

## **My People Are Destroyed for Lack Of Knowledge: The Vital Need for Christian Higher Education**

The title is taken from Hosea 4:6, in which the Lord says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

I do not claim to be an Old Testament scholar, but a couple points jump out from this text. Destruction, and negative consequences for our children, must result from rejecting knowledge and the law of God. That is certainly an apt description of today’s higher education environment. Knowledge – in the form of the heritage of Western civilization both Christian and classical, and of the nature of absolute truth – is rejected. God’s law is despised.

The motto of the State of Michigan is, “*Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam circumspice,*” which can be translated, “if you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.” If you want to understand the vital need for Christian higher education: look about you! It hardly seems necessary to provide further exhortation to anyone who follows media accounts of the climate in secular higher education today. Web sites such as [campusreform.org](http://campusreform.org) or [thecollegefix.com](http://thecollegefix.com) provide countless examples.

There are, of course, the major disruptions stemming from identity politics run amok, for those who worship ethnicity rather than our identity in Christ (Colossians 3:11). Enrollment at the University of Missouri declined by 2,600 students after racially-linked unrest on the campus forced out the top two administrators.<sup>1</sup>

There are the absurd gyrations of political correctness for those who reject the truth of God’s creation of man and woman (Genesis 1:27), and worship their own truths. At the University of Michigan, students are to be called by self-selected pronouns rather than “he” or “she”. The University instructs: “There is an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their [sic] pronouns.”<sup>2</sup> At Brown University, free feminine hygiene products are going to be furnished in men’s rooms, because “not all people who menstruate are women.”<sup>3</sup>

There are the ongoing attacks on the heritage of Western civilization. Last December, at the University of Pennsylvania, students removed a portrait of Shakespeare from a prominent place in the English department<sup>4</sup>, because it was not “inclusive.”<sup>5</sup> It wasn’t just the students; the action followed a vote by the faculty to remove it.

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<sup>1</sup> Keller, Rudi, “University of Missouri estimates show enrollment decline to cost campus \$36 million”, *Columbia Daily Tribune*, May 11, 2016, [http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/education/turmoil\\_at\\_mu/university-of-missouri-estimates-show-enrollment-decline-to-cost-campus/article\\_e6b9ca4e-31cc-58a4-bc60-484b595438d8.html](http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/education/turmoil_at_mu/university-of-missouri-estimates-show-enrollment-decline-to-cost-campus/article_e6b9ca4e-31cc-58a4-bc60-484b595438d8.html).

<sup>2</sup> Hasson, Peter, “University of Michigan to Students: “There Is An Infinite Number Of Pronouns,” *The Daily Caller*, October 3, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2016/10/03/university-of-michigan-to-students-there-is-an-infinite-number-of-pronouns/>.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchison, Sydney, “Tampons coming to men’s rooms at Brown University,” *Campus Reform*, September 7, 2016, <http://www.campusreform.org/?ID=8105>.

<sup>4</sup> Jaschik, Scott, “Making a Point by Removing Shakespeare’s Portrait,” *Inside Higher Ed*, December 14, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/12/14/students-penn-remove-portrait-shakespeare>.

Then there is the downright vile. In 2011, tuition at Northwestern University (originally affiliated with the Methodist church with a motto taken from Philippians 4:8)<sup>6</sup> was \$39,840.<sup>7</sup> That paid for such offerings as a class that featured a live sex act demonstration. The University, at least initially, defended it.<sup>8</sup> Why would any parent want to pay for this? Chicago radio talk show host Dan Proft, himself a Northwestern alum, says, “Get your kids out of these overpriced re-education centers.”

The secularization of higher education is not a new phenomenon. Yale was founded because Harvard, the first college in colonial America, was thought to have strayed too far from its Puritan roots. And that was in 1701!<sup>9</sup>

The trend has accelerated exponentially in recent years, however. Why? “[S]ixties radicals have taken over the colleges of education and today they dominate the education establishment.” “Jay Parini, a professor at Middlebury College in Vermont, offered perhaps the most candid assessment of this infiltration of the academy when he confessed: ‘After the Vietnam War, a lot of us didn’t just crawl back into our literary cubicles; we stepped into academic positions. With the war over, our visibility was lost, and it seemed for a while—to the unobservant—that we had disappeared. Now we have tenure, and the work of reshaping the universities has begun in earnest.’ Since the sixties the radical vision of what a college education should be has ‘percolated through the entire college curricula.’”<sup>10</sup> The express purpose is social change and disruption, rather than the preservation of culture and learning and the expansion of knowledge.

