impacted my life greatly. Mr. Paul Kimball also made a lasting impact. I saw in these professors an authentic, growing faith and deep love and devotion for Jesus. They were touchable and transparent about their own lives and learning experiences. I saw them not only involved in students' lives on campus, but leaders in the community. I had the opportunity to be in their homes, in Bible studies led by them or Sunday school classes...they were REAL."
- ❑ "Seeing older students living a dynamic faith influenced me greatly, and hearing practical, applicable truths from teachers helped guide me."
- ❑ "It was during my JBU years that the Lord shaped and defined my missionary call, but this was not through any JBU ministry or program. The people who

- impacted my spiritual growth the most were the Bible department professors and my close friends.”
- ❑ “The opportunity to meet and make lifelong Christian friends contributed greatly to my growth at JBU.”
  - ❑ “Overall my fellowship with other believers blossomed. God became my life, not just an element of my life there.”
  - ❑ “I had two great examples from my host families. There I was able to observe Christian principles applied. This taught me what a real relationship with God looks like.”
  - ❑ “Other students who sought the Lord—sort of a positive peer pressure, or rather, positive environment.”
  - ❑ “I LOVED the mentoring process that I involved myself in at JBU. While there wasn’t any specific ‘program’ in place, I made it a part of MY life to focus on 2 to 3 young men or women that I’d recruited in a given year, and follow them through their first year at JBU: (1) to make sure they were happy they were there, (2) to encourage them in their walk with the Lord, and (3) that in turn encouraged me. Pretty simple, but effective.”
  - ❑ “Extracurricular interactions with the professors in the Bible department plus their excellent classes. Godly classmates and friends.”

Specific references to “programs” (i.e., structured events that are a formal part of the curriculum or co-curriculum, or are institutionalized in some form) were made with almost as much frequency as relationships. Numerous alumni mentioned both relationships and programs in ways that indicated a strong integration of the two. This is a broad category that includes chapel worship, chapel speakers, personal interaction with special guests to campus, Bible classes, JBU position and heritage, consistency of worldview, contemporary Christian concerts, various other classes, and more. These items constitute the formal mission and many of the strategies of the University, and perhaps help us realize that the structure and disciplines of university life do facilitate spiritual formation. The following are illustrative comments:

- ❑ “Having chapel twice a week helped emphasize the importance of God and our relationship with Him—that He’s not just a Sunday God.”
- ❑ “It was a privilege to attend a Christian university where ‘Christ is over all,’ including careers, vocations, classes, tests, etc. It definitely helped me to follow a curriculum that integrated Bible classes with other courses.”
- ❑ “The commitment of the University to integrate spiritual truth and principles in all aspects of the campus experience: Bible courses, chapels...”
- ❑ “Bible classes: the word of God never comes back empty, even when it is read just as a requirement.”

- “The worship chapel was very encouraging to me and taught me how to worship God through music. I went to public school all my life until I went to JBU, so being surrounded by Christians with all the positive and negative implications had a great effect on my spiritual development.”
- “While I believed that my JBU experience would be somewhat ‘insulated from the world,’ we were still ‘confronted with the world.’ I enjoyed chapel, the Staley lecture series, the sharing from my professors in class, and out of it, the reality of being able to ‘be’ a Christian without fear of repercussion or shame. I don’t know if I would have been able to survive a public university educational experience at the time I chose to attend JBU.”
- “The course in Philosophy that is required for every degree had the greatest impact due to the fact that it caused me to find the basis for why I believe what I believe. Reasons went from ‘because dad said’ to ‘thus saith the Lord.’ What a blessing.”
- “Many of the chapel services left lasting memories. I’ll never forget Jay Kessler demonstrating the vastness of God and the smallness of man. Chapel scheduling was done well and we had solid Bible teachers and meaningful times of worship. These times fed and nurtured my faith.”
- “I learned to trust the Lord for financial needs while at school. Experiencing provision through on-campus work, scholarships and summer work was an experience of walking in faith in pursuit of an education I knew I wanted and needed. I grew in my walk from being a Christian who had been told what was right, to knowing God in a daily relationship. Exposure to the spiritual leaders of our time who came to speak was a tremendous encouragement.”
- “Learning in a Christ-centered environment, i.e., seeing teachers apply biblical truths to history, science, psychology and living those truths in their personal lives.”

