THE VALUE OF FORMATION

What are our Christian colleges and universities doing which make them worthwhile enterprises? Why do we need Christian Higher Education? What necessary “product” is created by our faculty and staff, which show them to be productive and effective in their work? These are all important questions, which are asked by various administrators, accrediting bodies, boards, as well as faculty and staff members. These questions could be answered in various ways depending on the individual and their specific interest or role in the institution. I am interested in looking at the issue of student formation in Christian Higher Education both from an institutional perspective and through the lens of the Student Development department, working from the following premise: Student formation is the worthy goal by which we evaluate our work and which we hold high as we defend the reason for our academic existence. Christian educators strongly believe we are more than makers and givers of golden keys that will open the job market door. True, we are increasingly seeing the need to ensure careers can begin with our degrees, but we trust that we are not sacrificing the primary mandate to develop students of character and vision who can see beyond the financial gains which educational degrees may bring.

Student formation is at the heart of Student Development work. However, busy-ness, daily demands, “we have always done it this way”, and resource shortages may result in a lack of attention to focused and intentionally planned student formation strategies and implementation. Effectiveness in planning and implementation requires us to be both visionaries and managers. My hope is that we may deepen our understanding of the importance of the college years in student formation, and that we will be challenged to continue taking steps in being more strategic and effective in our efforts.

WHAT DOES FORMATION LOOK LIKE?

What do I mean when I use the term student formation? Character development, student development, holistic growth, faith formation, personal development, moral growth, and student learning are some of the terms that are used when talking about formation. Some talk about the development of skills that allow the student to transition into more adult roles and responsibilities. While this is partially true, development is much more than learning a set of skills. Those of us in Christian Higher Education desire for students to be increasingly defined at their very core, as those who fully attempt and desire to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and their neighbor as themselves. These are the goals in which most of our institutions root their mission statement. Trudeau, Carpenter, Friesen & Herrmann (2001) state that:

Indeed, one of the major transitions Christian student development personnel hope to see in their students is an examination of the faith assumptions handed down by parents and others in an integrative process that results in the development of their own beliefs and faith practices based on those beliefs. (p. 12).

Continued on page 4
Dear Members

As I write this Thanksgiving is only 3 days away, and the initial rush of the beginning of the year has subsided. The combination of the two things for me is good. I am thankful for the Student Development work I can do on my campus, and for the work that is being done across Canada.

Our conference at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, in May was great. It was encouraging to connect with colleagues from across Canada. We were a small group of about 20 people working in and connected to Student Affairs, in spite of our small size there was a keen interest in learning and growing in our work.

At the conference we saw the election of two new executive members, Wally Rude of Ambrose University College taking on the role of Vice-President, and Marlin Reimer of Providence College and Seminary leading the membership charge. We extend our thanks to Steve Sutherland of Booth College and Colleen Taylor of Siretona Creative for their service on Executive.

Wally has already been working hard on the 2009 conference (see schedule overview on the back page of this issue). We have also added a Super Early Bird Discount for people registering prior to February 1, 2009. I encourage you to check out what is being planned for Ambrose and mark your calendars to come!

One of my main objectives for this year is to expand the ways in which we can collaborate as Canadian colleagues in the field of Student Development. We have all watched the general decline of enrolment these last few years and along with it a decline in fiscal resources. It is my opinion that in working together and sharing our knowledge, and extending our community we can help our areas and institutions thrive. I encourage you to connect with your Regional Representative and get to know the other Christian Student Development professionals in your area. BC – TBA, Alberta – TBA, Saskatchewan – Lisa Moran, Manitoba – Bre Woligroski, Ontario – Sharon Schotsman, Atlantic – Heidi Soggie

I am looking forward to this year, we will all no doubt face challenges, but together we can spread our wings, and as the theme of the 2009 conference says, Taking Flight to what God has in store.