One of the best known acolytes of this agenda is Bill Ayers, a co-founder of the sixties domestic terrorist group the Weather Underground. Ayers ended up getting a doctorate of education from Columbia, became a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education, and ultimately was viewed as a leader in the field of education, despite his views that “I don’t regret setting bombs,” and “I feel we didn’t do enough.”<sup>11</sup> Though the sixties generation of activists, including Ayers himself, is now largely retired, Ayers and his ilk trained a generation of educators that continue to spread the poison. As academics constantly generate ever more radical “new” and “original” work of “critical theory,” “pedagogy of oppression,” and the like,<sup>12</sup> the cancer metastasizes and grows throughout the body of the secular academy.

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<sup>5</sup> Glatsky, Genevieve, “Audre Lord replaced by English dept. with collage of 88 writers and filmmakers,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, December 23, 2016, <http://www.thedp.com/article/2016/12/shakespeare-portrait-removed>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/student-engagement/traditions/university-motto/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2011/03/costs-set.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Soave, Robby, “Northwestern silent on prof’s sex toy demo”, *The College Fix*, June 29, 2011, <http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/8766/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://matherproject.org/node/22>.

<sup>10</sup> Black, Jim Nelson, *Freefall of the American University: How Our Colleges Are Corrupting the Minds and Morals of the Next Generation*, WND Books, Nashville, TN, 2004, p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, Dinitia, “No Regrets for a Love Of Explosives; In a Memoir of Sorts, a War Protestor Talks of Life With the Weathermen,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/11/books/no-regrets-for-love-explosives-memoir-sorts-war-protester-talks-life-with.html>.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_theory), Paulo Freire ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo\\_Freire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo_Freire)), Lev Vygotsky ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev\\_Vygotsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky)), *et cetera*.

The Concordia University System (CUS) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (the Synod) is not immune from the problems facing higher education generally. However, all CUS institutions have endorsed the CUS Lutheran Identity Statement – adopted by the Synod in convention last summer in Resolution 7-01A<sup>13</sup> – that recognizes:

As educational institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System confess the faith of the Church. The Concordias uphold the teachings of sacred Scripture and its articulation in the Lutheran Confessions. This includes the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ — true God and true man — is the sole way to God’s mercy and grace; that at the beginning of time the Triune God created all things; that life is sacred from conception to natural death; and that marriage between a man and a woman is a sacred gift of God’s creative hand — over against the reductionistic assumptions of many in our culture who view men and women as only transitory and material beings.

That is a strong basis upon which to continue to build Christian higher education for the twenty-first century. At no public institution of higher learning, and at very few private ones, will students receive an education that is truly centered on the Gospel. We should have and maintain Lutheran institutions of higher learning for the same reasons we maintain Lutheran day schools.

Within the limits of this presentation, it is not possible to set forth in detail the entirety of the Scriptural and philosophical underpinning for a Lutheran, Christian university. Fortunately, that book has already been written. I commend *The Idea and Practice of a Christian University: A Lutheran Approach*, edited by Dr. Scott Ashmon of Concordia University Irvine, and available from Concordia Publishing House.<sup>14</sup>

It may be possible to get a good education at non-Lutheran schools such as the University of Illinois, where I graduated. I benefited from the campus ministry at University Lutheran Chapel, supported by the Central Illinois District of the LCMS. LCMS-U, the Synod’s campus ministry, does an outstanding job under the leadership of Pastor Marcus Zill. We should never abandon those efforts as a Synod. But the overall climate of higher education makes secular education increasingly risky as a proposition for the impressionable youth. When your child or grandchild enrolls in college, who will be his or her peers? Will his or her beliefs be mocked or even attacked as “hate”? What type of advice and counsel will he or she receive from professors? Will spiritual care be available? Will he or she find a pious spouse? Enrollment at a CUS institution cannot guarantee positive results, but it certainly makes them more likely.

Given that Dr. Ashmon and his contributors have been kind enough to write the book, I want to shift gears to discuss some history and demographics of the CUS institutions over the last half century. I am indebted to Dr. Paul Philp of the CUS, and to the Synod’s office of rosters and statistics, for data about the Concordia institutions as they looked fifty years ago, which I have arbitrarily chosen as the end of the “golden age” of the Concordia educational system as it had existed in the period of the Synod’s peak growth.