Finally, the next most highly-mentioned cluster included references to applied ministry opportunities. Included here are mission trips, service projects, community outreach projects, on-campus “CAUSE” ministries, camps, and involvement in musical ministry programs. Although not mentioned with as great of frequency as the other two groups of responses, it is obvious from the responses of alumni that the practical opportunity to participate in hands-on ministry is significant. Alumni also observed that such activities, some of which are a part of the institutionalized programs of the University, provided them with opportunities to build relationships with friends, staff, and faculty, so once again the lines are blurred. Several illustrative comments follow:

- “JBU mission trips opened my eyes and prompted my hands to continue God’s work on earth. After four mission trips sponsored by JBU, my faith in the God of missions increased as I saw His immediate work in people’s lives.”

- ❑ “My mission trip to Northern Ireland really challenged me in prayer and evangelism like never before.”
- ❑ “Involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ impacted me, particularly traveling to Daytona at spring break to share the gospel with college students.”
- ❑ “The Niños de México mission trip helped me to grow spiritually because it was the first time I was involved in a mission project outside of my country. Also, I experienced all the work a missionary has to go through in order to serve God. I was able to experience God’s love and provision in every single thing I did with my team, not only in the preparation process but also in the actual mission. It was the most incredible experience I had while attending JBU.”
- ❑ “I was actively involved in the Woodland Manor Nursing Home Ministry while I was at JBU. It opened my eyes to another part of life, and it changed me.”

The obvious conclusion is that God works in many ways for different people, but that relationships (i.e., person-to-person and heart-to-heart) are a very strong way to impact the spiritual formation of others. As Christian educational communities, we strategize ways to facilitate this. This involves delivery of content, exposure to perspective, promoting relationships, and practical application.

#### What Did Not Work

Question 3 addressed the issue of what was perceived by alumni as being ineffective in the process of spiritual formation. Alumni responses were specific, diverse, and difficult to cluster. Most responses appeared to describe a personal frustration or disappointment. Among these, only two items occurred repeatedly: chapel and faculty testimonies.

Responses regarding chapel were interesting for two reasons. First, some students also mentioned the chapel experience repeatedly as a positive factor. Second, responses tended to vary by era. Most of the frustration or disappointment with chapel centered on formality, traditional style, and ineffective speakers. A majority of those who perceived chapel as ineffective graduated more than five years ago. Recent graduates, however, tended to be far more favorable about the impact of chapel. These responses are consistent with the ongoing development of JBU’s chapel program which, in recent years, has seen a larger proportion of time committed to worship, more contemporary

speakers, and other changes designed to meet the needs of a young, contemporary body of participants. For example:

- “While chapel is offered a lot of times, I think it might be a bit of an illusion for me to say that this contributed a lot to my spiritual growth. I found myself wishing at times that the content of the chapel experience was more full of ‘truth.’ I was left with the perception that VARIETY of viewpoint and worldview was prioritized (in the name of academia?) above spiritual growth, exhortation, encouragement, and other forms of ‘watering’ the seed of truth. I was confused by content at times and do look back on a few experiences in which I do not think truth was being preached.”
- “Unfortunately, I would have to say that the speaker chapels were less effective. I enjoyed some of the speakers and their testimonies such as Ken Davis. I would have enjoyed ‘meatier’ chapel that had more content of God’s word and how it applies to my life.”
- “I’m so glad to see and have heard the ‘new’ worship atmosphere in chapel, and yet I felt that if we had attempted that while I was a student, it would have been downplayed as not ‘traditional’ enough.”

Alumni also repeatedly stated that faculty who failed to share their testimonies in class disappointed them. In responses to questions 1 and 2, it was clear that students appreciated this. Some illustrative comments are as follows:

- “The openness of the teachers and willingness to discuss their beliefs. The sincerity that they really care about you and your spiritual growth.”
- “The instructors who displayed their Christianity and prayed before class, even asking for prayer requests.”
- “The positive leadership models of the faculty should also be mentioned as [having] a strong impact on students.”

Responses to question 3 indicate that students’ reactions go beyond a simple appreciation for faculty testimonies when they do occur. This appears to be an expectation or need of the students, and they notice it when it does not occur. In some cases, the testimony of faculty was specifically noted as being counterproductive. Some illustrative responses:

- “...faculty members who did not take on the opportunity to impact students inside as well as outside of the classroom.”
- “Instructors who did not share their Christianity and their job for the Lord.”
- “I guess I would have to say the professors who never mentioned their faith in the classroom were less effective in helping me grow closer to God. Their impact was simply academic.”