Shalom,
Marjorie Hopkins

Marjorie Hopkins is the Associate Dean of Student Life at Emmanuel Bible College. Kitchener, ON.
**Milestones**

**Providence College and Seminary**
Matt Shantz has been hired on as Resident Director
Stephanie Kroeker has assumed the role of Student Services Coordinator

When Providence College and Seminary opens the new 25,000 ft Student Life Centre in January 2009, it will be the greenest building on the 100-acre campus. It will use geothermal heating, getting its heat from the ground rather than from gas or electricity. The building will house a new dining facility, lounge spaces, multipurpose areas, and classrooms for the English Language Institute.

**Emmanuel Bible College**
Karen Cornies (along with husband Ron who is the Facilities Manager at EBC) are expecting their second child in March 2009.

**Ambrose University College**
On September 15, 2008 the year began on our new campus. Located in south west Calgary, on a ridge that offers views west to the Rocky mountains. The heart of the new campus is the Academic Centre with new biology lab, computer lab, modern library, classrooms, offices, plus places for group and silent study. Students will appreciate the cafeteria and the centralized location of Student Services.

The Athletic & Performing Arts Centre has a full size gym and includes a stage for performances and chapels, with bleacher seating for 600-1000 people. Ambrose music department with dedicated practice rooms and teaching studios will be housed here. Residence is designed to foster community and can accommodate 134 to 170 students in groups of 16 and 24.

Our new campus is a place where up to 2,000 students can come every year to receive an education that offers provincially accredited Arts & Science degrees, professional ministry degrees and Seminary education.

**Bethany Bible College**
After three years as the Dean of Student Development, Sherry Heidebrecht moved to Winnipeg with her husband Doug as he started his new position with the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference.

We welcomed Lisa Braun into the role of Dean of Student Development, moving into this position after serving ten years as Bethany's Athletic Director. Lisa returns to Bethany after a year of maternity leave with her second child and has already been a great asset to the team as well as the school as a whole. She is in the final stages of finishing a Masters Degree in the area of Education and brings a wealth of experience as well as wisdom to this role.

**Atlantic Baptist University**
The Student Development Department at Atlantic Baptist University would like to congratulate Jonathan Grimes, Student Life Director on his recent engagement to Jessica Graves, English Professor also at ABU.

**Booth College**
Andrea Brown, recently graduated with her BA in Christian Studies and is working on her MA in Counseling/Psychology at Providence Seminary. Andrea works part-time in the residence halls as an area coordinator.

Anthony Knapp, joined our Booth College team as our part-time Athletic Director this year. He recently got engaged and plans to wed in May 2009.

Stephen Sutherland, Dean of Student Development is in his 10th year as a Student Development professional. He recently celebrated his first year of marriage.
Continued from page 1

It is important to ensure that all levels of institutional leadership understand how their student formation desires and objectives flow out of their institutional mission statement. A mission statement gives clear and succinct expression to the desires of the institution and guides further goal-setting and practical planning. The following are some examples from various Canadian Christian Higher Education institutions regarding their mission and/or core values/goals:

True education changes the way you think and influences the way you live. From interdisciplinary academics to a diverse faith community, (name removed) allows you to question, connect and grow

(name removed) provides Bible-based post-secondary education equipping women and men to think, live, serve and lead as mature Christians in the Church and in the world;

(name removed) is a Christian academic community in the evangelical tradition that teaches people to grow in knowledge and character for leadership and service;

(name removed) … strengthens the intellectual and moral development of Canada’s professionals. The goal is to produce graduates who are consciously and actively Christian in all aspects of life;

Learning to live well;

… demonstrate academic excellence, ministry effectiveness, and holy character.

It is apparent that our Christian institutions are striving for student formation in a holistic manner. This broad label of student formation or character incorporates many desires, some of which include: respect, appreciation of diversity, love, knowledge (awareness), leadership (sacrifice, modeling to others), service (humility), ability to take risks, personal responsibility, independence/interdependence, integrity, critical thinking, etc.