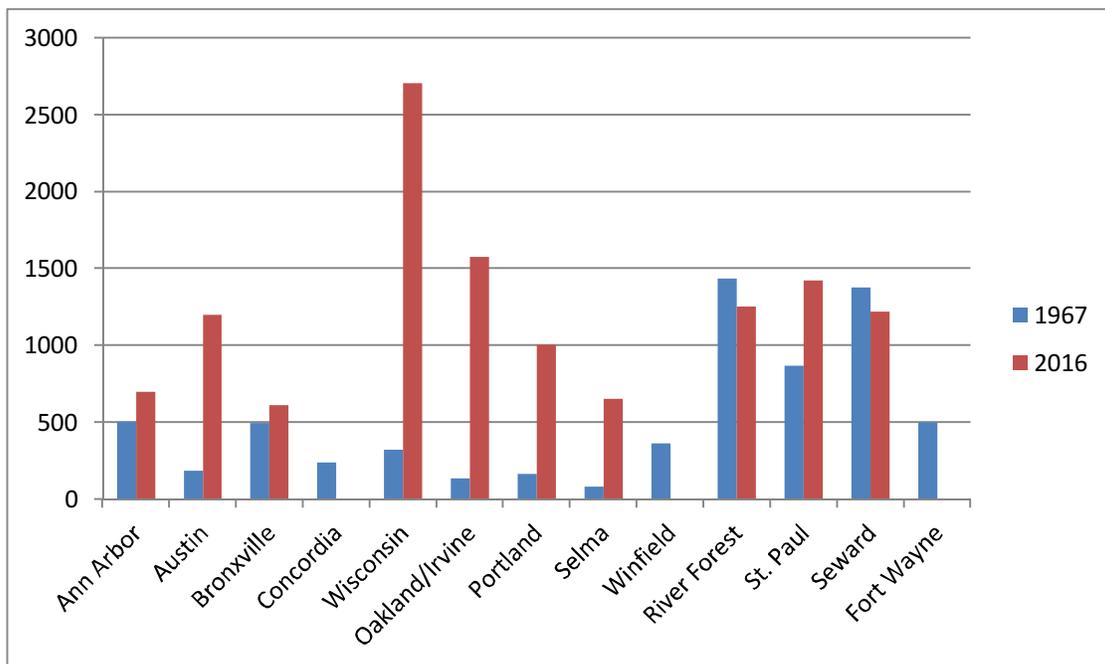
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<sup>13</sup> Available at <http://www.lcms.org/convention/downloads>.

<sup>14</sup> Ashmon, Scott A., ed., *The Idea and Practice of a Christian University: A Lutheran Approach*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2015.

In 1967, there were 13 Concordia undergraduate institutions in the U.S.: Ann Arbor; Austin; Bronxville; Concordia, Missouri; Milwaukee; California Concordia College in Oakland; Portland; Selma; St. John’s in Winfield, Kansas; River Forest; St. Paul; Seward; and the Senior College here at Fort Wayne. At that time all were two-year schools, except St. Paul, which had granted its first four-year degree only three years earlier, River Forest, and Seward. All but Ann Arbor and the Senior College originally had high school programs: all those were still operating except Austin, just ending its high school program, and River Forest, which closed its high school in 1950. Notably, in 1967 the average undergraduate enrollment at a Concordia institution was about 500 students (mean 512; median 495); only River Forest and Seward topped 900 students. Now, the average is 1,371 and only Bronxville and Selma are below 1,000.

**TOTAL ENROLLMENTS AT CUS UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS, 1967 AND 2016**



Source: LCMS Office of Rosters and Statistics (1967); CUS (2016). Concordia Irvine is listed as a successor to Oakland for comparison purposes only. 1967 figures exclude high school enrollment; 2016 figures include “traditional” undergraduates only.