- ❑ “There was one former professor whose marriage was falling apart during the years my friends and I attended JBU. He and his wife later divorced and he eventually married one of his former students. His faith was very intellectual, but when it came to where he lived, he was severely lacking. I know he left damage and disillusionment in many students’ lives in his wake.”

### Alumni Recommendations

Question 4 requested that alumni make recommendations regarding ways that JBU could be more effective as an instrument for spiritual formation. Not surprisingly, responses tended to parallel (to a certain extent) responses to questions 1 and 2. Overall, the comments seemed to cluster into about five separate groups, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The grouping process was more difficult, since responses tended to be diverse yet somewhat overlapping. The five clusters were as follows: relationships, evangelism and discipleship, staffing, program issues, and prayer. The first group (i.e., relationships) had the highest total frequency count, and the other four were virtually tied very closely behind.

Relationships. Alumni consistently recommended that JBU strive to facilitate personal relationships, particularly accountability relationships. Specifically, alumni urged the creation of more small-group Bible studies led by faculty and students. Other recommendations included facilitating relationships with faculty and staff and encouraging involvement in local churches. Some illustrative comments follow:

- ❑ “Promote small cell groups. It will be to study the Bible, but also to seek fellowship, encouragement, trust in disclosing good and bad experiences, healing and knowing what God wants from us.”
- ❑ “I would like to see JBU encourage small Bible study groups.... I believe the best way to prepare young people for the future, apart from academia, is to irrigate them with the Word of God. More and more children today are growing up without any Biblical influence.”
- ❑ “It is the individual relationships ... leaders have with us which leave the most lasting impact on JBU students, and in turn, on the world at large.”
- ❑ “Instigate, encourage and support small group accountability groups that are based on Biblical principles.”

Discipleship and evangelism. Alumni seemed passionate when expressing the need for evangelism both on and off campus. This fact alone, perhaps, is a good indication of the spiritual outcomes achieved in the lives of students—a heartfelt passion for the lost. Related to this was the expressed need for mentoring and mentor training. Although this is also a form of relationship building, it was included into this cluster because it was almost always stated in the more explicit context of personal evangelism and discipleship. The following are examples:

- ❑ “More evangelism within the JBU campus. There are lots of people who are not saved. They hear the gospel, they attend chapel, they ‘seem’ to be good, moral people, but they are not saved. So I suggest ... bold evangelist campaigns on campus: at dorms, at the cafeteria and Eagle’s Nest, etc.”
- ❑ “Train individual (mainly current students) to mentor other students that they come in contact with during their time here. It is a very impactful time in a person’s life that many don’t realize until years later.”
- ❑ “I think discipleship isn’t happening at JBU. There need to be people who take a vested interest in the spiritual growth of students there. Just because many are believers does not mean they have arrived spiritually.”
- ❑ “I recommend teaching Christian students to share their faith, to have classes in evangelism. As an international student, I strongly believe the main reason God brings so many internationals to the U.S. is to know about Jesus. It is easier to witness to international students when they are away from the false religions of their home countries. I pray that all international students will have the opportunity to hear the gospel, become Christians, and be discipled and trained to share the gospel while they are in America. A church, school, ministry that is founded on the Word of God and follows the great commission will always grow spiritually.”
- ❑ “Programs are nice but they are not a substitute for discipleships. Discipline can only be effective in a one-to-one manner.... When we attempt to make a convert of someone or to mentor another Christian, we need to do it on a personal level. Friendship is the most underrated thing today. By mentoring and being mentored, we will always have some authority over someone else and we will always be subject to someone else. The buzzword today is ‘a personal relationship with Jesus.’ I think this is a bit of a copout, a substitute for those who do not know what it is to have a mentor/spiritual director. That is true discipleship.”
- ❑ “In addition to growing and encouraging student leadership and positive fellowship (this really IS big), I was a bit hungry at times for someone older and wiser than myself to connect with at times. While it was a great lesson for me to learn in preparation for the real world to go out of my way to seek council, I felt just a little bit more unconnected with adults/authority than I wished that I was. I loved the freedom I experienced, but I remember wandering the dorm sometimes during searching times of my life wishing I had someone to connect with for

spiritual/Biblical insight. Students can offer some of this, but the dynamics of peer-culture sometimes hindered my ability to satisfy this.”