As we start thinking about formation, it is important for us to understand these students for whom we have such high hopes. There are many resources available which attempt to create an accurate picture. At the Manitoba Regional conference of CACSD in 2007, Cordella Friesen gave an overview of the typical North American young adult. In brief, it was stated that they value individualism, practical experience, volunteering/social activism, a high level of technological access, and often equate community with Facebook. Many current students are working part-time jobs due to increasing educational costs and the need for pocket money. More and more are concerned about physical and mental health issues including nutrition, exercising, alcohol consumption, family instability, anxiety and stress, etc. There is a desire for an individualized spirituality and an increasing resistance to making a commitment toward a specific religious affiliation.

It is important for those of us working with students to understand both the broad, typical categorizations of North American students, as well as the specific student body that has enrolled in our college or university. Understanding our students aids in guiding our formation desires and strategies.

There are many models proposing various ways to think about formation. It is easy to become overwhelmed as we face a myriad of theories including psychosocial, cognitive-structural, moral, racial identity, sexual identity, social, etc. Some target a specific area of character development while others use a broader lens. It is good for institutional leadership to be aware and examine the extensive work many have done in the area of formation. Two who have done much work are Chickering and Holmes. (Continued on Page 6)
Work or Freedom?

By: Tim Grace

Arbeit Macht Frei. Those three words welded to the top of the iron gates rang in an eerie silence as we passed through into the concentration camp at Dachau — at least what had been left or reconstructed as a memorial after the end of the Second World War. These three words in German translate roughly to Work Will Set You Free. It was what the prisoners first read (whether they could understand German or not) as they passed from the relative freedom of their former lives to the more than certain death for at least 30,000 of the 200,000 prisoners that entered these gates.

Dachau was a work camp, beginning as a munitions factory and going into various other types of forced labour as the war progressed. This type of work doesn’t really seem to be freeing as the phrase on the gates suggested. Did the work truly set them free? Or was it another pain on their way to the freedom that came with liberation by the United States Armed Forces in 1945 or, for many, death.

Which brings me to think, is the work that we do freeing? The day-in-day-out work can sometimes seem like a chore. Go in to get paid and leave. Or, is it the meaning behind the work that we do that truly sets us free? The joys of seeing students “get it” or the satisfaction that comes through seeing students move through various stages of development as they mature in thinking, faith, and life.

It is all in perspective. Let your work set you free. Let it motivate you to grow, to encourage, to educate, and most of all to continue through each day that can to a brighter future of knowing that what we do can be a freeing experience.

Tim Grace
is the Coordinator
of Assessment and
Student Programs
at Emmanuel
Bible College
Kitchener, ON.

Book Review

Monk Habits for Everyday People sets out to share one man’s journey with a Benedictine monastic community, and offer opportunities for application in the life of other Protestants. When considering the question of why engage in this type of spirituality, the author states that “in many respects we live shallow lives, easily entertained by celebrities, trivial pursuits, and consumer products. A deeply rooted spiritual life is desired by many, but its cultivation seems to escape just as many” (pg. 23).

Okholm is professor of theology at Azusa Pacific University, and co-pastor of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. He is an educator, and a spiritual guide. He recognizes the differences that exist between Catholics and Protestants, and provides a brief overview of the history and theology that has shaped these differences.

This book is accessible to readers. The author uses illustrations from his own journey to highlight the principles and practices of monastic life. Okholm has taken some of the most basic concepts of the Benedictine tradition, giving a chapter to each in which it is explained, both historically and experientially.

This book is a useful tool for helping to guide and shape not only our own spiritual lives, but those of our students. It is easy to read, if challenging to implement. Monk Habits for Everyday People is a helpful resource for those seeking spiritual depth, and looking to guide others depth.

Reviewed by Marjorie Hopkins, Associate Dean of Student Life, Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, Ontario.