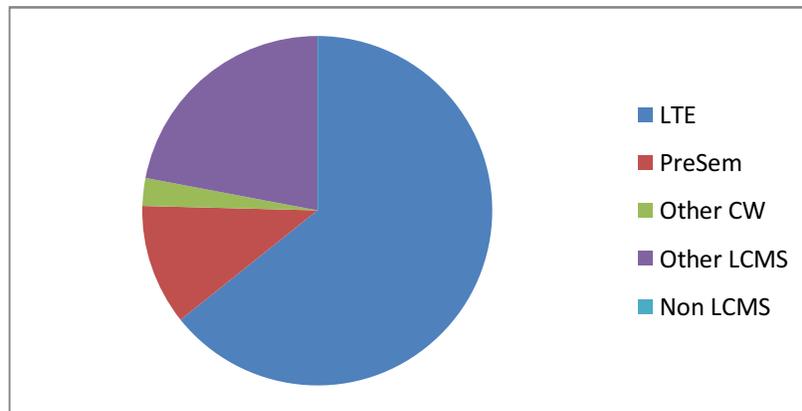
Total undergraduate enrollment in 1967 was 6,661; I do not have the statistic but am assuming that almost all students then were LCMS or members of churches in fellowship with the Synod. There were 5,202 students in church work (78% of the total enrollment), with 4,285 in teacher training, 746 in pre-seminary training, 90 diaconal students, and 81 enrolled in the parish worker program at Winfield. The remaining 22% of students were LCMS (or almost all LCMS) studying in non-church work programs.

Fast forward to 2016. CUS overall enrollment has roughly doubled; there are now 12,341 traditional undergraduate students among the campuses. Now all the schools have four year programs; most have graduate programs. But LCMS enrollment is only 32% of total enrollment (3,953 LCMS students across the CUS, of whom 1,355 are in church work). LCMS church workers are about 34% of LCMS students and 11% of the total enrollment. The

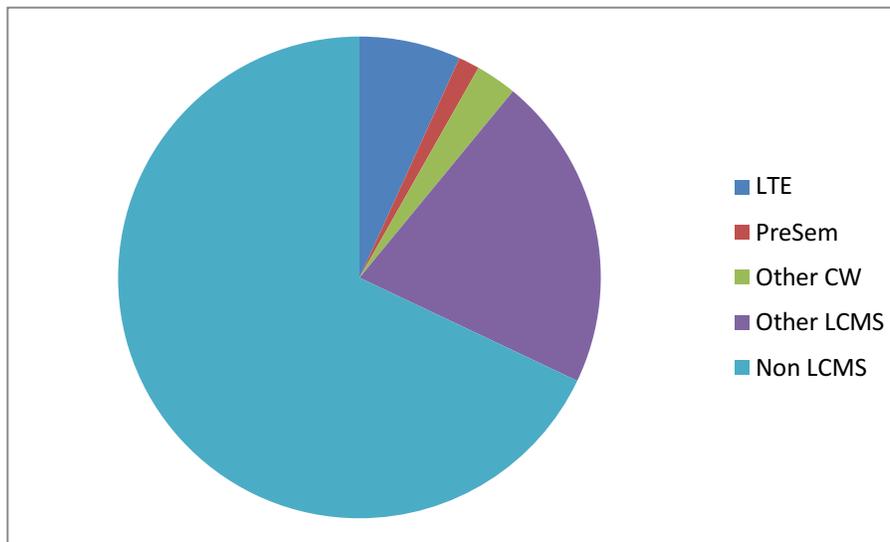
difference was made up by enrolling non-LCMS students, who in 1967 presumably constituted a negligible percentage of enrollment. So we have only 60% as many total LCMS undergrads, and only 26% as many church work students, as fifty years ago.

Lutheran teacher education remains the largest church work vocation: 837, or 62%, versus 82% fifty years ago. Pre-seminary enrollment remains about the same percentage of church work students, 13% now versus 14% then. The remaining 25% are divided among a variety of other church work programs: DCE, now the second largest, at 207 (15%), as well as Lay Ministry, Family Life Ministry, Deaconess, Parish Music, and Christian Outreach. Notably, LCMS non-church work enrollment remained nearly steady from 1967 to 2016, going from 22% to about 21% of total enrollment.

### 1967 ENROLLMENT DISTRIBUTION AT CUS INSTITUTIONS



### 2016 ENROLLMENT DISTRIBUTION AT CUS INSTITUTIONS



Source: LCMS Office of Rosters and Statistics (1967); CUS (2016). 1967 figures exclude high school students enrolled in pre-church work programs.