Staffing. Also of concern to the alumni was the issue of the Christ-centered position of the school that is perpetuated through its employees. Faculty were mentioned most frequently. The alumni do not want to see the University slip into a “comfortable faith” or a “tradition” of Christian values. Instead, they clearly desire that a strong Bible-based position be maintained. Staffing does not end with hiring. It was also recommended that there be accountability for the spiritual growth of faculty. The following illustrate this:

- “Hire only people with a demonstrated love for the Lord and commitment to the inerrancy of the Bible. Support them in what they want to do.”
- “Continue leading by example. Choose your people very carefully, as it has been done, so they can be living examples to students on how to live a real Christian life.
- “Hold the faculty to a high standard of spiritual growth (activity). Maybe faculty should have to give a ‘spiritual growth report’ every year.”
- “Keep caring; keep hiring mature Christians that care for the students as much as the school.”

Programs. The fourth cluster of responses tended to focus on a variety of specific formal activities of the institution and upon the focus of these activities. These responses dealt with the delivery of Bible classes, the provision of corporate worship times, the importance of required chapels, the need for dynamic, contemporary speakers, and more opportunities for mission trips. These comments tended to suggest that the University could provide better delivery of certain activities and more opportunities for general involvement and expression. Illustrative comments follow:

- “Maintain a core curriculum of Biblical truth. Cast a vision at every opportunity for ‘head, heart, and hand.’ Encourage personal spiritual growth. Model core spiritual values and guiding principles for life and at every turn.”
- “JBU has to keep working with the missions and churches in Latin America and the world. It is a good way to spread the Gospel.”
- “I always enjoyed the chapels and think they should put more emphasis on worship times. Also, they should try to implement new ways to get students involved in the campus ministries, especially the internationals who don’t get involved very often.”

- ❑ “Organized Bible studies and youth-oriented Bible studies. More activities like spring (or fall) break camps, based on a relevant theme, help develop a better relationship with God.”
- ❑ “More short-term missionary trips.”
- ❑ “Having chapels that teach more substance than just ‘feel good’ sermons. Perhaps having a mentor program where students could be disciplined one-on-one by staff, a professor, or peer. JBU could also offer student or staff-professor-led Bible studies throughout the year. This would not be for credit, but just for one’s own spiritual growth.”
- ❑ “Make OT and NT less rushed and deeper. We should not be tested on: ‘In which verse did Jesus say this or that?’ but rather, ‘What do you think of Jesus’ relevancy to actuality?’”

Prayer. Certainly not least, the alumni stressed the need for prayer. This included prayer within the classroom, soliciting prayer requests from students, and general prayer for the students and staff. As with the sharing of testimonies, many of our students seem to appreciate the time that faculty spend in prayer, and they like to be asked to share what is on their hearts. Furthermore, they seem to miss those opportunities when they are absent. Some examples follow:

- ❑ “I truly enjoy when we start the classes with prayer, and not all teachers do that. Also, when they ask if you have anything that you would like the class to pray for.”
- ❑ “I would love to see more of an emphasis on prayer and the Bible—can you ever get too much of these?”
- ❑ “Be consistent—JBU is a Christian school; let it be a Christian school. Start each class with a prayer and let Christ decide how each course is presented.”
- ❑ “Keep praying for God’s perfect will to be accomplished in every student’s life that is in your charge. Encourage your teachers to intercede, in prayer, for each of their students whether the student is the best behaved, or the worse. One never knows what goes on in the heart of even the best behaved.”
- ❑ “Pray much.”

### Discussion

So what are the lessons amidst all of this? Before describing some apparent conclusions to this research, it is probably best to describe what this study was not.

First of all, this was not an elegant statistical study. Care has been taken to avoid quantification of responses beyond simple frequency counts, and those counts were not explicitly shown lest the reader be tempted to engage in inappropriate

quantitative analysis. The lessons to be learned are from the content itself, which some appreciation for the magnitude of the responses.

Second, this was not an exhaustive study. It focused on graduates of the business programs of John Brown University, international alumni, and a smaller group of general alumni. Many alumni groups were not addressed, and the alumni who were contacted may not represent broad exposure to the University's faculty, staff, and services.

Third, this study does not address the proportion of alumni who actually did experience spiritual growth while at JBU. The relatively low response rate (about 5%) could be interpreted as an indication that, although the respondents spoke of their growth, the overwhelming majority has nothing to say regarding their spiritual growth while at JBU. This would probably be an incorrect interpretation, but unfortunately it cannot be determined from this study. Other factors, such as the lengthy solicited responses and the fact that many alumni have their office e-mail addresses on the list, probably account for the low level of responses to some extent.

Finally, this study was not intended to produce a general model of spiritual formation. Generalizing beyond the scope of this study would be questionable. This is a snapshot into the JBU community and how lives have been affected there.