Chickering, a guru to student development professionals, both faith-based and public, has spent decades examining college student development from a psychosocial perspective. He looks at the stages one could expect the typical student to go through in their identity formation as they enter and progress through their college experience. He examines the emotional, social, and intellectual aspects of student development in what he calls the seven vectors of identity formation. These are the vectors in brief:

1. **Developing Competence** - focuses on the tasks of developing intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal competence
2. **Managing Emotions** - students develop the ability to recognize and accept emotions, as well as to appropriately express and control them
3. **Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence** - students develop increased emotional independence, self-direction, problem-solving ability, persistence, and mobility, as well as recognition and the importance of interdependence.
4. **Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships** - development of acceptance and appreciation of differences as well as the capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships.
5. **Establishing Identity** - Seven significant areas
   1. comfort with body and appearance
   2. comfort with gender and sexual orientation
   3. a sense of one’s social and cultural heritage
   4. a clear conception of self and comfort with one’s roles and lifestyle
   5. a secure sense of self in light of feedback from significant others
   6. self-acceptance and self-esteem
   7. personal stability and integration
6. **Developing Purpose** - Developing clear vocational goals, making meaningful commitments to specific personal interests and activities, and establishing strong interpersonal commitments.
7. **Developing Integrity** - Students progress from rigid, moralistic thinking to a more humanized, personalized value system that acknowledges and respects the beliefs of others. Values and actions become congruent.

(Chickering, 1993, pp. 43-52).

Although we may not want to adopt or accept all Chickering says, his awareness and study of the college student provides incredibly useful information that should guide our expectations and strategies.

### Holmes’ Moral Education Objectives

Holmes’ moral education objectives can provide a good structure for us to examine an area that is crucial to Christian Higher Education. Those of us working in Christian settings often differ greatly from those who advocate a more pluralistic or postmodern standard. He acknowledges, as most of us do, that truth is worthy of seeking after and that we can search after and develop wise answers for complex questions and issues. Here are Holmes’ moral development objectives:

1. **Consciousness Raising** – things in the world are not ideal
2. **Consciousness Sensitizing** – Compassion coupled with indignation
3. **Values Analysis** – understanding values of decision makers
4. **Values Clarification** – Understanding personal values
5. **Values Criticism** – Are the operative values what they should be?
6. **Moral Imagination** – Tracing the web of moral responsibilities
7. **Ethical Analysis** – Exploring ingredients of complex moral situations
8. **Moral Decision making** – having wisdom to make good moral decisions
9. **Responsible agents** – Doing something about ethical issues in society
10. **Virtue Development** – The development of Godliness and righteousness

**Moral Identity** – Becoming a person of Christian character

(Holmes, 1991)

We all desire developmental growth for the students in our care, but we also need to ensure that we do not put unfair expectations on them. Students are on a developmental journey, of which many are just at the beginning stages. The temptation is to expect growth in leaps and bounds with students making 180-degree turns from ignorance to knowledge, disrespect to respect and dependence to independence. Our own experience and much research indicates growth is generally slower than we would like and we lack patience for the process. As we assess the formation of our students as they journey, let us be easily satisfied with small amounts of growth rather than being disappointed when we do not see large leaps in character development.
HOW DOES FORMATION HAPPEN?
When we have decided what formation means at our institution, we then need to clarify for ourselves how this formation will happen.

Our educational environment is crucial to our goals and developmental objectives. Astin and Antonio (1999) found the following experiences/activities have the greatest impact on character formation and student learning:

- Performing volunteer work
- Participation in leadership education or training
- Exposure to interdisciplinary studies, ethnic studies, and women’s studies
- Participation in religious services
- Social activities with students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Faculty members who provide emotional support

It has been shown that student engagement in meaningful activities outside the classroom is as important to personal development and academic persistence as activities in the classroom (Kuh, 2005).

Some view Christian colleges as hostile to “alternative” viewpoints. Awareness and appreciation of other views is crucial to being a “formation friendly” institution. Fear of being too pluralistic has often kept us from being open to exploring viewpoints that are different from ours and appreciating the truths therein. Let us be mindful that when students leave our institutions they will be faced with a vast array of viewpoints and they need to have developed some skills in critical thinking.

