

Christian Higher Education: A Statement of Purpose

Adopted by the Missouri Baptist Convention, 1976

A Biblical and Theological Foundation

A program of higher education which is viewed as a viable part of the Christian mission must have a sound Biblical and theological foundation. There are three Biblical doctrines which undergird and interpret Christian higher education: creation, fall and redemption. These basic Christian convictions underscore two major truths: that God, as creator, redeemer and sustainer of life in the universe is actively involved in his creation; and that his interest extends to the whole of his creation. The subject matter for education is life itself, in its wholeness. Thus, Christian education proceeds without fear into whatever knowledge may come. For the ultimate meaning of that knowledge is the meaning which it has in God.

Proceeding from the Christian view of creation, fall and redemption, the following reasons are listed in answer to the question, "Why should the Missouri Baptist Convention sponsor and support institutions of higher learning?"

1. All truth is of God, and Jesus Christ is the integrating center of all truth.
2. The Christian college has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and transmission of truth.
3. The churches need ministerial and lay leadership who have been broadly educated from the perspective of the Christian world view and who have learned to think in Christian categories.
4. In dealing with education one is dealing with more than education. The Christian college has the responsibility for transmitting particular ethical and moral values as reflected in the Scriptures.
5. The Christian college is different from other ventures in higher education because of its presuppositions about the nature of truth, the nature of God, and the nature and destiny of man.
6. Based upon the above-stated presuppositions, the discovery and teaching of truth by the Christian college becomes an essential part of the Christian mission to go and bear witness to the truth.
7. The world needs the witness of the Christian college, where education is seen in the light of faith and where faith is looked at in the light of education.

Baptist Colleges and the Missouri Baptist Convention: Laborers Together With God

At the center of a healthy relationship between colleges and the Convention lies the recognition that a college and a church are not identical in their purposes, methods of approach, composition of membership and internal administration. By means of complementary roles, each contributes to the Christian mission in the world. In their covenant relationship, there are basic, reasonable responses each may expect from the other.

What can the Convention expect from the colleges?:

1. A clear statement of its Christian purpose which is reflected in the administration, in the teaching, in the curriculum, and in the activities of campus life.
2. A comprehensive liberal arts curriculum which includes courses of study in the Bible, Christian ethics, church history, and related subjects, providing an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.
3. An academically qualified faculty who have a personal commitment to the Christian faith and who have an appreciation for the Christian heritage of the college.
4. Campus activities which include chapel worship services, periods of special religious emphasis and a variety of programs designed to nurture the spiritual lives of students.
5. An administration which brings distinctive Christian insights to the problems of college teaching and governance.
6. A genuine effort to recruit and to educate concerned persons who will devote their lives to the

services of the church through specialized ministries.

7. A sensitivity by administration and trustees to the purpose of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

What can the colleges expect from the Convention?:

1. Encouragement for the college to develop the highest possible teaching standards.
2. Cooperation with the college administration in the selection of trustees who are capable and committed to Christian higher education.
3. The most complete and generous financial support of which it is capable.
4. Support for the trustees in maintaining academic freedom and responsibility.
5. Effective interpretation to the churches of the purpose of the Convention and the colleges in Christian higher education, and the fostering of understanding and a sense of partnership between the colleges and the Convention.
6. The periodic re-examination of the Conventions aims and objectives in Christian higher education.
7. Guidance from the Executive Board of the Missouri Baptist Convention in the development and funding of professional or new degree programs of Christian Higher Education.

The funding of colleges by Baptists for the education of the ministry was an admission of the need for a liberal arts education which a church was not equipped to offer. Missouri Baptists want their schools to be sound academically, fully accredited, aware of the need to place Christian emphasis at the center of educational life, and responsive through trustees to the wishes of the Convention. True education is the wrestling of the mind with the ultimate issues of existence, and in that sense is an essentially religious undertaking. Given the doctrine of creation, fall and redemption, it is altogether fitting and necessary that Baptists provide colleges where young people can explore the world of ever-expanding knowledge under the guidance of committed Christian teachers.