What was accomplished? First, this study clearly indicates that students experienced spiritual growth while at JBU, and they attribute that growth, at least in some part, to some aspect of their University experience. This is clearly evident and documented through their stories. Furthermore, these alumni seem to care rather passionately about the ongoing spiritual condition of the University and its fervor for reaching each new generation of students for the Lord. Although it is abundantly obvious that God works in different ways in the hearts of different people, there were

some areas of commonality among the responses. Even so, the same activities or events can have exactly opposite impacts on different people (e.g., some were profoundly affected by chapel and some were not), so nothing is universal.

People plant and water the seeds, but God gives the increase. God may, however, use people in the process of giving that increase. The greatest commonality among responses was the importance of relationships. Alumni looked back and perceived significant relationships with peers and faculty as the most impacting events upon their spiritual growth. They recommended various ways of stimulating the emergence of relationships, whether in Bible studies, mission teams, informal activities, or formal mentoring programs. The message here is that God works through people to reach people, heart to heart.

Relationships exist within a larger context of formal curricular and co-curricular programs. Classes and chapels are vehicles for conveying truth, but much of that truth is then worked out in the individual's life through personal interaction with friends, teachers, mentors, and others. These formal processes can be thought of as feeding, while individual relationships facilitate digestion and assimilation. Truth may be foundational to spiritual formation, but the Christian walk is not simply an intellectual experience, and intellectual prowess has never been a necessary condition for Christian maturity. Mission trips, service projects, community outreach, and corporate worship all provide outlets for expression and practice of what is within the heart. JBU's own head-heart-hand motto is perhaps a good synopsis. The "head" is fed truth through various formal and informal means. God touches the "heart," especially through meaningful relationships and mentoring. The "hand" is the expression of a changed heart in the form of service or vocation.

Another important lesson is the apparent frustration and disappointment of alumni as they reflect upon lost opportunities, particularly those teachers who did not share their faith in the classroom. It may become a bit too easy for a faculty member, focused on his or her discipline and feeling pushed to cover too much content in too little time, to forget that students are waiting to be fed spiritually. Each class is an opportunity—either used or missed. Testimony does not necessarily have to fit the content to be appropriate. As one respondent noted, God's word never returns empty. (Isaiah 55:11)

Finally, what are the implications for outcomes assessment? If God truly does give the increase, then Christian colleges and universities may not be able to assess spiritual outcomes in the same manner they assess academic outcomes. Whereas academia can be held more strictly accountable for the volume of accounting concepts learned, spiritual development is at best facilitated by the institution, and hopefully not hindered. We may be able to plant facts in students' minds, but we cannot force their hearts to change.

Oftentimes, outcomes assessment tends to focus on magnitudes of accomplishment (i.e., how much of a particular concept is learned). Major Field Achievement Tests, for example, tell us how our seniors compare to other seniors across the nation, and this serves as a reflection of the quality of the educational process to which they were subjected. If there were a MFAT for the Christian Life, could we use it to compare schools' relative abilities to produce mature Christians, or would that be presumptuous upon God's wisdom and sovereignty? The same measure-and-compare approach may be questionable at best when applied to spiritual formation. Better question are these: Is spiritual formation occurring? What is facilitating it? How can we use students' stories to understand and enhance their experience?

Fundamentally, the purpose of any feedback is to help assess the impact of what was done and improve the quality. Broad, content-rich, alumni-focused, qualitative approaches to understanding spiritual growth, such as the approach just illustrated, may be an excellent way for us to establish and document that God is indeed working in the hearts of our students. Furthermore, this can be accomplished in a way that is unique and appropriate to the specific institution. We may also gain some insight into how God uses the rest of us in that process and what we can do to facilitate that process. The stories of our past students, when shared with faculty and staff, should serve to encourage and refocus on essential truths of God's nature and man's relationship to Him.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have examined the assessment of faith-learning integration in Christian college business programs. In doing so, we have considered the goals of outcomes assessment, the characteristics of effective outcomes assessment, and the benefits and costs of outcomes assessment. We have also examined the process of developing appropriate outcomes assessment goals. We then examined a number of methods that can be used for outcomes assessment. Finally, we provided an example of a qualitative approach to alumni evaluation that provides rich data for assessment purposes.

Assessing faith-learning integration is not easy. We trust that this paper will be helpful to our Christian college business faculty colleagues who, like us, are struggling with how to integrate faith and learning, and how to assess that integration.

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