It is important that we are creating a supportive and challenging environment. Students often experience deconstruction of previously held beliefs and assumptions. This is an uncomfortable time period that hopefully leads to a reconstruction of ideas and new ways of processing information and the world. It is crucial that students are in the right environment as they process ideas. Kegan (1994) has said that:

People grow best when they continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge; the rest is commentary. Environments that are weighted too heavily in the direction of challenge are toxic. They promote defensiveness and constriction. Those weighted too heavily toward support are ultimately boring; they promote devitalization. Both kinds of imbalance lead to withdrawal or dissociation from the context. In contrast, the balance of challenge and support leads to vital engagement. (p. 42)

Guthrie (2001) desires Higher Education institutions to be supportive and inclusive communities and has offered the following wish list for the ideal campus community:

- A purposeful community, where faculty and students share intellectual goals and values
- An open community, where freedom of expression is protected but which has a civility that respects the dignity of all
- A just community with a commitment to heterogeneity and diverse opportunities in the curriculum and social activities, and an honoring of the individual person
- A disciplined community in which the individuals are guided by standards of conduct for academic and social behavior and governance procedures that work for the benefit of all
- A caring community that supports individual well-being through positive relationships, sensitivity, and service to others
- A celebrative community, which unites the campus through rituals that affirm both tradition and change and instill a sense of belonging (p. 25)

Relational community environments provide the rich soil for student formation to occur. “To the extent that the faculty and the student affairs staff at a university can learn and become engaged with the individual stories of its students, the institution will become successful in affecting their lives and education” (Sandeen, 2008, p. 2). Student Development professionals preach that students are now adults and must take personal responsibility for their actions. Hopefully this will not be mistaken to mean students should be left alone to wrestle with making choices and grappling with their own confusion of ideas. In loco parentis (in place of parents) is further away from public university staff than it is for those in Christian higher education. Staff and faculty at Christian institutions see the value of input and guidance toward students by those who have life experience and wisdom. Barnes (2001) suggests in loco pastoris (p. 54). Garber states that “the best education is done where there is more accountability built into the relationship between faculty and student; something more like the master/apprentice relationship than the lecturer/audience setting which characterizes much of contemporary higher education.” (p. 126). Various researchers have shown that close, authentic and highly personal relationships promote character development and student learning.
Student learning/formation must be intentional and the purpose around which institutions conduct and implement their efforts.

As we look at the classroom, many Christian colleges are increasingly seeing the value in educating holistically (values education). There is a shift from lecture-based to student-centered approach. Trudeau (Growth, 2001) has said that “in order to teach we must first understand” (pp. 8-9)

What will our paradigm be as we look at formation? Should it be more in line with theology than psychology? If we have fundamentally different worldview assumptions than mainstream psychology and other professional colleagues, are we building on the right foundation? Are our questions “how do people become good” and “why are we here”? Maybe more answers are found in theology and philosophy than psychology.

WHO IS INVOLVED?
Ideally, all departments in the institution understand how their specific role is part of a larger whole with the goal of developing students. The Student Development Department exists for the education of students.

Many institutions desire the creation of “seamless” integration across departments regarding formation objectives. There are various challenges with this concept. The question to ask in your institution is, are our institutional departments focused on some of the same formation goals thereby offering more of a connected and seamless education, or are divisions keeping us from being effective with students? When there is a lack of collaboration with other departments, this is often due to how Student Development is viewed. There can often be gaps between academics and Student Development – in some institutions faculty do not see Student Development as contributors to the educational mission of our institutions. Do both faculty and the Student Development Department want this partnership and collaboration? This “seamless” approach can often be difficult to implement until provosts, academic deans and faculty members truly believe learning takes place in and out of the classroom. The good news is many Christian colleges are increasingly seeing the value in educating holistically (values education). Provosts or administration can often be helpful with this because their goal is to align with and work with all departments to meet their mission. It is crucial to have meetings between Student Development staff and faculty (and other departments) with the purpose of addressing the questions of student formation at the institution. Student Development can educate faculty and staff regarding what formation needs to happen during the “critical years”.