Where are the students? In 1963 (the year most 1967 college freshmen would have been confirmed), LCMS congregations confirmed about 55,000 teenagers; by 2012 (the year most current college freshmen would have been confirmed) that number had declined to about 18,000.<sup>15</sup> Those numbers must be taken with a grain of salt, because congregational data is not always accurate or complete. But if we can use junior confirmations as an approximation for the size of the LCMS young adult cohort, we find that in 1967, 12.1% of “eligible” LCMS youth attended a Concordia (9.4% in church work); in 2016 it was 22% (7.5% in church work). Again, if we accept that metric as a rough estimate, we are actually achieving more success in enrolling our own students into Concordia institutions now, though there is certainly still considerable room for growth. With the decline in the number and size of Lutheran day schools, though, we must recognize that such growth probably won’t occur in church work vocations.

Church work is the original *raison d’être* for the CUS, and we must continue to provide church worker training. However, the Synod must consider whether it is appropriate to consolidate church work programs. Currently, 82% of pre-seminary students and 88% of Lutheran teacher candidates are enrolled at only four of the ten CUS campuses. Programs with only one pre-seminary student or three teacher candidates may not provide the same formation experience.

It is necessary and appropriate that CUS institutions provide training in non-church work disciplines. In 1967, seven of the thirteen schools enrolled fewer than 400 students. That might have been sustainable in an era when the Synod covered much or all of the cost of operations, many or most instructors did not have terminal degrees, and the focus was primarily on church work. It is not sustainable when the CUS institutions, other than Concordia Alabama, no longer receive direct support from the Synod. The CUS schools are today tentmaking ministries largely dependent on tuition revenue: that means accreditation to enable students to receive financial aid, and that requires larger schools to allow for the economies of scale necessary to operate. The 1,355 students currently in church work would sustain one institution, not a system.

Accreditation also requires faculty members with terminal degrees in a wide range of fields. It is easy to find those in theology within the Synod; it is often harder to do so in other areas, particularly given the range of disciplines and number of positions to be filled as the size of the CUS has multiplied. We have not even discussed the graduate and non-traditional undergraduate enrollment at the CUS, which now totals almost 25,000, double the traditional undergraduate population. If you have a doctoral degree, have you considered teaching at a CUS school? If you know someone who has, or who has a master’s degree and can pursue a doctorate, encourage that person to consider the vocation of CUS professor.

CUS institutions have a mission to educate those who are not of our confession. Given the sad state of higher education outlined earlier in the presentation, there are many parents and students who want the type of Christian education that we can provide. Despite our increasing rate of enrolling LCMS young adults, there are simply not enough LCMS students to fill all places in the CUS. But there are many who need the Christian education we can provide, and who are supportive or receptive of our mission. The CUS can be a tremendous outreach, and a great blessing to these families, if we are clear and consistent in our confession.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://blogs.lcms.org/2016/insights-lcms-statistics-reasons-hope-growth>.

Having recognized the need for Christian education, I urge the church to support its institutions that have been built and sustained through the offerings, work, and sacrifice of the Synod, its congregations, and its people, as well as the faculty and staff – many of whom are non-LCMS.

Storm clouds are on the horizon. The State of California considered legislation to bar institutions of higher education from conforming to a Scriptural understanding of the nature of man and woman.<sup>16</sup> Even with a reprieve at the federal level, it is likely that other states and municipalities will continue to attack confessional Christian institutions, by challenging tax exempt status and in other areas. We must support our CUS schools.

How many of you, your children and grandchildren, have attended CUS schools? How many students from your congregation are attending? The CUS cannot raise up Lutheran students; parents and congregations can, with the help of God. Not all students can, should, or will attend a CUS school, but if even half of reported confirmands did so, we would more than double the LCMS population within the CUS.

I urge parents and students to investigate the benefits of attending a CUS school even if they are not interested in church work. I have most experience with Concordia Chicago. Cost wise, most LCMS students would actually pay less at Concordia Chicago than if they attended the University of Illinois. Past perceptions that private education is more expensive than public are often not accurate. Additionally, at Concordia Chicago, they will be taught in small classes directly by the faculty, not in large lecture halls with teaching assistants. Both quality and cost should be considered.

Those who attended our grandfathers' churches had the commitment to Christian higher education to found and fund the CUS institutions now serving the church. It is incumbent upon our generation to sustain these institutions in service to God and faithful adherence to our Lutheran Confessions, that our children and future generations do not perish for lack of knowledge.

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<sup>16</sup> [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billVersionsCompareClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160SB1146&cversion=20150SB114699INT](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billVersionsCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB1146&cversion=20150SB114699INT).