APPLICATIONS AND IDEAS
- It is important for institutions to do a self-analysis
- Meetings between departments (academics is crucial) to look at student formation goals. This helps to focus everyone on the institutional mission
- Recognize the student formation events/actions currently happening at your institution in all departments (e.g. Student Development events, faculty mentoring, drama, music tours and arts, athletics, intramurals, RD mentoring of student leaders, care groups in residence, Student Development staff in institutional committees and faculty in Student Development committees, faculty care for their students, faculty talk with Student Development staff, communication at regular meetings, study rooms in residence, residential requirements for students, various leadership opportunities, etc.)
- Practically state how formation goals will be achieved
- Assessment of effectiveness in meeting goals. Christian college Student Development professionals must also develop appropriate strategies and programs that give practical expression to their commitments and, at the same time, assess their efforts to monitor the extent to which their efforts are effective (Guthrie, Growth, p. 29)
- We need to respond to the dual challenge of effective management and visionary leadership. Great truths must be tied into action.
- Train student leaders with a formation mindset as well. They should be contributing to student formation and the mission/goals of the institution as well. Give them a broader focus and reason for what they are doing.
- Emphasize PD days - reading and researching. There are excellent resources available.

"... many Christian colleges are increasingly seeing the value in educating holistically."

Annual Student Leadership Summit Review

Redeemer University College, September 26th, 2008  By Sharon Schotsman
Ontario Regional Rep

Our CACSD partners in Ontario were invited to this event. We were happy to welcome nine people from EBC, seven student leaders and two Student Life staff. The speaker for the evening was Christa Hesselink.

Christa is currently the Mission 2 Project Manager at The Meeting House, in Oakville. Her topic was Risky Business: Leadership that pushes the boundaries. She encouraged the student leaders that in order to be a great leader on campus means they need to share their life with the people they are leading and work towards building a strong community…and that can be risky!

We also enjoyed dinner together and later on in the evening we enjoyed a concert put on by Isabelle Gunn and Jacob Moon. Our students enjoyed connecting with the student leaders from EBC.
## FINAL THOUGHTS

I believe that Christian Higher Education is worthwhile because of the holistic formation that happens at our institutions. Our students are leaving our institutions having been challenged to think critically regarding what it means to love God and their neighbour. We must not lose sight of this focus and we must recognize the impact we can have and are having on students during these critical college years. *(References on sidebar, see pg. 9)*

Marlin Reimer is the Director of Student Development at Providence College & Seminary, Otterburne, MB.

### STUDENT FORMATION RESOURCE LIST

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<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<th>Publisher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coomes, M.D. &amp; DeBard R. (Eds.)</td>
<td>Serving the Millennial Generation</td>
<td>New Directions for Student Services, 2004 (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garber, S.</td>
<td>The Fabric of Faithfulness</td>
<td>Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press</td>
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<td>Holmes, Arthur F.</td>
<td>Shaping Character: Moral Education in the Christian College</td>
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<td>Kegan, R.</td>
<td>In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life</td>
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<td>Sandeen, A.</td>
<td>Some Personal Reflections after 42 Years in Student Affairs</td>
<td>Journal of College &amp; Character, 9 (3)</td>
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<td>Schroeder, C.C., Mable P. &amp; Associates</td>
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<td>San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers</td>
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Taking Flight
CACSD Conference 2009 @ Ambrose University College
May 25-27 Calgary, AB

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<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
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<td>12:00-3:00pm</td>
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<td>3:00-4:00pm</td>
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<td>4:15-5:15pm</td>
<td>Workshop one (Choice of two)</td>
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<td>5:30-6:30pm</td>
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<td>7:45pm</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday May 27th</strong></td>
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<td>9:00am-11:00am</td>
<td>Session Two- Integration of Faith and Learning - Virginia Hooper</td>
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<td>11:00am-11:15am</td>
<td>Break (can use your Swipe card for Coffee)</td>
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<td>11:15-12:30pm</td>
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<td>2:30-4:00pm</td>
<td>Session three - Student Life Best Practice</td>
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<td>4:00pm-6:00pm</td>
<td>Free Time or visit to other Post Secondary Student Development areas</td>
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<td>1:00pm</td>
<td>Departure of organized outings</td>
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